A World of The Unexpected

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Summary

The Golds and their close circle of friends travel to Greece and Italy for a vacation of fun, romance and plenty of unexpected surprises. They're ready to take on the world but is the world ready for them?
Belle and Marie were miserable in the final weeks of their pregnancies. Since Belle was carrying triplets and Marie was carrying twins, both women had gained more weight than they had in their previous pregnancies and had a difficult time getting around but they weren't suffering alone. Their husbands once again experienced sympathetic symptoms due to the deep bonds they shared with their wives and were equally miserable. They both knew the worst part would come on the day their wives delivered and they would feel the women's pain as if it were their own. Rumple's first experience with it was so intense they'd given him Stadol in the delivery room and he'd gone on quite a hilarious drug trip that somehow ended up on the internet just as his little Adriana learned to walk. Archie's own experiences with the pain hadn't been quite as bad since he'd been prepared for them even before he and Marie got married, fainting only when he saw his wife delivering the afterbirth and finding it disgusting.

Adding to their discomfort was the heatwave that swept through the town at the end of May and everyone in the town was complaining about it as much as they complained about the long winter they had with some of the lowest temperatures and highest accumulations on record. The women were due to give birth in early June and they were going to spending July and August in Europe staying in Greece first then Italy, their main concern being whether it would be safe enough for their newborns to fly and on such a long trip. The flight to Greece was at least fourteen hours, quite a long time for one infant, let alone five and nearly all of the children that would be boarding the plane had magical abilities that would need to be kept in check for the duration. There were going to be so many people on the flight that Rumple was looking into taking a private plane. He could certainly afford it. They were already booked into the finest hotel in Greece, the Grande Bretagne, courtesy of Archie's Greek friend Alessandro Palakas and a villa in Rome. There was also the possibility that Snow and Regina could deliver while they were still abroad. Emma's baby would be due after they returned.

The expecting parents expressed their concerns to Doctor Jo who explained in detail what preparations had to be made to make them all safe for travel, magical and non-magical.

"This is one instance where being a mage comes in handy," Jo said. "There are differences in opinions amongst the medical community what age a baby is safe enough to travel on a plane by but I think you will have less of an issue with it than other parents. Also I would suggest all of you update your vaccinations before you go overseas. I know you had yours done before your honeymoon Marie but with all that's been going on in the outside world lately, you can't afford to take chances."

"That reminds me, we were having a discussion in the teacher's lounge the other day about parents who are refusing to have their children vaccinated for measles and bringing the disease into the schools. It's insane!" raged Belle. "We would have sold every last thing we OWNED to have those vaccines back in our world before the curse was cast."
The doctors in Storybrooke travelled back and forth between the two worlds working on ways to improve the way of life for the people who chose to stay behind, their healthcare being a top priority.

"I know honey but I am pleased to say that is not an issue here. All of the parents in town have been cooperating in the vaccination programs. This lapse in judgment in parents from the outside is leading to diseases that were thought to have been eradicated from coming back and in some cases they may mutate."

The expectant mothers cringed.

"Now then…any other issues I should be aware of?"

"No….just the usual mood swings, swollen feet, aching backs and bladders the sizes of peanuts," Rumple quipped.

"Wives who keep threatening to exile you to the couch because she doesn't think you give her enough room on the bed when you're almost falling out of it," Archie grumbled.

"Oh I do not take up the whole bed!" Marie exclaimed.

"Yes you do!"

"So do you dearie," Rumple reminded his wife.

"Need I remind you, dearie, there are five of us sharing that bed now, not two. I told you we should've gotten a bigger one but no! You said ours was large enough. I don't have this problem at Belle Reve," Belle argued.

Jo laughed. "Sometimes you feel like there's never enough room, right ladies?"

"They only gain part of the weight. We gain it all and they think they have it bad," Belle huffed.

"Still, don't you just looove it when they have the pain too?" Marie taunted.

Belle smirked. "Of course."

"Must you rub it in Marie?" Archie moaned.

"Dearie, get that look off yer face 'cause ye'll no' have yer way by making us have the baby one o'these days!"

"Magic needs to catch up with the times then."

"Not a chance in hell. Magic can do a lot of things but thank the gods THAT is not one of them. And that other thing you go through, I will have myself committed if it happens."

"You'll have to save room in the cell for me Rumple because I don't want it either!" Archie cried.

The two women looked at each other and grinned, unable to wait to find out how their husbands were going to handle it when their daughters became women and Archie unfortunately would experience it first since Gisella would be going through it sooner than the others.

"Speaking of that, I am going to have to have The Talk with Sella in a few years," Marie said. Her husband buried his face in his hands.

"Rumple, I beg you….whip up a potion that will keep my daughter a child…please!" he begged.
"I'd love to keep my lass a child too Archie but I can't," Rumple said resignedly. "And I'll be keeping a gun handy at the front door when those damned boys come calling…and the tests ready."

Archie smirked. "Oh I have my own arsenal of tests ready too. I hope there's room at the asylum for some new inmates."

Belle shook her head. "Our daughters are never going to keep boyfriends at this rate."

When they got back to the Victorian Bae and Andi were watching the kids while they played in the backyard. Mary Poppins was out of town; she'd just started seeing Doc and the two of them went to Boston to watch a baseball game. They were playing train robbery with Bae and Andi dressed as robbers, the Happy Army Bears as the passengers and Jonny, Gisella and Adriana were the sheriff and his deputies.

"This is a stickup!" Bae yelled from behind the scarf tied around his face as he pointed a toy gun at the bears. "Hand over the gold and shiny and no one gets hurt!"

"Oh no, please don't hurt us!" Major Belle pleaded and threw a plastic tiara into the bag Andi was holding.

"You got anything else on ya, Miss Rockerfeller?" Andi demanded, waving her gun. "Fork it over. Don't make me search ya!"

Jonny and his team hid behind the bushes until they made their move, their parents watching from the side, recording the event on their phones. They all had dozens of videos of their childrens' playtimes. Rumple wished they had such things when Bae was a child, he could still remember some of the wonderful games they used to play. His favorite was when they would walk through the forest and play the "Who Am I?" game. Rumple would look at something, give Bae several clues as to what it was then ask his small son to tell him what it was and the boy guessed correctly every time.

Jonny jumped out of the bushes in his Sheriff Woody costume and crept up behind Bae, pointing a toy gun at the teen's back. "Drop it an put your hands up!" he commanded in a gruff voice. "You're under arrest for armed robbery! Sella and 'Driana, cuff 'em and take 'em to the jail!"

"Yes sir!" The girls pulled out a set of toy handcuffs and cuffed Andi and Bae. "You heard the sheriff…move it!" Gisella ordered.

"Police brutality!" Andi exclaimed.

"Ya want some cheese with that whine?" Adriana, pressed her toy gun into Andi's back as she led her away. "Tell it to the judge!"

"Are you sure she's going to be a healer Rumple? She sounded just like a police officer there," Belle asked her husband.

"Without a doubt, mo chori. Kids, it's almost time for dinner!" he called out.

"Aww do we have to? Got the trial comin up," Jonny complained.

"Jonny you can have your trial at home tomorrow, okay?" Archie proposed to his son.

His son approached him with his hands on his hips. "Then we gotta start over. You havta be the robber and Mommy can be the girl on the train."

"I'm always the bad guy. That's typecasting!" his father complained.
"Yup. You're really good at playin' the robber."

Marie giggled. "Oh, Doctor Hopper what would it do to your reputation if everyone found out just how naughty you can be…?"

"Marie!"

"Mommy I wasn't talkin 'bout that!" Jonny rolled his eyes. "Bae's right. Worse n'rabbits."

The Golds laughed.

"No I think Mama and Papa are worse," Adriana piped up. "They make out in the spa!" she added referring to Rumple's last birthday which was caught on tape by the Mad Crew and set to music for their latest gag gift.

"And ye need to remember how to knock, dearie!" Rumple scolded his daughter.

"So do Mommy and Daddy." Gisella said.

"Gisella!" her parents cried.

"Come on, let's go. Dinner's getting cold," Rumple said and picked up his daughter.

There was so much to do in the weeks prior to the births of the babies. Several of Belle and Snow's classes would be taking field trips to museums and zoos closer to the end of the year. Rumple agreed to help chaperon and so did David. There were several classes holding graduation ceremonies from middle school into high school and the entire family would be seeing Gisella making her acting debut as "Annie" in the school's adaptation of the musical and film. She did most of her rehearsals at the school but enjoyed practicing the scenes with Daddy Warbucks at home with her father. Becky was playing Miss Hannigan and Ewan had been cast as Daddy Warbucks but the teenager refused to shave his head. Rumple cast a simple glamour spell that would allow him to appear bald for the duration of the play. Bae was helping with the set artwork, Lenore Phillips and several girls from the home economics department were making all the costumes.

Bae also entered a state wide art contest and chose to paint a scene from his childhood as his entry but when his parents asked him what it was he wouldn't tell them and he had his room locked tighter than Fort Knox so that no one could see the painting until it was finished. Rumple could have easily unlocked it with his magic but he respected his son's wishes to not peek until the painting was completed.

The summer festival would be also held the second week of June and this year Belle was going to submit the entry for the baking contest, having officially conquered her kitchen demons thanks to Archie. Her husband requested that she submit her version of the Golden Delight cake that she made for his birthday. Rumple never submitted anything for the cooking contest, not wanting his brother-in-law to lose his long standing title as the chili king. Instead he would submit an entry for the new contests Regina added this year for knitters and weavers. She'd gotten dozens of requests to add such a competition for years but never got around to doing it. The Golds and Hoppers took turns entering the kissing contest and this year Archie and Marie would be defending the family title as "Best Kissers".

Another new event was the boules tournament. Marie and Belle loved playing the game as children and made their husbands build them a boules court in the backyard for the spring and summer months and they also had one in the basements of their homes for the winter. Some of the other women and men in the town also enjoyed the game and men's and women's leagues had been
formed. The women played on Fridays at the Gold or Hopper house, the men would play on Sundays down at The Rabbit Hole. Most of the people who joined played for fun but there were others who were highly competitive and sometimes arguments broke out. Rumple and Archie had been forced to referee a few times when the women got into shouting matches at the house and Emma and Jeff had to haul men out of The Rabbit Hole for brawling during a game.

Another new addition and the favorite with everyone was the teams making their own floats for the opening ceremonies. Regina had given each team a list of float design guidelines to make it fair for everyone and the winner would be chosen by the crown. The ceremony would begin with the Happy Army and Minion march followed by the floats. Both sets of living stuffed toys were excited to finally be a part of the festivities and were only allowed to be after the kids held a protest on Regina's lawn complete with signs reading: No Happy Bears and Minions, No Fun!

"So where are you taking the kids on Tuesday, Belle?" Marie asked her sister.

"The Children's Museum and Theater in Portland," Belle replied. "They have a lot of fascinating exhibits that the kids will love; the one where they can play with shadows will be a favorite. I know Adrianna loves it, don't you sweetie?"

"I can make lots of happy faces!" the toddler cried. "And they have the playground inside too, huh Jonny?"

"Yup! I like the little town the best but should be one like the old west. Daddy, when we gonna go see a real old west town?" Jonny asked his father.

"Next year."

"I wanna do a cooking thing," Adrianna said.

"We did one in Greece, didn't we, Daddy?" Gisella asked her father.

"We certainly did, Princess."

Jonny laughed. "Yeah and you said you wished you were roasting the goat witch that turned Daddy inta a cricket!"

"Papa, Mama, you guys are gonna need a LOT of energy to keep up with two groups of hyperactive kids," Bae warned his parents.

"That's why we're going to bed early the night before," Belle giggled.

"Better hope you don't go into labor."

"Oh God! I hope not too!"

"Papa, it's really nice out. I wanna sleep outside tonight."

"Adrianna, mo astor….your mama and I can't sleep outside…."

"Bae can sleep outside with me, can't ya Bae?"

Adrianna enjoyed camping out, she had ever since she was an infant but Rumple and Belle didn't allow her to do so until recently.

"I can stay out in the tent with her, papa and you know Major Rumple and Major Bae will sit right outside of it and scare the crap outta anyone who tries to come near it."
"Ye bet we will!" Major Rumple called out from the living room.

"Oh, all right. But I want you to make sure you have plenty of warm clothes and blankets in case it gets cold overnight," their father said.

"Papa, you're the best!" Adriana jumped out of her chair and ran over to her father's throwing her arms around him.

"Daddy, can we camp out too?" Jonny asked his father.

"Jonny…ummm… we can't sleep outside either."

"Sella can!"

"Daddy, c'mon," his daughter pleaded, both of them giving their parents the puppy dog look.

"Oh, all right!"

"Yay!" they cheered. While Bae went outside to get the tents set up, Rumple got all the bedding the children used out of the second floor closet. It was close to bedtime by the time they got the kids settled. Archie and Marie were going to drive back home but Rumple took one look at their exhausted faces and informed them they were spending the night in the guest room.

Later on that night Belle heard a loud thump followed by someone groaning in pain. She sat straight up in bed. "Rumple? Did you hear that? I think someone's in the house," she said fearfully.

"That was me, dearie. Ye kicked me out of t'bed again! What are ye tryin' t'do, gimme another bad leg?" He turned on the lamp and glowered at her as he pulled himself up.

"I told you this bed was too small. We're getting another one tomorrow because I am not sleeping in this one another night!"

"Fine. At least then I won't have to worry about ye kickin' me out again!" he grumbled and crawled back into bed beside her.

"And finally I'll be able to sleep comfortably," she muttered into her pillow.

Over in the guest room Archie was awakened for the third time when he felt Marie's foot kicking the back of his leg.

"Archie, must you spread out so much?" she complained.

"Me? I'm almost hanging off the side! Could you move over a bit?"

"I can't!"

"Belle's right. The beds in this house are too damned small…I feel like I'm in the Three Bears' house!"

Marie moved over a few inches to give her husband a bit more room but they still felt cramped. They couldn't wait to sleep in their own bed the next night.

Several days later, Rumple, Belle, David and Snow along with their classes waited in the school's playground for the bus that would take them to Portland while Mary Poppins watched Adriana and Neal for the day. The women were grateful for their husbands' assistance with the kids since they would have a difficult time keeping up with them.
Rumple looked at his Rolex, frowning. "Sweetheart, wasn't the bus supposed to pick us up at nine-thirty?"

"Yes. I hope it didn't break down but if it had, surely the driver would've called."

"I hope it gets here soon because the kids are starting to get antsy," David muttered.

Minutes later they were all wanting to check themselves into a mental institution when the group of children started complaining that they wanted to go to the zoo, not stand around. Snow tried calling the cellphone number for the driver but it went straight to voicemail. She also called the garage and was assured by the supervisor that the bus was working properly and the driver should have arrived. Not long after she hung up the yellow school bus screeched to a halt in front of the school. As soon as the doors opened Quiet Riot's Come On Feel The Noise blasted through the speakers, nearly deafening the adults.

"Will ye turn that DOWN!?!" Rumple bellowed. "We don't need hearing aids yet!"

The driver, a young man in his early twenties with long brown hair done up with rasta braids, a tie dyed shirt, khakis and a knitted cap got out of the driver's seat. "What's your problem, dude?"

"How the hell can ye concentrate on drivin when ye're exploding yer eardrums with that noise?!"

"Aww chill out, will ya!"

"I'll chill out when you turn that junk off and get this bus moving!" the sorcerer snapped.

"Okay, okay…sheeze whatta grouch," the boy muttered. As he stepped outside the scent of marijuana filled the air. "Ready to go?"

"Oh we are, but you're not going anywhere, dearie except down to the station to have a little chat with Sheriff Swan about driving under the influence!" Rumple growled and gestured, a pair of handcuffs appearing on the boy's wrists.

"You've gotta be kidding me! It was just weed!"

"I don't give a damn if it was the poppies from the Ozian gardens! Ye are not driving this bus stoned out of yer arse with children and two women expecting on board!"

"Who's gonna drive? You?"

"I most certainly am. Now GIT!" he waved his hand and the boy vanished in a puff of smoke, appearing in the police station with a note attached to his tie dyed shirt.

"What the hell…?" Jeff gasped, his egg and cheese omelet dropping to the floor. Emma rose from her desk and approached the new arrival. She removed the note and gave it a quick read through, grinning.

"Ohhh Billy boy….you don't know how long I've been waiting to haul your ass in here," she sang. "Hey Jeff! Look who it is! In for a DUI!"

The two officers could barely contain their excitement. Rumple had just handed them the biggest marijuana dealer in Storybrooke on a platter.

Back at the school everyone boarded the bus for the trip to Portland. Driving a school bus was a bit different from driving a car but not for a sorcerer of Rumple's caliber though it was a bit difficult for
him to keep his road rage under control once he got on the expressway.

"Ye bloody arse! Where's your turn signal!" he yelled at a driver moving in and out of the lanes without activating the turn signal, forcing him to keep his foot near the brake pedal. "Where'd ye go to school to drive? The Go Kart Academy?"

"Mister Nolan, who has a bloody butt? Did they have one of them hemrods that busted like my dad did?" one of the boys asked David.

David and Snow burst out laughing.

"The light's GREEN, GREEN! How many colors do you want?" Rumple yelled when they were stopped at a traffic light.

"Honey, calm down. You'll raise your blood pressure," Belle advised gently.

"Maybe some people are color blind?" Jason piped up.

"Or stupid," muttered Hannah Phillips.

"This is going to be quite a trip," Snow giggled.

"Oh yeah….a real adventure," David chuckled.

"Mister Gold, are we gonna stop soon? Gotta go to the potty," another little girl said from the back of the bus.

He pulled into the parking lot of a McDonalds, in need of a cup of coffee after dealing with his own episode of the World's Worst Drivers.

"Did everyone have breakfast this morning?" Snow asked the children. Most of the children admitted that they had but several informed her that their parents hadn't cooked them anything before dropping them off or even making sure they at least ate something. She frowned, knowing who those parents were. They were some of the newcomers from the Enchanted Forest and had been just as lazy in their old world.

The children formed two lines when they exited the bus, one half going with Snow and David into the dining area to sit while they ate breakfast and Belle and Rumple took the second group to the restrooms.

"Order me a coffee and a sausage muffin to go will you please?" Rumple asked David, handing him his black American Express Card.

"With this thing I could buy out the whole restaurant," David chuckled.

"Well don't go hog wild Charming."

"Okay, girls, if you need any help just let me know," Belle was saying when she went into one of the stalls. She was at the sink washing her hands when she heard someone crying in another stall.

"April? What's wrong, honey?"

"Miss Belle! I can't get the door open! It's stuck!" the little girl cried, pounding on it in fear.

"Try turning the knob again," she coached.
"I am…it's not moving! I don't wanna stay in here!"

"April, honey, it's going to be all right. We'll get you out of there." She glanced down, to her dismay the space between the door and the floor was not small enough for the child to crawl out of.

"Miss Belle, what're we gonna do?" asked Cindy Lou Hoover.

"Cindy, I want you to try to find Mr. Gold or one of the workers…hurry now!"

Rumple was having an issue of his own in the men's room, first the condition of it left much to be desired. Using some of the magic he'd stored in his ring, he went around making sure all of the stalls were clean before any of the boys stepped one foot in them.

"There was poo all over the wall Mr. Gold. That's gross! Why'd they do that?" a little boy named Tom Thumb complained.

"Eww I stepped in somebody's pee! Why'd they pee on the floor like a dog?" another asked.

"Don't know how t' aim," answered one named Pete. "My dad said if you can't use it right, don't use it at all."

"All right boys, enough of that," Rumple said firmly. In a few minutes all of the boys had finished and they were walking out to the dining area when one of them yelped.

"Dennis, what's wrong?"

"Ummm….ummm….my zipper's stuck an I think it got caught on my winkie!"

"Oh man…that is the worst!" groaned one of the customers.

"Mommy, his fly's down!" yelled a girl at one of the tables.

Rumple glowered at the laughing patrons. "Come on Dennis, let's go get you fixed up." They were heading back to the restroom when they collided with a frantic Cindy Lou Hoover.

"Mister Gold, April's stuck in the bathroom and she's really scared. Miss Belle can't get the door open either!"

Rumple pulled the two children out of the sight of others, waved his hand and fixed Dennis's stuck zipper. As they approached the ladies room they could hear April crying and Belle trying to comfort her.

"Someone's coming, sweetie…"

"Cindy, did you tell someone from here what was going on?" Rumple asked her.

"I tried but all these people kept shovin me outta the line so I came to get you."

"Imbeciles." He opened the bathroom door to find Belle tugging at the stall door. "Sweetheart, stop….you don't want to hurt the babies."

"Rumple, thank God!"

He gestured and the stall door opened. Little April ran out and threw herself into Belle's arms. "Miss Belle, I hate being stuck!" she sobbed.
"I know honey. Come on, let's get you out of here." Rumple picked the little girl up and carried her out of the bathroom. She ran over to the other children and started telling them what happened.

"Aww that's nothing…try havin a zipper stuck on your winkle!" Dennis scoffed.

"I don't have a winkle, I have a birdie!"

Rumple nearly dropped his cup of coffee. Snow and David were laughing behind their napkins.

"These kids oughta go on Kids Say The Darndest Things," remarked one of the cashiers.

"All right….now we should be getting going, dearies…"

Children and adults boarded the bus and they were once again on the road headed for the Children's Museum and Theater in Portland. Snow, David and Belle kept the children entertained by playing guessing games with them and Snow and Belle had them all singing children's songs. In the driver's seat Rumple was smiling, looking forward to the day when he would finally hold his three new babies in his arms. His two older ones were growing up so fast that he wondered where all the time went. Soon Bae would be eighteen. He would have been centuries older due to an aging curse placed on him by a rival wizard but Rumple had managed to slow down the process to the point where once the Dark Curse was broken, Bae would age normally again. Adriana would be four and ready to start school soon. He and Belle would both be fighting back tears on that day after all they endured to have her. The diagnosis from Belle's doctor was bleak four years earlier but through the love they had for each other, they'd created a miracle. Months later the goddess Ninia had given them and the Hoppers a fertility blessing that was equal to using fertility treatments in this world. Now they knew they were expecting two girls and a boy. The boy they would name Robert, the girls Valora and Victoria and like their elder sister, they would possess some form of magic, he just wasn't sure what they would be. Each child would be different.

"We're here!" Rumple announced as he brought the bus to a stop in the parking lot.

"All right everyone: you are to stay with us at all times….no wandering off and no touching anything without permission. Understood?" Snow asked the group.

"Yes Miss Snow," they chorused.

"We'll be dividing you up into groups of four," Belle explained. "One group will come with me, one with Miss Snow and the other two with Mister Gold and Mister Nolan. I want you all to count off from one to four. The ones will be with Miss Snow, the twos with me, the threes with Mister Gold and the fours with Mister Nolan. Okay…begin."

The staff was pleased to see the Golds and Nolans since both of them held family memberships to the museum as did their friends that afforded them many perks including discounts in the shops, parties, workshops and summer camps and theater performances. They took the children to the indoor playground first to enjoy themselves a bit before they started touring the exhibits.

"Our kids will have more fun here than in the museums in Greece and Italy," David said to Rumple as they watched their groups play in the 25 foot fire truck pretending to be firefighters. It also taught them the basics of fire safety, a lesson they had with Belle and Snow in the school but it was always wise to have a refresher course.

"Oh, I don't know. Gisella enjoyed it when she went and she wasn't much older than these wee ones. I'm curious about that flea market."

David laughed. "You'll set your own table up."
"I'm thinking about it."

"Ah, go for it. I want to go to one of the restaurants and try out some of that food Archie's been making for us when we go over to their house for dinner."

"Just hope you don't have the two bad food experiences he did!"

"I about laughed my ass off when I saw that video of Gisella tossing that steak on the road and them giving the manager hell!"

Several of their children left the fire truck to go to the car repair shop where they acted like actual mechanics.

Belle and Snow's groups were on the second floor enjoying the Raising Readers Book Nook. There were books in many different languages including Braille ones for the visually impaired. Belle and Snow chose two volumes and they all sat in circles on the floor for storytime.

Rumple and David returned with their groups, both men filming storytime on their phones. They loved hearing their wives read to the children at home and Rumple was a bit inventive with his stories, creating different voices for each character. Once Belle finished reading her book, she handed one to her husband. "Your turn, honey."

He smiled. The volume she had chosen was The Little Prince. The sorcerer sat in the middle of the circle of children and began to read while Belle filmed him on her phone.

David and Snow took their children to the Camera Obscura exhibit on the third floor, watching as the children had fun making their shadows do some of the silliest things. One of the children even had his shadow dancing set to music from David's phone. They would give copies of all the videos they shot to the parents so that they could see some of the things their children did on their trip.

An hour later Rumple rounded everyone up for the drive to the Maine Wildlife Park. All of the children were excited to see the different kinds of animals the park contained. They started their tour in the visitor's center where some of them weighed moose antlers just to see how heavy they were and others visited the reptiles and played with puzzles and light boards.

"Can we get some ice cream Mister Rumple?" Cindy Lou Hoover inquired, pointing to the snack shack while they were walking toward where the habitats were located.

"At lunch time, dearie."

"Yay!" the kids cheered.

The adults carried pouches full of quarters for the feed dispensers so that the children could feed some of the animals since outside food was prohibited.

"Cool! A bald eagle!" Dennis exclaimed.

"There's a turkey!" One of the girls pointed to a turkey coming out of the woods. Their chaperones snapped more pictures on their phones, taking special care not to antagonize the animals.

In the afternoon as promised, they took the kids to the Snack Shack for ice cream treats and headed back to Storybrooke shortly before three. It had been a pleasant day even though there had been a few mishaps.

A week before school ended everyone was gathered in the auditorium to watch Gisella make her
acting debut in Annie along with Ewan and Becky. She spent two hours in the afternoons rehearsing at the school and on the weekend she would run through her scenes with Daddy Warbucks with Archie. Her favorite was the finale when they would sing 'I Don't Need Anybody But You' together.

"Those sets look wonderful," Snow praised as the curtain rose for the first scene in the orphanage. "Bae has a future as a set decorator too if he wants it." She snapped several pictures on her phone. The performance was also being filmed for a DVD that everyone could order.

Archie and Marie were in tears when the spotlight shone on their daughter as she sat by a window singing about the parents she longed one day to have and soon everyone else was misty eyed remembering how the actress had once been a little girl who longed for a father to love her.

"Maybe they're strict
As straight as a line...
Don't really care
As long as they're mine!
So maybe now this prayer's
The last one of it's kind...
Won't you please come get your "Baby"
Maybe..."

The tender moment was then interrupted by the arrival of Becky in the role of Miss Hannigan. The Scorpions in the audience looked at each other and smirked, recalling how they called the principal's secretary Miss Harridan Miss Hagidan. She certainly reminded them of the loose, alcoholic orphanage matron.

"Fury is having toooo much fun playing a lush," Andi giggled to Bae. Rumple turned toward them and raised his finger to his lips.

"Can't wait to see the scene where she tries to maul Ewan," Kat chuckled. "Had to hold her back a few times before she scorched Jenni Turlough because Ewan has to kiss her..."

Bobby sniggered. "Ewan can't stand kissing Jenni. He said her breath smells like feet."

"Oh gross!" Bae groaned.

"Quiet!" Rumple hissed.

"Where did she get all that crazy jewelry from?" Emma asked when they were changing sets. Regina laughed from her seat.

"Robin."

Emma rolled her eyes. "I'm sorry I asked….and sorry for the person you stole it from!"

"I'm not. She was a mean old buzzard. We were staying at her inn for a bit and we paid her well but she also wanted us to muck out her horse stables. We didn't mind…except when that horse of hers almost buried its foot in my ass!" Robin said. "It was called Lucifer and the name suited it."
"So we took off with some of her jewelry and left a little surprise in her bed." Little John added. Jeff and Emma's eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets.

"Man, if you tell me you left the horse's head in her bed, I'm hauling your ass in!" Jeff threatened.

"No…just some of the crap we had to shovel out."

"Oh God….I'm gonna puke," Emma groaned. Her stomach was unusually sensitive with this pregnancy.

Jeff held out his hat. "Make it go on someone we hate," he teased.

"Just…goin to the bathroom instead," she mumbled and hurried out of the auditorium, barely making it to the restroom in time.

When it was time for the final scene Archie and Marie looked at each other and smiled, recalling when Gisella first rehearsed that scene with her father a month earlier.

Marie, Jonny, their Happy Army bears and the pets were all outside on the back patio waiting for father and daughter to give their first performance together. Then the glass door slid open and Archie stepped out wearing a white tuxedo jacket and black pants holding a small white rose in his hand. Seconds later Gisella came out wearing a red dress. Her father bowed to her and handed her the white rose. She pinned it to her dress and took his hand in hers.

"Together at last
Together forever
We're tying a knot
They never can sever," they sang together.

"I don't need sunshine now
To turn my skies to blue," Gisella sang.

"I don't need anything but you!" they sang together as they danced around the patio.

"You've wrapped me around
That cute little finger
You've made life a song
You've made me a singer!" Archie sang.

"I'm poor as a mouse," Gisella was laughing as she sang.

"I'm richer than Midas!" Archie sang with feeling believing with all his heart that he was as he gazed at his daughter, his wife and son.

"But nothing on earth
Could ever divide us
And if tomorrow I'm an apple seller too
I don't need anything but you!"

Archie picked up his daughter and spun her around. She laughed and threw her arms around him. "I love you Daddy," she murmured into his shoulder.

"I love you Princess." he whispered and kissed her forehead.

"That was beautiful!" Marie sobbed as she shuffled over to them holding Jonny's hand.

"You're gonna be good Sella but it'd be even better if it was you an Daddy up there," Jonny said.

Gisella ruffled her younger brother's hair. "He's going to be in my heart, Jonny. That's what matters."

When the song ended, everyone in the audience was on their feet applauding the little girl while her parents wept with joy and pride.

"She was fantastic," Rumple praised.

"Oh Marie…she was wonderful," Belle whispered to her sister.

The proud parents were escorted backstage, Archie holding a bouquet of white roses. The moment he saw his daughter he kneeled down and scooped her up into his arms.

"You were wonderful Princess, wonderful!" he sobbed.

"I was imagining you were up there with me the whole time. Daddy. No offense, Ewan."

"Ah, none taken. Come here you!" he called out to Fury and pulled her into the corner for a kiss.

"I really liked when you an Daddy danced better Sella," Jonny piped up.

"Me too," Gisella murmured.

"Hey Sella….I…uhhh got you something…" Roland said, shuffling his feet nervously from beside his father who he pleaded with to take him backstage as soon as the show was over.

"You did?"

Archie set her back on her feet.

"Uh-huh." Roland handed her a small package wrapped in Sleeping Beauty paper. She tore it open and found a music box inside. When she opened it, it played "Once Upon a Dream."

"Aww! Thanks Roland." She gave him a peck on the cheek as he blushed scarlet. They heard a groan behind them and turned around to see her father passed out on the floor.

"Archie! Baby….come on….wake up!" Marie pleaded, slapping his cheek gently.

"No….my little girl's kissing boys…" he moaned.

"He passes out! I'm going to have a coronary if I see Adriana doin it!" Rumple muttered.

Two weeks later everyone was there to show their support of Baelfire for the art competition. Rumple choked back his tears when his son finally unveiled the piece he'd been working on all that time. He'd painted a scene from his early childhood where he was sitting on his papa's lap while Rumple told him a story, both of them wrapped in a blanket he'd made for them to keep them warm
when they had very little wood for their fire while outside a blizzard ravaged the land.

"It's beautiful Bae, so lifelike," Belle praised.

"Thanks Mama."

"You're gonna win Bae, "Adriana declared.

"I don't know…there are a lot of kids sending stuff…"

"It's not about winning, it's about sharing your talent with the world," his father said wisely.

Though there were many other talented artists in the group, everyone believed Baelfire's piece would be the one chosen for the top award. The judges walked past each piece, studying them carefully, making notes on pads they carried with them. The panel included some popular artists and each judge spent several minutes talking with the artists.

"Have you studied medieval history?" one of them inquired of Bae.

"Yes." I lived it, he thought.

"You've painted the medieval period in such detail that one would think you've lived it. This is the kind of work we like to see, inspiring and so lifelike that you feel like you are in the scene. What do you call this piece, Mr. Gold?"

"A Winter's Tale."

"A homage to the classics. Excellent, Mr. Gold." The judges moved on to speak with the next artist.

"Well done, Bae."

"I was so nervous, Papa."

"I didn't notice. Now, breathe, son."

The artists and their families waited anxiously as the judges went into a separate room to discuss the works on display.

"They're nuts if they don't choose you Fire," Andi said loyally.

"Yes, they'll need to go back to art school," added Shadow.

"And now we would like to announce our choices for the top three artworks that will be added to a special collection in the gallery. Third prize is awarded to Gabrielle Menigas for her Fragments of the Mind. Second prize is awarded to Trevor Winslow for his Mass Hysteria. And our grand prize winner is Baelfire Gold for A Winter's Tale! Congratulations to all of our artists and we wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors."

"YAY!" Adriana screeched and threw her arms around her brother's knees. "See I toldja they were gonna pick ya Bae!"

"Rumplette, you're gonna cut off my circulation now ease up!" Bae chuckled. His parents approached him, both in tears.

"We're so proud of you honey," Belle sniffled.
"Thank you Mama."

"We're going to hang the duplicate you made on the wall in front of the grand staircase at Belle Reve, Bae. That part of the house needs some light anyway," his father quipped. Belle frowned at him.

"Well maybe if you would open the drapes once in a while!"

"Those windows are too high for ye t'be goin up them on a ladder and ye won't be doin' anything like that till after the wee ones are born!"

"Then why don't you make it easy on me and make them open."

Everyone started laughing.

Rumple threw up his hands. "Cannae we just agree to keep those drapes closed? T'light from those windows can blind you."

"I can attest to that," muttered David. "It certainly blinded me the first two times I was there."

"Well, being blinded and having your ass blistered was just desserts for being a moron!" Marie huffed.

"You two and those damned brooms! Rumple, can't you torch them?" Jeff pleaded.

"Not unless I want MY ass blistered dearie and I'll no' be riskin' that."

"Papa, are we gonna have a party now? Bae won the contest, right?" Adriana demanded impatiently.

"We certainly are, mo astor!"

Bae felt like he was on top of the world. He'd come a long way from the former gang member. Now his writing had been featured in a state magazine and soon one of his paintings would be hanging in the art gallery for all to see. Art had always been his passion and with his family's encouragement, he was now ready to share his talent with the world.

In the week leading up to the summer festival everyone was busy getting their entries ready for the float parades, the spinning and weaving contests and the baking and cooking contests. The Golds and Hoppers' float would take everyone back in time to the flower power generation. Rumple made flower printed dresses for the girls and garlands for their hair. He, Bae, Archie and Jonny would all be wearing bellbottomed jeans, tie dye shirts, long wigs and blue sunglasses.

The top of the float itself would have a cardboard VW van with flowers painted on it in psychedelic colors. The floor would be a green outdoor rug with paper flowers sticking out of it, all of them with smiley faces drawn by Adriana and there would be a large glitter rainbow that ran the entire length of the float. Marie wanted to put up a 'Make Love, Not War' sign until her husband reminded her it was not safe for children to see. They settled for peace signs instead.

Ewan and Becky rigged up a sound system that would play the songs the group chose to represent the era as they drove by the crowd.

One day while Adriana and Neal were having one of their playdates, the curious little sorceress asked her friend what his family's float would be.

"Not 'sposta tell," Neal said.
Adriana crossed her arms over her chest and glared at him. "Uh-huh. You're my boyfriend an you're not allowed to keep secrets. They're bad."

"My daddy says you're 'llowed to keep some so I'm keepin this one," Neal said defiantly.

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah!"

Bae and his friends, having overheard the conversation, howled with laughter.

"Having a lovers spat, Rumplette?" he teased.

"Aww shuddup!"

"No we're not!" Neal defended. "Just not 'llowed to tell what our float's gonna be, s'all."

"Fine. I'll remember that when you wanna know a secret," Adriana snorted.

"I cannot wait to see what happens when they really start dating," Andi giggled.

"Papa's hair will all be white by then."

"And he'll probably be a bit loony by then," added Bobby.

"Well we're all half nuts anyway," Becky laughed.

The Charmingly Mad float was going to be a tribute to the family's favorite TV show, Doctor Who with the couples representing the time traveler from both the new and classic versions of the show and the children would be costumed as some of the monsters in the show. The base of the float would be a large blue police public call box that had been used widely in England around the time the show first aired in the early sixties. Jeff and Emma decided to play two of the least favorite doctors. Jeff would be costumed as the Sixth Doctor with a patchwork frock coat, yellow striped pants, a white shirt with question marks on the collar, a blue polka dotted cravat and a flower printed vest along with a blond curly wig. Emma would be dressed as the Ninth doctor wearing a black t-shirt, a black leather jacket and black slacks. Snow and David would dress as two of the most popular Doctors. David would portray the Tenth doctor with a long brown overcoat and a brown pinstriped suit with a white dress shirt, necktie and black glasses with Converse sneakers. Snow would portray the Fourth Doctor wearing a maroon velvet suit with a matching overcoat, a fedora hat and a long woven scarf. Henry and Grace would be costumed as Daleks, little robots that almost looked like R2 in Star Wars only they could speak and had what looked like plungers for eyes and their arms were weapons. Maggie and Neal would be the Cybermen, silver robots with square shaped heads.

The Sherwood Outlaws would be paying tribute to Mel Brooks' Robin Hood: Men In Tights and they would even be singing the theme song and wearing the costumes. Robin was not going to be on the float with his friends since his family was hosting the event much to his disappointment.

Everyone was excited on the day of the festival. It was the one day where the entire town could take the day off and just have fun. Regina stepped up to the podium with her family at her side and smiled as she addressed the crowd. "My family and I welcome you all to the summer festival where the only rule is to just have fun! We're going to start things off with the Happy Army and The Minions as they march to our national anthem in honor of our brave men and women in the US Military. I ask you all to please rise and gentlemen, remove your hats."
Bae walked out onto the street with Adriana behind him driving her little Power Wheels Regina had given her with Neal the passenger seat. She stopped the vehicle and they climbed out facing bears and Minions.

"Happy Army an Minions! March! One…two…three. Four!" they commanded in unison. The bears and Minions marched down the street dressed in uniforms representing the four branches of the Armed Forces, tossing candy at the children as they walked by. The children happily scooped up the treats while their parents took pictures and videos. Bae attached an American flag to the antenna of the Power Wheels, the crowd singing The Star Spangled Banner along with the stuffed toys.

"I think our daughter would make a good soldier Rum," Belle murmured softly.

"Or a field medic," he agreed. Even at the age of three she was demonstrating that she was well suited for either profession, but Rumple never wanted his children to fight in a war. Still, they all were loyal to this new world of theirs and if his children wanted to answer the call to defend the country they lived in, he would not deny them that right no matter how worried for their safety he would be.

"We'd like to thank Adriana Gold and Neal Nolan for allowing the Happy Army and the Minions to open our ceremonies this morning and now…teams….it's time for the float parade and good luck to all of you as our fellow townspeople vote for their favorite float."

"Daddy I really wanted to go on our float an sing," Roland complained.

"Me too buddy," Robin said sympathetically.

"Mommy can we do a float next year…please?" Ellie begged.

"Yeah….I wanna have one like the Muppets an Ellie can be Animal!" Jason teased his sister.

"You sayin I'm nuts?" Ellie glared at her brother, hands on her hips.

"Yup!"

"You wanna be toast?"

"Eleanor May! You even think about attacking your brother with fire your backside will be stinging for a week!" her mother warned.

The little girl bowed her head in shame. "M'sorry Mommy."

Robin stepped up to the microphone, his lips curved into a sly smile. "Our first float is from the Sherwood Outlaws and a salute to the film Robin Hood: Men in Tights!"

Everyone started laughing when Little John drove up on the float depicting a forest where the men stood in identical outfits and faced the crowd.

"We're men, we're men in tights.

We roam around the forest looking for fights.

We're men, we're men in tights.

We rob from the rich and give to the poor, that's right!

We may look like sissies, but watch what you say or else we'll put out your lights!
We're men, we're men in tights,
Always on guard defending the people's rights…"

They started dancing like they were in a chorus line and continued singing while the audience laughed.

"We're men, MANLY men, we're men in tights. Yeah!
We roam around the forest looking for fights.
We're men, we're men in tights.
We rob from the rich and give to the poor, that's right!
We may look like pansies, but don't get us wrong or else we'll put out your lights.
We're men, we're men in tights TIGHT tights,
Always on guard defending the people's rights!
When you're in a fix just call for the men in tights!"

Regina was giggling beside her husband. "You can do a solo performance for me later," she murmured.
"After the kid's born," he promised.
"Looking forward to it."

"Our next float is from the Golden Wishes team and their salute to the Sixties!" Regina announced.

Bae drove the family's float past the crowd and Rumple, Belle, Archie and Marie stepped to the front of it and started singing and swaying gently to the music while Johnny, Gisella and Adriana stood behind them shaking tambourines and throwing shining confetti at the crowd.

"When the moon is in the Seventh House
And Jupiter aligns with Mars
Then peace will guide the planets
And love will steer the stars
This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius
The age of Aquarius
Aquarius!"

Many of the older members of the audience started singing along with them, remembering how much their cursed selves had loved the music of that era.

"Are you all right, dearie?" Rumple inquired of his wife after the song when he noticed that she was starting to look tired.

"I need to sit down a bit," she murmured. Marie was already sitting down, Archie fanning her with
one of the paper flowers. Both men were feeling uncomfortable themselves from the heat and having to stand so long. Bae drove the float over to their designated spot to wait for the first event to start which was the kissing contest.

"Our final float comes from the Charmingly Mad team and their theme is Doctor Who!" Regina announced. Fans of the show began to cheer as a version of its theme music played and the four Doctors waved to the crowd while the kids got off the float and started chasing people in the crowd.

"Exterminate! Exterminate!" Henry and Grace yelled as the Daleks, spraying their victims with silly string.

"You are not compatible. You will be deleted. Delete! Delete!" Neal and Maggie recited also spraying people with silly string.

When the last float was parked, Regina asked the crowd to vote for their favorite.

"Hope we win, Daddy," Jonny said.

"I don't know pardner…the Charming team had a darn good one and they put a lot of work into it."

"The real guy who flies around in the blue box is cuter than Uncle David's version," Adriana said dreamily. "Just don't tell Neal I said that…he'd get jealous…"

"Oh yes he was honey," Marie cooed, earning a jealous glare from her husband.

"I'd take a flight in the TARDIS with him," added Belle and now Rumple was fuming.

"I'll incinerate that thing," he muttered.

"All right ladies and gentlemen, the votes are in. In third place we have the Sherwood Outlaws. In second place, Golden Wishes. In first place, we have the Charmingly Mad team!" Regina announced.

"Whoo HOOO!" Jeff hooted and threw his arms around Emma and spun her around. David clapped him on the back.

"Congratulations Hatter, Nolan," Rumple called out. "Though would ye mind losing the coat before you're arrested for a crime of fashion!" he teased.

"Aww cut poor Sixie a break, will ya!" Jeff threw back.

"I'd like to cut that coat to shreds!"

"Will our couples please take your places in the kissing booths?" Robin called out.

Jeff linked his hand through Emma's. "Come on hon, let's give Hopper a run for the money."

"Oh you bet."

"Come on, my goddess…..time to defend our title," Archie murmured.

"Hopper's Hotter n'Hell for the win!" cheered the Scorpions.

It was the Hatters and Phillip and Aurora's first time participating in the contest, all of them knowing they would have to step up their game if they hoped to defeat the Golden Wishes team who held the title for the last four years.
Marie blocked out everything else but her husband and cupped his face in her hands. Just before her lips met his, she felt sharp pains in her abdomen, their children deciding that they were tired of staying in her womb and wanted to join the outside world.

"Ohhhhh!"

"Marie, darling what is….oooh gods….not now!" Archie clutched his belly and doubled over in the booth. "Regina….we're….going …to…have…to withdraw from…the ahhhh… dammit….contest…"

"Archie, will you help me out here…I am NOT having these babies in a goddam booth!" Marie growled.

The two of them struggled to get to their feet and clung to each other as they shuffled out of the booth. The other expectant mothers and fathers gave them sympathetic looks knowing it wouldn't be long before it was their turns to suffer.

"Are they comin'? Are AJ an Maureen comin'?" Jonny asked excitedly.

"Yes!" his parents cried painfully.

"I guess I'd better go get the car," Rumple mumbled and was nearly brought to his knees in pain and seconds later he heard Belle cry out.

"Rumple….it's time!"

"What the hell…?" he groaned. "BAELFIRE! Get t'car!"

Bae made a mad dash for the parking lot then slapped his forehead, remembering they'd driven the Happy Float to the festival. Now what was he going to do?

"We're not all gonna fit in that car and I sure as hell am not driving to the hospital myself!" Archie yelled.

"Oh calm down, cricket….you….awww hellfire….why did we have to do this again?" Rumple moaned.

Though they were in worse pain, Belle and Marie smirked at each other as did all the other mothers in Storybrooke who wished every man in the town suffered through Couvade Syndrome.

"Do….I need…to tell…you to get out the damned wheelbarrel?" Belle snapped at her husband.

"Baelfire, will you please HURRY UP!" Rumple shouted.

Bae returned out of breath. "Ummm, Papa…."

"Papa, why'd you tell Bae to get the car? We got here in the Happy Float." Adriana spoke up.

Rumple facepalmed himself. "Dearie, why did ye not say somethin' earlier?"

"Cause I forgot."

He groaned and shook his head.

Seconds later the Nolans' rocket sleigh came to a stop before the astonished couples. "Come on get in! This will get you to the hospital faster than a car!" David yelled from the driver's seat.
"Nolan, are you out of your mind….? We want to get there in one piece!" Archie protested.

Marie grabbed his shirt. "Get…in…that…sleigh…or you…will…have a date…with…the couch…for a month!" she panted.

"Are you…ahhhh….honestly going to…ohhh dammit….pull that now!?"

"I am not going to the hospital in a…yeeahh…Belle!" Rumple yelped when his wife grabbed his cane and shook it in his face.

"Unless you want me to deliver our children in the middle of the street, I suggest you get in that sleigh Rumplestiltskin!"

The families of the expecting couples climbed onto the sleigh behind them, their children excited that their new siblings would finally arrive while the mothers and fathers just wanted the agony to be over with. David braced himself knowing Snow's time was quickly approaching. The sleigh pulled up in front of the emergency room entrance in less than five minutes, several staff members standing in a nearby parking lot stunned.

"What's Nolan smoking? Whatever it is, I want some!" joked one of the volunteers.

"Hold tight and I'll get you some wheelchairs!" David cried and jumped out of the sleigh with Bae at his heels.

"HURRY UP!" yelled four impatient parents.

"Sweetheart….breathe…that's it…" Rumple coached as he held his wife's hand, linking with her to try to lessen her pain though his was just as agonizing. The beautiful babies they would hold afterwards would certainly be worth it but dammit, he was hoping it would not be so difficult this time…at least that was what he'd heard from some of the other mothers in town.

"Oooooohhhh….they're coming too fast now."

"My water just broke!" Marie called out.

"Hold on Aunt Marie, we're coming!" Bae and David were pushing two wheelchairs out to the sleigh while two orderlies followed them with two more, both of them laughing when they saw Archie and Rumple moaning and groaning with their own pains. They glared.

"Won't be laughing if this happens to you!" Rumple sneered. "That can be arranged y'know!"

"Goddammit Rumple, hex them later!" Archie barked, practically crawling into his wheelchair.

Snow had called ahead to warn them that there were two expectant mothers on the way. Dr. Jo and her staff had the delivery room prepared. The sisters insisted on being in the same room so that they and their husbands could give each other moral support. They were going to need it bringing five children into the world at the same time. The staff also had plenty of Stadol handy; having a feeling the fathers were going to need it.

While Marie was being helped into her bed, Archie glanced over at her and realized she was asleep. "Darling, why are you sleeping?" he cried.

She opened her eyes and glared at him. "Because I'm doing all the work and I need the rest!" she snapped.
Belle had dozed off in her own chair and woke up once she was in her own bed, remembering Dr. Jo's advice that taking small naps between contractions would help her keep her strength up when she finally delivered.

"Supposed….to help them….keep their strength up…when they deliver…" Rumple panted though his was dwindling rapidly.

"All right boys, let's get you into your beds," Dr. Jo said with a smirk.

"Oh no! They stay right where they are," Belle ordered. "He's not getting any drugs like last time!"

"Not unless we get them first!" Marie added.

"I'm sorry ladies…but you're too far along for that now," Dr. Jo said sadly.

"Dammit!" Belle cursed.

Two of the male nurses, feeling sympathetic to the fathers injected both of them with Stadol.

"I don't feel anything…" Archie murmured.

"Ohhh wait till it kicks in…" Rumple sang.

"You bastards!" Marie yelled.

"Men!" Belle scoffed.

"Oooo I'm feeling good now Rumple…you wanna sing…?" Archie slurried.

"Shhhurreee dearie….let's do Dialogue."

The former cricket grinned. "Y….You havta start….my voice is too high for that part…"

"Okay….."

"YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! We're having your babies and you want to sing!? That is it! Rumplestiltskin, your ass is going to feel the sting of my broom when I get my hands on it!" Belle bellowed. "Ohhhh God…..why does this have to take so long!"

"Are you optimistic 'bout the way things are going?" Rumple started singing.

"No, I never ever think of it at all…" Archie sang back, barely able to keep himself sitting up.

"Don't you ever worry
When you see what's going down?"

"You should be worried about what's going down right here!" Belle shouted as another contraction hit. "Ohhhh!"

"Breathe, Belle…that's it…" Dr. Jo encouraged.

"No, I try to mind my business, that is, no business at all…"

"Your business, cricket, is shutting the hell up over there and paying attention to your wife!" Marie snapped.
"When it's time to function as a feeling human being
Will your bachelor of arts help you get by?"

"I hope to study further, a few more years or so
I also hope to keep a steady high…ooohhh yeahh…!" Archie sang gleefully.

"Oh my God this is better than the last time Gold was in here!" one of the nurses joked.

"Knock it off!" Dr. Jo barked.

"Oh, you're gonna be high all right, Archibald Hopper when I take my broom and whack your ass to Siberia…ohhhh God!" Marie moaned.

The men passed out in their beds.

"Dammit to hell…they passed out!" Belle glared at her unconscious husband.

"Better….wake up before these kids are born or else…"

Having only each other and Dr. Jo for comfort while their husbands slept off the Stadol, Belle and Marie struggled to keep up their strength as their labor went on without progress. Finally they heard the men stir in the other beds.

"Belle, oh gods….not again!" Rumple cried. "How idiotic was I this time?"

"Will you please forget about it and help me!" she pleaded tiredly. He jumped off the bed and rushed to her side, putting his arm around her and linking with her so that his energy could sustain her.

"They're being….stubborn…"

"Like their mama and papa," he murmured. He clasped her hand in his. "Together dearie….."

Archie put one arm around his wife's shoulders and held her. "I'm right here, my goddess…"

"All right ladies, we're going to need you to push now."

The women felt their strength returning, fueled by the love of the men who sat by their side, holding their hands, whispering words of encouragement and admiration in their ears.

"Just a little while longer. You can do it sweetheart," Rumple murmured.

"I can almost see one now, my goddess. That's it….Marie."

"The heads are crowning ladies. Push!" Jo instructed. "You're almost there, Marie! One more."

Maureen Hopper was born several minutes later followed by her cousin, Robert Gold. The proud parents barely got time to celebrate the births as their second children prepared to make their entrance.

"You're almost done Marie, one more! Come on Belle, you can do it….one more big push now…" Jo encouraged.

"I'm so tired…." Belle murmured.

"One more to go sweetheart and then you can rest…" Rumple said softly, sending her more of his
energy though it was quickly tiring him.

"Archie….I can't…" Marie said weakly.

"Yes you can, darling. I'm right here with you…we'll do this together…"

"Here they are, ladies, a handsome son Marie and a beautiful daughter Belle."

"Victoria…." Belle murmured. They cut the cord and handed Belle her beautiful daughter with eyes like her own and her father's face. Then Jo brought Robert to them, their son closely resembling his father with a small impish smile on his lips.

"Archie….they're so beautiful…" Marie wept as she held her own children in her arms, both of them having their father's eyes and small patches of ginger hair.

Archie took them from her arms and cradled them against his chest. "Our little crickets…" he joked.

Rumple held his son and tickled his chin. "Oh ye're going to be a sly one like your big brother, eh my wee imp?"

"Oh…oooo….Rumple….Valora……she's ready to come out!" Belle panted. Nurses took the babies from them to weigh and measure them while Belle gave birth to her fourth child.

"Marie….we'll need to deliver the afterbirth now," one of the nurses said to her while Dr. Jo assisted Belle.

Archie turned his back as he held his children. "Just…tell me when it's over," he gulped, recalling how nauseating the sight had been to him the first time with Jonny.

"This is it Belle…the last one….the last time….it's time to come home Valora," Rumple encouraged.

Ten minutes later Valora Gold made her own entrance. She, like her siblings had inherited their mother's azure eyes and their father's facial features. All of the babies were slightly smaller which was expected with multiple births but healthy.

"Congratulations!"

Jo snapped pictures of both couples holding their children in their arms, once again all of the pain and discomfort they'd endured in the months leading up to the births well worth it indeed. These would be the last children they would bring into the world and it was their hope that they like their other children, would help make it a better place for future generations. The arrival of five bundles of joy was the perfect start to what promised to be a wonderful summer.
A Long Way Down The Holiday Road

Chapter Summary

We learn what powers the new Gold and Hopper children have inherited and some funny things occur prior to the trip to Greece. We also meet some new but familiar characters.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

2
~ A Long Way Down The Holiday Road ~

I found out long ago
It's a long way down the holiday road…

Lindsey Buckingham – Holiday Road

A week before everyone was to depart for Greece Rumple was able to get in touch with an airline company that had private planes for hire. It was the name of the company that caught his eye: Neverland Airways. Year after year they were encountering more ex-patriots of the Enchanted Forest, all of them adjusting rather well in this new world of theirs. Most of them lived in Storybrooke but others settled in cities nearby, namely Boston and Portland. Even some of the Storybrooke residents decided to leave the town and settle elsewhere. Regina and Rumple pulled their resources together and set up an organization those who wanted to relocate, providing funds and getting them in touch with real estate agents in those areas to purchase their new homes at reasonable prices. Word got around that it was not wise to try to fleece anyone who had Rumplestiltskin Gold representing them. He’d been forced to fly out to several areas to inspect the homes for himself and sued quite a few real estate agencies for false advertising.

He’d also finally given in to some of Belle’s requests regarding the house, finding out quickly that some remodeling and add-ons needed to be done now that there were three more children in the house and eventually they would want their own rooms. He also had at least dozen living stuffed bears who were now demanding their own living quarters since they were animated all the time now. Work would begin on the expansions to the Victorian while they were in Europe.

Along with the home expansion and plans for their trip, he was also trying to adjust to having three babies waking him up in the middle of the night not one. Like their older sister, Victoria and Valora had screeches like banshees when they were in a snit, often drowning out their brother’s small cries and only Rumple and Bae could calm their furies while Belle and Adriana had more success with Bobby. He was the quiet one of the three, much like his father had been when he was a child. The couple thanked their lucky stars for Mary Poppins, Granny and Bae and his friends who all pitched in to help the Golds and the Hoppers with their new arrivals. Ruby would also volunteer to babysit when she wasn’t out with one of her boyfriends.
Because there were so many infants accompanying them on their trip, the Scorpions, Granny, Geppetto, August and Ruby had all been asked to accompany them to help out. August had no experience with children but he was learning quickly in the Gold and Hopper households. Belle had nearly taken the broom to his backside and Rumple had been tempted to give him the crabs when she asked August to change Bobby’s soiled diaper while she worked on dinner and discovered he’d forgotten about it and started watching something on TV. Bobby ended up getting a nasty case of diaper rash that made him irritable for days.

“Booth! Ye cannae let a baby sit around in soiled drawers!’ Rumple scolded when he arrived home that day. “When he needs changed he needs changed immediately not later! That’s why his bottom is sore. Lad, if ye’re gonna have wee ones of your own, ye have t’learn these things.”

His experience at the Hopper house was just as insane. They’d asked August to spend the day at the house helping Marie take care of the kids while Archie was at the office. While she was upstairs taking a bath, August had to change Maureen and AJ but he was too engrossed in a movie he was watching to take them upstairs to the nursery and used the sofa instead, forgetting to put a liner on it and both of them soiled it with urine and faces.

“You got poop and pee all over the couch. I’m telling! MOOOOOOMMMYYYY!” Jonny yelled and ran upstairs to fetch his mother.

To say that Marie was furious when she came downstairs was an understatement and Archie was even angrier when he walked in.

“What is going on in here?” he demanded when he saw August trying to scrub the filth off the couch with a brush and a bucket of soapy water while Marie stood over him with the broom in her hands and their son was laughing hysterically.

“August didn’t put one of those papers down while he was changin’ Maureen and AJ and AJ pooped on the couch and Maureen peed on it,” their son announced with a smirk.

“Thanks a LOT, Jonny!” August grumbled.

Archie sighed. “Next time will you please take them upstairs?”

“I dunno how the hell you guys do it…have kids….this is hard work,” the writer complained.

“Hah! Trying giving birth to one!” Marie retorted.

Regina made a joke when they were all at the Mills Mansion for dinner one night that they needed to open a nanny school for men.

“Why when they can get all the training they need in our houses?” Robin said with a laugh.

“Rumple, when are you going to talk to those people at Neverland Airways?” David asked.

“I have a meeting with them tomorrow.”

“Do you think they’re from our world?”

“It’s possible Snow but I’m going to exercise caution just in case.”

“That’s gonna be a long flight….fourteen hours!” Jeff groaned.

“And a time adjustment…they’re waaay ahead of us,” Emma added.
“We slept most of our first day in Greece and our first day back home to get our bodies to readjust to the time difference,” Archie said. “But once you get there…that county has some of the most beautiful landmarks you’ve ever seen,” Archie told them. “And we’re renewing our vows in one of them,” Marie murmured.

“I knew the moment I saw the video you took of the Fontana Di Trevini that it was where I wanted to renew ours,” Belle said softly.

Regina breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank the gods you found a solution to our issue with the children, Rumple. If we didn’t put those charms on them, they would be causing magical chaos all over the globe.”

Jeff chuckled. “Yeah, especially our resident weather witch.”

“I knew Maureen was going to have some kind of talent but Jesus, Rumple did it have to be that one?” Archie groaned. “And why did it develop so soon when Jonny’s didn’t until he was three?”

“Sometimes that happens. If you remember, Adriana began displaying her abilities shortly after she was born. And also keep in mind your children have a strong earth connection because you were once a cricket. So this time your daughter can manipulate the weather based on her emotions and your son can commune with the land itself. Now, my three…..they’re going to be keepin’ my on my toes as much as their sister does but they haven’t started showing theirs yet. They will soon enough.”

“Still it was funny as hell seeing a hailstorm on Hopper’s house and nowhere else,” Robin laughed. Archie glared at him.

They all started laughing remembering that day.

Maureen Hopper had inherited the Bordreaux temper in spades and it was evident from the moment her parents brought her home from the hospital. She was the most difficult to get to go to sleep and kept her parents up most of the night trying to quiet her down. She was also colicky, far worse than Jonny and Gisella had been. Like the Golds’ son, AJ was the calmer one of the two and most of the time all it took was half an hour in the rocking chair to get him to go sleep. Everyone was at a loss as to what caused the ‘Hailstorm Incident’.

Maureen awoke at two AM that morning screaming, bringing both of her exhausted parents into the nursery. They tried everything in their arsenal to calm her down, walking her, singing to her, even bringing in Majors Archie and Marie but nothing was working. She was still screaming at nine AM and both of them were ready to pass out. Gisella even tried to calm her so that her parents could get some rest but that didn’t work either. She finally went to sleep around noon. By that time Granny arrived to help out for the day while Mary was over at the Gold house. She sent Archie and Marie to bed to get some much needed rest and they were awakened two hours later hearing something pounding on the roof.

“Daddy, it’s rainin’ iceballs!” Jonny exclaimed when he ran into the room. “Somebody musta made Elsa mad.”

Any incidents having to do with ice or snow in any other season but winter made the former Queen of Arendale the prime suspect. She too was now living in Storybrooke under the name Elsa Frost and was now the new darling of the figure skating world.

Marie and Archie jumped out of bed and ran outside and indeed there was hail falling only their house was the only one under bombardment.
“Holy hell Hopper! What’d you do to piss off Rumple or Elsa?” David asked him.

“Not a damn thing!” he cried, his umbrella barely protecting them from the shower of ice. He pulled out his phone and punched in Rumple’s number. “Look I don’t know what the hell you think I did but TURN OFF THIS DAMN HAILSTORM!” he shouted.

“What?”

“Turn up your hearing aid! I’m having a hailstorm on my goddamn house and I don’t remember doing anything to you or Elsa to deserve it so TURN IT OFF!”

Rumple teleported to the Dutch Colonial.

“Th….That’s not my magic,” he murmured. “But…let’s see who you belong to, shall we?”

He grabbed one of the ice pellets in his hand and cast a tracer spell on it. Rumple, Archie and Marie followed it as it floated to their front door and upstairs to the nursery where Maureen lay in her crib screaming.

“Amazing!” the sorcerer exclaimed. “There hasn’t been a weather mage in our world for centuries!”

Archie picked the baby up and the storm suddenly stopped. “Maureen did this?”

“You certainly did, didn’t you, little cricket?” Rumple murmured, ticking her chin. She grinned at them.

Everyone discovered what AJ Hopper’s talent was one day while his father was taking him for a walk in the stroller. Archie stopped to talk to Barbara Tillman while she was outside in her garden, disappointed because the heat wave was killing her tomato and pepper plants and while they were discussing fertilizers, AJ woke up and started crying. Archie picked him up while he was sitting in the grass examining a tomato plant. Little AJ reached out and barely touched one of the leaves and the plant suddenly healed itself as did the rest of the plants in Barbara’s garden.

“He’s got quite the green thumb eh, Doctor Hopper,” she said softly.

“It looks that way,” he murmured.

“…I don’t think I wanna know what this kid’s gonna be able to do,” Emma mumbled. “I can barely keep up with Maggie!”

“Still, look at what our lives are now compared to then…cursed and sometimes at each other’s throats,” Jeff reminded them all.

They nodded in agreement.

Early the next morning Rumple drove to Boston to speak with the owners of Neverland Airways. The moment he stepped out of the car he felt a strong magical presence in the area and was comforted by it. When he walked into the building a young woman was sitting behind a desk typing on a laptop. She looked up at him and smiled.

“Hello Rumplestiltskin,” she greeted warmly and held out her hand. “I’m Wendy Darling, Mr. Pan’s assistant. He’s expecting you.”

“Perfect.”

Peter Pan was a slender blond haired man in his early thirties. He rose from his desk and shook
hands with the sorcerer. “Welcome to Neverland Airways, Rumplestiltskin. You may speak freely here.”

It was a code phrase he and Regina devised to determine if people they encountered were from their land or not, passed on by word of mouth and through social media.

“When did you leave Neverland?”

“Three years ago. I left it in the hands of a young boy who will treat everyone well. Though I loved being there, I’d heard so much about life in this world and I thought I could be useful to those who live here. It was odd. One moment I was still a ten year old but the moment I crossed through the doorway I aged twenty years. I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do but I’d heard about how some of you decided to continue your cursed professions and I thought an airline pilot would suit me. Fortunately I was able to find two other people to help me and the Darlings run it.”

“Who else is running it with you?”

“Tinkerbell and Sparrowhawk.”

“Oh, wise choices. I know them both well. Tinkerbell may be amused to learn that the Rhuel Gorm is now a dancer in a strip club.”

Peter laughed. “Oh, she will be! She’s wanted to tear the wings off that jellyfish ever since Blue cast her out. Payback’s a bitch, isn’t it?”

“It is indeed.”

“I also heard that congratulations are in order again. You’ve got quite a brood now, Rumple.”

“Yes, but my eldest graduates next year. I am not ready for that.”

“Wendy and I have been trying for two years but the gods have not been kind,” the pilot confessed sadly.

“Perhaps a visit to Ninia is in order?” Rumple suggested.

“We’ve been thinking about it, having heard of the blessings she bestowed on you and your brother-in-law.”

“Also, remember, dearie, your children will be conceived in true love and will inherit the gifts but they may be different from yours. And my wife and I understand how you feel better than anyone. For a time we believed Belle would not be able to have children.”

“We’ve gone to doctors here and they can’t find anything wrong with either one of us.”

“Have you seen doctors from our land?”

He shook his head.

Rumple took Dr. Jo’s card out of his wallet and handed it to Peter. “Give her a call. She’s been wonderful with our families and I’m sure she’ll be able to give you the solution you need but there is also the option of seeing Ninia.”

“Thank you. Now, what can we do for you?”

“There’s a group of us going to Greece and Italy for the summer. We were going to fly on a
commercial airline but it will be risky because of our children being mages. We’ve given them something to wear that will limit their abilities but I would feel more comfortable using a private service, especially one from our world.”

“Understandable. And the flight to Greece on a commercial airline is fourteen hours. Our planes can make the trip in far less time from the enchantments we placed on them and we have wards on them that protect our passengers against the issues that occur on flights these days…terrorist attacks, bad weather, illness outbreaks and equipment failures.”

“My niece is a weather mage. Those wards will come in handy then.”

Peter’s eyes widened. “There hasn’t been one of those in centuries!”

“All of the children have numerous abilities. My wee one, Adriana, animated a whole army of stuffed bears and those Minions from Despicable Me that she insisted we take along. Plus Archie’s son has the dogs, two snakes and two crickets…we’re taking our dog and Regina’s brood has a frog and a poodle.”

Peter burst out laughing. “Oh so that’s who let all those animals loose in the Portland Mall before Christmas!”

Rumple sighed. “Yes, unfortunately. What a mess that was! Regina’s girl wanted to burn it down and Snow’s boy wrecked Bon Ton.”

“How the hell is your hair not white yet?”

“It’s getting there.”

They talked a bit more about the fees Peter would charge them for the flights to the two countries and the return flight home and then he took the sorcerer out to the hangar to look at the planes so that he could decide which one he wanted to take. Tinkerbell and Sparrowhawk were making repairs to one of them when Peter asked them to stop and talk.

“You don’t need to worry about a thing Rumple. Me and Tink will give you a smooth flight,” Sparrowhawk vowed.

“Peter’s told me of some of the wards you’ve placed on the planes. I’m pleased to see you’re keeping up with your magic and so would Oigon.”

“I would not be the wizard I am today were it not for him,” Sparrowhawk said wistfully.

Rumple glanced at the other mage’s upper arm and noticed a tattoo of the late wizard on his skin with his name underneath it.

“I am told in this land some mark their skin in honor of someone they loved dearly and this is how I chose to honor my master. Would he be pleased, Rumple?”

“I believe so.”

“The only tattoo I would get is an image of Blue with a bullseye over it,” Tink growled.

Rumple giggled. “She’s fallen very far from grace, dearie. She now works in a strip club in Storybrooke.”

The former fairy threw back her head and laughed hysterically. “Oh, that is the best damn news I’ve
“Well, let’s give you the grand tour of our babies here and you can pick which one you want to use,” Sparrowhawk said. The company had twelve jets, all of them with interiors that would put the ones owned by the rich and famous to shame. They truly were homes in the air including full bathrooms and kitchens.

“Since you have three expectant mothers on board and babies, we’re going to do some modifications to provide them with the maximum comfort,” Tink was saying. “All of the seats convert into beds that can fit two so the couples will not have to sleep apart,” she went on and demonstrated how to operate them.

“How long will the flight be?”

“We can shave seven hours off the flight time at the maximum,” Sparrowhawk answered. “We’ve tested it at higher speeds and ran into complications during other flights.”

“Seven hours is still good,” Rumple said.

The rest of the week the families were busy getting ready for the trip. Adriana was still upset that the Happy Army bears and Minions were forbidden to be animated around anyone except the family and had to stay toy size during the trip but she knew what the risks were if outsiders saw them and she and the other kids warned the army not to disobey orders while they were away.

Regina, Snow and Emma had one more checkup with Dr. Jo to make sure their pregnancies were progressing normally and she would call to check up on them during the trip. Regina was worried what would happen if she gave birth in a regular hospital as was Snow but Jo assured them there wouldn’t be any magical incidents as long as they wore their bracelets.

Emma appointed Arthur Pendragon acting sheriff in her place and Uther was acting mayor in Regina’s absence. The two women had every confidence the Pendragon men could keep town in order while they were gone.

The night before they were supposed to leave, all of the parents had a difficult time trying to get the children to go to sleep because they were all excited about going on a trip. Everyone stayed over at Rumple’s house for the night, the older children sleeping outside in tents with the Happy Army and Minions as well as Ruby, August and Scorpions standing guard along with powerful wards cast by Rumple, Emma and Regina. All of their belongings had been picked up by John and Michael Darling the day before and loaded onto the jet and limousines would pick them up at the Victorian at 9AM.

At seven AM Rumple strode out into the yard. “Everybody uuuuuupppp!” he called out.

Groans could be heard inside the tents.

“Awww come on, Papa…gimme five more minutes!” Bae protested.

“Papa m’tired,” Adriana whined.

Archie crawled into his childrens’ tent. “Rise and shine it’s another beautiful day!” he sang.

Gisella threw her pillow over her head as her mother did when she didn’t want to get up early.

Jonny sat up, his blue eyes sparkling with excitement. “M’ready Daddy!”
“Roland, Ellie, Jason…come on…let’s get going!” Robin ordered his children.

“Okay,” they grumbled and crawled out of the tent.

“Henry, Gracie, Maggie……the portal’s closin’…get a move on!” Jeff yanked the covers off his children to wake them. They jumped up and ran out of their tent.

Bobby, Ewan, Kat and Andi came out of the remaining two tents and when they noticed that their friend still wasn’t awake they decided to invoke an old gang custom that their deceased leader would be proud of.

“This one’s for you, Dickie!” they declared and joined hands. “Hope you have a good laugh over it up there! Okay gang, let’s sting him good!”

The five gang members gathered around the tent. “Okay, Shadow….do it!”

Nicknamed Shadow for a very good reason, Kat crept into the tent and yanked the covers off and threw them outside trying not to laugh when she saw the Scooby Doo pajama pants her friend was wearing. She snapped a picture of them on her phone before she yanked them off and ran outside, tossing them at Andi. Ewan crawled in and grabbed the backpack with the clothes Bae planned to wear that day.

“So…Bae, why you wearin’ smilie undies?’ Roland asked.

“And Scooby Doo jammies?” Jason teased.

“I think his undies are cute,” Adriana huffed.

“Yeah, but guys don’t wear that,” Neal said.

“Oookay gang…new tradition! We’re gonna start giving everybody ugly underwear and pajamas for their birthday!” Jeff declared.

The other members of the Mad Crew wore identical smirks.

“Oh great,” Belle moaned.

Several people drove by, beeped their horns, pointed at the flagpole and started laughing. “Looks like someone’s been watchin’ Meatballs!” one of them called out.

“Hey don’t be knockin’ the school of classic comedy,” Becky threw back, and winked at Ewan. They were already planning on pulling the bed on the lake prank on someone the next time they were at the cabins.

“Wonder if they have a Spencers in Greece,” Emma mused.
“I think I already got an idea for Belle,” Regina said and whispered in her friend’s ear. “I want to give Belle a set saying Someday My Prince Will Come---When I’m Old and Gray and Lost All My Marbles…with a picture of Cinderella scrubbing the floor.”

Emma started laughing. “Hey if we can’t find em….you think you can make ‘em?”

“Yes.”

“She’s gonna flip her lid.”

“Okay where’s my clothes guys?” Bae demanded of his friends.

“Yeah cover those up before we all die laughing!” David teased.

“Remember when Dickie did that to Mikey?” Andi asked Bae.

“Yeah. I bet he’s up there laughin his ass over it.”

“Ummm Daddy, you got no room to laugh cause you got those undies with flamingos on em.” Neal spoke up.

All heads turned in his direction.

“F….Flamingos!” Archie exclaimed and doubled over laughing.

“They were the only pair in my size and I bought them while we were visiting Universal, okay!”

“Liar, liar pants on fire,” Snow sang. “You bought them because you liked them but I said they made you look ridiculous.”

“And….Rumple….you have that Harry Potter pair…” Belle reminded her husband with a grin.

“Robin, honey….cupids bows and hearts…..” Regina added. Her husband groaned.

“Oh my GOD! I wouldn’t be caught DEAD in those!” Jeff exclaimed.

“You should talk, Hatter. You want me to get out that picture of you in the red hot chili pepper ones?” Emma threatened.

“NO!”

“I think MY husband has the best ones,” Marie cooed.

“Who’s he got on ‘em? Jiminy Cricket?”


“And signed on the butt!” piped up Johnny.

“Thank you very much for that little tidbit John Wayne Hopper,” his father muttered.

Rumple started giggling. "Dearie, there is nothing sacred with a toddler in the house."

"So I've noticed."

"It's a conspiracy, I tell ya. Women don't have ugly underwear!” Jeff protested.
"Ohhh you haven't seen the horrors I have, Hatter....like the thongs that go so far up that you need a crane to dig them out." Marie blanched. "And the ones that have a certain part cut out.....might as well not even bother."

"Marie, must we get into that!" Archie cried.

"You ain't seen nothin' till you've grabbed the Nazi dominatrix drawers outta Miss Blue's closet!" Andi snorted.

"Are you serious?" Emma asked.

"Yeah I almost lost my supper when I saw those," Bae agreed. "And how about Miss Harridan's? They were so ugly I was almost struck blind!"

"Did she have granny panties?" Roland inquired.

"Worse! She had ones Granny wouldn't have been caught dead in!" Andi whooped.

"I should hope not!" Granny protested.

Rumple frowned at his son. "An' d'ye mind tellin' me just HOW ye know this, Baelfire?"

"I think we know how. They put them all over the school, Rumple," Archie reminded them.

"Well they both deserved it, especially that Blue bitch for writing filthy things about our husbands!" Belle hissed.

Rumple shuddered. "Please, don't remind me dearie! I think I'm scarred for life reading that--that trash! It was worse than 50 Shades!"

"I almost threw up my insides after reading three pages," Archie grimaced at the memory.

"You made it that far? I got to page two before I wanted to vomit up my sausage egg and cheese sandwich," his brother-in-law said sympathetically.

"Oh no...I started getting sick after the first three sentences...but my name wasn't mentioned until the third page."

"That nasty blue bug made Papa an' Uncle Archie sick?" Adriana growled. "I oughta whack her with the Super Duper Flyswatter!" A very large plastic flyswatter with the words Bug Terminator appeared with a pop.

"Ha ha...good one Driana," Ellie giggled. "I coulda roasted her like a weenie."

"Barbecued beetle!" hooted Jason.

Regina shook her head.

Bae cracked up. "I could just see Rumplette chasing Blue around the classroom with that! I'd bust a gut laughing."

"Yeah and she'd git her good," Neal said and put his arm around her.

"Yeah, 'cause no nasty bug's gonna make my papa sick! I'll beat her butt!"

"She's a Bordreaux woman for certain," declared Maurice.
"I'm surrounded by them," Rumple snickered. "I have an army of little Amazons."

"I have Mother Nature in my house, how do you think I feel?" demanded his brother-in-law.

"Like Father Time?" joked Jeff.

"Hurricane Maureen," Gisella laughed.

"Better watch Uncle Jeff or she's gonna make it rain on you," Jonny warned.

Seconds later a cloud appeared over Jeff's head.

Maureen Hopper's lips curved into a sly smirk from her bassinet.

Jeff backpedaled hastily. "Hey, can't ya take a joke? Emma, where's the umbrella?"

"You mean this one?" she asked and tossed it to Archie.

"Man, am I glad none of my sisters can do that," Bae muttered. "And just wait till she's older and gets--oww!" he yelped as Andi poked him in the ribs.

"You were saying, Baelfire?" she queried with a sharp glare.

The cloud moved in Bae's direction.

"Nothing, honey," he drawled.

"Maureen, enough," her mother commanded firmly.

"So Rumple, do you know what your kids' powers are yet?" David quizzed.

"Besides the power t'drive me crazy?" the sorcerer quipped.

"Yeah. Archie's kids have theirs already...."

"Well, they've begun to show a few distinct auras. Valora here is my mind mage--she's a telepath and telekinetic, as near as I can determine. I can always feel her in my head. And she can always sense me or Belle or her sister and brother. I think as she grows older that circle will expand to include Adriana and Bae."

"And of course remember the scare we had when we saw Bobby start to grow white hair!" Belle cried.

"What?" Snow exclaimed.

"Aye and next thing we knew we had a white and gold kitten in the crib," Rumple related. "He's a wee beastie. A shifter and he can speak to felines."

"Cool!" Jonny was excited. "An I can talk to him cause he's part animal, right?"

"He's a mage who can become cat," Rumple corrected. "'Tis a wee bit different, lad, but yes, when he's a kitten ye can speak with him."

"Good!"

"What does Victoria do?" Regina inquired.
"She's a kinesthetic," Rumple replied. "You know what that is, right? It's another of the rare gifts."

"And a dangerous one if not controlled."

"Aye, and I'll be working on it with her," Rumple agreed.

"So what is it?" Emma asked.

"She's an energy absorber, dearie. Meaning she can absorb energy from any magical or non-magical thing--and transmute it into heat and light and . . . make explosions if she needs to."

"In other words she's a human bomber," joked Henry.

"The kinesthetics were war mages back in our homeland," Regina recalled. "And they were some of the most feared mages anywhere. They could absorb any spell thrown at them . . . and then kill you with it."

"Wow....Daddy do you think our new brother or sister will be like that?" Grace asked her father.

"Doubtful."

"Each child manifests True Love magic differently," Rumple explained. "You can't predict what will be given until the baby is born and starts showing an aura."

"Yeah but we're still all cool, right Papa?" Adriana asked.

"Yes, mo astor. All of my wee ones are special."

"Our kids oughta be a riot...sticky fingers," Andi teased.

Bae groaned. "Great, hon! We're gonna be the only parents whose preschooler gets arrested for picking pockets!"

"Mine will be a master chef," declared Kat.

"We'd better eat and get dressed before our rides get here," Belle reminded them.

"Yeah. Guys--my clothes!" Bae ordered.

Ewan tossed the backpack at him.

"Thanks, bro." He caught the backpack and went inside the house to change.

Rumple and Archie made a buffet style breakfast for the group and set up on the front lawn while the mother's helped the kids dress. They had everything cleaned up and everyone was finally ready ten minutes before the vehicles arrived to take them to Neverland Airways. At the airport, Tink and Sparrowhawk were doing their final equipment checks while Peter held a meeting with the flight attendants, all of them former Lost Boys.

"Are we really gonna fly in that big bird, Papa?" Adriana asked, her eyes wide with wonder as she stared at the large jet.

"We certainly are, mo astor."

"I can't wait to get there so we can see Sandro, Kyria and Sophie," Gisella told her father.
“Neither can I, Princess,” Archie agreed, smiling as he recalled the wonderful time his family had in Greece during his honeymoon five years earlier.

“And I cannot wait until our second wedding night because we have a lot of lost time to catch up on,” Marie whispered in his ear and winked at her sister.

“I just can’t wait to see the place,” Emma said.

“Welcome aboard!” one of the flight attendants greeted the group.

“Whoa! They got a TV!” Maggie exclaimed.

“Good. I wanna watch Maleficent,” Ellie declared.

Maggie rolled her eyes. “You ALWAYS wanna watch that an you never let anybody else watch something else first. I don’t wanna watch it all the time!”

“Well I do so why don’cha just shut your trap.”

“You wanna fight?” The little girl faced her rival, her fist raised in defiance. “I’ll knock your teeth down your throat!”

“Oh yeah? I’ll fry your hair!”

“Eleanor May!” Regina yelled.

“Margaret Eva Hatter, you stop this right now!” Emma pulled her daughter back while Regina grabbed Ellie. The two little girls tried to break free from their mothers’ grasps.

“Maggie’s gonna kick Ellie’s butt,” Neal bragged. Roland and Jason glared at him.

“Not if she’s toast!” Jason taunted.

“Neal Leopold Nolan, do you want to spend some time in the corner?” David demanded of his son.

“Same goes for you two. Don’t egg it on!” Robin warned his.

Five infants started screaming in protest after being woken from their naps, earning angry glares from their parents at the Nolans, Hoods and Hatters.

“There will be no more fighting on this plane or you will not just be spending time in the corner, there’ll be no TV watching or playing your games, either. Am I understood?” Regina asked her children.

“Ellie and Maggie act just like Mom and Regina did before the curse was broken,” Grace whispered to Henry. He nodded in agreement,

“Yeah and that’s what worries me. I hope they grow out of it or they’re gonna make the town a warzone when they get older.”

Emma scolded her daughter while Snow scolded her son and all of the parents made the children apologize to each other and shake hands before they put them in a five minute time out.

After they got the twins and triplets back to sleep Rumple and Belle started reading the new books they’d purchased while Adriana played Cafeland on her father’s tablet. Bae and his friends challenged Robin, Maurice, August and Jeff to a game of poker with candy bars as the wager at
Emma’s request. He hadn’t gambled with money in months much to her relief. She was catching up on episodes of CSI on her tablet while her mother and Granny were working on new baby blankets for everyone. David, Geppetto and Ruby were watching The Kingsman on the second big screen TV while the children were watching Shrek 2 on the other one with Regina. Gisella and Archie worked on one of her jigsaw puzzles while Marie helped her son play Monster Buster on her tablet. The smaller children fell asleep three hours into the flight, the adults an hour later.

Athens, Greece

“Are they here yet Daddy?” Kyria Palakas asked her father impatiently.

Alessandro glanced down at his phone. “Not yet honey. Archie said he’d send me a text when they arrive.”

“I still can’t believe we’re actually going to see them….fairy tale characters that are real,” Sophia said. “I’m still getting used to the fact that Archie is Jiminy Cricket and we’ve known that for years.”

“Remember Sophie, we can’t talk about it in public because they’d be surrounded by idiots who would make them look like freaks in a show.”

“No and this is a strange land for all of them except the Hoppers and we want to make a good impression. And it’s so sweet that we’re actually going to see what Archie and Marie’s mythology wedding was like.”

“It’ll be more special because they’re having the second ceremony here.”

“D’ya think Adriana’s gonna bring the bears like the one she sent me?”

“I think so but they’re not going to be animated all the time. Her father insisted on it.”

Kyria’s face fell.

Alessando’s phone beeped with a text. “Sophie! They’ve just landed at the airport!”

“C’mon, Daddy! We gotta go out there and meet them!” Kyria grabbed her father’s arm and nearly dragged him out of his office. Several of the bellhops started laughing.

“All right everyone….we’ve got a large group of guests checking in and I want everything to run smoothly, understand?” Alessandro ordered.

“Yes, sir.”

The family raced out to their car, ready to give the Enchanted Forest group a welcome party they would never forget.

Chapter End Notes

Sparrowhawk is a character from another well-known fantasy series. Which one is it?
The Palakas family first appears in Chapter 12 of True Love Conquers All, the Unexpected Saga Book III.
Chapter Summary

The families finally arrive in Greece with some funny and sweet moments for all of them.

Jon and Michael woke everyone up an hour before the plane landed. Belle, Rumple, Archie and Marie were changing and dressing the babies while everyone else ate dinner. Adriana stood beside her parents, watching them work, hoping to learn how to change and dress her younger siblings herself.

"It's not hard, Driana. They taught me how to change you and I wasn't much older than you," Gisella said.

"Make sure the diaper is actually on them before you let them loose. I about laughed my butt off when we were driving down the street doing our random patrol and seeing Bae and the gang chasing a little streaker," Emma teased. "And now that we know where she gets it from..."

"Ha ha, very funny dearie," Rumple grumbled.

"I didn't expect her to be able to run that fast," Bae exclaimed.

"I didn't streak!" Adriana protested.

"Yeah you did, Rumplette. The whole neighborhood saw."

They could hear laughing from the case where the Happy Army was kept. Adriana scowled at her plush friends. "Not funny! I didn't streak...did I?"

"Ye certainly did dearie," answered Major Rumple.

The toddler groaned.

"I don't streak!" Ellie declared imperiously. Her two brothers looked at her and smirked.

"You wanna tell her about the time she threw her diaper at Daddy?" Roland asked Jason.

"I did NOT!"

"You did too and you peed on him when he picked ya up to try to put it back on!"

"Ha ha! Little Miss Ellie Prissy peed on her daddy!" Maggie taunted.

"You keep it up Rag Mag an I'm gonna make ya toast!" Ellie threatened, getting in the other girl's face.

Maggie raised her fist. "Ha! You always say you're gonna make us toast 'cause I'd whup your butt in a real fight!"

"Oh yeah? You wanna find out?"
"Bring it, Prissy!"

"That's enough Ellie or you are going to be spending the rest of this vacation in the corner!" Robin barked. "But for now you have five minutes. Get going!"

"And the same goes for you, Margaret Eva Hatter. Corner. Now!"

"They're worse than we were," Regina sighed to Emma. "I don't understand it."

"Hopefully they'll grow out of it or the town's going to be a warzone when they get older."

Jeff and Robin called the two girls out of the corners and ordered them to shake hands and apologize to each other before they went their separate ways.

"What they need to bring about a truce is the same thing that united the two of you, Regina. Fighting a common enemy. It will allow them to refocus all that energy in a more positive direction," Rumple said.

"The trouble is....I don't want any trouble in town, not when it's been so peaceful all these years," Regina confessed.

"For the most part. We still have people coming over from the Forest causing trouble like those damned Phillips boys, the drunks down at the Rabbit Hole and the Lolly Pot Guild," Emma added, referring to a crew of pot dealers. She'd already arrested one of them thanks to Rumple but the others were getting better at hiding their cash crop and there was a consensus among the mage community that they were being helped by a rogue mage.

"We can smoke em out, right guys?" Bae offered.

"You bet. Our inside guys used to mess with the Dogs' stash all the time," Ewan added.

Rumple almost passed out. "Baelfire! You did drugs?"

"Hell no, Papa...but we torched a few of their growing spots."

Rumple breathed again. "Because if you did I would seriously have to beat ye."

"I did, anyway," bragged Fury.

"Drugs!?" Archie exclaimed.

"Nope, torched a pot field."

"I can torch a field!" Ellie exclaimed. "Whatcha want burnt?"

"You're not burning anything Eleanor May," her mother said sternly.

"Aww, but Moommy!"

"This is a matter for the adults, honey."

The little girl scowled. "I never get to do anything fun! Like blow stuff up! Like in the movies!"

"That's because you aren't thinking about how you could seriously injure someone. Your gift is not one I want used to harm anyone Eleanor. I mean it."
"All magic comes with a price, dearie," Rumple warned. "And ones with your gift comes with the highest price of all. Someday I'll tell you the story of Esmerelda the Fire Mistress."

"The perfect example, Rumple. Thank you. I've been going crazy trying to think of something to tell her to drill the lesson into her head."

"We'll need to be careful with Victoria too, Rumple since her powers are as dangerous as Ellie's," Belle pointed out.

"Aye, I know, dearie. Especially since over here there is no War Mage Guild where those with the martial Gifts went to be trained properly. But we'll make do, like we always have."

"That reminds me Rumple, we should have a mage council," regina said.

He nodded. "Yes, I was thinking the same. With so many of our children being Gifted and others coming over from the old realm, we need one to police ourselves and set down rules for the use of magic."

"Will you serve as Elder? You're the oldest and strongest?"

"I will," he agreed. "And you are my Warden." That was his second.

She smiled.

"Mr. Gold, there's a group of people waiting outside for you..." Jon Darling informed them.

"It's Sandro, Sophie and Kyria!" Gisella exclaimed.

"Let's go then. I think the welcoming committee has arrived."

"Let us go first Rumple since they know who we are," Archie suggested.

"Right, dearie. Go on." he waved his brother-in-law and his family forward.

The Palakas family plus one, Alessandro's mother Penelope stood on the runway holding up a sign the family made saying Welcome To Greece written in Greek as well as in English. Penelope, a mythology and history professor was excited to meet this group of people from another world. Some would have been surprised by her willingness to accept such a truth so easily but she'd always been an open minded person.

"Oh my goodness what a brood you have now!" Sophia greeted Marie and hugged her.

"We've always wanted two of each child and we got our wish."

"And we finally get to meet the little cowboy. How are you, Jonny?" Alessandro sand and kneeled down to shake his hand.

"M'good. Pleased ta meet'cha."

Gisella hugged Kyria. "Now you really look like Archie," Kyria whispered to her. "Is it some kind of magic?"

Gisella nodded. "My uncle told me a while ago it was. I guess he said it's a kinda true love magic where Mommy, Daddy and I all had the same wish that I'd be theirs and it started right after daddy had my birth certificate changed."
"Cool!"

"These two are adorable. Do they have special gifts like Jonny?" Sophie inquired.

"Yes. AJ is a nature mage and Maureen can manipulate the weather." Marie answered.

"Well, let's meet the rest of your family. Come on Mum," Alessandro said.

Archie led his friends over to the rest of the group, bringing them to the Golds first.

"Sandro, this is my brother-in-law, Rumple, his wife Belle and their kids, Bae, Adriana, Victoria, Bobby and Valora," Archie introduced them.

Belle gazed at the Greek man in fascination. "My . . .he looks positively . . ." she began.

"Oh did I forget to mention that," Marie giggled.

"Belle!" Rumple hissed. "I'm right here, dearie!"

"He gets that all the time," Sophia laughed. "I've even had women ask him for his autograph."

"What's the big deal, mama?" Adriana demanded.

"He looks like Ben Barnes," Belle answered dreamily.

"Oh yes he does," Ruby muttered from behind her. "I could slap Marie...holding out on us like that!"

"Who's Ben Barnes?" Adriana pressed.

"He's a movie star," Bae replied. "And all the girls love him. Right, Andi?"

"Oh yeah...I about died during that scene in Prince Caspian when he rescued Susan..."

"Tell me about it. You only rewound it TEN times!" her boyfriend groaned.

"And the kiss...oooh I would've held on a bit longer..."

"One of these days, milady duchess, I'm gonna pick you up on the back of my horse and kiss you till you faint in my arms," Bae challenged.

"Oh please do...."

"Gotta borrow a horse first."

Penelope approached Rumple with a smile. "At last I get to meet an actual wizard...."

He bowed and took her hand and kissed it. "Charmed, dearie. Rumplestiltskin Gold, at your service."

"Penelope Palakas," the older woman said and blushed.

Belle wanted her broom.

Rumple smiled. "I'm glad that our being magicians doesn't disconcert you, Penelope. Most people are . . .uncomfortable around us mages."

"As a professor of history and mythology....I'm a bit more open minded. I will warn you though, I
will drive you mad with my questions."

"My wife did too when she first met me," he laughed. "I was tempted to write a manual so that all
the answers would be in one place."

"Oh I did not!" Belle protested.

"Umm...actually you did, Mama. I remember one time you kept him up till midnight asking him
exactly how many kinds of mages there were and what they all did and so on," Bae remarked,
grinning. "And that was right after the green goat was kicked outta the castle."

"Was that the witch who turned your dad back into a cricket?" Kyria asked Gisella.

"Yeah."

"Oh, all right Bae I'll give you that one," Belle mumbled.

"And I won't ask just what YOU were doin' up listening to our conversation, lad," his father
interjected, making Bae quit grinning abruptly.

"I was thirsty, Papa," he answered in his best little boy voice.

Rumple rolled his eyes, as the Scorpions burst out laughing.

"I don't know how you handle four children, Belle. I have enough trouble keeping up with Kyria,"
Sophie laughed.

"Five," Belle corrected. "And somedays I want Calgon to take me away."

"And this is our father...Maurice Bordreaux," Marie said. Her father was standing behind Belle.

"Pleased to meet you, my lady," he said, somewhat shyly. He found his breath was quite stolen
away.

"And you, Lord Maurice," she said, holding out her hand.

He took it and kissed it properly. "I haven't been a lord since coming to Storybrooke," he admitted.
"In America I'm just a florist."

"Still, one should never forget his roots."

"True. And when I return to my birthplace, my castle is waiting," he agreed with a twinkle in his
eyes.

"I may drive you mad with my questions too."

Marie glanced over at her sister, frowning. Seeing their father flirting a bit with another woman
bothered her.

"I look forward to it," he said gallantly.

Belle, however, was just glad Penelope was no longer looking at Rumple like a slice of dark
chocolate cake and thought it was sweet that Maurice was finally showing interest in another woman
after all this time.

"And this is one half of what we call the 'Mad Crew': the Hatters: Emma, Jeff, Henry, Gracie and
Maggie." Archie led them over to the Hatters.

Marie pulled her sister aside. "I don't know about this..."

"Marie, he's not proposing to her," Belle whispered. "I think it's cute, that he's finally displaying some interest after so many years . . .he's been lonely ever since he lost our mothers."

"I know....but it's hard...seeing him with someone else other than them....I ...would go insane if I saw Archie with someone else..."

"So would I with Rumple, but . . .Papa's different, Marie. Our mamas are gone and he's had no one except us. He's not a monk, you know," Belle giggled.

"I feel like I've been one for the last few months and believe me....the night we renew our vows....I am making up for lost time!"

She was still going to have a talk with her husband about her feelings and hopefully he had some advice for her.

Belle smirked. "You and me both. I've longed to tie Rumple to me so many times . . .in my dreams . . ." Then she added, "And at least we can share a bed now without him ending up on the floor!"

Marie gazed longingly at her husband. "Maybe I'll have him serenade me like he did on my birthday....and I still owe you a debt for telling me that's what he planned and of course YOUR husband told Archie that you talked!"

Belle frowned. "I still owe him for that."

"Hmmm...maybe you can make it up to him in Italy?"

"Yes . . .I think so . . ."

"So are you really THE Mad Hatter," Kyria was asking Jeff.

Jeff held out his hat. "Mad as they come, hon."

"We had a ball seeing that video you made of Rumple," Sophia laughed.

"We had more fun making it," Emma spoke up.

"Well it just goes to show you, people can still feel sexy no matter how old they are, isn't that true, Lord Maurice," Penelope asked with a grin.

"I suppose so," he said nervously.

"Men age like fine wine," Rumple said with a wink at Belle. "Isn't that so, sweetheart?"

"Oh of course..."


"Here she goes again," Neal sighed.

Maggie rolled her eyes. "Like she's the only one here."
"Yeah, always hasta be the center of 'ttention."

"Neal, hush!" his mother warned.

"It's true!" her son said honestly. "I'm a prince too an' you don't see me bragging 'bout it."

"No you're not. My mommy was queen!" Ellie argued.

"Eleanor," Robin gave his daughter a Look.

The little girl bowed her head. "Sorry Daddy."

"Who cares?" Adriana huffed. "We're all the same over here. It says so in the con-sti-tion. Right, Papa?" the attorney's daughter informed them.

Regina breathed a sigh of relief. Sometimes her daughter reminded her too much of herself, Zelena and their mother for her own good.

"Yes, dearie. It does say that in the constitution of the United States," Rumple corrected. "Everyone is equal under God."

"Whatever," Ellie snorted.

Rumple frowned. "But even if that weren't so, Ellie, you would still be obligated to show good manners and treat all your subjects equally and with respect. Because that's how a true royal behaves. Otherwise she honors not the blood of kings." He lectured firmly. This was the sort of talk he had longed to give her mother once upon a time, and would have if Cora had permitted it.

"And a lesson I should have learned," Regina added.

"It's one I would have taught to you, had your mama permitted me," he admitted. "For in my life I have seen the best and worst of rulers come and go."

"It seems that your royal history is as troubled as the ones here," Penelope spoke up.

"That's putting it mildly," said Snow as she and her family moved forward before Archie had a chance to make their introduction. "We're the Nolans."

"Cool! You're the real Snow White and Prince Charming....he's cute..." Kyria said sweetly, staring at David.

Alessandro's mouth dropped open.

"Kyria!"

"What? He is!"

"Do you get THAT all the time, Snow?" Sophia asked her.

"Yes, actually quite a lot," the princess blushed.

"I can't believe it...she's fangirling," Andi whispered to Bae.

"Well, she IS Snow White. And most little girls want to be like her," Bae muttered back.

"Except me." Andi sighed. "I used to wish I was born the baker's daughter--so I could be free to
marry whoever I wanted and love whom I chose."

And she already had her choice in mind.

"Looks like you got your wish—in a roundabout fashion," Bae reminded her.

"Well, why don't we get you all back to the hotel. You'll be tired after that long flight but you'll have tomorrow to start sightseeing," Alessandro told the group.

"That sounds good to me," Rumple agreed. "Before my three imps wake up and start imitating three emergency vehicles."

They heard loud screams from where Archie and Marie stood.

"Uh-oh...it's Hurricane Maureen!" Jonny announced.

Dark clouds formed in the sky above them.

"I thought you locked her magic down Rumple!" Archie cried.

"Oh no, ye wee weather pixie!" Rumple shook his head. He snapped his fingers and the clouds dispersed. Then he went to see how come his bracelet hadn't worked—and found the clasp had broken. "Oh dearie me. Looks like I needed to do this." Then he rewove the strands so they were a continuous solid circle that fit to the baby's wrist.

"Could it be there's magic here too, Rumple. I can feel it," Emma murmured.

"Me too, Mom," Henry said.

He nodded. "Yes. There is. And long ago--there were powerful weather witches like this one here."
He tickled Maureen under the chin. "Right, pretty dearie?"
She smiled at him.

Archie cradled her against his shoulder. "Now, now Maureen. You can go back to sleep when we get to the hotel."

"I don't know about that," Rumple disagreed. "This one isn't the sleeping type, Archie. She's like my Driana, likes to see everything and everyone."

"I know...I haven't had a decent night's sleep in weeks but I'm used to it."

"You do, and I've been the same with mine. Usually when one's asleep the other two are awake and when two are asleep, one is always up."

"AJ can sleep the whole night but as soon as the sun comes out he's wide awake and wants to go outside...like his brother."

"Yup. Cause bein outside is more fun than being cooped up in the house," Jonny piped up.

"I guess I better be ready for this one to keep me up," Emma said

"And there speaks a true green mage," Rumple said. A soft cry came from one of the infant carriers beside him, and he went to pick up his youngest triplet, Valora. "Hey, Val. Did you hear us talking, baby girl?" This daughter was sensitive to other people around her, and often woke up even when someone was being quiet and had come silently into the room to check on her.
His daughter gurgled at him and reached out to grab his hair.

"Ah ah! None of that," he gently disengaged her hand. "You don't pull Papa's hair. That hurts!" He sent a brief image of himself crying into her head to help her understand.

Marueen smirked at her father and grabbed at his ear.

"Oh no, she's got Daddy's ear!" Archie chuckled.

"Better put it back Mo or he's gonna go deaf," Jonny teased.

Maureen pressed her small hand against her father's ear, imitating returning it to him.

Valora cried softly, in reaction to her papa's mental image, then her hand patted his cheek. And she cooed into his ear. Rumple grinned and said, "Oh yes, you're gonna be my little deal maker, aren't you, sweetheart?"

His baby girl made a curious purring sound and then cuddled next to him, her big blue eyes taking everything in quietly.

"Just give us a call when you're ready to take off for Italy," Sparrowhawk said to Rumple. "We're gonna do a little sightseeing ourselves."

"Will do, and watch the air currents here if you shift. They're a wee bit tricky or so I've heard."

"I'll be careful."

"Send us some good pictures and video!" Tink called out.

"Don't worry, Henry will take plenty for everyone. I think he's going to become a photographer." Rumple assured her.

"Well you guys give me enough to keep me busy!"

They waved goodbye to their pilots and followed their hosts down the street to their hotel, eager to begin their adventure in Greece.

The bellhops were waiting in the lobby with the luggage carts ready to help carry their bags up to their suites.

"I've booked you into the same suite you stayed in during your honeymoon," Alessandro said to Archie.

"Oh Belle, you're going to love our suites. They're like a home away from home!" Marie exclaimed.

"I can't wait to see ours!" her sister cried.

And to finally have some alone time with Rumple, she thought longingly. Provided their babies all slept now.

"This place is like a palace, Mama!" Adriana exclaimed.

"It is, isn't it honey!" Belle said, thinking that the accommodations here were much nicer than some actual palaces she'd stayed at in their old realm. Belle Reve was the only one to have actually had functioning indoor plumbing.
Though the rooms were all the same, every guest could feel that they were living in a palace with two bathrooms that included steam showers, double vanities, flatscreen plasma televisions and a tub with a silver princess phone where guests could make calls to the outside or other rooms. There were cream colored sofas with matching armchairs in the sitting room with an antique working table that included high speed internet as well. Bowls of fruit and water were set out for the guests to enjoy upon their arrival. Artwork from the finest auction houses lined the walls as well as some valued antiques that everyone knew Rumple would appreciate and as he looked around, the pawnbroker and antique dealer nodded in approval, mentally calculating the costs of each item in his head. The beds in the master bedrooms were all large enough to fit at least three and each room had its own plasma television and DVD/CD players concealed in the armoire and there were several walk in closets. Complimentary robes and slippers were placed in the bathrooms and each bathroom was equipped with its own salon style hairdryer.

"Boy do I feel like a fish out of water," Emma chuckled as her family walked down the hall to their suite.

"You! I'm a wolf out of the woods!' Ruby giggled.

"I feel like we're living the high life in Vegas," Jeff said, whistling.

"Yeah but you're not goin near the tables. I mean it Hatter!"

He sighed, his fingers were itching to play cards. "Aww, Em!"

"Hatter! Do I have to call for Archie?"

Jeff held out his hands. "Okay, okay! I never said I was gonna, just that I'd like to."

"Good because you're not losing your shirt. C'mon. I'm exhausted."

"Really? You're sure?" he said, giving her a wink.

"Maybe a little..." she cooed.

"Where's our room?" he purred.

"Right this way Mr. Hatter." A butler stood outside their room. "My name is Dominic. I will be your butler during your stay."

"Cool! We've got out own butler!" Grace exclaimed.

"That's awesome!" Henry agreed.

He picked up Emma's suitcases and carried them into her suite, putting her clothes in the closets and drawers.

"Would you like to order something to eat?"

"Yeah! I wanna try a gyro!" Henry said. "How about you, Gracie?"

"That sounds great!"

"I'll have some sent up immediately."

"What's that, Henry?" asked Maggie.
"It's sorta like a Greek fajita," he explained.

"Remember, Uncle Archie made them for us one night when we went to his house," grace reminded her.

"Oh yeah! I liked them a lot," her sister recalled.

Maggie, unlike Ellie was not picky about eating and ate anything.

Emma fell back on the bed, sighing dreamily. "I've died and gone to Heaven. The kid's gonna be spoiled sleeping in this huge bed."

"And so am I. I feel like a sultan in some Arabian Nights palace," Jeff agreed. "I could sleep in here ten nights straight and never touch the same spot twice."

"Mmm.....well there's a lot of things we could do here in this bed..."

"I hear ya, baby," he was grinning.

"After the kids are asleep..."

"Uh huh."

"In a month or so...we won't be able to do much of anything..."

"I know, so let's get while the gettin's good," he sent her a steamy look over the pillows.

"You don't havta ask me twice, Hatter."

He clasped her hand. "There was only one time I did . . before we were married."

"Yeah but we have a great kid out of it."

"That's for sure. And soon we'll have three."

"And will need lots of Wheaties or Red Bull to keep up."

"Or B-12 shots," Jeff chuckled.

"Hey Mom! Dad! You gonna lounge around or eat some gyro!" Henry yelled.

"I'm coming!" Jeff said. "So don't eat 'em all, kid!"

Lately Henry had an appetite like a bottomless pit.

"Growth spurt."

"Yeah he's growin' all right. Like the Jolly Green Giant," Jeff coughed.

Dominic rolled a serving cart into the room with a tray of gyros, cans of soda and dishes of ice cream for dessert.

"Ice cream!" Maggie crowed.

"Enjoy your snacks and call if you need anything. I am your primary butler but there are others who will serve you as well throughout the month."
"Thanks, Dominic," Jeff said and sat down next to his son. "I've been hankering to try one of these since Archie bragged about how good they were."

"I'll see you in the morning."

"Good night," they called.

Though the hotel was not as grand a palace as the ones she'd lived in when she was queen, Regina was no longer one to complain about it. Robin couldn't help looking around and noticing how all of the monies from the gold and silver trinkets could feed a dozen families in the Enchanted Forest for a year.

"Don't be getting any ideas," she teased him.

"Honey, I've gone legit, remember?"

"Thank God because I can't pardon you in this land."

"Mommy, where'm I gonna put Kermit?" Jason asked, holding up the box where his pet frog was sleeping while Roland lead Pinkie along on his leash.

"Why'd ya have to bring that dumb frog? He's gonna give everybody warts!" Ellie complained.

"Oughta give you warts!" Jason sneered.

"Don't start you two or it's the corner!" Robin threatened.

"Good evening Mr. and Mrs. Hood. My name is Troy. I'll be your butler during your stay," a middle aged gentleman greeted them outside their door.

"Our own butler!?" Robin exclaimed.

Ellie held up her little suitcase. "Here then, take my bag!" she ordered.

"Eleanor May! That was unbelievably rude! Apologize! Now!" Regina snapped.

Troy chuckled. "Oh, it's all right, Mrs. Hood. I'll be happy to take your bags for you, miss. And you sir?"

"I've got this Troy," Robin insisted and helped the butler carry the rest of the bags into their suite while Regina took their daughter into the bedroom and sat her down, giving her a Disappointed Look.

"You are not going to be disrespectful to everyone during this vacation and going around acting like a queen because you are not one here and neither am I. Do I make myself clear?"

"Mommy..."

"Don't interrupt me. Years ago I did the same thing, looked down on people, treated them as my inferiors and I spent years of my life friendless and alone. Is that what you want?"

"Noooo," she sobbed.

"Nor is it what I want for you."

"This mean you don't love me anymore?" the child wept.
Regina threw her arms around her daughter and held her tightly. "I love you more than anything in the world which is why I don't want you acting like this. I'm trying to protect you. I don't want you to live the life I did."

You are not going to exert your influence on my child from beyond the grave, Mother. I will NOT allow it!

Though Cora's curses had been broken, Regina still had her fears that the darkness that had surrounded the Mills women while they were growing up was now reaching out to ensnare her daughter and she would fight with everything she had to prevent it.

"I'll be good Mommy. I promise."

Regina kissed her forehead and set her down on her feet. "Come on. Let's find your room."

Once she got their daughter settled she went to the master bedroom and found her husband sitting on the bed waiting for her.

"How did it go?"

"I'm hoping I got through to her this time. Robin, what if the curses were never broken on me...what if...what if she cursed our children!"

Robin pulled her into his embrace.

"Honey, honey! She couldn't have. We had Rumple look through every book he had on curses and he assured us those two she cast can't spread to future generations once they're broken. Ellie is going to grow out of this as long as we continue to be the best parents we can be."

"It's just that...when she does that...I see myself as I was in her...and it terrifies me!"

"We'll get through it together," he promised her and kissed her gently.

"We always do," she murmured.

All three children were on the bed watching a movie when they walked into the second bedroom. Ellie was holding Major May and the other majors were sitting on the floor with Pinkie and Kermit.

"You can watch this movue but after that it's time for bed."

"Awww!" they whined.

"No buts. We have a long day ahead of us tomorrow and you want to be rested or you'll miss all the sights."

"Okay."

Robin called to have snacks and sodas sent up to them while they watched the movie. The children fell asleep twenty minutes before the movie ended. After kissing them goodnight, the couple returned to their own room.

"I wish I wasn't so far along...or we'd be celebrating our first night in this room properly," Regina purred.

"We'll be able to make up for it later." He patted her belly affectionately. "I can't wait for this little outlaw to be born."
"You seem to sire girls on me."

"I'm not complaining. Girls can be outlaws."

She swatted him.

"Ow! What'd you do that for?"

"Our girls are going to be law-abiding citizens Mister Hood!"

"Yes, my lady." He pulled her into his embrace as he yawned. "We better rest up too if we're gonna keep up with the others."

Regina drifted off to sleep with a small smile on her lips. She could always depend on her outlaw to chase her demons away.

The Charmings' suite was next to Regina and Robin's. Their butler was a younger man in his early thirties named Thaddeus and he kept staring at Snow, making David want to do something not so charming to the man until Snow gave him a Look and made him help Thad carry the family's luggage into their suite. They had seen it before through the photographs and videos the Hoppers shot during their honeymoon five years earlier but actually being in the room made it all the more exciting.

Neal was impatient to let his Minions and Gru out of their box to play but he knew he couldn't as long as the butler was in the room. Snow felt she was back at her father's castle again as a child with servants at her beck and call, once a spoiled princess until her mother had set her straight. The one slight the then Princess Eva had given a simple miller's daughter set in motion a brutal plan for revenge that left two families and entire realm shattered until their offspring banded together to break the cycle.

Fighting a common enemy, Snow thought. And together we're making this new world we live in a better place for us and our children, one day at a time.

"This is better than seeing the place in pictures and videos, isn't it Snow?" David inquired of his wife.

"It certainly is," she said softly and sat down on the sofa, her feet and back aching from the walking they had to do. They were going to be doing more of it the morning when they toured the city, first by travelling as a group and then the families would go on their own tours to give them all time alone with each other. They all knew from experience that spending too much time together sometimes brought conflict and they all wanted their vacation to as peaceful as possible.

What people would think if they knew there were real fairy tale creatures in their world, David thought with a smirk. Only Archie's friends knew their secret but Rumple warned them all that it was possible other mages or fairy tale characters lived in this world and were hiding in plain sight as the Neverland crew did and not all of them were as friendly. They would all be on their guard but he was confident they could kick the backside of anyone who threatened them now that they were a united front.

"Would you like something to eat and drink, Mrs. Nolan?" Thad inquired.

"Yes please."

"I'll have something brought up right away."
"Now can I bring Gru an the Minions out?" Neal demanded.

"Yes but they have to be quiet when Thad gets back."

"Okay...Hey guys! You can come out now!" Neal yelled into the box holding his friends. The stuffed bear and Minions hopped out of the box, the Minions running around the room excitedly.

"Watch it! You're gonna break something and I DO NOT have enough money on me to buy it!" Gru yelled at them.

One of the Minions was jumping up and down on the chair. "No bounce....no fun!" it pouted.

"No bouncing on the furniture or you're going right back in that box, Mister!" David said sharply, feeling like he was talking to his son.

"Milo, you gotta get down or you're gonna git grounded!" Neal threatened. His mother laughed from the sofa.

"Doesn't that sound familiar!"

"Too familiar. Hey where the heck do you think you're going? Neal! They're going in the bathroom!" David called out to his son while he, Major Gru and Neal chased three Minions who ran into the bathroom and jumped into the sink and started splashing each other in the sink and getting water all over the counters and the floor.

"C'mon you guys...outta the sink!"

"Ha, ha...all wet!" one named Toby laughed as it splashed Neal.

"You come outta there now or you're not comin outta your box for the rest of our 'cation!" commanded Neal.

Snow heard footsteps outside their suite and quickly closed the bathroom door, blocking it with her body.

"Is everything all right, Mrs. Nolan. You're a bit flushed."

"Yes, yes...everything's fine. David's just...giving Neal a bath!" she lied.

"What are you doing with that! Put it down!" she heard David yelling.

Thad laughed. "Reminds me of my kids. They either don't want to take a bath or they don't want to get out of the tub."

Except in this case we're dealing with a bunch of stuffed menaces, Snow thought, dreading what chaos she was going to walk into the moment she opened the door.

Thad set the tray of drinks and snacks down. "I'll see you in the morning Mrs. Nolan. Please don't hesitate to call if you need anything." He smiled at her and left the room. Snow sighed with relief and opened the bathroom door, her eyebrows raising into her hair at the mess before her eyes.

"Somebody better clean all this up!" she said in her best princess tones and she looked at the Minions pointedly.

The bathroom was a shambles. All of the linens had been yanked out of the closets and thrown on the floor, the toilet had overflowed and one of the Minions had given himself a spiked hairdo using
the hairdryer.

"Mommy, we tried to stop em but they went nuts like they was on catnip or something!"

Father and son were soaking wet.

Snow tapped her foot on the floor. "Well? This mess better be cleaned up in two minutes or else all of you are grounded!"

"Awwww!"

"You gotta do it or else," Neal said sternly, giving them the same Look his parents give him when he got out line and started handing them some of the dry towels. "You heard Mommy. Get cleanin!"

You can whistle while you work," Charming smirked. At his wife's Look, he said sheepishly. "Sorry, couldn't resist."

The Minions were doing just that only they were whistling Todd Rundgren's I Don't Wanna Work while they tried to repair the damage they'd done to the bathroom.

When the room was cleaned to their satisfaction, Neal glowered at his friends and pointed to the corners in the sitting room. "You all got five minutes in there an you better be thinkin' 'bout respectin other people's property!"

All of them were exhausted after the 'Great Bathroom Disaster" that David recorded on his phone to send to Henry so that his grandson could include it in the group's travel diary. They watched it together while relaxing on the sofa.

"If that's any indication, this is going to be a crazy vacation!" David exclaimed.

"Hopefully not," Snow mumbled.

An hour later all of them were exhausted. Neal put the Minions and Gru in their box for the night and his parents tucked him into bed before they collapsed into their own.

"...This is a wonderful place Archie picked for us to stay in," Granny was telling Geppetto while they were exploring their own suite. They were sharing one with August and Ruby while Maurice and Mary Poppins had their own rooms.

Geppetto glanced at the suitcase his son was carrying where the ring he bought a few weeks ago waited. Now he just needed to find the perfect opportunity to pose the question but he wasn't sure when it would be.

"And how long were you on my case to marry Marie," Archie had teased him before they left. "You don't want to wait too long or she'll find someone during our trip. You should've gotten married years ago, after I did!"

I just want to be sure..."

"She loves you, you love her. What are you waiting for, old friend? If she didn't think it wasn't going to work between the two of you she would've stopped seeing you years ago. Now get yourself down to the jewelers and pick up a ring or I'll do it for you."

"You would not!"

"I would." the former cricket said with a smirk.
"You're becoming as devious as your brother-in-law! All right, I'm going!"

"Papa, when are you gonna ask her?" August inquired of his father when they were alone in Geppetto's room while their butler Jason helped them unpack.

"I don't know!" he cried. "What if she says no?"

"She's gonna say yes, Papa. Quit worrying."

Geppetto took the ring out of his suitcase and locked it in the small safe he brought with him. He was exhausted from the long flight and lay down to sleep, still wondering if he was making a mistake.

"This is better than that shack we had in the woods, Granny."

"We made do, Ruby." Her grandmother nodded in approval when she saw the red bracelet around her granddaughter's wrist. "Please don't be out too late honey and never take that off."

"I won't. I'll be with August so he'll look after me."

Granny snorted. Geppetto's son had been a wild one during the curse and she had her doubts he'd tamed much over the years. Her granddaughter was trying to mend her wild ways but it was taking time. "It's just that....we don't know anyone in this city Ruby...and only a few know what we are. Be careful."

Ruby kissed her cheek. "You worry too much, Granny."

"No I don't. Be careful," she said again.

August was waiting for Ruby out in the hallway. The two of them had spent an afternoon on the computer before their flight looking to see what night clubs they could go to in Greece and Italy and discovered there were quite a few in Athens. There wasn't much of a night life in Storybrooke and both of them were itching to spread their wings again. However, they knew their parents were right when they warned them they would have to be careful. Ruby would wear her bracelet to prevent the change but her wolf's instincts were always on alert in the face of danger. Anyone who tried to attack her would have quite a fight on their hands. The pair called for a taxi to drive them into town, unaware that their worried parents would be waiting up for them to come home.

"I wish my son would settle down," Geppetto said with a sigh.

"It's going to take a strong man to tame my wild granddaughter."

"Our wild days are far behind us, thank God."

"I wasn't wild at all. I had Archie keeping me on the straight and narrow. Thankfully he was a cricket while I was growing up or he would've lost his hair from all the scraps I got into!"

"Now he has his own boy to worry about," Granny chuckled.

"I was starting to worry he was never going to find his own happiness but the moment he told me about Marie, I knew. I could see it in his face that she was the woman he wanted to spend the rest of his life with."

"We found ours too...in a way."

But I want to settle down too...she was thinking. She'd been waiting patiently all those years for him to ask her to marry him but he insisted he wanted to take things slowly. She'd respected his wishes
and loved him enough that if he decided they would go on just dating she would live with it.

"Marie, has Geppetto said anything to Archie about...us getting married?"

"It's more like my husband been after Geppetto to marry you," Marie had said. "And I think it was time for you to do so years ago. Granny, take it from me, you don't want to let go of the best thing that ever happened to you. I came close with Archie far too many times."

"Your situation was different. Gaston was a bastard. I loved my husband and Geppetto loved his wife and we both lost them tragically, before their time."

"I don't know how I'd feel if Papa remarried..."

"That's what I'm worried about with Ruby. She barely knew her grandfather and August came along many years after Geppetto lost Lucia."

"She might surprise you and be happy with it. She's gotten used to you seeing each other."

"Now if our children would give us grandchildren to spoil, I'd be much happier."

"I'm afraid we're going to have a long wait for that."

They already knew they were in for a long night waiting for their children to return home. Though both were adults, a parent never stopped being a parent.

In their own rooms, Mary and Maurice were having similar thoughts. Mary was enjoying spending time with Doc and they had also discussed marriage but wanted to take things slow. Maurice was nervous. He'd gone out on a few dates during the curse but those women had been nothing like Collette, or Jeannette. Penelope Palakas however, the moment he met her reminded him of the best attributes of both of them. Perhaps it was time for him to start living again, even as difficult as it would be.

Marie felt as if they were on their honeymoon again. Alessandro insisted on carrying the couple's luggage to their room as he did years before when he was still a hotel butler. Gisella and Kyria led Pongo and Perdy while Jonny carried the cages holding Zach, Zara, Mickey and Minnie and their Happy Army bears and their parents carried the twins.

"Daddy, can I stay with Sella tonight?" Kyria begged.

"That's up to Archie and Marie."

"It's fine."

"Yay!"

"Daddy, I wanna bunk with Roland n' Jason sometime too!" Jonny said to his father.

"You can ask them tomorrow. They're probably asleep now."

"Welcome back!" Alessandro announced as he opened the double doors to their suite.

"Oh, Archie....it's still as beautiful as it was the first time we were here!" Marie exclaimed.

"Oh wow! This place is kinda like Uncle Rumple's castle!" Jonny exclaimed.

"Yeah, I know," his sister said. "That's how I felt when we came here the first time...and look!
Daddy had one of those chocolate puzzles made for me!” She raced over to the table and picked it up. "Look, Jonny. There's another bear for you!"

The toddler laughed when he picked it up. "Can't wait to see how Duke likes that."

"What'cha gonna name him?"

"Wayne," the little cowboy said with a grin. "Gotta have somebody to keep Duke in line, ya know."

"That's an understatement," his father muttered. His son's bear had caused quite a few mishaps back home, the worst being when he was drunk before Christmas.

"Ahhh, my chocolate stand!" Marie sighed and snatched a piece off it.

"Oh no you don't, my goddess. You're sharing it this time."

"Are you gonna make me, Hopper?" she challenged flirtatiously.

"I most certainly am..." He reached behind her and grabbed another piece and popped in into his mouth, giving his wife a heated look.

"Awww come on, don't you guys start already!" Gisella groaned. "Wait til we go to bed!"

"Sella!"

You'd better be well rested husband of mine because when our children DO go to bed, we are going to make up a lot of most time.

The twins had awakened from their nap, both of them oddly quiet as they took in their surroundings but both were still sleepy after their long flight. Their parents carried them into their room and sat down in the rocking chairs Alessandro had put in the room while Archie sang "When You Wish Upon a Star" to them.

"He's really good," Kyria said to her friend as they watched from the doorway. "You didn't tell me he can sing."

"Yeah he does but he gets really nervous when he has to do it in public."

"And you can sing like him too now?"

"Yeah. He's really my daddy now, Kyria."

"He was from the day you met him," her friend reminded her.

"Yeah but back then I didn't look like him. Now I do." She held up a strand of her now ginger hair.

"That's still really cool that you changed so that you do look like him."

"They both cried when they noticed it that Christmas after they got married. Jason looks like Regina and Robin now too. He's happy with it."

"Glad I never met that witch you talk about."

"Me too. She shoulda been fried like eggs for what she did to my daddy and Aunt Belle."

"So what did Rumple do to her the first time?"
"He smacked her butt good!"

"He did? Really?"

"Yep," Gisella giggled.

"I would have wanted to be a fly on the wall to see that!"

"So did I but that happened before my mom went to see them and met daddy."

"Your uncle looks like he could kick butt and take names."

"He does. He took care of the crazy Toy Story family that tried to bomb our house good. Turned them into toys and scared the crap outta them."

"Your dad's more the quiet type."

"He is...except when someone tries to hurt any one of us. Then he can kick butt. Had Jeff let him loose he would've beat Gaston to a pulp after what he did to mommy and he nearly blinded one of the Black Dogs when they were bothering me."

"Okay, girls, let's get you tucked in," Sophia said and led them to their room. Alessandro took Jonny to his room while his parents got his younger siblings off to sleep.

"When you gonna have another kid for me to play with?" the toddler demanded.

"Ummm...well...ahhh...."

"Better get a move on or I'm gonna stake out the stork's place and get ya one."

"All right Jonny," Alessandro chuckled. "Your parents will be in in a bit."

"Thank you for all your help," Marie said when they came out of the twins' room.

"It's no trouble at all, Marie. We're just glad you came back. We've been waiting long enough for it."

"Well then maybe you'll return the favor and come to Storybrooke," Archie teased.

"Maybe over the holidays. Mum's the only family we have here. Good night...and I'll come and get Kyria in the morning."

All three children were asleep when the couple entered their rooms. They kissed Jonny and Gisella good night and went to their own room. While Marie was in the bathroom, Archie opened his overnight bag and took out his Chicago 17 CD, a small smile on his lips, looking forward to seeing his wife's face when she saw what he had in store for her, a little trip down memory lane to her last birthday.

When she emerged from the bathroom her husband was standing in front of the bed and crooked his finger at her, giving her a smoldering look.

"I don't want you to misunderstand me
I just wanna say what's on my mind
No need to hit me with an attitude
Because I haven't got the time
I want you to know one thing's for certain
I surely love your company"
And I won't take no if that's your answer  
At least that's my philosophy...."

"As if I would say no!" she moaned. He pulled her into his arms and pressed her close to him as he continued to sing, his blue eyes burning with desire.

"Stay the night  
There's room enough here for two  
Stay the night  
I'd like to spend it with you  
Stay the night  
Why don't we call it a day?  
No one can stop us  
Nothing is in the way...."

She could feel her body temperature rising as he danced her around the room, still amazed that the shy former cricket who had little experience with women she met years before had transformed into her Adonis, a lover who could make her burn with a look or even the slightest touch.

"I can still remember how surprised I was when you danced with me that night like this," she whispered.

He grinned. "Well, we'd never watched Dirty Dancing before and I was a bit...inspired. That was the part your sister didn't know about...my own little surprise I threw in at the spur of the moment..."

"I wasn't complaining."

"Have some friendly conversation  
And if you still don't have a clue  
Unless there's something else you've got in mind  
We've got better things to do..." He swung her up into his arms and carried her over to the bed, kissing her hotly.

"Oh you know we do, baby," she cooed. She yanked his shirt out of the waistband of his jeans and pulled it over his head, kissing him back while he threw hers on the chair and unhooked her bra. "Oh gods, I've missed you!"

"I've been here..."

"You know what I mean."

He chuckled. "Well I hope you're well rested, my goddess, because sleep is the last thing I have in mind tonight!"

"I'm going to hold you to that, my Adonis. We've changed so much since we were here the last time, haven't we?"

"Like I keep saying, my goddess, I am not the shy former cricket you first married."

"No, you're not," she sighed dreamily.

Years ago, he'd been terribly nervous the first two weeks of their marriage, having never been intimate with a woman before. Most of the men in Storybrooke had made fun of him, wondering why he'd chosen to remain chaste until he was married when a good majority of them indulged themselves whenever they needed to, caring little for the feelings of the women they were with but
that was not for him. He could still hear Blue's scathing words to him shortly after his wedding.

"I cannot believe you actually did it...you married her!"

"I married Marie because I love her," Archie said, glaring at her.

"She's a whore...and you're a fool if you believe her when she claims she isn't," Blue snarled.

"She's not!"

"She's corrupted you...with her lust."

Archie stood up. "I find it fascinating that you still work in that damned club and try to pass yourself off as a pillar of virtue but you're far from that. You always have been. You've never wanted me to be happy ever since that incident with Geppetto's parents...which could have been reversed but you made me believe it couldn't just so you could enjoy seeing me suffer all those years. Not anymore! I love Marie and I am not ashamed of it. And if enjoying making love with my wife is corrupting me then so be it. Now get out of my office!" he yelled.

"You'll see things my way when she leaves you," she declared.

"That'll never happen because we have something you never will: true love." He strode over to the door and yanked it open. "Out...or I'm going to call Jeff and have you escorted out!"

She glared him one last time and stormed out of the office.

For years Marie had allowed others to make her feel like the whore she'd never been, forced to dance for men to support herself and her young daughter having only been with three men in twenty-nine years prior to meeting Archie and only for one night. She hadn't been able to respond to any of them but it hadn't stopped them from talking about her. Even hearing all the rumors and knowing what she did for a living hadn't tainted her image in his eyes. She was his goddess and only when she was in his arms did she truly feel like one, the only man who made her life complete. He took his time making love to her as he always did, giving her another precious memory to add to the thousands of others she'd collected over the years to replace the painful ones of her past and in the same countries where they honeymooned years ago, there would be many more precious moments to come.

Another butler waited outside the Golds' suite when they approached their room.

"Good evening," he greeted. "My name is Lukas and I will be your butler."

"A pleasure, Lukas. I'm Rumple Gold," Rumple shook his hand.

"Pleased to meet you sir. Now let me get your suitcases into your room."

"That's too much for you to carry alone. Bae, help him, please." Belle instructed.

"Thank you." Rumple went inside and sat down on the sofa, rocking his sleepy daughter back and forth. He began to sing softly in his mellifluous voice, a familiar lullaby. "Hush my wee lass, 'tis time for ye to close yer eyes and dream..."

Bae went and took some of the suitcases.

"Can I carry my Happy Bears, please?" Adriana asked.
"Sure, Rumplette," Bae handed her the box with them in it.

Belle came last with her son and daughter in their carriers.

"Would you like to put the children down for a nap, Mrs. Gold?"

"Yes, please."

One of the rooms had cribs inside for the triplets. Lucas placed Bobby and Victoria in the crib for her.

They didn't even stir, deeply asleep, and curled next to each other much as they probably had in the womb.

"Is there anything else you'll be needing Mrs. Gold?"

"Well, if you could be so kind as to send us up some lemonade or iced tea and something to eat, I would be most grateful," Belle said kindly.

"Not a problem. I'll be back in a few minutes."

Belle went back into the main room to see if Rumple had gotten Valora to sleep yet.

The baby yawned, then stuffed her fist in her mouth, drooling on her papa's shoulder as he sang.

Bae leaned against a doorjamb and recalled Rumple singing this same lullaby to Adriana and if he could recall that far back, most likely him as well. Adriana tugged on his arm.

"Yeah, Rumplette?"

"Can we draw stuff? Please?"

"Okay. Let me unpack my sketchpad and pencils."

"Cool!"

She pulled back the curtains and pointed at the Acropolis high on the mountain. "I wanna draw that."

Bae went to his backpack, which was where he carried his sketchpad and some pencils and took them out. He handed a piece of paper to his sister and some pencils. "Okay, you do that. But I'm gonna draw something in here first."

"Like what?"

He quickly turned back to where his papa and sister were and began to sketch rapidly. "This."

"Okay."

She had several sketches he'd done of her and her father hanging on the walls in her bedroom at home.

Bae drew with the ease of long familiarity, capturing the utter love on his papa's face and the sweet innocence of his baby sister, as well as the love his mama expressed as she gazed at them from the doorway.
"How's this Bae?" Adriana handed him the sketch she'd made.

"That's really good," he praised, and it was for a toddler.

Lukas returned to the room with the tea and some baklava for them to try.

Rumple by then had almost gotten his baby fast asleep. The little one's eyes had closed and she was asleep with her little head on his shoulder. He rocked her gently.

Andi texted Bae to let him know their friends were settled into their own suite and were having snacks.

You want to come over and watch a movie?

Yeah in a bit. Soon as I finish this sketch.

Okay...what do you want to watch?

You pick. Surprise me.

Okay....something good and scary

Sounds good.

He picked up some baklava and sighed in bliss as he ate it.

He quickly sucked honey from his finger tips while he finished the sketch and signed it with his name and the date on the bottom, titling it, "A Lullaby For Valora".

He set the sketchbook down and stood up, saying, "I'm gonna go over to my friends' suite and watch a movie, okay?"

"Go ahead, lad. And if you're gonna stay there, let us know." Rumple said.

He rose and murmured, "Looks like this wee lassie's ready for the Land of Nod. Let's put her with her brother and sister." He carried his sleeping daughter into the room and placed her in the crib next to her siblings.

"Mama, I'm tired...can I get the Happy Bears out now?"

"Yes, darling," Belle said. She reached for a piece of baklava and then fed it to Rumple.

"Yeah....I'm goin' to bed if you're gonna just make out..." their daughter mumbled.

Rumple groaned. "Now really, no astor, all yer mama did was give me some dessert . . ." Sometimes it was embarrassing to have such a perceptive child.

"For now. Still goin to bed before I see something I don't wanna."

"That's a good idea," Belle agreed quickly. "You want to be well rested tomorrow for when we go visit all the temples."

"You gonna read me a story?"

"Yes, in a little while," her mother agreed.

Several of the Happy Army bears marched into the room and saluted their young mistress.
"Permission to keep watch, dearie?" asked Major Rumple.

"Permission granted," she replied, saluting them back.

They raced down the hall to her room and hopped onto the bed to wait for her.

She went up to Belle and kissed her. "Night, Mama."

Belle hugged her and said, "I'll be in soon to help you into your nightie and tell you a story about Mt. Olympus."

"Okay, Mama!"

Rumple kneeled down and held out his arms for her to snuggle into them.

Adriana ran into them. "Night, Papa. Will you sing to me?"

"Sure, mo astor."

She kissed his cheek and then skipped into her room.

"I wonder how the others are enjoying their rooms," Belle said to her husband.

"I'm sure they're doing just fine," he replied, then he kissed her leisurely.

"Don't forget to tuck Adriana in...or she might interrupt..."

"Aye, and ye owe her a story too," he recalled.

Then he went into his daughter's room and sat her on his knee and brushed her hair. Then he tucked her into her very large bed and began to sing softly to her, the same lullaby he'd sang to all his children, and the same one his mama had sung to him.

She started to close her eyes, the promise of a story forgotten and cuddled up close to Majors Rumple and Belle.

He sang softly to her and kissed her forehead. "Sleep tight, dearie, and don't let the bedbugs bite."

"Mmmkay..." she murmured sleepily.

He looked up as his wife entered. "I think you're gonna have to owe her a story tomorrow," he said and indicated their sleeping daughter.

Belle leaned down and kissed her little angel's small cheek.

Her husband smiled at her and whispered, "Who would have ever thought we'd have what we do now, mo chroi?"

"I wouldn't trade a single moment of it for anything."

"Nor would I...strange as that sounds."

Now that their children were asleep, there was nothing more Belle wanted than to be alone with her husband. She took his hand and led him toward their bedroom.

He followed content to have her lead, though this was a dance he knew by heart. "We have, as Marie puts it, some lost time to make up for."
"Was that what you two were whispering about on the tarmac?"

"That...and she's a bit worried Papa might be interested in Penelope."

"Well...I wouldn't say that's something to worry over," Rumple said easily. "Perhaps Moe is finally allowing his heart to love again. I know firsthand how difficult that is. I hope he finds the second chance I did."

"I can understand why she feels that way. She knew how much Papa loved both of our mothers...but I always knew he loved Jeanette more and...like me, Marie's only had one true love in her life."

"Sometimes, dearie, you get lucky twice," Rumple said. "It's rare but it happens."
"It won't with me. You're the only man I will ever love," she vowed.

"And you are the only one for me," he answered.

"Now let's make up our lost time, darling..."

"That's the best suggestion I've heard all evening," he said softly, and he drew her blouse over her head.

"Let's loosen that tie, shall we..."

She carefully unknotted his tie and pulled it free from the collar of his shirt, letting it fall to the floor at their feet.

"Would ye like to unbutton the Gold One, dearie?" he crooned, the name a play on what he used to be--the Dark One.

"Always..." she murmured and started undoing the buttons on his shirt slowly. "And what layers are awaiting me, darling?"

"As many as ye want to uncover," he answered, his own fingers undoing her bra.

"There are so many...it could take all night..."

"Well, aren't we fortunate we have the entre night?" he asked sexily.

"Yes...we are...unless our triplets decide they want attention..."

"Let's hope they sleep then," he said, and drew her towards the bed.

"I cannot wait to renew our vows and have the honeymoon we wanted..."

"Neither can I."

"I love you, Rumple."

"And I love you, Belle."

She'd missed nights like this when night fell and they could indulge in their passions without restraint but the beautiful children sleeping in the rooms down the hall had been worth the sacrifices they made.

He had missed them also, but counted the price well worth it as he drew her close and began to seduce her expertly, knowing every curve of her like he did his own name.
And over the years she'd come to know his body, his heart and his soul as he'd given them all to her of his own free will, difficult as it had been after being hurt so many times in the past. In in turn, she'd given herself to him, never asking for anything other than his love in return.

It was a love she had fought hard to win, but once won, he had never denied her it, giving her all of his generous spirit and tender yet fierce passion. It was something he would have given to his first wife had she ever quit berating and belittling him, but Milah had been a consummate fool. She had thrown away his heart and stomped it into the dirt, breaking it into a million little pieces.

With time and patience she repaired those broken pieces, driving back the darkness that plagued him for so many centuries, helping to reshape him into the man he wanted to be.

Until now he could stand proudly before any man and not think he was inferior to anyone. He was never inferior in her eyes and that night she reminded him of this as she allowed him to seduce her into their own private paradise. No matter what pretty face always glanced her way, at the end of the day and every night, the Beauty would have no other but her Beast for as long as they both lived.

Rumple allowed her touch to soothe him and her passion ignite his own as he made slow gentle love to his wife, the wife who had seen the worst and best in him, both darkness and light, and had stayed and fought for the man she saw beneath the curse. The wife who had given him the family he had always longed for and who loved being a parent as much as he did. So unlike Milah, who had lacked the empathy, responsibility and maturity to be a good mother. Belle was everything Milah would never be, and he need have no fear of his children being abused or neglected while he was gone. Or fear that she would cheat on him.

The old demon of low self-esteem appeased for the nonce, he kissed his beauty leisurely, knowing how to take his time and bring their pleasure to the fullest, and after all they had all the time in the world.
Chapter Summary

The families are touring some of the famous sights in Greece and a bit of an altercation at a restaurant and a sweet proposal scene!

Rumple arose at 6 AM the following morning and pulled back the drapes, smiling to himself at the beautiful sight that met his eyes outside his bedroom window and raised the window and allowed the warm summer breeze to caress his cheeks. He could see the Acropolis and Parthenon in the distance, excited to tour the ancient sites for himself. He could also feel the magic radiating from them, not dark magic as he'd often sensed in the Enchanted Forest but the light magic of the gods that once ruled over the lands from the famed Mt. Olympus.

Belle rose from the bed and walked over to the window, putting her arm around her husband's waist. "Rumple, it's beautiful. I can't wait to see everything!" Rumple summoned his phone and snapped a picture as the two of them stood there together, feeling like they were at last on the honeymoon they hadn't been able to talk when they got married years ago. They often spoke about a honeymoon and couldn't help feeling a little envious when Archie and Marie returned from theirs with so many photographs and videos of these beautiful countries, promising each other that one day they would finally see them for themselves.

"Well, my sweetheart, we're going to see as much of this part of the world as we can before we go back home," he murmured. "Come on. The children will be awake soon and wanting breakfast."

As if on cue Adriana walked into the sitting room holding Major Rumple in one hand and grinding the sand out of her eyes with the other. "Are we gonna go see all those old buildings today Papa?" she asked sleepily.

"We certainly are, mo astor!" he picked her up and kissed her forehead. "Why are you awake so early?"

"Was too excited to sleep," she confessed.

"Well I hope you won't be too tired later on," Belle teased.

"Uh-uh. Can I take Major Rumple and Major Belle with me?"

"Dearie, we talked about this. You cannot take the bears with you because they will want to stay animated and if anyone sees them or any of us doing magic, you know what will happen."

"Papa, they won't stay animated. They just wanna see everything." She gave him a puppy dog look. "Please. I promise they won't be animated until we're back here."

"Adriana, sweetie, it's too risky," her mother reminded her.

"I can make them really small so they can fit in my Belle bag."

"Mo astor, I know you want to take your bears sightseeing but its far too risky," Rumple insisted. "You're going to have to leave them here."
Adriana's face fell. "Okay," she sighed.

Belle held her daughter up so that she could gaze out the window. "Isn't that beautiful, sweetie?" she asked pointing at the Parthenon in the distance.

"It kinda looks like an old castle," she said. "Are we gonna go in it, Mama?"

"We're going to see as much of it as we can and many other places. Come on. Let's get you dressed and we'll go meet everyone for breakfast."

The little girl raced into her bedroom and opened her dresser drawer, holding up a yellow Belle shirt and a pair of shorts. "I'm gonna wear these with my big sunglasses!" she cried excitedly. "Mama, how 'bout we wear matching stuff today?"

They sometimes did wear matching outfits, allowing them to bond even closer. While she was growing up Belle always longed to have a daughter she could do those things with just as her mother did with her and Marie while she was alive. She went into their bedroom and took out her own Belle shirt and blue shorts and set them on the bed while she helped her daughter dress. She was looking forward to the day when she and all of her daughters would be matching.

"You know what would really be cool? If we all wore matching stuff...all the girls!"

"I don't know if everybody will want to do it, sweetie."

"They don't have to wear what we do...but they can match in their own stuff."

"Maybe some other day, sweetie. Now wipe that frownie off your face. You and I are still going to match today. Remember, no frownies allowed here."

Rumple was waiting for them in the sitting room wearing his white button down shirt and relaxed fit jeans with his Gucci loafers. "Aren't ye the the most beautiful lasses," he said softly and snapped a picture on his phone of mother and daughter in their matching outfits. Moments later the triplets awoke needing to be fed and changed. While her parents tended to her siblings, Adriana grabbed her father's phone and pulled up Bae's number.

In the Scorpions' room, the group stayed up most of the night watching horror movies and snacking on soda and popcorn, reminding them of the old days at the warehouse when they all lay on the floor in front of the latest model television they'd stolen and for a few hours they could forget they were in a constant struggle with the Black Dogs and their families were gone or just didn't want them. Even though they were all back with their families, they still tried to spend as much time together as they could. Next year they would all be graduating from high school and starting college, not having as much time for each other as they became adults.

Bae was having a rather pleasant dream of Andi when he heard his phone ring. He grabbed it off the nightstand and held it up to his ear expecting to hear his father's voice but instead it was his sister on the other line singing.

"Get up you sleepy head
'Cause life won't find you in bed
Take a deep breath
Look up and say
Thanks for a brand-new daa-yyyy!"

"Rumplette, how'd you get Papa's phone?"
"Ahh Val, Valora and Bobby are being fed so I just borrowed it. C'mon, get up! We got a lotta stuff to do today and ya can't do it bed! You want me to send Major Rumple over to throw you in the shower?"

"Heck no!" he jumped out of bed and grabbed some clothes out of the dresser. He could hear phones ringing in his friends' room and chuckled to himself knowing his devious sister wasn't going to let any of them sleep in on this vacation. He had to admit he was as curious as to see this new country they were in for himself. He had only been in the shower thirty minutes when he heard someone pounding on the door.

"Hey bro! Ye wanna hurry up in there?" Ewan yelled from the other side of the door. "Me an Bobby gotta shower too!"

"Hold your horses will ya!" Bae called back.

"What t'hell are ye doin in there anyway? Just wash, rinse an git out!"

"I'm almost done for cryin' out loud! Why don't you use this girls' bathroom?"

"Cause I don't want Fury kickin my nuts up inta m'throat that's why!"

Bae stepped out of the shower, dried himself quickly and exited the bathroom, scowling at his friends. "If Dickie were here, you know what he'd say."

They laughed. "Yeah. he said he was gonna put in one of those showers like they have in the school. Hell no! I hated those damn things. Everybody looking at ya!" Bobby exclaimed.

Ewan raced into the bathroom and shut the door.

The girls were having a more peaceful time getting themselves ready for the day's adventure even though they were still getting used to having to wake up early during the summertime, especially if Bae's sister was around. After they were all showered and dressed they got a text message from Rumple telling them everyone was meeting in the hotel lobby after breakfast in their rooms.

Geppetto stood beside his son's bed with his hands on his hips. "What have I told you about your drinking?" he said angrily. August sat on the edge of the bed holding the ice bucket in his hands and heaved into it.

"Papa was....just...ohhhh Goooodddd!" he moaned and heaved again.

"I've had enough of this, Pinocchio! When I sent you through that wardrobe it was on the belief that you would protect Emma and lead the decent life I wanted you to, not going around drinking and staying out until all hours of the morning! What happened? You were doing fine back in Storybrooke."

August lowered his head guiltily. He hadn't as far as his father knew. He'd been cut off at the Rabbit Hole more times than he could count and it was becoming increasingly difficult to conceal his hangovers from his father.

"You're gonna have to...go...without me today..." he murmured.

"Yes but we're going to be having a talk with Archie about your drinking problem."

"Papa!"
"Don't you Papa me! You aren't hiding it as much as you think you are! Now you're going to spend the rest of the day in bed sleeping it off but we are having a talk with Archie!" Geppetto spun on his heels and left his son's room, slamming the door behind him, the noise sounding like a dozen anvils being pounded in his son's head. He found Granny and Ruby in the living room, both of them already dressed and ready for the day's adventure.

"I tried to stay with him Geppetto, I really did...but he gave me the slip," Ruby insisted. Unlike her companion, Ruby only had two drinks during the evening, fearful that if she had anymore she would remove her protective bracelet and change. Several men in the club had stopped to talk to her and had given her their numbers but she was getting tired of playing the field since she'd been doing it for so long.

"It's all right Ruby. I know you tried. Beverly, I just don't know what to do with him," he said to Granny.

"What you told him you would, sit him down with Archie. Hopefully he can talk some sense into the boy. Unless he finds some sense of his own after he sleeps it off."

"I don't know. I just don't know."

Of the two of them, Granny once thought she had the more difficult child to deal with but she was now beginning to realize that Ruby had mellowed out some since the curses were broken but Geppetto's son couldn't seem to shake off his wild ways, the drinking being the worst of the lot. August tended to babble quit a bit when he was in his cups and his father feared he would start telling everyone in Greece who they were.

In the Hatters' suite everyone had just finished showering and dressing when Dominic and a bellhop wheeled the silver carts with their breakfast into the room. Henry lifted the lid off one of the platters and whistled. "Holy crap Mom, check all this out!"

"Damn! We're gonna get fat eating in style like this!" Jeff chuckled. "And the kid's gonna get its palate spoiled before its even born," he added, patting Emma's belly.

"Well look at it this way Hatter, we sure as hell didn't eat like this when we were growing up," Emma reminded him.

"You can say that again!" He poured himself a glass of orange juice and handed the others out to his children. "Hey! No eating or drinking on the sofa!" he yelled at them just before they sat down on it.

"Dad, we're not gonna make a mess," Grace insisted.

"Table Gracie. No arguments," Emma said firmly.

They had been served a Western continental breakfast with eggs, bacon, orange juice, pancakes, muffins and toast and were eager to try to more of the local cuisine but had been told by Archie that the best places to do that were the restaurants around Athens.

"I wanna go see all those old buildings!" Maggie exclaimed after she finished her breakfast. "C'mon Daddy! Don't wanna stay here all day!"

"Mags, cool your jets will ya and let us finish eating!" Grace begged. She and Henry were still eating as were their parents.

"Margaret Eva Hatter you better not have inhaled that food and given yourself an upset stomach," their mother warned.
"I didn't."
"Guess we're gonna find out later, eh Mom?" Henry teased.
"Better let Rumple know we'll need one of his wonder tonics if she gets sick," Jeff groaned.
"M'not gonna get sick!"
"She says that now," Grace chuckled.
"M'not. You wanna bet on it?"
"Sure. Whadda ya got?" her sister challenged.

Emma slapped her forehead. "Great Hatter, just great. Now you've got the kids gambling!"
"Em, I swear I didn't..."
"Oh, never mind!"
"If I get sick....I'll be your gofer for a day."

Grace smirked. "You got a bet, Mags."
"And if I don't? What'cha gonna do for me?"

She thought for a moment. "Okay, how about you get to put me in your jail for a few hours?"
"No escaping neither!"
"I won't."

They shook hands. "Deal!"

Jeff had recorded the exchange on his phone thinking Rumple would find it amusing then looked at the time. "Okay guys let's get this cleaned up. Rumple's gonna be ready to roll in ten minutes.

Robin and Regina had little trouble getting their brood up and about much to their relief and believed the morning was off to a good start...until Kermit decided that he wanted to keep Ellie company during breakfast.

"Ewww, get away ya stupid frog! I don't want warts!" she yelled.

"Maybe he wants to kiss ya," Jason taunted.

"M'not kissin a stupid frog. You git!"

"Jason, would you please put Kermit back in his cage?" Robin pleaded.

Pinkie jumped up on Roland's lap and started licking at his plate.

"Gross! Now your food's got dog germs!" Ellie shouted.

"I already ate and Pinkie wants some so mind your beeswax." Roland snapped.

"That is enough! I don't want anymore fighting. Pinkie, get off the table. Jason, put Kermit back in his cage!" Regina said sharply. Three heads bowed in shame.
"Sorry Mommy," they chorused.

"Now finish your breakfast. We have to meet everyone downstairs shortly. After everyone was finished eating they scraped off their plates and set them aside for their butler to take down to the kitchens to wash and Regina made sure everyone had their beds made and their clothes and toys picked up, not wanting the poor man to feel like he was serving a bunch of slobs. She cast several wards on them before they left the room, not wanting to take any chances at any of them being harmed in this strange land they found themselves in. Like Rumple, she could feel its magic and though it was light magic, she knew there were sometimes dark mages lurking in neutral boundaries.

The Nolans were also awake at 6 AM even little Neal who had been too excited to sleep. He had to crawl over several snoring Minions to get out of bed, never needing his parents to come in and wake him up. Snow and David were already sitting at the table loading their plates with the breakfast items. Neal glanced down at his plate of eggs and pancakes and frowned.

"Thought we were gonna have Greek stuff."

"We'll get that all day. Eat up son. We have a long day ahead of us," David encouraged.

"Can we see if we can find a pair of earplugs? Milo snores really loud and Gru kept telling him to quit it but he just got louder."

Snow laughed. "Maybe you should only have them animated during the day so you can sleep better honey."

"I'm okay at home 'cause they got their own room but they don't wanna stay in their box here cause they get...clausphobic."


"Kay. Claus-tro-pho-bic."

'That's good. It's your new word for today."

"That's a big one, Mommy."

"Well you'll be learning a lot of big words as you get older but it helps if you sound them out first."

"Okay. You think Driana's up yet?"

"Knowing Rumple they're all up and dressed already," David answered and heard his cellphone beep. He took it out and read the display. "Yep. He's up. We're all gonna meet down in the lobby at eight."

They finished their breakfast and changed their clothes. When they entered the lobby everyone else had assembled except for the Hoppers.

"It's not like Archie to be late. Did you text him Rumple?" David asked.

"Yes. Twice. And he hasn't answered either one of them."

"Marie's not responding to mine either. I hope nothing's wrong," Belle said worriedly.

"Maybe they just slept in," Maurice mused.

Jonny was awake the moment the rays of the morning sun touched hs small face. He jumped out of
bed and ran into his sister's room. "C'mon Sella, Kyria! We gotta get up. Mommy and Daddy are gonna be taking us to those old buildings today."

"We're comin..." Gisella grumbled and shook Kyria awake. The two girls crawled out of bed and walked into the living room where their butler was setting the table up for breakfast. "Mommy and Daddy aren't up yet?" she asked her brother. He shook his head. "I'll go get 'em up!" he called out and ran down the hall toward the couple's bedroom with Gisella and Kyria in tow.

"Mmmm....now this is how I'd like to wake up every morning," Marie murmured as she lay in Archie's arms. "I'd stay here in bed with you all day if we didn't have so much to see and the kids would throw a fit."

"We have the rest of our lives to make up for lost time, my goddess," he whispered and kissed her.

"Last night was a good start....and this morning..."

"Daaaa-ddyyyy....Mooo-nmmmmy wake up!" Jonny called out from the other end of the door.

"If you're in there making out, get it done with and get up! We wanna go sightseeing!" Gisella yelled.

"Gisella!" they cried. "That daughter of ours knows far too much at her age," Archie grumbled, untangling himself from his wife's embrace. As he was walking toward the bathroom Marie picked up her buzzing cellphone to find several messages from Belle.

Marie, we're all waiting in the lobby. Where are you? Is something wrong?

Marie, did you sleep in? Answer me back or I am sending Rumple up.

We're getting up! Calm down!

What did you do, sleep in?

Something like that :D she texted back.

"Everyone's waiting downstairs in the lobby, Archie. Rumple and Belle have been burning up our phones wondering where we are."

"Well, we're going to have some explaining to do, won't we? I'll be out in a bit."

The adults were all smirking and the children were giving them impatient Looks when they finally met up with them in the lobby an hour later. "Sorry we're late," Archie said sheepishly.

"We...ahhh...forgot to set the alarm."

"Bullshit!" Jeff coughed. Emma poked him in the ribs.

"Well now that we're all here, where do we go first?" Rumple asked while his brother-in-law's face turned crimson.

"You need to see the Acropolis first," Marie suggested. "But there can be very long lines even when it first opens so everyone needs to stick together."

Rumple, Belle, Bae, Archie and Marie were all carrying the infants in carriers strapped to their chests and the other children held the hands of another adult except for Grace and Henry. Alessandro arranged through the concierge team to have several minivans take them to the historical sight rather than taking the Metro to avoid as many crowded conditions as possible.
"I feel like we're on the red carpet," Bae joked when their van stopped at the entrance to the historical site. They could feel the eyes of the other visitors on them, some of them giving them hostile looks, mistaking them for snooty rich tourists.

"Was this where you wanted to renew your vows, Marie?" Belle asked her sister while they were walking toward the Parthenon. She nodded.

"Alessandro told us yesterday they don't allow anything like that on the historical landmarks," she admitted sadly.

"Oh, honey I'm so sorry. I know you had your heart set on it. What are you going to do now?"

"We're going to renew them on our anniversary and have the ceremony at on the beach in Vougliameni," she answered. "We talked about this morning. I don't care where we have it Belle. I could marry him in the woods if I wanted to, as long as I'm with him."

Belle giggled. "You're acting like you're on your honeymoon again, keeping us all waiting while you lounge in bed with your husband!"

"Oh don't you tell me you didn't have a little fun yourself, sister dear."

"Well...last night, but not this morning!"

"I rest my case."

"Papa, what was this place supposed to be?" Adriana asked her father.

"Well, mo astor, the Greeks built in honor of their goddess, Athena. The Athenians considered her their patron, that she took care of them but it also served as a treasury but in the sixth century it was turned into a church by the Christians honoring the Virgin Mary."

He went on to explain that it had also been turned into a mosque during the Ottoman empire and that a great portion of the building's destruction occurred when the Venetians ignited an ammunition storage the Ottomans had been keeping in the building.

As Rumple was giving his daughter a brief history of the landmark all the other families gathered around as well as several other groups of tourists and even the tour guide herself was impressed with the sorcerer's knowledge.

He'd seen many pictures of the site in books, documentaries and on the computer but as Archie told him before, they didn't compare to the joy of actually being there.

"Have you been to Greece before?" she inquired.

"No but my brother-in-law has," he said, indicating where Archie stood taking pictures of his family on the steps then Archie handed the camera to Geppetto so that he could take more with Archie included in them.

"It's not gonna fall down, is it?" Adriana moved closer to her father's side.

Bae laughed from where he was standing. "I doubt that Rumplette but you guys would make Stonehenge fall down."

She blew a raspberry at him.

"Enough of that you two," Rumple scolded.
"Darling, let's get a picture!" Belle handed her camera to Ruby.

"Okay everybody, big smiles!"

The Golds, huddled close together smiled brightly for the camera.

"Mommy, this wouldn't make a good castle. It's a big wreck," Ellie said with a frown.

"In its heyday this was one of the grandest buildings in the world honey," Regina said softly.

"I think it's cool. Don't you Jase?" Roland asked his brother.

"Yep. I woulda wanted to see all those gods kick butts."

"I would've been looking for the gold," Robin teased. Regina swatted him.

"And you would've brought the wrath of the gods down on you for desecrating a holy place."

"You mean gods lived here?" Ellie asked her mother.

"Well it was dedicated to the goddess Athena."

"Cool! What was she like, Mommy?"

"Well, she was said to be the goddess of wisdom, war, alw and justice among other things," Regina replied.

"Cool! Did she make fireballs like me?"

"Possibly."

"You think maybe someday I have a building and statues made of me?"

"Honey, you don't need all that to feel special. You already are to your family and your friends. Being too prideful can do more harm than good. Always remember that, Ellie."

"I will."

"Hey Gina! Get over here! Picture time!" Emma called out from where she was standing with the rest of their families to pose for a picture while Granny held the camera. Regina took Ellie's hand and stood beside her husband, all of them wearing bright smiles as Granny snapped the picture and emailed it to Henry to add to his album. Normally they all made silly faces and gave each other bunny ears in their photographs but they chose not to do so in a place that commanded a great deal of respect. They would have plenty of time for silly moments later.

"These monuments are astounding," Maurice was saying to Penelope while they were walking the site together.

"We have so much beauty in this country, but it like any other country isn't without its problems," she confessed sadly.

"Archie mentioned the financial crisis..."

"It reminds me of your Great Depression. We owe the European Cenrtal bank almost three billion dollars and we defaulted on our repayment this month. Our unemployment statistics are very high, one of the highest in Europe and many of our investors have been pulling their euros out of our
country and investing elsewhere. People have been withdrawing all of their money from their banks or using the ATMs in a panic. Some businesses are even accepting only cash payments. Some stores now have empty shelves and people are stocking up on the basics because we don't know what's going to happen now."

"Isn't the tourism helping at all."

"Not enough to repay such a large debt and we're going to have a voting whether we will stay in the eurozone and continue to use its currency or attempt to solve our problem internally. I'm still uncertain as to how I will vote. Either choice has consequences for this country. Some of us are able to hide our pain behind a smile. Others not so fortunate. I and several of my fellow professors run a relief organization in our spare time and Sandro and Sophie volunteer there when they can."

"Had my kingdom not been destroyed by the Orgres I would be wealthy enough to send some of my money here. Still, if you need funds for your organization..."

"Maurice, you don't have to..."

"I want to and I'm sure my family and our friends would be willing to set aside some of their own finances as well. My sons-in-law already do."

She smiled faintly. "You're a good man, Maurice Bordreaux."

The former lord found himself blushing at her words. Though her mind was troubled by her country's current affairs, she was making a valiant effort to enjoy their time together.

Everyone went to the museum next, the parents giving their children stern warnings that they were not to touch anything. Jeff chuckled, recalling the disaster they'd faced when they took the kids to the mall in Portland over Christmas.

"And there they are...the naked statues," Gisella joked and pointed to some of the sculptures in the Archaic Gallery.

"Daddy, why're they naked? You're not 'sposed to be naked in public. It's bad," Jonny reminded his father while his sister giggled behind him.

"Daddy, his bojangles are hangin out...why doesn't he wear a fig leaf?" Jason asked his father. The former outlaw sniggered.

"Don't you be getting any ideas about drawing some of the women here like French girls," Andi teased Bae. He blushed, hoping she wouldn't figure out that he was looking at some of the statues of the women and imagining her in their places.

"These sculptures and statues are beautiful. It's a shame a lot of them were damaged," Belle was saying to Rumple.

"Can we fix them, Papa?" Adriana inquired.

"No, mo astor," he whispered. "The damage they sustained is a testament to the troubled times they survived and it would be blasphemy to repair them. But you can see them as they once were in your mind."

"Okay."

"I remembered seeing statues similar to these in our holy temples," Snow said to Regina. "I know we
had one of Medusa....but David's encounter with that didn't turn out well," she teased her husband.

"Yeah, yeah, rub it in. You were the one who wanted to try to use her on Cora and Regina."

"I think she would have been the one frozen by my mother," Regina said bitterly.

"Rumple, they have a reading room," Belle exclaimed. "I'd love to go up there."

He chuckled. "Of course, dearie. You never want to miss storytime."

"There are so many great exhibits in here...wish I could get some pictures or video," Henry whispered to his mother. Emma shook her head.

"You can't take them here...they'll confiscate your phone. But...I may have a trick or two up my sleeve. Let me think on it." She checked to see that no one was looking and waved her hand and a gold chain with a charm book appeared in it. "Wear that and it will send pictures and video to your phone," she whispered.

"Cool! Thanks Mom."

"I try, Henry. I try."

"That's awesome Emma. C'mon Henry!" Grace grabbed her brother's hand and they restarted their tour at the entrance now using Henry's charm to capture their moments on video.

The peaceful silence was suddenly interrupted by five screaming infants. Belle, Rumple, Bae, Archie and Marie took them down to the baby changing area in the north side of the first floor gallery and asked for some strollers that seemed to make the babies happy because it allowed them to see everything and changed them. Bobby wriggled about in his stroller impatiently and started sliding his arm along the side of the stroller to get his bracelet off.

"Bobby's gettin mad, Uncle Rumple. He wants to be a kitty and run around," Jonny whispered to him.

"Not in here he can't."

"I have a feeling we're going to have a hard time keeping up with him when he gets older," Belle sighed.

"We're going to have a hard time keeping up with all of them," Marie giggled.

They decided to have lunch at the museum's restaurant and were able to see the hills of Athens and the Acropolis itself through the panoramic windows in the dining room. Since it also offered a traditional Greek breakfast, they made reservations to eat there the following morning so that they could experience more of the local cuisine. Rumple and Belle ordered wild greens with goat cheese, grilled fish fillet with potato puree, a fresh sea bass in salt crust with steamed vegetables and lemon shorbets with ice cream. Henry, Grace, Maggie Jeff and Emma all ordered gyros. Regina had a smoked eggplant salad while Robin ordered veal scaloppini with oregano, lime and sautéed seasonal vegetables. Roland, Jason and Ellie all had tomato soup with turkey sandwiches. David ordered trachanas from Arachova with mushrooms, Snow homemade pasta with minced meat and kafalotiri cheese from Amfilohia while Neal had cherry tomatoes and red saffron. Maurice ordered Greek prosciutto for himself and Penelope at her request and Geppetto, Ruby and Granny ordered shrimps from Alexandroupoli with ouzo. The restaurant was crowded and they all had a long wait for their meal but they were all used to that from eating at Archie and Rumple's houses since neither one of them enjoyed making dinner in a hurry. They could hear a few of the other tourists complaining.
some of the cursing at the staff. Adriana turned around in her chair and glared at the couple behind them.

"Hey! You quit givin them frownies!" she said angrily.

"You mind your own business," the man snapped.

"They should have more people working if they knew the place was going to be busy," the female added.

"Adriana, mo astor, ignore them," Rumple advised.

"Mister Rumple they're mean," Neal defended. Adriana smiled at them.

"And rude. Oughta have their food dumped on their heads," Maggie said with a smirk.

"I can lasso 'em with the tablecloth." Jonny offered.

"John Wayne Hopper, you'll do nothing of the kind," his father said sternly.

"I can burn their food and make it roadkill," Ellie grinned. Giselle and Kyria laughed behind their napkins.

"You don't wanna do that, Ellie. The cook'll get blamed for it," Jason said.

"Maybe we oughta put a big ole rat on their plate. That would scare em off," Roland put in.

"All right guys, quit it." Robin scolded.

"Something tells me these kids keep you on your toes," Penelope whispered to Maurice.

He chuckled. "The beauty of it is some of them I can spoil rotten and send home to their parents."

"Oh thanks a LOT Papa!" Belle groaned.

Moments later servers returned with the orders for both tables. No sooner had the server given the other couple their meal, both of them complained about the long wait and their meals.

"I asked for bottled water, not tap water. Did you not understand English?" the woman ranted.

"Oh, get over yourselves," Emma muttered from her seat, the couples' loud voices giving her a headache. Whether it was the woman's loud voice or simply being hungry, Maureen started howling, her brother and cousins following suit. Their older siblings were laughing thinking they could give the irritating couple beside them a run for their money.

"Jesus Christ can't you shut them fuckin' kids up!" the man complained. "Thank God we don't have any. They'd drive me nuts."

"You'd probably be in jail for child abuse!" Archie snapped, his blue eyes narrowed to slits.

The Scorpions made crashing and burning sounds.

"You want your face rearranged, old man?"

"Ye might not want to bait anyone at this table dearie unless ye want yer arse handed to ye on a plate," Rumple gave him a cold stare, his hand gripping the handle of his cane tightly, wanting to
smash the man's face with it while his brother-in-law wanted to give him another set of holes with his umbrella.

"Ohhh yeah, you don't want to mess with Gold and his Cane of Doom and the Hopper umbrella buddy!" Bobby hooted.

"Is there something wrong here?" they heard someone ask as he approached their tables.

"Yes. These people have been rude to your staff and rude to us. They should be asked to leave," Snow answered.

The couple protested loudly, spouting obscenities at both the restaurant staff and the Storybrooke residents, angering the parents. Several staff members were forced to physically remove the couple from the restaurant and once they were outside Rumple smirked and waved his hand.

"What did you do to them Rumple?" Belle whispered.

"Papa gave them soap mouth," Adriana giggled.

"Among other things," the sorcerer said evasively. "Needless to say, they'll be minding their manners next time."

They spent the rest of the day in the Plaka, a historic village in Athens. The stone streets were of labyrinthine patterns and neoclassical architecture. Unlike most modern cities, the view was not obstructed by utility lines as they were all located underground and accessible by tunnels. Bae and his friends decided to separate from the group for a bit so that he could visit the Folk Art and Frissiras Museum of Contemporary Greek and European Painting so that he could study the works of other artists to inspire him.

"One of these days bro, you're gonna have your stuff in here," Ewan said.

"Maybe.

"No maybes, you will," Andi assured him.

Bae and his parents had several discussions about his future education and they all agreed that he needed to live out his dream of being an artist instead of spending his time at the shop. They were looking at several art schools in New York and even a few in Europe. It would mean that Bae would be separated from his friends, one of the many downsides to finally becoming an adult but he knew he always had the phone and the internet to keep in touch and they'd all agreed that no matter what they chose to do with their lives, they would still stay in Storybrooke.

"You know, we passed a few artists outside selling some of their work. Maybe you could do that," Becky suggested.

"I could...."

"It would get you noticed man," Bobby pointed out.

His fellow artists didn't seem to mind it but he knew many of them had to try to sell their works to tourists to make a living. He'd heard his parents and their friends discussing the country's current financial crisis shortly before they left Storybrooke and some of the concerns they had. He knew his mother and aunt feared rioting since their nurse was killed in one year before but Archie's friend assured them they wouldn't have as much trouble as people believed.
"Yeah it would but some of these people need that money right now more than I do and Papa said while we were here, we were going to support the locals as much as we could with what we spend."

"So you could put up a stand and tell them you're going to donate what you make," Andi suggested.

"Yeah I could and make sure it goes to people who need it. A lot of us knew what it was like to have nothing."

They stopped to talk to several artists and purchased some of their works and one of them invited them all to sit down with him. The others had very little to say but he and Bae had a wonderful time discussing their work and he even allowed Bae to sketch him and his daughter. They were having such a wonderful time that they hated to leave but his father wanted them to meet up at the Cine Paris which was an outdoor cinema.

The Charmings were stopped at several tables where a group of girls were making fuzzy marionettes, moldable faces out of balloons and one of them was attempting to make an image of David's face with rice while their parents sang and played various instruments. Neal was speaking with a girl just a few years older than him who made him a makeshift Minion out of a balloon.

"That's really cool! You seen Despicable Me?" he asked her.

"Yeah. I watch it a lot. I wanna go see the Minion movie but I don't know if I can."

"Why not?"

"Cause my dad has to work."

"Awww. I hope it's really good and you get to see it."

Neal could feel sadness and anger amongst some of the people they visited as did the other children and when he asked his father about it, David explained what was going on in the country in a way that his son understood.

"Be nice to them Neal and be generous," his mother advised. "But also keep in mind they have their pride and they're trying very hard to put up a brave front for the people who come here."

"Awww...I can't get this to come out right," one of the girls complained when her rice image hadn't turned out the way she planned.

"It doesn't matter. It looks good to me," David praised. "I'll tell you what....why don't you make me one of a horse I can take home with me?"

"Really?"

"Sure."

Snow purchased three marionettes thinking they would make the perfect additions to the talent show the school would hold during the fall and two of her students were turning out to be master puppeteers. The Greek families were astounded by the generosity of this particular tourist family and suspected at least the parents had been in a similar situation. Before they left, the girl had given David the rice image she created for him. It didn't look much like a horse but it didn't matter to him. He would still hang it up as he did with all of his son's artistic efforts.

The Hatters were happily indulging their sweet tooths in Ice Scream, an ice cream shop serving a wide variety of flavors with some eye catching names in gorgeous displays as well as milk shakes.
Emma leaned back in her chair sipping from her milk shake, chuckling to herself.

"This kid's gonna have a major sugar high when it comes out," she joked.

"The best part is this stuff is homemade," Jeff praised.

"And they serve waffles with it!" Grace exclaimed. She and Maggie were having pistachio and caramel, dipping their waffles into it while Henry was having cookies and cream. Jeff raised his cone of a version of chocolate ice cream named erotica to his mouth and licked at it provocatively while winking at Emma.

"Keep it up Hatter and you're gonna get us kicked outta the place..." she whispered.

"But it's sooo tasty..." he purred.

"Dad! Our virgin eyes!" Henry exclaimed.

"Dad, do that later," Grace scolded.

"Yeah or you're gonna get 'rrested for public lewdness," Maggie piped up.

"Where did you hear that word, Mags?" Jeff inquired of his daughter.

"You said it when you 'rrested that guy who peed on the wall of The Rabbit Hole."

"Hatter! You took our kid with you a bust?" Emma glared at him across the table.

"What the heck was I supposed to do? You were at the breathing class and I was on my way back from the store when they called it in."

"It's called Lamaze class Hatter and it would be nice if you went to one instead of making Mom do it."

"Don't think different ways of breathing are gonna make it any less painful, hon."

"Says you," she scoffed. "Now quit scaring our kids, will ya?"

"Fine. But you owe me."

"Yeah. Later."

"Oh my God. TMI, TMI," Henry groaned and buried his face in his hands.

The Hoods spent most of their time visiting the various shops. Robin made sure to buy some souvenirs for the Merry Men, who were already talking about taking a little vacation of their own the following year. Instead of visiting Europe, they wanted to travel west to places like Colorado and Montana. At Olympico Jewelery he bought Byzantine pendants for Regina and Ellie since both of his girls loved wearing jewelry and Ellie was already after her parents to get her ears pierced though Regina didn't want her to until she was older and at the George Dolkas T-Shirt shop they had a great time browsing through the owner's collection of original t-shirts to find the ones they liked as well as some for their friends. Regina and Ellie bought matching shirts that depicted a breathtaking view of Athens, Ellie wanting to follow Adriana's example and dedicate a day to dressing alike.

"How about we do that tomorrow, honey?"

"You promise?"
"I promise. And you can even help me find a matching pair of shorts to wear."

"Cool!"

"Daddy, I wanna get a Swatch!" Roland begged.

"We'll get one but I don't want to see it sitting on your dresser back home, understand?" Robin said firmly.

"Can I get one, Daddy?" Jason asked.

"Same applies to you Jase. If I buy them you wear them."

"We will."

Robin took his sons next door to the Swatch shop while Regina and Ellie stayed in the T-shirt shop purchasing the rest of their items. Both of their arms were loaded with shopping bags when they came out of the shop but they would have some wonderful new additions to their wardrobes back home.

While Ruby was enjoying herself shopping in a punk fashion store called Remember, Geppetto took Granny to the mosque on the Roman Agora. While she was standing on the sidewalk taking pictures of the marvellous structure that even served as a bakery for the Venetian army that now was a storage site for the Roman Agora archeologists, Geppetto glanced down at his phone nervously as it beeped with another text from Archie.

Did you ask her yet?

No.

What are you waiting for? That ring to burn a hole in your pocket?

Maybe you should come down here....

No, you'll be fine. Besides it should be done in private anyway. Just let me know what happens. Quit stalling and ask her!

There's something else I need to talk to you about...later.

I take it it has to do with why August is back at the hotel?

Yes.

All right. After dinner. Now get moving!

"Beverly...." he said hesitantly.

"You've been quiet this afternoon. Are you worried about Pinocchio?"

"I am but...there's something else I've been thinking about too and..."

"Yes..."

Please, please let it be what I'm thinking it is, Granny pleaded silently. If it was, he couldn't have picked a better setting for the occasion. She only wished her granddaughter would be there but she wanted to give Ruby some space on their vacation and show her that she trusted her enough to do
things by herself without getting into trouble.

He took the box out of his pocket and held it out to her. "I know men usually do this on one knee...and I would...if I was twenty or thirty years younger....but..." He opened the box up to reveal a beautiful diamond engagement ring. "Beverly Lucas....will you marry me?"

"What do you think? Yes!" she cried and threw her arms around him and kissed him. "What took you so long?"

"Well...ahhh...we said we were going to take things slow..."

"We've been taking them slow enough!"

His hand was trembling as he placed the ring on her finger, both of them knowing this was a huge step they were taking but even though they were older than they were with their first spouses, they were looking forward to spending the rest of their lives together. They found Ruby at Remember and she suggested they go to one of the outdoor cafes to celebrate and called August to give him the news. He was happy for his farther but still feeling too miserable to get out of bed.

The Golds and the Hoppers along with Maurice, Penelope and Mary were touring more of the historical sites in the Plaka with Penelope acting as the family's unofficial tour guide. Archie and Marie enjoyed revisiting some of the places they'd seen during their honeymoon. As they stood at the site where the famous Tower of the Winds stood, Rumple sensed there were some traces left of the great magic that once surrounded the building that was rumored to be the grave of Philip of Macedon but was in truth a meteorological station that was built in the first century.

"So there really was magic here, Papa?" Adriana asked.

"Yes, mo astor. There isn't much there now but we can still feel it. White magic." As they walked over to the Doorway of the Medrese, the mages in the group felt a sudden chill, even the babies started crying.

"Jonny, what's the matter?" Archie frowned. His son's face was pale. He stepped back away from the site, holding his father's hand tightly.

"Papa, this place is creepy..." Adriana whimpered.

"Aye....." her father agreed.

"Penelope, what happened here?" Maurice asked her.

"I suspect they're sensing what happened here. This is not a very popular place for the natives or the tourists."

"What was it?"

"Well Belle, it was originally a theological school but when we were fighting for our independece from the Turks this place became a prison. Many people were hung here...even after the war was over." Penelope answered.

"Gross! Mommy, let's get outta here!" Gisella cried, tugging on her mother's arm.

"Maybe they should tear it down," Mary suggested. "I mean, if it is not a pleasant chapter in your history, there's really no need to keep it standing."
All that remained of the site was in fact the doorway, the rest of it had been destroyed.

"I think we keep it standing for its historical significance and I choose to remember those who died here."

"Let's go see something a bit more pleasant, shall we dearies?" Rumple suggested.

They walked to Tripodon Street to see the Monument to Lysikratous. While the families took pictures, Penelope gave them a brief history of the site.

"Are you serious....did someone actually practice speaking there with rocks in his mouth to help with his stutter? I saw that on The King's Speech and it made me cringe only it was marbles not stones," Marie moaned.

"There were rumors that Diogenes did practice his speeches there but that's all it has ever been proven to be...rumors. You'll find quite a lot of them in many historical places and historical figures. He....had a colorful history to say the least."

"I read that he urinated on people who insulted him, defecated in theaters and....did some other indecent...things in public," Archie said.

"Ewww! You mean he pooped and peed on people? That's 'gusting, Daddy!" Jonny cried.

"Unfortunately there are some accounts of his obscenity from other writers and orators who lived during that period," Penelope confirmed.

"Well, I guess every realm has its share of mad people. I'm sure you girls remember Lord Babineut?"

"Oh, Papa, don't remind us. That man was a pervert!" Belle exclaimed.

"And he had the foulest mouth in Avonlea," Marie added. "Especially towards the women. We were glad when you and Jonas tossed his worthless hide into prison and he ended up dying of the pox there anyway."

"He's damned lucky I wasn't around to hear his foul mouth. It would have been scrubbed raw with soap after I gave him a few whacks with my cane to teach him some manners," Rumple growled.

"Oh you would have needed to let me put in a few shots Rumple," Archie put in. Seconds later his phone beeped. He took it out and read the display, grinning. "Oh, finally! Geppetto proposed."

"And? What did she say?" Marie pressed.

"She said yes of course! How could you doubt it?"

"Looks like we have some celebrating to do, eh Rumple?"

"Of course Moe. Come on. Everyone should be at Cine Paris now."

Everyone congratulated Geppetto and Granny on their upcoming nuptials and everyone bought takeout from a nearby cafe to take into the theater with them, something that not even the closed in theatres in the States allowed. The weekly feature was La Isla Minima with the English title of Marshland but the content was not suitable for their younger children. Maurice, Penelope and Mary took the kids back to the hotel while the rest of the adults watched the movie.

"I think I love this as much as do our nights at the drive in," Belle said dreamily as she snuggled close to her husband while they sipped a milk shake they bought from the ice cream shop. "Here I
can see the stars...

"Psst...no PDAs, Papa," Bae teased from behind them.

Rumple waved him away and pulled Belle closer. "Git!"

"I'm enjoying the view more than the movie," Marie admitted as she cuddled next to her own husband.

"So am I, my goddess," he murmured.

Emma and Jeff sat a few rows back feeding each other popcorn while Snow and Regina were just content to rest after a long day of walking and their husbands had their drinks while Granny and Geppetto toasted each other over a glass of wine and discussed setting a date for their wedding.

It was after midnight when they returned to the hotel and woke their children up to take them back to their own rooms for the evening. It was only their second night Greece and they were already feeling like they were having the adventure of a lifetime.
August's concerned family holds an intervention to get him into rehab for his drinking, The Nolans, Hoods, Hatters and Scorpions have a fun filled day in Greece's adventure rooms. Marie and Belle spend the day with their father, Rumple teaches Adriana how to spin and a riot breaks out in Syntagma Square and the Scorpions get caught in the middle of the chaos!

Not wanting a scolding from their friends and in-laws for sleeping in, Archie and Marie made certain they were awake at 6 AM the following morning but Archie noticed immediately that his wife seemed bothered by something. She stirred her coffee constantly and had forgotten she'd already put too many spoonfuls of sugar in it than normal.

"There something you want to talk to me about?" he asked her.

"I'm fine," she said quickly and continued stirring her coffee. Archie took the cup and saucer out of her hands and set them down on the table.

"No, my goddess, you're not and you haven't been since we came back from the movies last night. I didn't say anything because you can't go to sleep angry any more than I can but you're not doing this again...shutting me out!" he said, his voice rising as he remembered the pain they both endured while they were dating and she hadn't told him about Gaston terrorizing her.

Are you honestly going to do this now, Marie? You've had five wonderful years of marriage with this man because you finally got your head on straight and stopped screwing things up by not being open with him.

"You're going to think it's silly...that I'm silly...!"

"Just tell me," he pleaded.

"I hate making you put the hat on," she sobbed, referring to something he said before they even started dating that it was sometimes difficult for him to take his therapist's hat off when someone came to him with an issue."

He set his own cup down and pulled her into his arms. "Darling, what is it?"

"Papa and Penelope have been practically joined at the hip since we arrived...and it bothers me!" she confessed. "He always told me how much he loved my mother...and somewhat loved Belle's mother but now....now he's starting to treat her like that...and it's as if Mama and Collette never existed. Oh God...Archie....I would die if you left me for someone else!" She buried her face in his shoulder.

"And when I saw them sitting together sofa last night....that's what went through my mind!"

"Marie....darling..." He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her tear streaked cheeks. "You are my first and my only love," he murmured. "Oh there have been women who've tried their tricks on me as you know but I'm not going anywhere. I'm yours; heart, body, and soul. We're bonded, my goddess. That means that not even death is going to part us. Maurice didn't have that with your
mother or Belle's...and it's been a long time since he's had someone in his life. Do you believe either one of them would want him to spend the rest of his life alone? What does Belle think?"

"She....she's happy about it...thinks it will be good for Papa....and I want to be happy for him, I do...."

"Darling, your support would mean a lot to him if he's considering a serious relationship with her. I'm not sure how it will work with them living in two different countries....but true love always wins in the end." He gazed at her intently as he caressed her cheek. "Are you sure that's all that's bothering you? You're not feeling overwhelmed with the kids....?"

He was concerned that she was showing signs of post partum depression, signs that normally developed shortly after childbirth and she admitted to having it after Gisella's birth and hadn't experienced it all after Jonny's because he kept a close eye on her and made sure that he was doing as much as he could to help her take care of their children. Though Mary Poppins spent a great deal of time at their house, it was mostly to clean and babysit once in a while.

"No because I have you and that's a luxury some new mothers aren't given," she said softly.

"Even when I'm so tired I can barely keep my eyes open?"

"As long as you're not too tired to cuddle at the end of the day, my Adonis."

He laughed and kissed her. "All joking aside Marie, all I'm asking is that you try to accept your father's new relationship for his sake. I don't think Penelope is the wicked stepmother type."

"I'll try," she promised. "You seemed a little tense last night yourself, especially after you talked to Geppetto. August drinking again?"

He nodded. "He was hungover yesterday. Ruby tried keeping an eye on him but he slipped away the first chance he got and went to other bars. They want to hold an intervention and they've asked me to come over to help them. Will you be okay with the kids this morning?"

"I'll be fine. We're just going to do some more sightseeing around Athens and maybe a little shopping but Gisella wants to spend at least a day in the National Gardens with all of us."

"She will. I'll join you as soon as I can."

The Hatters were in the middle of breakfast when Snow called her daughter on her cell. "Emma, what are you all planning on doing today?"

"Oh heck, I dunno Mom. You know before we got here, I thought we could plan it all out so that we didn't miss everything but now that we're actually here, I kinda like the idea of playing it by ear. Why? What do you guys have planned?"

Her mother laughed. "We haven't the faintest idea either...but...I was thinking we could have a family day...just our family."

"Just us? What about the others?"

"Honey, we have plenty of time to spend with the rest of the group but I want us to have our time too."

"Okay I'm in but I doubt you'll want to be doing too much walking since you'll be ready to pop soon."
"I can handle it."

"Hey Emma! They have these places in the city where we can go into rooms and have an adventure!" Grace exclaimed and showed her stepmother a site she pulled up on her laptop featuring several sites around Athens that housed adventure rooms with games lasting 45-60 minutes long requiring the cooperation of an entire group to solve the puzzles within and make their escape...if they could before time ran out.

"Mom, Dad, can we go, please?" Henry begged, always the adventurer.

"Hold the phone a minute gang and let me put my mother on speaker," Emma chuckled. "You hear all that, Mom?"

"It sounds like fun. Are there any age restrictions?"

"Just that kids under fourteen should have an adult with them so Mags and Neal can come along."

"You think they'll have a jail, Daddy?" Maggie asked her father.

"Yeah. The Black Queen one sounds like it. Whaddya say?"

"I wanna go!"

"All right, we'll see if we can book one of the rooms. Which one do you want to go to? There are three different sites around Athens we can go to...but they seem to be booking up fast. Maybe we better call," David suggested when he found the link to the site using his tablet.

"Even if we don't get in today, we can still go later this week."

"Granpa I wanna play the Black Queen one!"

The Black Queen was a game where her murderers had the players arrested and with her ghost as an ally, she communicates to them the clues they could use to escape using only their senses or meet the same fate.

"The Mad Scientist one sounds really cool!" Neal spoke up.

Referred to as the Original Game; the premise was that a scientist discovered the formula to separate good from evil, his personal test of the experiment a dismal failure. With his good nature as a guide, the participants had to escape the room with his formula to destroy the world within one hour or the darker side of his nature would take control and turn the group into his future test subjects.

"How about you guys play that one, we'll play the Black Queen one and we can have lunch together when we're done?" Jeff suggested.

"Great! Oh I hope we can get in today!"

"Let me give them a call and see if one is available."

The rest of the family waited anxiously while David put in calls to all three sites in Athens asking if there were time slots available for his large family to have their own adventures in the rooms. The site at Monastiraki unfortunately was booked for the day but was relieved when he called Chalandri and was informed that they had open slots due to cancellations and would be happy to book the families into the those time slots.

"Hey maybe we oughta the others in case they wanna go?" Jeff suggested when David called them
"We could but it's going to be hard for the Golds and Hoppers with the babies..." Snow pointed out.

"Mommy, it's only an hour. They can sleep through it," Neal piped up. "That's what they do most of the time anyway. Can't wait 'til they're older and can do stuff besides cry, poop an' sleep."

Emma giggled on the other end of the line. "They forget what they were like when they were babies! But that's why we're here to remind them with the embarrassing videos and pictures of course."

"Awww cut it out, Em!"

"Hey Nealio, I still got that picture of you shakin your booty in Pull Ups to You Should Be Dancing. Wanna see it?" Emma teased.

"Noooooo! Why'd ya havta take that stupid thing anyway?"

"Because you're my little brother and you looked cute. Don't worry. Gonna get plenty of blackmail material on our little sister when she's born."

"Yeah, yeah I hear ya."

"Love you too Neal. See ya later."

Though they would spend the rest of the afternoon with her parents, Emma knew the adventure rooms would appeal to the Hoods as well and called Regina immediately after speaking to her father. Regina was also playing their vacation by ear; she had enough organization and planning to do back in Storybrooke and as a special surprise for Ellie, they would wear matching outfits for the day.

"These rooms sound like a lot of fun. I can break in and out of places but solving puzzles....won't be much help there, honey," Robin confessed.

"It's okay Daddy...we can do it!" Roland indicated himself and his brother.

"I can burn us outta there," Ellie offered.

"No you can't honey because you have your bracelet on and even if you didn't what did I say about using magic around the outsiders?" Regina inquired.

The little girl stared at her shoes. "Not to."

"We can beat it without it Ellie," Jason said. "Cause we're all really smart 'bout stuff like that."

She beamed.

"Let me give them a call to see if they have any more open slots today."

They called Chalandri where the Nolans and Hatters were having their game and was told there were only two more slots left. Regina immediately booked her family for the earliest time slot and the children could barely contain their excitement that they were actually going to be solving a mystery. It would also allow the family to work together as a team, something they tried to do as often as they could at home but it was difficult with Regina and Robin's work schedules. When she called Emma and David back, they both suggested that if they all enjoyed the adventures, they would go back several more times and change up family members for an even more exciting challenge. If there was one thing the former queen enjoyed as much as her family, it was a challenge. The groups would meet up outside the building where the games would be held half an hour before the Nolans'
adventure began. Each family was booked into a different time slot even though they would be playing two different games. Regina's team decided to try the Black Queen adventure as well. Everyone got dressed, eager to start another adventure filled day.

"...Dearie, Marie's on the phone!" Rumple called out, walking into the bathroom as Belle opened the clear glass shower door, giggling to herself when she noticed her husband staring.

"Doesn't this take us back," she purred.

"Aye...." he grinned wickedly as the memory returned.

During the curse he'd referred to the women he knew as the schoolteacher Belle French as his 'least favorite pain in the ass'. She'd call him every morning at 6 AM to complain about something in her apartment that needed fixing and she had the most issues with her apartment out of all of his tenants. Most of the time it was her air conditioning that she had an issue with but on that particular day she was demanding that he fix her broken shower door.

"Well, if it isn't my least favorite pain in the ass," he drawled. "What can I do for you, Miss French?"

"You can come over here and fix this goddam shower door that's what!"

"A little testy are we?" he chuckled.

"Oh you bet, you slumlord...I can't even open it now and I am NOT using the sink to take a bath!"

"Now, now, dearie, no need to get insulting," he clicked at her. "I'll see what I can do . . . later. I do have a child to look after, you know."

"Yes I know but you'd better come over and look at it otherwise I am calling the sheriff and reporting you for being a slumlord," she threatened.

Take that you arrogant ass! she thought.

"Well...when can I expect you?" she pressured.

Gold sighed. "Very well, dearie. I'll send someone over as soon as I can."

"What's the matter Gold, afraid to face little ole me yourself?"

"Hardly. But I need to get my son ready for school . . . and he doesn't always get up when I call him."

"All right but I want this door fixed...immediately!"

"I'll be sending Mr. Dove within the hour."

"Good!"

Unfortunately for him, Dove was having surgery that day and he'd been forced to go over to Belle's house himself. They'd never met in person because of the curses, only spoke on the phone and his image of her was a pock marked, grey haired spinster, not the beauty that had learned to love a beast...

"...Ummm...nice try, dearie, but putting yourself on display won't get me to replace your shower door."
She glared at him and pointed at it. "Well, you're going to have to now, won't you?" she asked sarcastically.

Flushing, he went and grabbed a towel from the closet and tossed it to her. "Godsake, will you cover yourself?" Then he turned away and punched in the number to Leroy the handiman. "Hello, Leroy? This is Mr. Gold . . ."

He told Leroy the problem and gave him the address and told him to charge it to his account. "And I need this fixed now!" he ordered.

"Finally!" Belle grumbled. "And you can add the air conditioning to that too while you're at it!"

"Whatever, dearie! Now if you're through putting on a show, I have to be going. Have a nice day!" he snapped.

"Asshole!" Belle hissed and retreated to her bedroom to dress.

"...He-llooooo!" they heard Marie's voice call out impatiently. "Do NOT I repeat, do NOT start doing anything with ME on the phone!"

"Calm down, dearie. And don't ye be tellin' me ye wouldnae be starin if it was YOUR husband comin' outta the shower?"

"I would...before I dragged him back in it and had my wicked way with him."

"Marie! TMI!" Belle exclaimed.

"Tell you what, sis. Remember my birthday? You DO owe your husband for that, don't you?"

Rumple smirked at his wife. "And you haven't quite paid me back in full for that, have you, mo chori?"

"No..."

"Let's make a deal, sweetheart?"

"Marie, can you call me back?"

Her sister was laughing on the other end of the line. "You've got three hours..." she teased.

"Long enough. Talk to you later!" Belle said quickly and hung up the phone then pulled her husband into her arms for a kiss. "I think three hours is plenty of time for me to repay my debt, don't you?" she cooed, as she began unbuttoning his pajama top.

"And.....once we get back home, ye have to make me some of your Golden Delight cake," he propositioned as he led her into the bedroom pulled her down onto the bed with him.

"Deal!"

"Now then....ye need to finish unbuttoning the Gold One...and repay a wee bit of your debt," he murmured as he pushed the straps of her nightgown down and kissed her ardently.

"Oh I can do that," she sighed softly.

And for the next three hours the beauty happily repaid part of her debt to her gentle beast.
Geppetto paced the floor of their suite nervously while they waited for Archie to arrive. He became more convinced that his son's behavior was out of control when they returned home from the cinema and discovered him lying on the sofa in the sitting room passed out, a bottle of whiskey on the floor by his outstretched hand, claiming he'd only been celebrating his father's upcoming nuptials.

"You could have found another way!" Geppetto cried. "This must stop, Pinocchio. It must!"

He and Ruby put the young man to bed but Geppetto found sleep difficult that night and Granny, concerned for her fiance, stayed awake with him, offering him as much comfort as she could. She remembered spending many sleepless nights wondering what else she could do to curb her own granddaughter's wild ways but unlike August, Ruby made the decision to become a more responsible adult on her own and she couldn't have been more proud.

"I'm sorry Beverly. We should be talking about the wedding too but..."

She reached out and clasped his hand in hers. "This has to be settled first," she said softly.

Geppetto breathed a sigh of relief when Archie arrived and hugged him.

"I want this to work."

"It will."

"I'll go get August up," Ruby offered.

The moment the young writer walked into the room and saw his father, Granny and Archie all of them holding stacks of notecards in their hands, he glared at them. "Papa!"

"August, would you sit down please?" Archie inquired softly. Ruby took her place on the sofa beside her grandmother.

"This is crazy!"

"Son, sit down." Geppetto pleaded.

He sank down into the chair. "You guys are making too much of a big deal outta this! I got drunk last night, so what?"

It was much more than that and all of them knew it. Before they returned home from the theater, Geppetto pulled Jeff and Emma aside to ask them if there had been any legal incidents involving his son. They hadn't had any problems with him recently but when she called the station and asked Arthur to run his name through the system it came back with a recent citation for a DUI that he was still making payments on and hadn't told anyone about. There had also been an incident in a bar in Boston where he'd almost gotten in a brawl.

"I love you, Pinocchio but you don't understand what you're doing to yourself, to us, every time you do this!" Geppetto wept. He looked into his son's eyes as he continued to speak. "We used to spend so much time together; going fishing at the lake, tinkering with my old clocks, making puppets....we never do this anymore. When you come home it's late in the morning and you have no idea where you are or who we are. And it hurts me to see my boy looking at me, talking to me like a complete stranger."

"Papa, I don't..."

"You do...and you've been hiding things from me...you're paying a fine for drunk driving. Do you
not understand what you risk when you get behind the wheel drunk? You risk harming yourself...and someone else! The bar in Boston? What do you think it would have done to me to get the call that my son was in the hospital...or dead?"

"Papa..."

"I want my son back but I can't have him as long as this holds you in it's grip." He held up the whiskey bottle.

"Papa, I've wanted to stop...but when I try....I just can't. I keep thinking about all those rejection letters I keep getting and I just want to forget..." August lowered his head in shame, his father's words starting to sink in.

"Don't you think your drinking isn't affecting your writing? It is. I see you so many times sitting at your typewriter with that bottle beside you. It doesn't make you write better. It keeps you from writing. Your wastebasket is overflowing with blank pages. When you aren't drinking, you can spend hours typing away....I've read some of what you've written and it's wonderful Pinocchio!"

"If it's so damn great why do they keep rejecting me, Papa?"

"Because they don't know good writing when they read it. I believe in you. You can be the great writer you want to be but you cannot give up on yourself and drink to forget. You have to keep trying!"

Archie watched his best friend with pride. This was one of the most difficult moments of Geppetto's life but he was handling it beautifully and he finally seemed to be reaching his stubborn son.

"Papa, I don't know what to do....I can't stop on my own," August sobbed.

"Then let us help you! This is why we're all here! We want to!" Ruby spoke up.

"But...Granny...you and Papa want to get married. This....will just delay everything!"

"August, right now getting you better is our main concern," Granny told him. "We'll wait as long as it takes."

"Okay....I'll do it...whatever it takes. I'll do it. Papa, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!" August threw his arms around his father and sobbed into his shoulder.

"It's going to be all right, son. We'll fix it together..."

"How?"

"You've taken the first step by admitting that you have a problem and are willing to resolve it," Archie said. "You have many options open to you; counseling, medication, support groups...."

"Can't you be my counselor?"

"I would August but I'm not a licensed addiction counselor, at least not yet. I have contacted a Doctor Edgar Boyar in Portland and he would like to take your case."

"I don't know....an outsider...?"

"We have to try, Pinocchio. Let the man help you," his father pleaded.

"Okay."
"I've already called Neverland and they're going to fly us back home today."

"Papa! You've been looking forward to this vacation!"

"Did you not hear what we said? Getting you better is our main concern right now because the next vacation we go on, we want to do it as a family....a healthy, happy, family." Granny argued.

He buried his face in his hands. "Our vacation is ruined because of me!"

"Please stop thinking like that, son! It won't help you!"

He sighed resignedly. "All right Papa."

The next thing he knew he was being pulled into his father's arms with Ruby and Granny joining him. All the years he lived with his father it had just been the two of them..and Archie when he wasn't being called to other people across the realms. They were a family, strange as it was and it was only now that he realized how much he wanted that back again.

As August was packing his things, the others searched the room, discovering bottles of whiskey hidden in several places, including the inside of the commode much to his father's horror. They dumped the contents out in the sink and threw them in the trash, praying it would be the last time they would be forced to do so.

While they were doing so, there came a knock at the door, and Rumple's voice called, "Archie, do you have a minute? I need to ask you something about places to...err...renew wedding vows and such."

"Ummm...yes...come on in."

"Might as well tell him Archie. He's gonna find out soon enough," August said when he emerged from his room carrying his luggage.

"Tell me what?" asked the sorcerer, entering the room. His eyes widened as he saw the luggage. "Are ye going somewhere, August?"

"Home...we're going home. I...I'm going into rehab."

Archie hadn't intended to discuss August's problem with his brother-in-law, feeling that if the family wanted the others to know, it was their choice to tell them.

Ruby pulled the bag of empty bottles of the trashcan and tried to tie it up before Rumple saw it but she was too late.

Rumple digested this information calmly. Since he was friends with Emma and Jeff, he had known of some of August's nocturnal activities. "That will kill ye quicker than any curse, dearie. And Greece really is not the place for a recovering alcoholic. I'm glad you made the decision to get help. It's not an easy one. Many alcoholics never have the courage to do so. My papa didn't."

"Your father...?"

"Aye. He was addicted to the bottle and to gambling. Put my mama and me when I was a little lad, no older than Roland, through hell," Rumple said, his eyes darkening with remembered sorrow.

Archie knew talking about his father was difficult for Rumple. They'd had many secret sessions about it, most of them where Rumple recalled the pain of dealing with an alcoholic relative.
"Did he....beat you?" August asked nervously.

They sat back down on the sofa, Geppetto relieved that Rumple was willing to share his own experience, hoping it would give his son more confidence that he was making the best decision to get help.

"Oh yes. With anything he could lay his bloody hands on when he was drunk," the other man said bitterly. "A belt, a switch, a rope, the spoke from my mama's spinning wheel . . .a porridge stirrer . . ." He sat down at the table, feeling a shudder run through him. "Once he dragged me outta bed when he came home from the tavern and whipped me for not having a light in the window for him to see his way home by . . .the lamp had gone out while I was sleeping. But it really didna matter, when he was drunk he was mean as the devil, and any excuse was enough for him to hurt me . . ."

"I....I could never do that!" August cried though he had come close in Boston.

"What he's trying to say son is that there may come a time when you could." Geppetto said softly.

"Could ye no'?" Rumple hissed. "For some the drink makes one giddy and silly, but others . . .others it brings out the beast within them, and sets it free . . .and when it rampages . . .people around him suffer. My papa didn't just beat me . . .many times he beat my mama too, especially when she tried to protect me from him."

"Please, listen to him August!" Ruby pleaded.

"That night in Boston...I got in a fight....and I hit a man.....and I didn't remember doing it!"

Rumple closed his eyes, recalling a time when he was five and had hidden in the wool shed and Malcolm had beaten his mama instead because she wouldn't tell him where Rumple was hiding. "I could hear her screaming, she fought him, kept him from getting to me," he whispered. "And then . . .there was silence. I was petrified, but I crept out to see . . .he was passed out in the bed, and she was lying on the floor . . .her face all bloody. I thought she was dead at first, but when I put a wet cloth to her she came around . . .he'd broken her nose and cut her lip . . ."

Rumple nodded grimly. "My papa sometimes said he never remembered hitting me or my mama too, the morning after. And he'd plead with us to forgive him and promise to never do it again . . .But the next day or the day after he'd be back at the tavern, playing cards and drinking . . .and it would begin again. It never stopped."

"I don't want to end up like that, Papa...I don't...I'm NOT going to drink again. I'm NOT!"

Rumple clasped his hand. "You say that now, boy, but can you resist the temptation when it sits in front of you? This is what you need to ask yourself. Because drinking destroys not only you, but those around you. My mama died still praying for my papa to quit . . .died along with my baby sister of a fever, because he was so drunk we couldn't afford to pay an apothecary to buy medicine . . .he drank away all the money he made . . .oh and he cried and was all self-pitying later but he wouldna give up the bottle even then . . .not even then . . ."

"Aye, you can do what I could not. My papa made me all kinds of promises, on her grave he swore he would quit, but he broke every single one, until finally he left me with some spinsters and ran away from his creditors and never came back. And I was both sorry and not sorry to see him go."

"We're going to be leaving today. Would you and Archie be able to say goodbye for us?" Geppetto asked.

"Yes. And I'll keep quiet about the real reason you're leaving. Until you choose to speak of it."
"The only other person who knows is Marie and my wife won't say anything," Archie said.

As his assistant, Marie logged all of his handwritten notes into his laptop every evening, knowing how important it was to her husband to maintain doctor-patient confidentiality.

"I know it's not the main reason you stopped by and...it wasn't easy for you to tell us what you...went through...but we appreciate it Rumple," Granny said.

He smiled at her. "What I lived through during my childhood with that bastard...it affected me for years...half of the reasons why I became the Dark One had to do with what he did to me...and the wounds he left here--" he put a hand on his heart--"were worse than the ones that had been left on the outside. It took me years to trust anyone again, cursed or not. And it's also why I don't drink much, and I will never countenance abusing women or children. Ever."

He eyed August sharply. "And while ye are in rehab, I woud like ye to think about this. Your drinking carrie a price...but it's not one only you pay. Your nearest and dearest pay too...every time you lift a glass. And while ye may feel like going to hell in a handbasket, remember that doesna give ye the right to drag your family down with ye."

"No...." He lowered his head.

"And should ye break your word to them...and I find out...ye'll deal with ME." He warned. "And ye willna like the consequences, dearie. I may be a white mage now, but I'm no pansy arse. And there are worse punishments than having yer heart crushed, d' ye ken?"

"Yes.. I'm not going to break my word."

"Don't. Because nowhere does evil enter so readily as with the broken promise. And I won't like punishing ye, son, anymore than I do my own kids, but rest assured I will do so rather than let ye destroy the lives of the folks around ye. Ask Bae if ye don't believe me."

"I don't want to risk your wrath, believe me."

The door opened and Adriana came in. "Papa, Brave's over, now can you teach me to spin?"

She ran over to where Rumple was sitting, and hugged him. "Aye, mo astor, I promised ye."

Archie laughed. "We can talk about the rest later...if you want."

"And you never break your promises," she said.

"No," he agreed. "Yes, later would be good."

"Well I'll see you later. Marie's with Moe and Penelope and I want to make sure everything went well."

Adriana turned to August then, and in one of her periodically errie flashes of insight, said, "I found this on the beach. It's a sea stone...something with a bit of magic in it. It'll help you if you hold it and whisper your troubles to it. You're gonna need it." She pressed it into the writer's hand. "To help keep the frownies away."

"Thank you honey...."

It was a shimmering agate of striated colors--aqua, ivory, gold and green mingled.

Rumple put an arm about her. "The lass is a Healer born, and the gifts o' the spirit call to her."
Archie hugged his friend, Granny, Ruby and August. "Dr. Boyar is going to be keeping in touch with me regarding your progress. I'll set up my own sessions with you about...your other issue."

"Thanks Archie."

They knew the little Healer couldn't take away years of alcohol abuse with magic but she'd given him a way to heal his mind and soul.

"Are they goin' home, Papa?" Adriana asked curiously.
"Yes, we're going home, little one," Geppetto answered softly.

"Why?"

"Well...ahhh...I'm not feeling well...and..." August trailed off.

"So you need to go home and get better?" she clarified.

How did one explain his condition to a child so young?

"Ummm...yeah..."

"Okay. You listen to the doctor an' get well. My mama says you're suppost to do that. And remember to rub the sea glass everyday. It has the heart of the ocean in it and will make you happy."

For some reason she knew the rock was important. In the same way she knew that the rock was meant for her to give away to someone who needed it.

August kneeled down and hugged the little girl. "You know, you're a really special little girl.....and I really think this can help me."

She nodded. "It can. It's full of love. I felt it here," she cupped her hand over her heart. "It's why I picked it up. But it's not meant to stay with me. It told me I would know who needs it. And when I saw you--I knew it's for you, Auggie." She kissed him gently. "Have a safe trip."

"Thanks kid."

He understood now why Rumple's nickname for her was "my treasure" in Gaelic. And he hoped one day to meet an adult just like her.

Then she pulled free of him and scrambled onto her father's lap, all impatient toddler again, and implored, "Papa, can we spin NOW?"

"Better get going Rum....at least she won't rain hail down on you if she doesn't get her way!" Archie joked.

"No . . .but she'll make me feel guilty as anything," his brother-in-law giggled. "Right, minx?"

"Uh-huh...and can I have a happy face wheel. Please?"

"Yes . . .now how the heck am I gonna manage that?" he muttered, picking her up.

"I can do it..."

"Perhaps we can put 'em along the outside rim?" he mused.

"And I want to make happy stuff for the people in the market since a lot of em have frownies now."
"Aye, we shall do so, dearie," her father agreed.

When they returned to the room, Adriana hopped onto the bench. "I'm ready!"

Rumple tapped the wheel, shrinking it so she could use it. He picked up some raw carded wool out of a basket. "Now, dearie, ye start like this--and feed the wool onto the wheel by twisting it, while ye pump the treadle with yer foot . . ." He gave her the wool.

He could recall showing Bae how to do this also, but Bae had been older about six, since back then the only wheels small enough for a child to use were too big for younger children.

"Papa, that treacle thing is too far away for my foot to reach it."

"Aye, I see." he muttered, and adjusted the wheel so she could reach it, thinking that his daughter had inherited his small frame.

"Umm....I think I got it stuck," she said sheepishly, indicating the wool.

"That happens a lot your first time," he said. "Ye untangle it like this, by spinning backwards." He showed her how to reverse the tension on the wheel to free the trapped wool.

"Aye, but dinna go too fast. Remember, slow and steady."

She slammed her foot down on the treadle, forgetting in her excitement her father's warning and the wheel began spinning rapidly.

"Lookit, I'm spinning!"

"No! It's too fast!" he cried, and sure enough the thread became tangled halfway through because she couldn't maintain the tension.

"I broke it!" she wailed.

"Now don't cry, dearie. This happens all the time with new spinners," he said patiently, and helped her untangle the thread. "Start again, remember to twist the wool and spin slowly this time, Adriana, ye willna be able to go fast lke I do because ye aren't used to it . . ."

"But I wanna be good like you."

"I've been a spinner for hundreds of years, lass. And when you do something that long . . . it becomes like second nature to ye. I dinna even haveto think about it anymore. Unless I'm teaching. And practice akes perfect."

"Okay," she started spinning again more slowly this time, not forgetting to twist the wool as she spun.

Good! D' ye see how different it feels?"

"Uh-huh. But this wool looks so . . . dull...are we gonna color it like you do with Easter eggs?"

"Yes, I can show you how to dye it properly at home, but for now . . . I can do so with magic."

"Why cause we need a lot of stuff to do it?"

"Yes, we do," he replied. "And a place to let the thread dry and so forth. Even modern dying
techniques take time we don't have here. So . . . what color do ye want?"

"Ummmm...black...and we need yellow for the happy faces."

She grinned. "I wanna make a flag that says Keep Calm and Be Happy."

He changed the colors of wool in the basket with a flick of his hand. "Then ye best start spinning, dearie. Because after this, ye must sew what ye've spun."

"I can?"

"Aye, I shall mark the cloth for yer flag and show ye," he said. "Tis a lot of work to make something, isn't it?"

"Yeah. No wonder you spend so much time in there mama gets worried you're gonna turn into Rip Van Winkle."

Rumple laughed. "Were we back in the Enchanted Forest, ye'd be learning to sew a sampler like all the lasses did back then--be ye peasant or queen, all ladies could sew . . .and so could some men too. In my village, all the men could knit, and did so to pass time when watchin' the sheep. I taught Bae to knit when he was a little older than you."

"Why doesn't he do it now?"

"He could, if he hasna forgot, but he likes to draw better and . . . some people here think only girls knit."

"Girls and boys can do anything they want to, right Papa?"

"Yes, they can. But some people have silly notions and try and say that only boys can do something--like be a soldier and girls are only good to knit and take care o' children."

"Hmph," she snorted. "You do girly stuff like wash clothes, do dishes, cook and change diapers."

"Aye, and there's no shame in that. I was also a soldier once. You do what you must to make your life better. Work is work, no matter who does it."

"Well I hope Neal's gonna be like that and not a lazy butt."

Rumple chuckled. "Oh, I don't think you'll have to worry about that, dearie. His papa does chores around the house just like I do."

"Yeah but Neal says he sucks at laundry cause he bleached one of the minions after it got dirty and I had to fix it."

"Everyone does something like that when they first learn. Ye ask yer brother about the time he put a red kerchief in with our white underclothes and turned everything pink! Only he tried to make me blame yer mama for it because he was being a scamp!"

Adriana giggled. "Didja run around wearing pink underwear?"

"Yer mama bleached it back, though once I found out what he'd done, I made HIM wear pink underwear for three days!"

"Good!"
"Hope Mama's having a good time with Pappy and chases away Aunt Marie's frownies."

"I think she is. Now let me see you spin some more, mo astor."

"Okay."

He was glad his daughter wished to learn the family trade, so to speak, recalling how he had tried to teach Milah to sew and spin when they first were married, but she had soon grown bored with the repetition involved and had he not sewn several smocks and blankets for the baby and knitted caps and booties, poor Bae would have been naked. Milah had barely the patience to mend a blouse or hem a skirt and her spinning had been abysmal, because she refused to concentrate. She had been one of the laziest women ever, accustomed as she was the daughter of a well-off smith to having servants to do for her while growing up.

"Mama can't spin at all, can she?"

"She knows how, but she prefers to let me do it since I'm better at it than she is."

"Maybe we can make something for her too."

"We could. Perhaps a pretty scarf or kerchief." he suggested.

"Yeah..she gets cold in the winter."

In her mind she was already planning to make something for her father and Bae too.

Maurice was overjoyed when Belle invited him and Penelope to spend the day with her, Marie and their children. He'd noticed that Marie wasn't happy he was spending so much time with the history professor and it pained him. He'd loved her mother and Belle's but from the moment he met Penelope Palakas, he started thinking about finally settling down again. He was hoping this day with his daughters would help ease some of the tension and it had been quite a while since he'd had a day with them.

They met up with his daughters in the National Gardens, the largest park in the city with Mary in tow to help them with the children.

"Where are Rum and Archie?"

"Rumple's doing some spinning with Adriana for the flea market...Bae and his friends are with the others. They're going to those adventure rooms Grace heard about on the internet," Belle replied.

"Oh those are exciting but I couldn't escape any of them!" Penelope confessed.

"And Archie?" he inquired of Marie.

"He's taking a conference call."

"On his vacation?"

"You know my husband, Papa. He always makes time for his patients," she said.

"That's sweet of him, dear. Not many doctors will do that," Penelope said. "They pass them off to the on call doctors."

"We do have Mina Harker and Jack Seward but there are some patients who are more comfortable with Archie." She lifted AJ out of the stroller and set him down on the blanket she set up and put
Maureen down beside him. As soon as the triplets were put down, AJ and Maureen wanted to be closer to little Bobby and AJ kept trying to grab at the grass.

"We stopped by several delis and picked up lunch for all of us. I hope you like it," Penelope said nervously.

"That's so sweet of you Penelope," Belle said cheerfully.

"Yes, thank you," Marie added distractedly, wishing her husband were with her for moral support. The moment she'd seen her father approach them holding Penelope's hand it made her uneasy.

"Mommy, can we go play hide and seek?" Jonny asked, pointing at Gisella and Kyria.

"Yes, but you stay where I can see you."

"These gardens are so beautiful!" Belle began snapping pictures on her phone. "Papa you stand over there with Penelope and I'll get a picture!"

"Umm..all right."

She had the couple pose in front of a gazebo surrounded by flowerbeds, his arm around Penelope's waist. Though it was still very early in their relationship, she could feel the bond growing between them, a bond as strong as the one she had with Rumple and her sister had with Archie. She recalled her husband telling her years before that she'd been able to sense it between Marie and Archie before they did because anyone who knew true love recognized it when they saw it.

"You look wonderful. Let me take another one!"

"Belle, please!"

"Come on, Papa!"

"Oh, all right."

"Now let me take one of you and your girls Maurice," Penelope offered.

He was more than happy to pose for a picture with his two daughters, his pride and joy. Both of them had been limited on what they could do back in their world but in this one they had so many more opportunities open to them. Now they were both successful career women with the best husbands he could ask for and they'd given him beautiful grandchildren to spoil, then send home.

Maurice took the camera from her. "Now it's your turn."

Penelope was nervous about posing for a family photograph, especially with Marie, who did not seem pleased that she was there at all. Maurice wanted to talk with his daughter about it. Now she believed it was time to do so. "Marie, may I have a few moments alone?" she said after their picture was taken.

"I....all right," she sighed when Belle gave her a Look.

"Come on, Papa. Your grandchildren want to play," she said as she led her father away. He sat on the blanket beside her and picked up Victoria and Valora. "Hello, my little poppets. Pappy's here."

Both babies snuggled into his shoulder, blowing bubbles at him and little Bobby kept poking at his arm from his mother's embrace. "You know this is one of the times when I had arms like a spider so I could hold all my grandchildren," he joked.
"Don't tempt my husband. He would do that," Belle laughed.

"That he would."

"...Marie, I know this is difficult for you...seeing me with your father..." Penelope began.

"How much did he tell you about my mother?" the younger woman demanded.

"That they were childhood sweethearts but he married Belle's mother to please his family."

"He did, but he still saw my mother. Collette knew but she did as most women did then when their husbands strayed..turned a blind eye...even when she found out Maman was carrying me while she was pregnant with Belle."

Marie looked away with tears in her eyes. "Until the day she died, Maman thought there would come a day when Papa would divorce Collette, set her up comfortably, marry Maman and legitimize me."

"He did legitimize you."

"It didn't matter. People still called me a bastard and for so long I was angry with him because he gave Maman false hope...but he told me he loved her the most and no one could ever replace her in his heart." Marie sobbed.

"I'm not trying to make him forget her, Marie. There is a place in his heart that will always belong to Jeannette and Collette."

"What about you? Does a part of your heart belong to Sandro's father?"

Penelope snorted in disgust. "No, honey. I don't know if Sandro told you but Vasili was no father at all."

"He briefly mentioned him....that you were divorced and he died when Sandro was twelve."

"He was a possessive, abusive bastard who died in a cheap hotel room in bed with a prostitute after overdosing on cocaine!"

"Oh my God...I am so sorry."

"I was a stupid sixteen year old who thought she was in love and let him sweet talk me into bed...and got pregnant with Sandro because he didn't use anything. But, Sandro was the only good thing that came out of that fiasco. I've been....careful since my divorce about who I date."

Marie nodded sympathetically. "It was hard for me to love anyone after my fiance was poisoned...but Archie...he never gave up on me even when I gave him so many reasons to want to."

"I don't know how all of this will work out Marie but all I'm asking is that you give us chance? Will you do that?"

"I can. I'm sorry I've been such a bitch and having been in a similar situation....I wouldn't begrudge anyone wanting to find a good man."

Penelope embraced her. "You certainly found one in Doctor Hopper."

Marie smiled. "I can't wait to renew our vows."

"I'm looking forward to seeing it, the pictures I saw were beautiful."
Moe breathed a sigh of relief when they returned, both of them smiling and even laughing together. Belle squeezed her father's hand. "You see, Papa. I told you everything would work out."

He was grateful for that and suspected to help break the tension Penelope had told Marie about her horrible marriage and how eerily similar it was to Marie's situation with Gaston. When they returned to the picnic spot, AJ and Maureen were eager to see their mother.

"I wish I'd been able to bake my Golden Delight cake," Belle said as she served everyone slices of chocolate cake her father bought at a bakery in the Plaka.

"Well you can when we get to Italy, poppet because we're staying in a villa but I have a feeling you and Rumple will be fighting over the kitchen soon..."

"He does let me cook but God, Papa, I could take the broom to him sometimes when he gets upset if I move something," Belle giggled. "For example, he has his cooking spoons in a certain order on the pegs and I switched a few of them after I washed them and he stood there and put them back...even put up labels for what went where!"

"Surely you were used to that from being his chatelaine?"

"Oh I was....which was why I tried to avoid the kitchen like the plague but now..." She smirked. "He even threatened to make a his and hers kitchen space!"

"And he would too!"

"Thankfully Archie isn't that bad!" Marie exclaimed.

"Did I hear my name mentioned?"

Marie turned around to see her husband standing there holding Jonny with Gisella and Kyria beside him. Penelope snapped a picture with her phone.

"When did you sneak in?" Marie inquired softly.

"Daddy gave away my hiding place!" Gisella pouted.

"I didn't mean to Princess but you didn't hide well enough."

"Yup. Woulda found ya anyway," Jonny agreed. Gisella blew a raspberry at him. Marie handed her children to Penelope and Moe to hold and Archie set his son back on his feet. Archie wrapped his arms around his wife and kissed her gently.

"How did it go," he whispered.

"Everything's fine," she assured him with a smile.

"MAMA, MAMA, LOOK. I MADE SOMETHING!" they heard Adriana yelling as she ran toward them while her father struggled to keep up.

"Dearie, will ye please slow down 'fore ye make me keel over!" Rumple panted.

When the triplets started walking, he thought, gasping, he might need a wheelchair to keep up!

"C'mon Papa shake a leg," she demanded impatiently.

"Never ye mind, minx!" he puffed. Damn, he hated getting old!
"What did you make honey?" Belle asked softly.

"I made a happy flag!" she boasted and held it out for her mother. "And I spun the wool all by myself and Papa colored it for me!"

Rumple set his hands on his daughter's shoulders. "She takes to spinning like a duck t'water, Belle."

"And you're surprised, Rumple?" Moe teased.

"No, not at all."

"You think that'll help stop all the frownies here?" Adriana asked her.

"We can hope it will help, dearie."

Little did they know that unrest was brewing in the streets and later on that evening some of them would find themselves directly in its path.

In Chalandri, the Hoods, Hatters, Nolans and the Scorpions were having a fabulous time in the adventure rooms. The game masters were pleased to see so many enthusiastic people eager to try their hand at escaping their complex puzzles.

"We only have a thirty percent escape rate," one said before they began.

"Well...those statistics might have to go up a bit," Emma said with a smirk. "Right, guys?"

"Oh yeah. We've gotten out of crazier places than this, eh Wraith?" Bae asked.

"You bet, Fire!"

"C'mon! I wanna get started!" Henry grouched.

The Nolans and Hatters headed for the Black Queen and Original Game rooms while the Hoods and the Scorpions waited patiently for their turn, the mages taking a solemn vow that they would not use their abilities in the rooms no matter how difficult the puzzles were. However, in their training with Rumple they'd been taught various techniques to solve them without magic. There were many puzzles in each room and everyone became stumped on a few of them, even when they were working together as a team.

"Would you like a hint?" the game master asked when Neal was becoming frustrated with his puzzle.

"Yes please."

"Okay. Listen carefully." The game master gave the toddler a small clue to help him locate the object he needed to complete his puzzle. "Good luck."

"Thank you!"

"David...we only have ten minutes left!" Snow cried, all of them excited that they'd made it that far. They finally located the evil scientist's potion and the exit, or at least they believed they did.

"Daddy, hurry. I don't wanna be a lab rat!"

"I'm tryin, I'm tryin!" David huffed.
"Daddy, I got it...I know what to do!"

"Two minute warning, buddy!"

"I got it!" he insisted.

"Thirty seconds!" Snow called out.

"I got it! C'mon let's gooooon!" the toddler cheered and the family happily raced for the exit. The game master awaited them at the exit. "Congratulations! You all did an excellent job and look at that...two seconds to spare!"

"Close call!" David joked while they posed for a picture and wrote a small message on the red wall behind them: We had a wonderful time and would love to come back soon. Mary, David and Neal Nolan!

In the Black Queen room, the Hatters were making the most of their sixty minutes. They started out in a makeshift jail cell but had been able to find the clues to move on to the next portion of the game quickly but their current puzzles left them scratching their heads, wondering how they were relevant.

"It's a red herring hon," Jeff said.

"Well it's an annoying one!" she complained. They'd been working on the puzzle for ten minutes and she was about to give up when Grace and Henry finally solved it and it allowed them to go on to the next portion.

"Thanks kids."

"No sweat Mom!" Henry said with a grin.

They had fifteen minutes left when they reached the final portion of the game and while the rest of her family was still working on another puzzle, little Maggie worked on finding the exit. "Hey, c'mon! We can get out now!" she called out.

"All right! Great job, Mags!" Grace hi-fived her.

The game master stood dumbfounded as the group emerged from the room. "That is one of the fastest escapes I've ever seen in that room!" she exclaimed.

"Umm...well...me and my husband, we're cops back home," Emma said. "And solving crimes is what we do but you had us stumped on a few things in there!" she said while they posed for their picture and immortalized their visit with their own personal message on the red wall.

"Hah! Betcha we can get out faster!" Robin bragged when they approached.

"You're on. How much?" Jeff demanded. Emma swatted at him.

"Hatter....!"

"Ummm...the losers have to buy our dinner for two nights?" Robin wagered.

"And we get to pick the place," Regina supplied.

"You're on Queenie but you're not gonna make it," Emma teased.

"We'll see about that Sheriff. Never underestimate the Queen."
"You think you're gonna get away from the mad scientist?" Neal asked Bae.

"Dunno but we're gonna try."

The Hoods and the Scorpions marched off to their rooms, knowing they had a tough task ahead of them. Bae and his friends surveyed their surroundings. Though all of them were good at breaking in and out of places, many of the puzzles in their room required a lot more brainpower than muscle power.

"It's not like free climbing out of the school with a kid on your back, eh Fire?" Ewan asked.

"I still can't believe you guys did that. It was awesome!" Bobby crowed.

"Yeah but those idiots Eti and Savannah should've smoked their weed somewhere else!" Kat muttered.

"This guy reminds me of Whale on crack!" Bae joked.

"Yo...bro...time's wastin!" Bobby gave him a small punch on his arm and pointed at the clock. Bae had been too busy talking instead of focusing on his puzzle and it cost the group six minutes.

"Lock picking! Now this I can do....damn...I don't have my picks!" Kat whined.

"Gotta improvise sister," Becky said and the two of them got to work on the lock.

"God this feels like Saw," Andi groaned.

"Do you wanna play a game?" Bae teased in Jigsaw's voice.

"Quit it! Breakin my concentration here!"

"YO! Ten minutes guys!" Bobby shouted.

The group searched frantically for the final clue that would help them escape the room, hearing the mad scientist taunting them. When they looked up at the clock again time had run out.

"Awww sheeeewwww!" Bae groaned.

"Great. Now we're lab rats," Ewan muttered.

The group walked out of the room with their heads hung low, their triumphant friends snickering.

"Squeak squeak!" Neal and Maggie mocked.

They still managed a smile when they posed for a picture and wrote their names on the wall. "We're comin back again!" Bae said determinedly.

"How bout some cheese, rats?" Maggie giggled.

"Awww shuddup!" they groaned.

In the Black Queen room Regina's team had an equally difficult task ahead of them if they wanted to beat Emma and Jeff's time. Normally impatient when they couldn't get anything to go their way, Regina and Ellie managed to maintain their composure for most of the puzzles and had even solved a few of them together. They'd placed the boys on lock and key detail, knowing Robin and Roland had the most experience at both.
"One time when we was breakin in to this castle Daddy had me crawl in a window an steal a key off some guy's table while he was sleepin. He snored really loud...and he farted too!" Roland said.

"Gross!" Jason held his nose.

"Did he light it on fire like some stupid guy did once?" Ellie asked him.

"Nah."

"Robin have you been watching those stupid You Tube videos with our daughter around?" Regina demanded.

"Ummm....yeah...but I swear I thought I put my screen down before she saw it!"

"Don't do it again or I am making you sleep in the yard...without a tent mister!"

"Mommy, I'm ready for the next puzzle!" Ellie called out.

"I'm coming sweetie. Roland, time check!"

"Twenty minutes, Mommy!"

"Damn, five minutes, let's hustle!"

"Coming up on fifteen Mommy!"

Robin was scrambling to find the last clue that would help them escape. As it came closer to their time limit the family started searching the room together and finally the door opened at fifteen minutes and thirty seconds.

"Awe crap, we lost!" Jason groaned.

"Nuh uh we got out!" Ellie reminded him.

"Yeah but we still gotta buy them dinner."

"Ahh so what...least we got out!"

That's the spirit honey, Regina thought proudly.

"That was close, Mom!" Henry exclaimed when the others exited the room beaming with pride that their efforts had proven succesful. The group posed for their own pictures and wrote their names on the wall beside the Hatters.

"What's wrong with you guys?" Jason asked the disappointed Scorpions.

"They didn't get out!" Maggie bragged. "They're lab rats."

"Yeah, yeah rub it in half-pint!" Ewan grumbled.

"We're gonna try again before we leave," Bae said firmly.

Regina was smiling.

"All right Queenie, I know that look. You're plotting something. Now out with it!" Emma demanded.
"I'm thinking we should have something like this back in Storybrooke and even make it part of the summer festival."

"Oh cool! Can we Auntie Gina?" Maggie pleaded, giving her a puppy dog look.

"We certainly can honey. I'm going to have them get started when we get back."

"Yay!" the kids cheered.

Their hosts were amazed by this group. They'd never seen a more intelligent group of toddlers and adults and were looking forward to having them return.

When they were all walking back from the restaurant they saw a large crowd of people marching down Syntagma Square carrying banners and signs and chanting in Greek. The crowd was concentrated around Parliament.

"What's going on Mommy?" Ellie asked.

"We should get back to the hotel...right now!" David said worriedly.

"I was afraid this was going to happen as soon as the vote was held," Snow added.

"I don't think we should panic yet. They're matching peacefully," Emma pointed out.

"For now....but protests can turn violent awful fast," Jeff muttered. He'd seen a few of them when he was in Miami.

"They wanna solve their problem their own way. That's why they're upset," Maggie said.

"I'm not taking any chances. Let's go!" Regina said firmly and cast a protection spell on the group.

Another large crowd came marching in their direction. In the commotion, the Scorpions had gotten separated from the others and they were curious as to what was going on, finding themselves among a group of teenagers, all of them holding signs and shouting.

Suddenly there was an explosion.

"Holy shit! Somebody threw a Molotov!" Becky exclaimed.

"What!? C'mon guys, let's get the fuck outta here!" Bae cried.

The six teenagers looked at each other in fear. There were thousands of people surrounding them. Several more explosions were heard and fire erupted in the square followed by voices now raised in anger.

"...RUMPLE...RUMPLE! They're exploding bombs and OUR SON IS OUT THERE!" Belle screamed.

"Papa, Bae's gonna get hurt!" Adriana sobbed.

"Oh God...oh God....it's just in Avonlea!" Her frantic mother sank to her knees on the living room floor sobbing in terror. "Please God, don't let them hurt my son...please!"

The door to the room flew open and Archie ran in followed by his wife and their children. Marie ran to her sister and threw her arms around her. "Belle....oh God! Bae..."
"Alessandro's locked down the hotel. Where's Bae! Regina said he didn't come back with them!" Archie cried.

"He's down there an I'm going after him!" Rumple said firmly.

"You're not going down there alone! This isn't a small town mob we're dealing with Rumple, it's over a thousand very angry people!"

"Aye and I'm not going to let an angry mob stop me from finding my son!"

They heard another explosion. The older children ran into Adriana's room and hid under the bed and Marie and Belle were trying to calm their terrified babies who started screaming while coping with their own terror.

The next noises they heard were the police sirens as the riot police moved in and began launching canisters of tear gas into the crowd. Most of them began to disperse while a group of anarchists, undeterred, continued throwing cocktails.

"Rumple, if you're thinking about going down there to find Bae, we'll go with you," Jeff offered, indicating himself, David and Robin.

"I am...and they'd better be praying my boy's unharmed," Rumple said, his eyes blazing with rage. He picked up his cane and limped over to where his wife was standing. "I'm gonna find him, Belle," he vowed.

"Be careful my heart," she sobbed.

"I will." He embraced her and kissed her.

After the husbands bid farewell to their wives, they got in the elevator and went downstairs to the lobby, all of them armed.

"Where the hell do you think you're going?" Alessandro demanded and had several of his bellhops block the door.

"Back off Sandro. My nephew is out there!" Archie said angrily.

"Ye don't want to get in my way lad," Rumple hissed.

And to save his son he would risk exposing his true nature to the entire world.

"You want out, you have to get through us. It's too damned dangerous. The square is full of tear gas!"

Rumple laughed harshly and froze them. "It's gonna take a lot more than you and tear gas to keep from my boy, dearies!" He waved his hand a cast a protection spell over his brother in law and his friends. "Let's go!"

The group vanished in a puff of smoke.

"Penny? Are you all right?" Moe asked worriedly, putting his arm around Penelope's shoulders. She turned around and buried her face into his shoulder, sobbing brokenly.

"No....no...oh God...what is happening to us!"

"I wish I knew," he said solemnly, being taken back many years to the tax riot in Avonlea that had
endangered the lives of his two precious daughters. At least one hundred people had been killed including the girls' nurse in a clash with the Duke's guards. And now that he knew his grandson was out there among the protestors along with his sons-in-law he was even more terrified.

The group of men appeared on the street outside the hotel, the smoke from the tear gas so thick it made sight difficult but the protective charms Rumple cast on them would allow them to navigate through the crowd with no difficulty.

"I knew this was gonna get ugly," Jeff muttered.

"Rumple can you use some kind of locator spell to find Bae?" Robin asked.

"Working on it," he murmured, his eyes closed in concentration.

His concentration was broken when he heard his cellphone ringing.

"Please let it be Bae," he begged.

"Hello?"

"Papa, Papa it's me!"

"BAE! Thank the gods! Are you all right. Are the others all right?"

"We're okay....but we've...we've been arrested."

"WHAT?!"

"They...they think we were with those people who threw the Molotovs but I swear to God we didn't do it."

"I know, I know," his father sobbed with joy. "Sit tight lad. We're comin to get ye!"

"How? They have it blocked off where you are, don't they?"

"Ye think that's gonna keep me out lad? No. Don't you worry. I'm on my way."

In an Athens police station the six terrified teenagers breathed a sigh of relief. These people were going to learn quickly that hell hath no fury like Rumplestiltskin Gold!
Feel The Love, Share the Love

Chapter Summary

After the riots the families band together to help the people of their host country at the flea market.

Bae and his friends were among 50 or so people who had been detained by the police as they struggled to get the situation under control. Five of them had survived a bloody gang war and the moment they found themselves surrounded by angry protestors they had been taken back to that terrifying day when the members of the Black Dogs stormed their compound heavily armed and killed many of their friends as well as some of Emma's deputies. All of them went into battle mode, protecting themselves and each other as best as they could without weapons.

"Bae, look out!" Andi screamed as a rock flew past his head, thrown by a hooded teenager who also held a Molotov cocktail in his other hand. They could also hear breaking glass as rocks were hurled at building windows and several trashbins were set ablaze. The group made their way through the crowd as the best they could until they saw several canisters of tear gas being launched. They threw themselves on the ground as the smoke surrounded them and moments later they were confronted by several police officers.

"We weren't doing anything!" Kat cried out in Greek while she, Becky and Andi were being pulled to their feet.

"Guys, c'mon! We're just tourists!" Bobby insisted.

"We'll talk more at the station. Come on," one of the officers commanded firmly, escorting them to several police cars.

"My father is gonna have your butts for this," Bae snarled.

Once they were at the station, they were allowed to call Rumple who was the adult responsible for all of them while they were overseas.

"Hello?"

"Papa, Papa it's me!"

"BAE! Thank the gods! Are you all right. Are the others all right?"

"We're okay....but we've...we've been arrested."

"WHAT?!" Rumple roared on the other end of the line.

"They...they think we were with those people who threw the Molotovs but I swear to God we didn't do it."

His father was in tears on the other end of the line. "I know! I know! Just sit tight lad. We're coming to get ye."
"How? They have it blocked off where you are, don't they?"

"Ye think that's gonna keep me out lad? No. Don't you worry. I'm on my way."

Bae hung up the phone and smiled at his friends. "Papa's coming, guys."

"Thank God. He's gonna wipe the floor with their butts," Andi said with a smirk.

Five angry men marched into the police station a few minutes later.

"Ye arrested my son, Baelfire Gold and his friends. I want them released. NOW!" Rumple demanded in his coldest voice. "And I want to talk to whomever is in charge!"

Though the gentleman was walking with a cane and dressed in an Armani, the icy glare he gave them and the firm stance, the officers in the room realized quickly that he was not one to be trifled with and sprung into action. Rumple was taken to speak with the arresting officers while the others waited.

"Holy hell! This is worse than the riot that broke out before Regina's trial!" Robin exclaimed.

"Yeah but that one was still bad. Those idiots were gonna torch the goddam police station with us in it!" Jeff cried.

"And they tried to tie me to a tree!" Archie growled.

"Until Rumple sent them flying!" David laughed. "They were pissing themselves when they found out he had his powers back."

"Archie, you dumbass, why the hell did you think you could hold em off yourself?" Jeff asked his friend.

"I thought maybe, just maybe I could talk some damned sense into them but not with that windbag Whale leading them!"

"Rumple should've turned that piece of shit into a snail," David muttered.

"He thinks about pulling a stunt like that again and Rumple won't have to. Regina will roast his ass," Robin said with a grin. "She wanted to roast him during that summer festival when he and that girl from the Foxtrot were doing their little porn show during the kissing contest."

"Well if Zelena hadn't been turned into a goat, I would've bet my next paycheck he would've taken her in there."

"Thank the gods Marie was at the club when those damned dwarves dragged me there or I would've been filing rape charges!" Archie cried. "That....tramp ogled me like a steak until she came out!"

"And you probably would have ended up with an STD," Jeff winced. The others cringed in sympathy. "Surprised Spencer isn't being treated for one."

David laughed from his chair. "He IS!"

"Are you kidding me?"

"No. I heard a while back he was being treated for genital herpes."

The others started laughing. "Oh I cannot wait to tell Marie that!" Archie exclaimed. "That damned
snake deserves it after what he put us through during Gaston's trial. Having the nerve to say I was the one who assaulted Marie and then trying to make her sound like a gold digger with Jonas when he was her godfather only that damned curse Cora had us under made everyone forget that...just to try to drive a wedge between us!"

"....Mr. Gold, I am so sorry about all this," one of the officers was saying.

"Officer, I can understand everyone was on edge. We had a situation like this occur back home but you have at least a dozen witnesses who verified that my son and his friends took no part in this evening's activities, they were merely caught in the crossfire, so to speak."

His eyes narrowed. "Most people in my situation would immediately file a lawsuit and being that I am an attorney, I am well within my rights to do so."

"I...I understand," the officer gulped.

"But, all I want is for my son and his friends to be released."

"They will be....with our sincerest apologies...and we hope this...incident hasn't given you a poor impression of everyone in our country."

"It hasn't, but dearies, this is quite a mess you have on your hands and people taking to the streets rioting isna gonna resolve it."

The officer nodded. "We'll need them to give us statements of what they witnessed this evening."

"That won't be a problem."

"Again, we are so sorry this happened Mr. Gold."

"I just want to take my son back to our hotel. His mama and his sister are worried sick."

After statements were taken from all six teenagers, they waited for him out in the hall cheering. "WHOOG HOOOG, MR. GOLD DOES IT AGAIN!"

Rumple chuckled as he threw his arms around his son. "Calm down ye lot or they'll toss ye back in the cells again."

"I knew you were gonna get us outta here," Bae croaked.

"Nothin' in this world or any other is gonna keep me from getting to ye Bae. I'd walk through the fires of hell if I had to."

"I know, Papa, I know."

"Come on. Let's get back to the hotel so your mama stops worrying."

All of the women and their children were gathered in the Golds' suite, anxiously awaiting news from the men. Belle paced the floor frantically, running to the window several times to look out but all she could see on the street below was the aftermath of chaos.

"This...reminds me of what happened, before my trial," Regina said sadly.

"Only worse," Emma mumbled.

"I knew this was going to happen, I just knew it!" Sophia sobbed and buried her face in her hands.
Penelope sat down beside her and embraced her. "It's only going to make it worse...and there are so many tourists here right now...they won't want to come back!"

"Not everyone will feel that way honey," Snow said gently.

"True Snow, but she's right," Regina said sensibly.

"I just want to see my son and my husband. That's all I care about right now!" Belle cried. "Marie, are you all right?"

"Am I? No! My brother-in-law, my nephew and my husband are out in that mess...and you know how scared to death I was when Archie faced off against that damned mob that went after Regina!"

"Belle, dearie, it's us!" they heard Rumple call out.

"Oh thank GOD!" she ran to the door and threw her arms around her son before he had a chance to get in. "Bae....I was worried sick!"

"I'm okay, Mama."

"BAAA-EEEE!" Adriana screamed when she ran out of the bedroom and hugged his knees.

"Holy crap, Rumplette! You're gonna cut my circulation off!" he teased.

"You scared me!" she sobbed.

He picked her up and hugged her. "I was scared myself but I'm here now."

"Everybody okay?" she asked him.

"Yeah...we're just a bit shaken up."

"What happened?" Emma asked.

"A bunch of kids wearing hoods threw Molotovs and rocks at the police," Andi answered. "We tried to get the heck outta there but we got surrounded and then the cops took us in because they thought we were part of it."

"Good God!" Penelope moaned.

"I'm sorry I froze ye down there Alessandro but you need to understand...nothing and no one keeps me from my son," Rumple was saying to Alessandro, who came up to the room with a cart full of snacks for everyone. "And don't worry. No one else will remember but you."

"It's all right," he sighed. "I've had at least a dozen guests calling, wanting to check out. Dammit, this is only going to make it worse. What the hell were those kids thinking!?"

"I don't know, dearie but as I said to those officers, this isna gonna resolve it," Rumple spoke up, sitting down on the sofa with Belle, Bae and Adriana, who insisted on sitting on her brother's lap.

Seconds later the Happy Army appeared in the room as medium sized live bears to comfort their frightened masters and mistresses. "We'll be sleeping wi' the kids tonight like this if ye don't mind?" Major Rumple said to his human counterpart.

"Actually that might be a good idea," spoke up Archie, knowing how much of a comfort his daughter's bear and her dolls had been to her in the aftermath of Gaston's assault on Marie years
before and during Christmas the family had come under attack by Sid Phillips and his father in retaliation against Archie and Rumple for helping Lenore Phillips with her health issues.

"That's fine Major Rumple but ye'll need to turn back into toys before morning," Rumple reminded them.

"We should all go to bed," Snow suggested.

"Ward the rooms," Rumple instructed Regina, Emma and Henry.

"On it," Emma said and saluted before they left the room with their children. The Palakas family left a short time later. Rumple followed his brother-in-law's family back to their own room to ward it before he took Bae and his friends back to their room.

"Nothing's getting in here Bae," Rumple assured his son.

"Never can when Mr. Gold's on the job," Kat praised.

"Good night dearies, and we'll see you in the morning."

Once the door closed behind them, the group pulled the mattresses off their beds and dragged them out into the middle of the sitting room. It was how the gang slept in the warehouse with six people standing guard in shifts armed with guns. Bae rifled through his backpack and pulled out a set of colored pencils and put them in a bowl. "Eyes closed. Red pencil gets first watch," he said. They stuck their hands in the bowl and each member grabbed a pencil. When they opened their eyes and held out their hands, Bae was holding the red pencil in his hand. They dropped the pencils back into the bowl.

"Okay. My shift is midnight til three, next shift is three til six. Blue pencil. Go."

When they opened their eyes the second time Bobby was holding the blue pencil. "We gonna do one more shift or everybody up at six?"

"Everybody up at six," Bae answered.

Though Rumple's wards would protect them from outside threats, they would have someone standing guard to wake another member having a nightmare. It wasn't a luxury they'd been afforded after the warehouse battle since they'd all been separated, having only their phones to communicate with each other.

The atmosphere in the hotel was a somber one the next morning. As Rumple was walking across the hall to the suite his son and his friends were sharing he saw a family coming down the hall with their luggage. The door opened in the suite beside them and Archie stepped out, looking as exhausted as Rumple did after being awakened in the middle of the night by their screaming infants needing to be fed, not that they slept well at all.

"Where are you headed?" Rumple asked him.

"I was going to check on Bae and his friends, make sure they're all right."

"Did you sleep at all last night?"

Archie shook his head. "Barely. Marie had a nightmare about those riots when she was a child..."

"So did Belle and then my wee imps wanted fed as soon as I tried to go back to sleep," Rumple
inserted the keycard into the lock of the Scorpions door and entered the room. All of them were
awake and watching a movie, sipping cups of coffee and eating doughnuts left over from Moe and
Penelope's picnic.

"Morning, Papa."

Rumple gave his son a hug. "Are you all right, Bae?"

"Yeah, we're doing good."

"If any of you need to talk..." Archie offered.

"We'll be okay, Doc." Becky said. "We've got each other's backs, don't we guys?" she asked her
friends. "Had to go to the mattresses."

Rumple glanced down at the mattresses, frowning. "We're going to have to put these back before
housekeeping comes in or Alessandro's going to have a fit." He waved his hands and the mattresses
were returned to the beds.

"We're not going home, are we?" Kat asked. Despite what happened, they all wanted to stay and see
the rest of the country.

"No, dearie, we're not. This is a beautiful country and we all came here to see it, despite what
happened last night. We are, however going to be a bit more cautious. I've strengthened the
enchantments on our talismans so that if we're seperated again we can locate each other quickly."

"Papa, you really should try out those adventure rooms. They're great!" Bae said.

"How would I....with my leg?"

"Maybe you can put a spell on it that it won't bother you...it's only an hour, Papa and I know Mama
would get a kick out of it. Heck, you could probably escape it. We sure as hell didn't."

"That's because you were too busy yappin and not paying attention!" Bobby scolded.

"Yeah, well, I wanna go back again and get out this time."

"Need to duct tape your mouth first," Becky muttered.

"How about we duct tape your head?" Bae teased.

"Keep it up mate and I'll be duct tapin' your nuts!" Ewan threatened.

"I shoulda shoved YOU in the freezer for that. You took some of my hair off, ya dick!"

Archie and Rumple winced. "I don't even want to know why anyone would do that..." Archie
grumbled.

"And why did ye do that, lad? Tis a bit....harsh," Rumple inquired of the other boy.

"Och, that smartarse over there decided to have a bit o' fun with me while me and Fury were laying
out gettin some rays. Dickhead drew a penis on me with sunscreen and I had the damn thing on my
chest for weeks. Was too embarassed to take my damn shirts off in front of people!"

"Baelfire!"
"What? It was a joke."

Rumple rolled his eyes. "Well don't be getting any ideas about doin' that to me on the beach!"

"Are you kidding? I don't want my butt beat with the Cane of Doom! Do you guys?" Bae asked his friends. They shook their heads.

"Well, we'll let you get dressed and we'll decide what we're doing today," Rumple said and the two men left the room, the laughter they were hearing in the Golds' suite from their children bringing smiles to their faces.

"What's going on in here?" Archie chuckled, spotting his son sitting on the floor tickling his little brother and cousin while Adriana and Gisella mused Maureen, Valora and Victoria with little puppets Geppetto made for Adriana, while the babies cooed at them, blew bubbles and wriggled their arms and legs excitedly. All of them were trying to lift their heads and shoulders for longer periods of time and laughing at their siblings and cousins' antics.

"Now that's a good way to start a day!" Rumple said, winking at Belle. She jumped out of her chair. "Don't you even think about it, Rumplestiltskin! Ohhh!"

Rumple seized his wife and tackled her to the sofa and tickled her in the ribs. "Ohhh I am going to get you for this you...you beast...Adriana! Help your mama!" she pleaded.

"Kinda busy here Mama," Adriana giggled impishly.

"Marie...please...!" Belle begged.

"Sis, you're on your own," Marie cooed.

"Hopeless the lot of you...ohhhh stooopp you're going to make me PEE myself!" Belle giggled. Rumple chuckled wickedly. Had they been alone in the room, he would have enjoyed putting a new spin on a fond memory.

It was after they'd announced their engagement and he'd chased her into the study to have some time alone though they weren't always alone with enchanted furniture living in the castle.

"...Have to catch me..." she sang.

"You little tease!" he shook a finger playfully at her. "Just wait..." He lunged for her, his hands trying to grasp her.

"Not fast enough dearie...and no magic..." She ran to the opposite end of the room, giggling. "Here I am...all by my lonesome..."

"You think I need magic to catch you?" He laughed. "And when I do...I'll make you pay all right...with my specially designed Stilskin Tickle Torture..."

He crept around the loveseat, trying to surprise her.

Curiosity got the best of her and she decided to make his quest a bit easier...

His eyes glinting, he stalked her...recalling long ago days when he played this same game with Bae through the little cottage.

Then he caught sight of her shapely legs underneath the curtain and yanked it back. "Aha! Got ye!" he declared triumphantly.
"Oh have you? And what do you plan to do with me?"

"Just gotta find the right spot...ahhh...there it is!"

"Not there..." she moaned. "Anywhere but there..."

"Aye lass...there..."

She could barely stay on her feet while his fingers were dancing over her ribcage, inflicting the most exquisite torture on her.

"Oh gods..."

She threw her arms around his neck and drew his head down to hers, kissing him hungrily. His arms snaked around her waist and pulled her closer as he deepened the kiss. They slid down the wall and lay on the floor, unaware that their voices woke the furniture from their sleep.

"D'ye know what you do to me, lass?" Rumple inquired seductively.

"What you do to me..." she whispered.

They gazed into each other's eyes, speaking without words that they both wanted the same thing...to take the final step and become one in every way.

Yet as much as they desired each other...it wasn't the right time...or place.

"Belle...we...should..."

"I know..." she said sadly.

"...Darn it, Rumplestiltskin....hah! Now the tables have turned...dearie!" Belle flipped them over and yanked off her husband's slipper and tickled his foot.

"Hehehe...oh gods Belle...not there....!

The triplets tried to raise their heads up and laughed.

"Get him, Mama! Under his knee!" cheered Adriana.

"Whose side are YOU on!?" Rumple demanded of his daughter.

"Can't win 'em all, sweetheart," Belle taunted.

On the floor, Marie winked at her eldest son and crept up behind her husband while he and Gisella was playing with the twins. Jonny ran into Adriana's bedroom and grabbed several pillows. Marie tackled her husband to the floor.

"Marie!"

"Pillow fight!" Jonny bellowed.

"Ohhhh no you don't!" Archie cried and tried to crawl out from underneath his wife.

Gisella laughed hysterically while her mother and brother attacked their father with the pillows. "You know something guys....we have one crazy family...but I wouldn't trade it for the world," she said to her siblings who smiled in agreement.
"You...two...just...wait til I get up! Sella, a little help here!" Archie pleaded.

"I'm buussyyyy," she sang.

"Traitors, the both of them, right Archie?" Rumple asked from the sofa as he tried to fend off Belle, who had found another sensitive spot on his neck.

"Belle, please....mercy!"

"Now who is the champion of the Stiltskin Tickle Torture?" she inquired sweetly. "Say it and I'll let you up."

"Never."

"You asked for it..."

"Noo...nooo...all right...I'll right I'll say it.....you win!" he cried.

She sat up, a triumphant smile on her lips. "There, that wasn't so hard, was it?"

In the back of his mind, a plan was forming of how he would extract his sweet revenge later on.

His brother-in-law, however was having more success, having flipped Marie over and was now attacking her and their son with the pillows. "Uh-huh...who always wins these?" he taunted playfully.

"One of these days, Daddy, we're gonna get'cha...and you're not gettin up!" Jonny challenged.

"Oh yeah, bring it pardner!"

Though the previous evening had been a difficult one for all of them, a little love and laughter was the best medicine to chase the blues away.

They booked several more times at the adventure rooms for the day to give the Golds and the Hoppers a chance to try them out before they all challenged each other to see which team could beat the Hatters' time in the Black Queen room. Belle, Adriana, Rumple and Bae were booked into the Black Queen room while the Hoppers were trying the Original game.

"It's gonna be tough, Jonny. We got out with just two seconds to spare," Neal warned his friend.

"We can do it. Daddy and Sella are really good at puzzles. They do them all the time."

"This is so exciting. I can't wait to get started!" Belle exclaimed.

Before they entered the room, Rumple put the brace he used during his curse on his leg with a special charm that would allow him to navigate through the adventure without being hampered by his old injury. It only lasted a few hours, time enough for him to enjoy the event with his family.

Bae was having much more success in the Black Queen room, his father assigning him the task of finding keys and useful items while he, Adriana and Belle worked on the puzzles, all of them keeping a close watch on the clock.

"Papa, Emma and Jeff's time is fifteen minutes....we're getting close!" Bae warned. Rumple, Belle and Adriana were working on the final puzzle to find the key but all of them were stumped, even with help from the game master.
"Anyone who can outsmart me deserves a pat on the back, Rumple mused aloud. "And I'm supposed to be so clever!"

"Papa! I've got it!" Bae crowed.

"Yay, Bae!" Adriana cheered as the door opened. They glanced up at the clock. They emerged from the room at fifteen minutes and twenty seconds, only ten seconds behind Regina's crew.

"Well at least you escaped that time," Andi teased Bae.

"Yeah. But we're still trying that mad scientist room again. How are the Hoppers doing?"

"Cuttin it close," Neal said, checking his Minion watch.

"Hey Sella, now you can be a real Nancy Drew," Jonny said to his sister.

"You have to have a PHD to figure this jargon out!" Archie exclaimed while he and Marie were studying a formula. "And mine certainly isn't in chemistry!"

"I was never good at the sciences either," Marie confessed.

"Mommy...look....right there's a clue!" Gisella exclaimed, pointing to a spot on the board.

"Good job, Princess!"

"Daddy, we gotta hurry...time's running out!" Jonny reminded them.

The family scrambled to find the key with Gisella locating it with less than two minutes to spare.

"You beat our time!" Neal cried. "Cool!"

The two families signed their names on the walls and posed for their pictures and Regina mentioned to the staff that she was going to open her own series of adventure rooms in Storybrooke.

"That's a wonderful idea, Mrs. Hood. "You're going to be able to find a few of them during your trip to Italy as well."

"We are? Awesome!" Henry hi-fived his sisters and brothers.

"And if I'm not mistaken, some places in the States have them too."

"Oh, ours are going to be a wee bit different, dearies," Rumple said with a smirk, intending to pitch the idea that one of them would be to try to escape his castle's dungeon.

"It still astounds us that children this young were able to do well in the game. Most of them are ten or older."

"So this is a franchise that operates out of Switzerland but you can apply for one?" Robin asked.

"Certainly, if you want to use our format."

"We do, but we also want to create additional rooms with our own twist on them," Regina added.

"Let me get you some information about the franchise."

"Thank you!"
"So where are they back home?"

"New Jersey and Connecticut," was the reply. "And as you wish to, they've added some extra adventures to give it a more personalized touch."

"Oh, ours are going to be personalized all right," Robin said with a smirk. "We hold a summer festival every year that only lasts a day but if we include these rooms into it, we could extend it for a few days, even a week."

"I'd love to see them when you finish them."

"We'll send you an email with some pictures and videos," Regina offered.

Before they left, Bae and his friends entered the Mad Scientist room one more time to attempt to his escape while his family members and their friends waited, keeping their eyes glued to their watches. Learning their lesson from their previous mistake, the Scorpions managed to escape with three minutes to spare!

The next day, everyone was shocked to discover that a series of wildfires blazed in the forest around Athens, further dampening the spirits of some of the natives, especially Penelope, Sophia, Kyria and Alessandro.

"When it rains, it pours," Alessandro said glumly while all of them were eating dinner at the rooftop restaurant that evening, thick smoke from the fires billowing out across the city with the strong winds and high temperatures making battling the blazes extremely difficult for the firefighters. "But we're not even supposed to get any rain."

"Mo can make it rain!" Jonny whispered.

"She could, dearie, but not enough to put out a blaze like that," Rumple said. "And unfortunately something is blocking any of us from helping magically..."

"Why?" Adriana demanded angrily.

Her father sighed. "I wish I knew but magic in this land has always been unpredictable."

"It's a sign to our people to set aside their differences and work together to get this country back on its feet," Penelope spoke up. "That's how I see it."

"But surely we can do something non-magical Rumple," Belle said.

"And we will, at the flea market. I've reserved spots for all of us where we're going to sell the items we've made and others people in the town have donated but we will make it clear that all of the proceeds are going to the people of this country, not in our pockets."

"I'm gonna sell Happy Flags, some of Papa's dolls and Happy Bears but they won't be like our happy bears," Adriana said. "Neal, you're gonna sit with me, kay?"

"Okay...why can't I sell some special Minions?"

"Cause you'd get sued, duh! Some big studio owns the Minions and they'd sue ya if you tried to make a pirate copy huh, Papa?"

"That's right, dearie."

The Scorpions started laughing. "Ohhh if they only knew.." Becky murmured.
"Ye keep your pirating activities to yerself, young lady!" Rumple scolded.

"Oh, come on! Been outta the game for a while."

"I wish we could hold a festival like we do back home," Bae said.

"You can't but this will help." Moe said.

"And another thing we need to do is sell the tourists on visiting the tables of the locals. Rumple, you can talk someone outta their underwear if you wanted to," Jeff said.

"As long as it's not a female or else he and it get the broom!" Belle said, her eyes flashing.

"Oh for God's sake Jeff, he's not running a con!" Archie exclaimed. "My parents, however, would have jumped at the chance to do it. It's a great idea Rumple and we'll be happy to help."

Later on that night after the others went to bed, Rumple met with his three apprentices to discuss charms they were going to place on the items they would be selling. Though they were prevented from combating the wildfires with their magic, he sensed that the powers had relented to allow him to assist the people in another way, by lifting their spirits as the group had done so many times to their own people through troubled times.

Everyone awoke early on market day, all of the items that would be sold packed into bags. They didn't dare risk using Mary's magic bags in case someone saw them and questioned it. When they arrived at the market, several stand owners gave them cold glances, furious that tourists were attempting to cut in on their business until Rumple visited each stand to inform the owners about their plan.

"Why would you do this?" one man asked him. "You are on vacation, not here to work."

"We know what hard times are like, dearie and this country and its people have been kind to us. This is our way of giving back to you."

Adriana reached into her bag and handed the woman one of her flags. "Hang this up and every time you feel sad you can look at it and it'll chase those frownies away," she said softly.

"Did you make this yourself, sweetie?"

"Uh-huh. Papa taught me how to spin."

"It's wonderful!"

Rumple set one table for himself, Neal and Adriana where they would sell her flags, Rumplette rag dolls and Happy Bears. Belle, Marie and Gisella would be sitting at another table selling some of Rumple's shawls and afghans. Regina, Emma and Snow had their own table where they were selling plastic bracelets with various inspiring messages along with some of Rumple's homemade jewelry that he'd summoned from Belle Reve. He'd intended to give all of it to Belle but she joked there was so much of it that she'd never be able to wear it all in a lifetime. Most of it sat collecting dust in his workroom and she'd begged him several times to sell in in the marketplace while they were spending their time in the Enchanted Forest but he'd never gotten around to it.

Becky, Grace and Kat were operating a table where they would be selling girls' and women's clothing donated by Maleficent and Princess Tiana as well as several of Rumple's designs. The two women were the town's premiere fashion designers and they'd been begging Rumple to go into business with them for years but he always refused, claiming he never had enough time between
running his shop and raising his family.

Archie, Jonny and Roland's table featured items from Geppetto's shop including puppets and custom clocks and Geppetto had also sent them a copy of August's completed novel that Rumple magicked into copies of hardcover books. The clockmaker was hoping that it would generate enough sales at the market that it would at last be noticed by a publisher and help boost his son's spirits.

Jeff, Henry and Maggie's table was a book lover's paradise. Belle asked Rumple to summon some of the books from their libraries, many of them current best sellers and she had him make copies in several different languages. They also had copies of the Once Upon a Time book for sale but Rumple went through it and made certain that enough details about all of them were changed so that no one would suspect the book was their story.

Robin, Ellie and Jason's table was selling some of the items from Rumple's shop, a mixture of new and old, all of the items kept in pristine condition. Ellie would also host little tea parties for some of the children that came around to look at the items they had for sale.

Bae, David, Bobby and Ewan's table would be the home for all of Bae's artwork. He brought along some oil paintings, sketches and even carvings he made out of wood that had been recovered from the bombed warehouse and restored with loving care by his father. Most of his art was from the Enchanted Forest and Storybrooke but he also included a few sketches of the historical sites around the city.

"Where did you get all this stuff!?" Alessandro asked, his eyes wide.

"We sent word back home and everything just 'popped' in last night," Rumple giggled.

"Even the flowers?" Sophia asked Moe, who was operating a makeshift Game of Thorns stand with Penelope.

"Even the flowers."

"Oh my God....you could make a fortune here!"

"We hope to...but not for us."

"Hey Gold....I got another idea....why don't you summon some of our clothes back from your shop....would bring the cosplayers in droves!" Jeff announced.

"Dammit! Now why didn't I think of that before?"

"On it!" Regina stood up ran down the street into an alley. Robin and David got up from the table and followed her, the three of them pushing racks holding the group's Enchanted Forest clothing on hangers, most of them from Regina's own wardrobe.

In order to boost sales, the women decided to hold a mini fashion show posing in their old clothing. A group of young women immediately flocked to them.

"Oh my God! You look just like Belle in Beauty and The Beast!" one girl exclaimed when she approached Belle. "Do you cosplay?"

Belle laughed. "No, but I did dress up as Belle once for a party while my husband played the Beast...and we even recreated the ballroom dance scene...with people playing the enchanted objects."
"That is awesome! I really would like to buy that dress! How much do you want for it?"

Rumple had advised the group to do a little haggling, not wanting anyone to try to cheat them when most of the items they had on sale would be worth a small fortune in either world.

"And this isn't just any dress. It was a wreck when I got it but my husband restored it and even added his own embellishments to it as well as making the Beast's costume himself."

"I'm serious. I want to buy it and the Beast costume. My boyfriend wants to cosplay them at a convention this year."

Belle named her price. "My mom is gonna flip out I'm spending this much money but I don't care. I HAVE to have this set!"

"It's for a good cause too," Belle reminded her. "Before you go, stop at some of the other tables. There's a man a few tables down from us who is selling some pottery if you are interested."

"I sure am! Been trying to do it in school but I suck at it!"

"Well then, maybe he can give you some pointers."

Another group of young women flocked to where Regina and Snow were standing while they did a mini-sketch of a Snow White rivalry.

"Your gown is wayyyy better than the ones I've seen for the wicked stepmother," one of the women was saying to Regina. "And I like the idea of Snow White being an outlaw."

"We wanted to put a bit of a spin on it," Regina joked. "She does have that hideous blue and yellow dress though."

"I hated that thing!" Snow laughed. "But...David and I wanted to be Snow and Prince Charming for the party so we showed up like that."

"Please, please...pleeeassee tell me you have a costume for him. We're having a Halloween party at work in the fall and everyone has to dress up but I had no idea what to wear. I want to go as Snow White and my boyfriend can be Charming!"

"The hell with that...I want to wear what she's wearing!" her friend said, gesturing to Regina's gown.

"I want that dress too!" another cried.

"Ladies, you're in luck. I've got a whole wardrobe up for sale so everyone can be the Evil Queen for a day," Regina said with a smile. Laughter was heard at the tables behind her.

"That's a scary thought!" David joked.

"Watch it Charming or I'll use my poison apple on you!"

"Bring it on! I broke your curse before. I can do it again!"

The Scorpions decided to take a break from their own tables and don their old Forest clothing and the boys were immediately mobbed by a group of girls.

Bae had on the outfit he'd worn the most last summer--a pair of leather pants, lace up boots and a summerweight light cotton shirt colored a soft teal with a black vest over it.
One of the girls stepped behind him, eyeing his backside appreciatively.

"Who were you supposed to be?" she cooed.

"Just the son of a spinner," he replied casually. "No one in particular."

"Don't look like it to me..."

"Where the HELL is is mother's broom!" Andi growled.

Bae coughed. Then he pulled out three soft stuffed balls. "I can juggle, see?" He began doing so with ease of long practice. Juggling kept a thief's hands dextrous and something he used to do all the time back when he was cursed.

"I really like that costume...do you come with it?"

"Noooo," Andi muttered.

"Sorry, I'm unavailable." Bae said inbetween catching. "I already have the best girl I could ever want."

"I would like to buy that suit anyway...but I doubt my boyfriend would look as good in it."

"It's very comfortable. And the shirt's loose enough to be worn by almost anyone." He named a quick figure. "Boots are extra."

"Even if he doesn't wear it all...I will..." She grinned.

"You could. You know a lot of girls back home dressed up like this . . .for Halloween," he amended quickly.

"Does that cologne you're wearing come with it?"

"Umm . . .no. It's umm . . .a custom scent . . ."

His friends snickered behind him.

"Oooh tell me it's for sale somewhere!"

Bae looked at Andi. "That's my girlfriend. She made it for me."

"You did? Oh God I can't get Matt to even make a date on time let alone a perfume!"

Two other girls were circling Bobby and Ewan. "Sooo is it true about what you don't wear beneath those kilts?"

Andi laughed while her friends were glaring daggers at their boyfriends' 'groupies'.

Kat walked over to Bobby and said softly, "It's also true that when a Scotsman gives his heart, it's forever." She was dressed in a cotton dress that flowed about her like a green crystal swath.

Bobby put an arm around her. "Aye, to this bonny lass." And he grinned at her irresistably.

"And my heart's yours, my Fury," Ewan murmured to Becky.

Becky showed them a charm with their symbols, a flame and dirk.
"These would be great for a con for Outlander!" one of the girls exclaimed.

The group of girls decided to buy all of the outfits and one of them asked Bae to give her a brief juggling lesson.

Bae agreed, saying that you had to keep your eyes on the balls.

Unfortunately one of the girls was keeping her eyes in a more uncomfortable direction.

It took every once of self control Andi had not to want to scratch the girl's eyes out.

And Bae was oblivious, focused on his student.

At the end of the lesson, the girl asked Bae if he wouldn't mind giving her more lessons over Skype once she returned to the states and even asked if Andi would like to talk to her over social media.

"I can do that," he agreed. "My Skype name is Bae Gold," he spelled his name for her.

"That's a cool name...Celtic."

"Yes . . . my papa's family are from Scotland."

"Well, I gotta get going. It was nice meeting you...catch ya later!"

Bae waved. "Bye!" He turned to see his girlfriend glaring at another girl. "Hey, Wraith, you look like you're gonna murder someone's ass."

"Did you SEE where she was staring!? Holy crap I thought she was gonna get out a ruler next!"

Bae found himself blushing hotly, like his papa he was shy about discussing those things in public, and his father had raised him to not speak about such things in female company. "Umm . . .no . . .I didn't. Really. I only notice when YOU look at me like that."

"Well she's lucky she can still see because I don't want any more girls looking at you like that."

"It's the pants. For some reason they make women wild."

"When your dad gets his out there will be chaos."

"And my mama's gonna be getting out her broom, I'll bet. Or something like it," Bae predicted. "Because Papa looks even better than me in them."

"Speak of the devil..."

All heads turned to where Rumple was standing in full Dark One regalia with Adriana and Neal beside him. He was wearing his brown leather pants, dragonscale vest and boots with a yellow silk flowing shirt, even carrying a plastic dagger with his name on it.

"If the real Rumplestiltskin looked like you, I'd make any deal he wants," one woman purred.

"Well, I'm also the Beast too, dearie."

"You can be my Beast," she offered.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you dearie, but I already have my beauty...and a few little imps."

"Yeah my papa's taken!" Adriana piped up.
"Pity because I could take you around the world on my yacht..." She murmured and stepped behind him, pinching his backside.

"Hands off the merchandise, dearie," he giggled.

That is one of the worst pickup lines I've ever heard you tart, Belle thought, her mind drifting back to another day in the dark castle when she'd been forced to witness a female guest's unwanted attentions. Her name was Melisande and she'd come to Rumple to ask him for a potion to make men notice her.

"Oooh Rumple-you don't mind if I call ya that, do ya?" Melisande giggled.

Belle gripped the handle of her broom so tightly her knuckles were white. If she looked one more time...

And call him Rumple? No you may not you tramp!

"That's my name, dearie, why should I mind?" he replied, writing out instructions in his swift neat hand. "Here." He handed the buxom lass the potion and the parchment. "Now, you follow these instructions here as I've written...if you don't... it won't work."

"Don't see why she even needs it," Belle muttered.

Melisande nodded, taking it. "And... do you have any... other instructions for me?" she asked breathily, making sure to lean over so he got the full view.

That did it. Belle swung her broom out and swatted.

"Uh... err..." Rumple was tongue-tied because her breasts were practically in his face and he didn't want to touch them lest she think he was groping her.

"Yeeoww!" screeched the maid. She turned around. "Hey! What's the big idea, you stupid girl? I'm not the floor, you ninnyhammer!"

"Hands off the merchandise, dearie!" Belle sneered.

"Why? He's the Dark One... and I'll stare if I want to!"

She thrust her hand with her engagement ring on it into the harpy's face. "He's TAKEN, you trollop!"

"Belle...it's not what it looks like..." Rumple stammered.

"Oh isn't it?"

Melisande goggled. "You... and HIM? You actually... are gonna marry... a MONSTER?"

"Oooh so now he's a monster, eh?" She swung the broom again. "Take that!"

"Nice looking one... but yeah...what else would you call that skin and those eyes... of course-owww! You bloody bitch!" Melisande yelled, clutching her backside. "You gonna let her do that? I'm a client!"

"Our deal is struck, so not anymore," Rumple declared frostily, angry at her words to Belle.

He had been rather flattered at her attention... until she had revealed that like almost everyone else...
she still saw him as a monster...just a nice looking one.

"You insulted him so you're lucky he doesn't take back what he's given you...personally I would turn you into a frog."

Melisande snorted, saying to Rumple, "Anytime you get tired of this wench, come on down to the Thirsty Goose and you can have yourself a good time...drinks on the house..." and she sashayed pointedly around him.

Belle struck again. "Now run along and try to work your charms on some other man because you and every other woman in this realm will NOT be getting MINE!"

Yelping Melisande fled, one hand clutching the potion and the other her behind, all the way back down the winding road to the village below.

"Good riddance you piece of trash!" Belle yelled after her.

"...Well, maybe I can make my own beast with this outfit. How much would you like for it?"

Rumple quoted her a price that the woman happily paid and Rumple suggested she visit a few of the local tables during her visit as well as recommended several cafes.

"Thank God she's gone or I was going to have Regina get my broom," Belle muttered.

"They can look all they want mo chori, but you're the only one who can touch the merchandise," Rumple murmured softly.

"How about later on I perform a detailed inspection," she whispered.

He smiled. "Tis an inspection I'll be looking forward to."

Several other women approached the sorcerer, asking him questions about the other items he had for sale at the rest of the tables and his spinning and weaving. Adriana even showed them some of the flags she made and the rag dolls.

"These are adorable. My grandchildren would love them!"

"So would mine!"

"And these dolls an bears help keep frownies away," Neal added. "Right, Driana?"

"Yup."

The group of ladies purchased most of the dolls, bears and flags and even two of Rumple's shawls from the other table. At their table, Archie, Jonny and Roland were holding a puppet show with Geppetto's puppets, taking Archie back to his early years, travelling with his parents while they held their own shows except this time he wasn't sneaking about picking the pockets of the patrons. Rumple and Adriana then joined in. Archie's puppet was him in his cricket form.

"Mommy, lookit....it's Jiminy Cricket!" a little girl cried out and ran over to the table.

"Honey, that doesn't look like Jiminy Cricket."

"He's the Jiminy Cricket in that book you just got!"

"Ohhh...there's the Beast too!" She pointed to where Rumple was sitting holding his own puppet.
Soon a large crowd of children gathered around the table.

"Hello, dearies," Rumple called out.

"Can you sing "Wish Upon a Star?" a little girl in a wheelchair asked. She was from a nearby village.

"We certainly can," Archie said softly.

Rumple wheeled the little girl over to the table and both of them danced their puppets for her as they sang, their wives watching them with pride...and love.

"Disney eat your heart out," Emma joked while Henry recorded the moment on video. Rumple even lifted her out of her chair and allowed her to sit on his lap as they continued to sing to her.

"I wish the stars could make me walk again," the girl said sadly.

Adriana grabbed one of her Rumplette dolls and handed it to her. "Maybe if you keep telling her your wish it'll come true," she said when Rumple gently helped her back into her chair.

"The doctor says it can't."

Adriana frowned. "Dunno...maybe they're wrong," she said set the flag on the girl's lap. Rumple and the other mages could see a faint gold light surround the girl's legs.

"Did she just..." Marie whispered to her sister.

"I think she did," Belle whispered back.

"Hey, can you do the part in this book where Beauty and the Beast dance?" another girl asked Rumple.

"We certain can. Belle, would you mind helping me with this?"

"Not at all."

Rumple and Belle danced their puppets across the table, singing Beauty and the Beast together amongst cheers from little girls who all wanted to be Belle and find their own beast to tame...and love.

"....Miss Belle, Miss Belle, the master's waiting for you!" Tobias cried excitedly.

"Go! Your betrothed awaits!" Cosette urged. "One last dance, honey! Give us something to dream about. Go!"

When she stepped out into the hall she saw him waiting patiently at the top of the grand staircase, as handsome as ever in his own outfit that complimented hers.

He held out a hand to her. "Are you ready, sweetheart?"

"I have been my whole life," she whispered. "For you...and only you..."

"Then shall we dance?" He led her down the staircase, processing into the ballroom, which had been newly cleaned by him and Bae, and an invisible orchestra began to play as they stepped onto the polished golden floor.
"This...is even better than at Papa's ball...no one here but us..."

"Aye only you and I, mo chroi..." he grinned, that impish smirk she loved so well. Then he put an arm about her waist and began to waltz with her.

She rested her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes, praying to every god and goddess she knew that the time the curse was active would go by quickly and she would be back in his arms again, this time as his wife.

"I love you, Rumplestiltskin...with all my heart."

Up above, on the grand balcony overlooking the ballroom, a door opened and Cosette, Lumiere, Cogsworth, Mrs. Potts, Chip, Gabby, Misty, Tobias, Wesley and many others gathered along with Bae to watch the master and mistress dance together...and celebrate hope and love in a world that was going to fade into darkness someday soon.

"And I love you, Belle...forever and ever...through all that may come..."

Then he leaned forward and kissed her.

Let this be the first memory I have when I awaken, she prayed.

There was a collective sigh from the furniture and even Bae smiled. Then he took out his sketchpad and began to draw rapidly. He wanted to preserve this moment and the only way he knew how was to capture it on paper.

It was a beautiful scene...a beauty and her beast...a tale as old as time with the truest love there could be.

And though a curse might separate them for a time they would always find their way home to each other, for their hearts were entwined with a bond that would not break, and endure to the end of all things.

"...Mommy, I like their Beauty and the Beast better'n the cartoon."

"Me too. Why'd he havta change?"

"He was boring as the Prince."

"Why does your Beast kinda stay the same?"

"Because honey, the true beauty of a person is in the heart," Belle said softly. "Our story shows that everyone is beautiful in their own unique ways," she said, her eyes meeting her husband's.

"...Hey, can you do the scene where Jiminy gives the girl a rose?" another child asked Archie.

"How's he gonna do that? He doesn't have a girl puppet."

"I don't need one," Archie murmured.

Be still my heart...Marie thought dreamily and joined her husband at the table. Archie 'walked' his puppet over to Marie and handed her a rose, gazing deeply into her eyes as they recreated one of their fondest memories. Marie had been a late sleeper most of her life and tended to be cranky in the mornings and one morning while they were both staying in the castle he'd made the mistake of waking her early. She was cranky and he was determined to cheer her up...and try to tell her how he felt without actually saying it.
"...Are you going to be cross with me all morning?" he demanded. "It doesn't become you."

Truth be told, she didn't like staying angry with him now. She spent most of the week in bed sick, miserable and missing her daughter terribly but he was always finding ways to bring a smile to her face with his stories about the Charmings and little adventures he had with his friend Geppetto.

She patted her shoulder and he flew onto it then she took him out to the gardens, loving the scent of the red roses that bloomed there. Jiminy flew off her shoulder and down to the roses and took one off the vine by biting into it. It fell on the bench beside her.

"Jiminy….that's so sweet of you….thank you," she said softly as she picked it up and sniffed it.

"Now that's the smile I was looking for."

She laughed. "You won't let me be unhappy for a moment, will you?"

"No."

"Why?"

Because you're even more beautiful when you smile and if I were human again I'd bring you a dozen roses every day just so I could see you smile.

"You deserve to be happy, Marie…that's all," he said shyly.

But you're not human and you can't be, not right now. It's too dangerous. Any day now Cora will cast her curse and take you all away…and the only way you can protect yourself and her is to stay as you are and try not to get too close.

They had to try to get into Cora's vault one more time. Too much was at stake now to let the curse be cast and once again he was willing to die to stop it if that was what it took. She was worth dying for.

"I have my daughter, my family and a few friends….what more do I need?"

You need a man who will love you more than anything else in the world. I can be that for you. I want to be that for you! And I know I'll love your daughter too if I get to meet her!

"You don't think you need anything else? What about love?"

"Love's for everyone else…not me," she said sadly. "I thought I was in love once…but he died."

"You can love again. You just have to believe in it, in yourself."

And in me.

"No, Jiminy…love's not for me. It never will be."

"What if someone proved to you it would be? Would you take the chance?"

"Why are you asking me this?"

"Because I think that's what is missing in your life…a man to love you…and a father for your daughter."

Now why can't a MAN treat me like this? Marie thought bitterly. She despised insects yet this one acted like he was still a human being and if he were one she could even fall in love with him. Could
it be possible HE was the man she would meet in the new land? No, it was too much to hope for.

"Well I won't find him here...if I ever will so there's no sense thinking about it!" she cried.

His face fell. "What do you mean?"

"Rumple...he said in another land I would find a man who would love me and Gisella....but it's too much to hope for," she sobbed.

"...So did he get the girl?"

"You'll have to read the book and find out, honey." Marie said softly while archie reached across the table and took her hand in his.

"Rumple, you are not gonna believe this but all of our stuff is sold out!" David said when he, Robin and Jeff approached them with their children in tow. They glanced down the street and saw some of their customers visiting the tables of the natives and even some of them were reporting that their merchandise was sold out. An hour later all of the tables were empty and the families began to pack up.

"Papa, how much money did we make?" Adriana asked her father.

"I don't know yet, dearie. I have to count it."

"How are we gonna donate it all Rumple?" Regina inquired.

"By shopping of course!"

The group spent the rest of the afternoon travelling from table to table and all of the shops and cafes in Monastiraki, distributing all of the proceeds they made from their own tables amongst the natives who felt that Christmas had come early for them at a time when their country's future was so uncertain. The following morning, a little girl who had given up hope that she would ever walk again took her first steps in ten years, her doctors baffled and her grateful parents began to believe in miracles again, thanks to the kindness of strangers.
The families encounter a group of nudists on a beach, have a rather unpleasant encounter at an outdoor restaurant and a sweet surprise is planned for little Eleanor May Hood.

A week later they left to explore some of the islands to visit several beaches and would return to Vougliameni for Archie and Marie's anniversary the following day. The couple would spend their second wedding night at an inn there while Rumple and Belle took the kids back to Athens with them. Since Alessandro and Sophia both had to work, Penelope and Kyria would travel with the Storybrooke residents.

"This looks like a good spot," Belle said as she spread the beach blankets out while Rumple, Archie and Bae set up their chairs and umbrellas. The Hoods picked a spot on one side of them, the Hatters the opposite side and the Nolans set up their chairs and blankets beside Emma's group while the Scorpions picked a spot on the other side of the Hoods. Penelope and Maurice lounged in chairs beside them.

"Let's go make a sandcastle!" Kyria suggested to Gisella, Adriana, Ellie and Maggie.

"We can make a bigger one than the last one!" Gisella cried.

"Gracie, you want to make a fort?" Henry asked his sister.

"Sure. You guys wanna help out?" she asked the rest of the boys.

"Yeah, we can build a fort like the Alamo!" Jonny exclaimed.

"I wanna build a big castle where I'M queen," Ellie declared haughtily.

Maggie shook her head. "Then build it yourself! I wanna build a jail!"

"You stay right where we can see you!" Emma warned them.

"Okay Mom!" Henry called back.

"Papa, we're gonna ride some waves." Bae said to Rumple as he, Bobby and Ewan walked past them carrying surfboards while Andi and Becky carried bodyboards.

"I'll just stand in it and get wet," said Kat.

"You be careful out there, dearies!" Rumple cautioned them.

"We will. C'mon guys!" The group of teenagers trotted down to the shore carrying their boards to wait for the first waves to take them in.

When Belle reached into his carrier to pick up little Bobby she pulled out a kitten instead. "Sweetie...you can't be a kitten today...it's too hot out." Her small son buried his face in her shoulder,
purring contentedly and she noticed the bracelet her husband had placed around his arm when he was human was missing. "Rumple, his bracelet is gone....and he's changed again."

Rumple took the baby from her arms and waved his hand over him, changing him back into an infant and conjuring another bracelet for him. "He must've chewed it off in his sleep or it slid off. I thought I enchanted it so that it stays on limbs or paws. Now ye wee imp, ye won't be gettin this one off!"

Then he and Archie set up the beach shade the twins and triplets would nap in with blankets he made himself for the floor, pillows, muslin swaddling blankets to wrap them in and several battery operated fans he enchanted to make sure all of them stayed cool but not too much that they would catch a cold. Then he conjured a protective shield around the shade's opening, preventing the sun's rays from burning their children's sensitive skin. Unlike normal children, the five mages seemed to be adjusting to their new environment well though they fuss over being in the shade, especially AJ who even though he couldn't sit up or crawl yet, wanted to interact with the land around him.

They heard hysterical laughter from one of the other spots as Jeff took off his jeans revealing a pair a shorts with hot peppers all over them and the words RED HOT CHILI PEPPER in the back.

"I cannot believe you are actually wearing those on the beach!" Robin exclaimed.

"Why not? They're swim trunks too!" Jeff defended. "And I think I look good in them," he said, striking a pose for effect while his father-in-law snapped a picture and sent it to Henry's phone.

"Now there's a red hot chili pepper!" Emma murmured from the blanket.

"If you want to dream, dream big. I've got my own hot pepper right here," Regina cooed at her husband.

Snow and David were laughing from behind their books.

"Hey David, where's the flamingos, huh?" Robin asked him.

He didn't dare admit he'd packed them but he wasn't going to wear them on the beach knowing the humiliation he'd face from his son-in-law and his equally mad cohorts.

"Is this normal?" Penelope asked Maurice.

"For that lot, yes. I think my daughters' families are the sanest."

"Oh yeah? You wanna see the Speedo video we shot Bordreaux?" Jeff challenged.

"No, he does not!" Rumple cried out from his chair.

"What Speedo video?"

"Never mind, Moe. Just never mind!"

"Oh my God! So HE is the older man that went viral on YouTube!" Penelope exclaimed. "One of the other professors sent it to me and we were lucky we didn't get caught with it because it was obviously not safe for work!"

"Rumplestiltskin! Did you make a pornographic video?" his father-in-law demanded, glaring at him.

"I most certainly did not! That lot hid a camera in my spa room and invaded my privacy! Then they posted it on YouTube for the whole damned world to see so that is why I've been having some of these ladies chasin' after me!"
"And they're damned lucky their asses weren't blistered with my broom!" added Belle.

"Thank God no one has ever done that to us," Marie whispered to her husband.

"Oh, I'd be the laughingstock of the internet," Archie groaned.

"Not to me, baby, not to me..." She tossed him a bottle of sunscreen. "Would you mind putting this on me?"

"Don't you be getting any ideas, my goddess. There are children around," he whispered in her ear.

"I'm saving them for tomorrow night."

Belle took a bottle of her own bag and tossed it to her husband with a grin. "We don't want my fair skin to get burned, do we?"

"No, mo chori we do not."

"Hey guys, we're done with our fort! Come and see!" Grace yelled a short time later. Maurice and Penelope got up from their chairs to watch the babies in the shade while their parents walked down to where a large sand fort stood with two preteens and four young boys standing in front of it, beaming with pride at their hard work. It had taken a lot of sand and a lot of patience to build but their teamwork paid off when they saw the joy in their parents' faces as they took pictures and videos on their phones.

"Daddy, we made a little Alamo!" Jonny declared proudly.

Archie scooped up his small son and hugged him. "And you did a great job pardner!"

"Too bad we can't take it home," Henry confessed sadly then grinned. "Or can't we? Mom, do you think we could?" he asked both of his mothers.

The two women thought for a moment, going through the knowledge of magic they’d been given in the minds to try to find a solution for their son themselves before they consulted their tutor. Regina looked around the beach to make certain no one else was present and kneeled down to whisper a spell she sometimes used in her son’s ear. "You can do it, but wait until you're absolutely certain no one can see it."

"You come up with something, Gina?"

"He can shrink it and turn it into a clay sculpture and then he can resize it once we get home...or he can just keep it a sculpture over the winter."

"That's perfect Gina. Henry, you'd better cast it now before we get a strong wind that damages it," Emma told him.

"Okay guys get your pictures in now," Grace advised.

"Why? What're you gonna do?" Neal inquired.

"I'm gonna shrink it and turn it into clay so we can take it home."

"Yay!" Roland and Jason cheered. "Can we put it up in the yard over the summer?" Roland asked.

"We sure can lil bro."
"Excellent idea Henry and good practice with your magic," Rumple praised.

" Everybody done taking pictures?"

" We're good Henry. Go ahead!" David called back.

The young magician waved his hand over the sandy structure and it began to shrink in size until it could fit in the palm of his hand and seconds later a small clay sculpture sat where a two foot tall sand fort once stood. He also conjured a bottle to put it in to protect it from being damaged.

" Very good Henry."

Grace hugged him. " That's great Henry! Now we can keep it forever."

" Hey, check these out!" Kyria called over to them. She, Adriana, Gisella and Maggie were standing in front of a sandcastles and a small makeshift jail while Ellie sat off the distance throwing sand around and pouting.

" Henry, can you make our castle and jail small so we can keep them?" Gisella asked him.

" Sure. Get your pictures in while you can guys!" Henry instructed the parents before he shrunk the two pieces of artwork into small pieces and placed them in bottles for their parents to put away for safekeeping until they got home.

" Ellie, what's wrong sweetie?" Regina asked her daughter.

" I wanted to build a big castle and I can't!" she pouted. " Didn't wanna build no dumb castle with Driana, Maggie and Sella an Kyria cause they said I wasn't gonna be queen in it!"

" Why didn't you ask them to help you? Did they offer?"

" Yeah but I don't want help. I wanna do it myself!"

" Ellie, honey, sometimes we all need a little help. Even me."

" You do?"

" Yes." Regina sat down beside her. " A while ago, something terrible happened and I thought I was handling it fine on my own but I wasn't. It wasn't easy to ask for help but when I needed it they were right there for me. I'm talking about Emma, Jeff, Snow, David and Rumple. We all used to not get along but look at us now. We had common enemies to fight and we did so together and people can accomplish so many great things when they work together. But people don't always have to come together to fight an enemy. Look at what everyone did at the summer festival. We all came together to have fun, like we did on this vacation and how are you going to have fun when you sit here by yourself?"

" M'not," she sniffled.

" Ellie has a frownie. C'mon guys, let's help her build her castle," Adriana suggested.

" She told us she doesn't want help, she said she wanted to do it herself," Maggie said.

" You know how she is...stubborn," Gisella added.

"Stubborn? She's a brat!" Kyria muttered. "All she does is act snooty."
Maggie and Sella agreed with that assessment. Even Adriana did, a little, but she could also sense the other girl was unhappy and the small empath did not want anyone to feel sad around her. "Well, I'm gonna help!" she said and walked over to Ellie, carrying her Beauty and the Beast pail and shovel. "Hey, Ellie, I can help. Ya gotta make the walls first. Bae says so," she told the other girl, willing to share her hard earned wisdom.

"Really? You wanna help me?" Ellie's eyes lit up.

"Yeah, because it's no fun tryin' to build a castle yourself. It's boring." Adriana smiled at her. "Papa says two people can build a castle better n'one."

"C'mon guys....Driana's right. We oughta go help Ellie," Maggie said to her friends.

The three girls picked up their pails and shovels and joined Ellie and Adriana in the sand while their mothers stood back smiling.

"Thank goodness that Adriana was here to encourage the spirit of cooperation," Regina said to Belle. "She's very much like you must have been as a girl."

"She is. When Marie first came to live with us, she spent most of her time by herself."

"Until you dragged me out of my room and made me play boule with you," Marie laughed.

Belle smiled. "True. I didn't like being lonely. Neither does Rumple, only he told me that they moved around so much as a child that he never had the chance to make any friends and once the other children found out who his papa was, they wouldn't let him play with them. He says he learned to live with being lonely, but he hated it. I think he has a similar empathic gift as our daughter, but had to suppress it as child to keep from going crazy because he suffered so much hurt as a boy."

"Hopefully now she and Maggie won't be at each others' throats all the time."

Emma couldn't bear seeing the girls fighting the way she and Regina did before the curse was broken.

It reminded her too much of the way other girls had picked on her in the various foster homes she had lived at. She thought that she and Rumple had a lot in common with their childhoods.

"Mommy, Mommy...lookit....we did it!" Ellie ran over to her mother, jumping up and down excitedly and pointed to where another sandcastle stood.

"That's great, sweetie!"

"You want this one saved too, Ellie?" Henry asked her.

"Uh-huh. I wanna keep it...if you guys don't mind?" she asked the other girls.

"You can have it and we can play with it when we get back home," Maggie suggested.

"Okay."

Henry handed the saved castle to his mother.

"Hee-yyy Papa, check me out!" Bae called out as he and his friends were riding a large wave on their surfboards.

"Whoooo hoo....lookin' good Fire!" Andi hooted from the shore while she and Becky were
recording them on their phone. Another wave came up behind him and Ewan and knocked them off their boards.

"Bae!" Rumple cried out, limping down to the shore, worried that his son had gotten caught in an undertow and dragged out to sea. Seconds later the two boys emerged from the water carrying their surfboards. "Dammit boy, ye nearly scared twenty years off me!"

"I'm fine, Papa. Just wasn't payin attention."

"Wipeout!" Kat and Bobby teased.

"Hey Daddy, what's that? It looks like a little blue bottle," Neal said and kneeled down to try to pick an object that looked like a blue bottle in the sand.

"Neal, don't touch 'im! He'll sting ya!" Jonny yelled.

"What is it, Jonny?" his father asked him.

"He says he's a Man o War."

"It's a kind of jellyfish," Rumple stated. "And it's poisonous. I think we need to help this one go back into the sea. It'll dry out on the shore."

"Yeah, he got dumped out here by the waves," Jonny added.

Rumple looked at the budding earth mage. "Would you like to help me, Jonny?"

"Sure."

"Rumple, I don't want him touching that thing! It will sting him!" Archie cried.

"Nuh-uh, Daddy. He knows I'm cool."

"Honey, be careful," Marie begged.

"And we don't have to touch him to help," Rumple said. "Jonny, I want you to kneel down here and touch the earth. We need to make the sand move so he can float back into the tide." He kneeled down and touched the earth.

"Okay...like this?" The toddler started moving the sand around with his hands.

"No, lad, not exactly. What I want you to do is to imagine the sand is like a dry ocean in your head. And it ripples like waves. Each ripple brings the Man-o-War closer to the sea" Rumple instructed. "I'll start. Like this."

"You can do it Jonny," Archie coached.

He concentrated and the sand suddenly rippled up and shoved the beached Man-O-War towards the ocean.

"Daddy, he says there's more of them further down the beach."

The toddler concentrated forming the image of the sand as waves in his mind and the Man-O-War disappeared into the water.

"Good job, lad!" Rumple praised. "That's a good exercise for you."
"Yeah, he's happy now but we gotta find the other guys before they dry out and die or they sting somebody cause they're mad."

"Can you feel them?" Rumple asked. One of the talents of an earth mage was feeling creatures auras.

"Uh-huh. I know where they are...one's close by and she's really mad.....she can't find her mate cause they got split up."

"Show me, Jonny."

Together the young apprentice and his elder walked down the beach.

"Owwww!" they heard Andi scream.

"What the HELL?" they heard Bae snarl. "Papa, this jellyfish thing stung Andi!"

Her friends gathered around and saw a long red welt down the side of her thigh.

"Oh my God....Bae it burns!"

"Don't move . . .I think it's got venom in it!" Bae muttered.

"Holy shit Andi it got you good," Becky groaned.

"She might be allergic Daddy," Gisella cried.

"Marie, go get Gisella's epipen out of our bag!" Archie ordered his wife.

Marie ran up to their spot and dug her daughter's pen out of the tote bag she brought with them, always carrying it since their daughter was allergic to coconuts or anything with coconut in it.

Rumple heard Bae's shout and said, "Hang on, dearie. I'm coming!" He cursed the fact that he couldn't teleport and the shifting sand played havoc with his mobility.

"Bae...oh my God....I feel like I did that time I got burned on Kat's stove..."

"It's gonna be okay," he murmured. "Can you breathe all right? Do you feel like you're gonna pass out?"

"I...I think so.." she murmured.

"Keep talking to me, okay?" he urged, terrified. Now he understood the way his papa felt when Belle was in labor.

Marie returned with the pen injector and handed it to her husband. "Do you think she'll need it?"

"I don't know...but we have to get the stinger out....if we can find it."

"I can find it!" piped up Adriana.

She pushed past the knot of concerned teenagers and put her hand on Andi's leg. "Don't worry, Andi. I can make you all better."

"Rumplette, what are you doing?" Bae frowned. "You'd better let Papa do this."

"Bae's right....you gotta wait for your dad..."
The little healer shook her head. "No . . . I can do this . . ." she muttered, then she closed her eyes and let her healing power operate on instinct. A golden glow enveloped her hand and then spread to where the welt was. The magic found the stinger and extracted it, numbed the pain receptors in the girl's leg and then mended the damage.

By the time Rumple arrived, Adriana had removed her hand, and said, "See? All better!"

"You did it!" Andi hugged the little girl.

"That's my baby sister!" Bae said happily and hugged her also.

Rumple beamed proudly at his daughter. "Dearie, ye shoulda waited but . . . you're a Healer born if you can heal something like this when you're only a toddler."

"Amazing," David breathed.

"We gotta get these guys back in the water 'fore they sting anybody else Daddy," Jonny reminded his father.

"They should close the beach down" Marie added.

"Can't we just burn 'em up?" asked Ellie.

Jonny glared at her. "You wanna burn all of 'em up? They didn't do nothin' to you. They just got tossed up here by accident...no reason to kill em!"

"No one's killing anything," Rumple declared flatly. "Jonny, repeat what we did with the first one here. Then we'll do the rest together."

"Okay." The toddler got back to work and returned the second Man-O-War to the ocean but he knew there were at least a dozen others still scattered on the beach.

"How many more are there, lad?"

"About thirteen. I can show ya where they are."

"Maybe we should tell someone and have them close the beach before someone else gets hurt?" Belle suggested.

Fearing this would be too much for the small magician, Rumple said to Emma and Regina, "Come with us, ladies. You can help us."

"I can do it!" Jonny insisted.

"Not by yourself, you can't," Rumple told his nephew. "You'll drain yourself."

"Jonny, listen to your uncle," Marie advised.

"Okay," he sighed.

"Be the first time I've tossed fish off a beach," Emma joked.

"Come on. Let's get goin' before we have another incident," Rumple urged. "Where to next, Jonny?"

He pointed to a spot further down the beach.
This time Rumple showed Emma how to do the "ripple effect" releasing the Man-O-War back into the sea.

While the others were walking back to their spot they could see a group of people walking toward them carrying towels, coolers, umbrellas and blankets.

"Hello!" one of the men called out.

The Storybrooke residents stared at them, hoping their eyes weren't playing tricks on them.

"Ummm...Jeff...are they?" Robin began.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again. "Yep...they are...unless we both need glasses."

"Daddy, they don't got not clothes on! That's indecent 'sposure!" Maggie yelled.

"Their bojangles are hangin out! Gross!" cried Jason.

"Their what?" Kyria asked him.

"It's what my daddy calls your nuts."

"Ummm...excuse me...I don't mean to be rude, but would you please put some clothes on? There are children here!" Archie snapped.

"Yeah and we do this all the time!" yelled a boy of about eight years old who stepped out from behind the adults, also naked.

"What's this, the streaker parade?" Bobby frowned.

"You...you let your children run around...naked!" Marie gasped.

"What kind of parenting is that?" demanded Snow.

"What's the big deal?" a teenage girl in the group asked them.

"The big deal is that it is highly inappropriate, that's what!" David answered angrily.

"What planet are you from? We're naturists or don't you know what that is?"

"I hardly think getting back to nature means running around with no clothes on!" Belle huffed.

"We're not naturalists, we're naturists which means we're nudists. Read a book will you!" the girl retorted.

"Then whyn't you join a colony?" Bae snapped. "If I want to look at women's cleavage I'd go to a strip joint." He covered his little sister's eyes. "Don't look, Adriana, you'll be scarred for life!"

"Daddy, you gotta arrest em for indecent 'sposure!" Maggie told her father.

"Hey short shit, we're allowed to be nude here!"

"You watch who you're callin' a short shit or you're gonna be a fried shit!" Ellie hollered.

"Eleanor May! Do you want to taste soap? Mind the mouth!" Robin snapped at his daughter.

"Sorry Daddy, but she's pickin on Maggie an I'm gonna whip her butt!"
"You and what army?"

"If you want an army we can give ya one!" Adriana challenged with an impish grin.

"Do not even think about it Adriana Isabelle Gold!" her mother warned.

"Laura, stop baiting them!" the father barked at his daughter. "Look, we don't mean to offend anyone but this has been our lifestyle for years. We do live in a colony back in California but we're just here on vacation."

"What's going on here....what in the seven hells are ye people doin' runnin around starkers?!!" Rumple demanded as he, Emma, Regina and Jonny approached the group.

"Ummm...they're nudists, Papa," Bae explained.

"What?! Ye mean...ye do this all the time?"

"Oh dear, it looks my son forgot to warn you about this!" Penelope spoke up. "You see some beaches, like this one, are clothing optional but most of the time you see that from tourists rather than the natives."

The man wrapped his towel around his waist. "Put your towels on," he instructed his wife and children and the two other adults with them.

"Daddy, I don't wanna!" his son pouted.

"Tim, just do it okay," his mother pleaded.

"This is bullshit!" Laura fumed. "If they're so offended, why don't they go somewhere else?"

"Why don't you!" Kat yelled back.

"Laura Ann Cross, you put your towel on or I'm going to do it for you!"

"Fine!" she grumbled and glared at the Storybrooke residents. "Freakin' prudes!"

"I don't understand how such a lifestyle doesn't make you feel...isolated," Belle said.

"Oh it doesn't. Actually, we have less stress in our lives than most of the people we talk to who wear clothes do. For us, clothes represent social boundaries but without them, everyone feels accepted regardless of age, weight, sex, orientation...you name it. For example: the older men and women in your group I'm certain are a bit....self conscious about being undressed in front of anyone other than your spouse...and sometimes even in front of your spouse. That doesn't happen with us...everyone is beautiful just as they are, no need to change a thing to feel accepted," one of the other women, whose name was Jennifer answered.

"And....being unclothed around each other doesn't encourage any...inappropriate behavior?" Archie inquired.

"Not at all."

"Well, I guess we should introduce ourselves. I'm Todd Cross. This is my wife Tiffany, our kids Laura and Tim and my brother Mike and his wife's name is Jennifer." Todd held out his hand to Rumple. The sorcerer shook it politely and introduced the rest of the group, making sure to call Snow and David by their cursed names. He introduced himself using his cursed name of Robert but said everyone called him Rumple because of his profession as a pawnshop owner.
"Deals are my specialty," he chuckled.

"Where do you live?" Tim asked Bae.

"It's a little town in Maine called Storybrooke."

"Sounds like it's in the middle of nowhere," Laura said.

"It kinda is," Andi laughed.

"No wonder you guys don't know much about nudists."

"It's kinda hard to run around starkers when it's thirty degrees out," Bae laughed. "Winters in Maine are COLD and the summers aren't all that warm either. Not like on the West coast."

"I guess we're spoiled then. We've lived in California all our lives. Hey...nice tat you got there." Laura pointed to his Scorpion tattoo.

"Thanks," Bae said, as he had long since stopped feeling self conscious about his gang logo. Besides these people wouldn't realize what it had stood for.

She turned around and showed them the large dragon tattoo she had on her back.

"That's a nice one!" Bae said and the other Scorpions nodded.

"It hurt like hell having it done but it was worth it. I've always loved dragons and I draw them and other mythological creatures all the time."

"Bae won a state contest painting him and Papa!" Adriana boasted.

"Umm . . . yeah, I did," Bae acknowledged. He pulled out his phone. "This was my painting."

"That's amazing. I do mostly sketching and body art...I can't work well on canvas."

"I had to take lessons to learn how to paint, because before this I sketched too. But I like to paint because you can get a richer color palette and tone you can't get with pencils."

"Oh I tried taking lessons but my teachers said body art worked best for me."

"Everyone has their own mediums," Bae said.

She glanced down at the surfboards. "You been out in the waves yet?"

"Yeah for a bit," Andi said. "Till he got wiped out and nearly gave his papa heart failure."

"And you got stung by a Man-O-War," Becky reminded her.

"Oh crap! They're out? I got nailed by one once and it hurt like an SOB with welts all over me."

"Tell me about it. It hurt like the time I burned myself on my friend's industrial range top." Andi grimaced. "But I think the tide came and got them all cause we didn't see anymore since."

"Good. I'm going to catch some waves."

The teenager grabbed her surfboard and headed out to the water. "You guys comin?"

"Shall we try this again, bro?" Bae asked Ewan.
"Yeah. C'mon Fury. Andi, you coming?"

"Ah why not."

"We'll just stay by the shore and let you guys splash us," Bobby joked, indicating himself and Kat.

"Be careful out there!" Rumple called out to them.

"We will, Papa."

"You guys wanna build a sandcastle?" Tim asked the younger children.

"We built some but we can build more, plus we gotta have a fort an a jail," said Maggie.

"We got enough of us to do it," Grace giggled.

"If we were back home I'd wanna play kickball but it sucks in the sand because ya can't run fast."

"Well they seem to be getting along," Belle said to Jennifer and Tiffany when she and Marie went to check on the babies. All of them were wide awake and in need of changing.

"I don't know how you two manage having that many babies at one time!" Tiffany laughed.

"It's easier when you have a husband willing to share the workload."

"I can imagine being a father again late in life was a bit shocking for your husband, Belle."

"Not really Jen. We wanted to have more children...for a little while we didn't think we could...but we've been blessed...fourfold!"

"So what does your husband do, Marie?" Tiffany inquired.

"He's a therapist, a good one too. I'm his office manager but lately he's been holding office hours at home because he doesn't want to have too much time away from the kids."

"That lump over there and I are the law and order in the town," Emma quipped, pointing at Jeff.

"Belle and I are teachers....David is one of Emma's deputies but he also volunteers at the pet shelter." Snow said.

"My husband owns a plumbing business and I guess you can say I own the town." Regina smirked.

"You think you do! She's the mayor."

Valora started screaming, her siblings following suit.

"Oh, looks like someone is hungry."

The other ladies excused themselves while Belle nursed her triplets. Marie put AJ and Maureen in their carriers and took them over to where Archie was sitting under his umbrella reading.

"I knew as soon as we saw them you were going to pull out one of your manuals looking for something," she joked.

"I just....would feel...odd being naked in public, especially at my age!"

"You'll always be my Adonis even when all our hair and teeth fall out."
He knew his brother-in-law would share his feelings.

"And I know Rumple wouldn't..."

"Rumple, when are you and this husband of mine gonna get it through your thick skulls you're always going to be handsome to Belle and me?"

She was tempted to break out the broom for good measure.

"Well I won't be parading around starkers in public, dearie."

It was bad enough there was that video still floating around on YouTube and now he had what Belle called 'groupies' chasing after him. Thankfully he hadn't encountered any of his 'fans' yet but his inbox was still being flooded with racy emails.

"Damn that Hatter and his cohorts for putting that video on the internet," he grumbled.

What he had was for his wife's eyes only, not the whole damned public....and he seriously doubted any of those women were as interested in him as they claimed to be, nor did he care.

"Some things...just should remain private," he added and glanced over to where the Cross men were talking with David, Jeff and Robin. Maurice and Penelope were walking along the beach.

Now it was AJ and Maureen's turn to demand their lunch. Marie and Archie picked them up and took them back to the shelter to nurse them while Belle and Tiffany carried the triplets over to visit their father. He adjusted the umbrella to keep them well shaded. Holding his three babies in his arms and stealing glances at the beautiful woman he'd helped create them with pushed back his inner demons once again.

"Part of me can't wait to see them start crawling....walking...talking...and the other part doesn't want them to grow up too fast," Belle said.

"Hopefully we won't miss them take their first steps like we did with Adriana. She snuck that in on us!"

"She gets that from you. Now we did hear her say her first word."

He giggled. "Oh aye. Right in the middle of Emma's wedding! I'm almost afraid of the shenanigans these wee imps are gonna cause."

"Well, they're chips off the old teacups so we'll need to be on our toes, aren't you?" Belle cooed and tickled them under their chins. Her children all wore their father's smirk on their faces.

The teenagers were walking back toward them, the girls and boys laughing hysterically after Bae wiped out on his surfboard. Rumple glanced up to see what the commotion was, his eyebrows raising into his hair.

"BAELFIRE GOLD! YE GET A TOWEL ON RIGHT NOW!" Rumple bellowed.

"Papa, what the heck's your bag?"

"Bae! Oh my God!" Belle covered her eyes and their daughter's.

"What's wrong with them?" he asked his friends. They said nothing and continued to laugh.

"Bae, for God's sake will you listen to your father and put a damn towel on!" Archie called out while
he and the rest of the parents shielding their children's young eyes. The Cross family started laughing.

"Will somebody tell me what the heck is going on?" the teenager demanded impatiently.

"Your bojangles are hanging out!" Roland yelled.

To his horror Bae realized that his shorts had fallen off. He'd been having difficulty keeping them up the entire time he was in the water and felt them sliding down while he was surfing and as he was trying to pull them back up he lost his balance.

"Awww shit! Guys, why didn't you TELL me I was running around naked instead of standing there laughing like a buncha idiots!" He glared at his friends and grabbed a towel from Ewan, wrapping it around his waist.

"Too busy enjoying the view," Andi whispered.

"Don't ye be gettin' any ideas, Andrielle MacLeod!" Rumple growled.

"Damn, I was enjoying the view too," Laura joked.

"Oh you can look...but you can't touch," Andi warned.

Soon the children were begging their parents to take them in the water. Rumple assured all of them that it was safe again now that he, Jonny, Emma and Regina had returned the Man-O-Wars to their rightful place in the ocean.

"They're happy now...and I told them we won't bother them so they won't bother us," Jonny added.

"Yeah but that sting hurt like heck, Jonny!" Andi moaned.

"Last one in is a rotten egg!" Jeff called out to his family.

"If I wasn't carrying your kid you'd be eating my dust right now, Hatter!" Emma bragged.

"We'll beat him, Mom. C'mon Gracie, C'mon, Maggie!"

"Hah! Eat OUR dust, Daddy!" Gracie blew a raspberry at her father as she and her siblings ran past him.

"How about the last one in gets dunked!" Robin called back.

"You're on Hood!" David raced past the portal jumper.

"Come on guys you heard Daddy. Make him work for it," Regina said to her children while she, Snow and Emma shuffled along behind them.

Archie set his book aside and stood up. "Would you mind watching the kids til we get back, Moe?"
he asked his father-in-law.

"Not at all."

As he and Rumple started walking down the beach their wives stepped in front of them, scowling. "You're not going down like that. Shirts. Off!" Marie said.

"Marie, I can't....my scar..." her husband said nervously.
"Ye think I wanna be showin' off more wrinkles, Belle?" Rumple demanded of his wife.

"Shirts off boys," Belle said with a snap of her fingers.

"You didn't mind me keeping my shirt on the first time we were here Marie," Archie argued.

"That's because we'd just gotten married and you were still a bit shy around me but we're past that my Adonis," Marie said softly. "It's just your shirt. The rest comes later...tomorrow night," she whispered in his ear.

"And Rumple honey, you have nothing to be ashamed of either. You'll always be beautiful to me," Belle was saying. "I can unwrap the rest of the Gold One later...in private."

"Oh will ye now?" Rumple's eyebrow arched. "Ye wanna make a deal wi' me mo chori?"

"You go in the water with your shirt off for at least an hour and..." she stepped forward and whispered in his ear. "Hehehe! Ye bold minx. Deal!" He yanked his shirt off and tossed it at the chair. "Come on, Hopper!"

"Well, my goddess, will you make me an offer I can't refuse?" Archie inquired of his wife.

"You've been hanging around him too long, and watched the Godfather too much! All right. How about tonight I..." she whispered in his ear. His eyes lit up and he threw his shirt at his chair. They took their wives' hands and ran toward the ocean with their children behind them laughing.

"Bout time you two get your asses in here!" Jeff taunted Archie and Rumple.

"I was here first!" Archie laughed.

"This is the best vacation ever!" Henry yelled.

"You can say that again!" Bae called back and disappeared under the water, swimming like a shark toward his unsuspecting father and dunked him.

"Ahhh! Bae, ye scamp! Ye just wait!"

"Gotta catch me first."

"That won't be too hard!" Belle winked at her husband and they swam toward their target.

"They're gonna git'cha Bae!" Adriana warned. She and the other toddlers had been instructed to stay closer to the shore and though all of them could swim very well and were wearing floatation devices, their parents weren't taking any chances. Snow stayed behind with them, content to just stand in the water to cool off.

Belle and Rumple located their target and dragged the teenager under the water while his friends laughed and the other couples took turns dunking each other and splashed each other playfully.

"Get a room!" Regina yelled out to Belle and Rumple and Archie and Marie who stood in the water kissing each other passionately. They ignored her.

"You have an amazing family," Penelope said softly while they watched the others frolicking in the ocean. "And your sons-in-law seem to adore your daughters."

"They do. And my daughters love them as much....plus look that the beautiful grandchildren I have."
"Maurice, these past few weeks have been the best time of my life," Penelope confessed. "Being with you and your family..."

He took her hand in his. "I've been having a wonderful time too...and I've been thinking...why don't you come to Italy with us?"

"You want me to?"

"Of course I do!"

"All right. I'll come with you."

They both knew sooner or later they would have to say goodbye but neither was ready for that yet. It would not be easy for them to have a relationship with so great a distance between them but as he'd learned from his daughters: true love always found a way.

Later on that afternoon, the group plus the Cross family decided to have dinner together at an outdoor restaurant. It was the same one the Hoppers had visited during their honeymoon that was owned by an American, boasted a multicultural menu and the site of the famous 'roadkill' incident. It was well known by the family that Gisella Hopper was one of the harshest food critics and if she found fault with something served to her, it didn't matter who cooked it, she would toss it out on the road and yell "Get your roadkill!" to passersby.

"Hopefully the management and the cooking staff have changed," Archie muttered while he read his menu.

"Phone's ready just in case," Henry chuckled.

"Do you guys even eat naked?" Roland asked Tim. The family stopped at their hotel to put on clothes before they went to the restaurant.

"Yup. At home but not when we go on vacation 'less we're at a colony or something."

While everyone waited for their orders the Cross family recounted some of their adventures in other countries.

"We're slowly but surely becoming globe trotters," Regina said with a laugh. Jeff and Emma have been a few places in the States and Mary and David took Neal to Universal. And of course, Archie and Marie spent their honeymoon here and in Italy."

"How soon are you due?" Tiffany asked her and Snow.

"A few more weeks at least...if not sooner," Snow answered. "I'm a little nervous about having the baby abroad but we should be fine."

When the servers returned with their food, Rumple and Archie grabbed their forks and knives and cut into their steaks, relieved to see that they had been cooked to order. When Belle's hamburger was set down in front of her she scowled.

"What is this?"

"Ewww, Mama, what is that white stuff all over it?" Adriana cried.

Belle picked up her spoon and tasted the white cream. "Yogurt?! On a hamburger? I didn't order this! I asked for ketchup, cheese and pickles."
"Yogurt, yogurt...I hate yogurt! Even with strawberries!" Becky recited a famous tirade from Spaceballs. Her friends tittered.

"Enough you lot!" Rumple chastised. "Now dearie, take this back and tell the cook to make it the way she requested."

"Or it's going out on the road!" Gisella threatened.

"W...What?" Jennifer laughed.

The server glared at them and took the plate back to the kitchen. While the others were eating their dinner, Ellie jumped up and started screaming.

"MOMMY! LOOKIT MY SOUP!"

Jonny, who was sitting beside her glanced down at the bowl. "Gross! What the heck IS that?" He pointed to a plastic object floating in her clam chowder.

"I dunno but m'not eatin' it!" She pushed the bowl away.

"Oh my God! That's a CONDOM!" Emma exclaimed. "What the hell kinda place is this?"

"Is there a problem?" the server asked when he returned with Belle's hamburger.

Robin dipped a spoon in the chowder and fished out the condom. "Does THIS look like a problem to you?" he barked. "How the HELL did THAT get in there?"

"I...I don't know," he stammered.

"Well I suggest you find out...and quickly!" Regina demanded, giving him one of her regal Looks.

"Some things never change," Marie sighed.

The commotion brought the manager to their table. He took one look at the Hoppers and groaned. "Not YOU!" Though it had been five years since their last encounter, the manager remembered the family well, having heard through friends that the girl's stunt with her father's uncooked steak went viral on YouTube.

Archie stood up. "Yes, me. I suggest you start running because if you think my family was difficult, you haven't seen anything yet. He's all yours," he said to Regina.

"What the hell kind of establishment are you running where people are serving CONDOMS in the food?" Regina ranted. "I ought to SUE you!"

"Try and they'll laugh you out of court. You think I don't know a setup job when I see it?"

The Scorpions made slashing motions across their throats.

"Y...You...son of a bitch. Are you honestly suggesting that I would deliberately traumatize my child to make a few bucks? That...thing was in the soup before my daughter even touched it!" she hissed, wanting to roast the man on a spit! Emma took several pictures of the soup for evidence and Jeff was recording the exchange on his cellphone.

Ellie jumped out of her chair and ran over to where the manager stood, glaring up at him. "You watch how you talk to my mommy or I'll roast you!"
"Oh yeah? What'cha gonna do huh?" he challenged.

"Boy is he gonna get it," Neal whispered to Adriana.

"She can't 'cause Papa put that bracelet on her to stop her from doing it," she whispered back.

Though she wasn't able to use fire, Ellie did have another weapon at her disposal...her feet. She raised her foot and stomped down hard on the older man's toes.

"Owwww...you bitch...you little fuckin bitch!"

"You kiss your mommy with that mouth?" Jonny asked angrily and before his father could stop him he ran over to them, kicking the man in the shin. "Don'cha call Ellie names again or next time m'gonna kick ya right in the nuts!"

"Git 'im Jonny!" Maggie hooted while Ellie glanced over at Jonny, her mouth agape. It was the first time he'd ever defended her.

"You people are nothing but trouble. Leave!" the manager yelled.

"Gladly!" Rumple said coldly. "But know this: ye won't be in business much longer....dearie!" The group left the restaurant with many of the other customers close behind them, not wanting to patronize a place with such a rude staff and unsanitary conditions.

Later on that evening while Regina was putting her daughter to bed she noticed that Ellie seemed preoccupied.

"What's wrong, sweetie?"

"Can we read my Maleficent book tonight?"

"Of course honey." Regina sat on the bed beside her and opened the book, an orchid that had been preserved by a spell falling into her lap. She picked it up and smiled, recalling how they found it and what she thought it meant.

"Moooo-mmmyyyy!" Ellie sobbed. She was sitting on the ground holding her leg where she'd scraped it after falling off the swing. She and Maggie had been having a competition to see who could swing the highest and the fastest and Ellie not wanting to be outdone by her rival had been swinging too high to keep herself on the seat and tumbled to the ground. Regina had been setting up the picnic table for the children's lunch when she heard her daughter cry out and rushed to her side.

"M'sorry Ellie," Maggie said sadly.

"GO 'WAY! Why you always havta be better at everything? Huh?"

"I didn't mean to..."

"Maggie, would you mind going in the house with your grandmother and the others for a minute?"

"Okay..."

After Regina tended to her daughter's knee and helped her to her feet they were both surprised to see an orchid sitting on the seat of Ellie's swing. It was the toddler's favorite flower.

"Where did that come from?" Regina mused.
"Maybe it blew in with the wind."

Regina shook her head. The family owned an orchid bush but it grew in the special greenhouse Rumple had designed for her since the Maine climate was not suitable for growing them outdoors. "Maybe you have a secret admirer," she said softly.

"Nuh-uh. The boys don't like me. They like Maggie. She's prettier...or Driana."

"But someone knows this is your favorite flower. Do you want to keep it?"

"Yeah. Can you put some kinda spell on it so's it doesn't die?"

"I sure can honey." Regina waved her hand over the flower. Ellie smiled and tucked it between the pages of one of her favorite chapters in her book.

"Mommy, why do boys like Maggie more'n me?"

"Which boy are you referring to?"

"Just boys," Ellie said evasively.

Regina frowned. "Ellie, honey talk to me."

"It's nothin, Mommy. Can you read now?"

Regina was only able to read several pages before her daughter drifted off to sleep, the book opened to the pages holding her orchid.

Over in the Hoppers suite a similar conversation was taking place between father and son, Archie recalling another conversation he had with his son a month earlier.

"...How do ya let a girl know you like her? I mean like a girlfriend."

Archie's mouth dropped open. "Jonny! My God, aren't you a little young for that?" he cried.

"Sella's got a boyfriend!"

"Well...ummm...err...I suppose...but..." The therapist sighed. His children were growing up too soon for his liking. "Have you told her that you like her?"

"No....afraid she'll laugh at me."

"Then maybe you can show her."

"Huh?"

Archie smiled. "If there's one thing I've learned loving your mother it's that a woman doesn't always need a man to tell her how he feels but show her. And that's what I've been doing for as long as we've known each other. You know I first fell in love with her when I was a cricket but I didn't let that stop me from trying to show her how I felt."
"How didja do it if you were a cricket?"

"She was a bit upset with me for waking her up early one morning and all I wanted to do was see her beautiful smile so I chewed a rose off one of the bushes and gave it to her. She started having feelings for me then but was afraid to admit it...because of what we were."

"This girl likes flowers....maybe I should leave her one."

"It doesn't hurt to try."

"....I guess now I have my answer as to which girl you were referring to, don't I, Jonny? That was brave of you to stand up for Ellie like that but also dangerous. That man could've injured both of you."

"Yeah. I know she thinks I don't like her...I just don't like when she gets all snooty....but when she's nice...."

"Did you do what I suggested?"

"Yeah I left her one of those flowers she likes on her swing that day she fell off...but I got scared an hid before she found out it was me!"

"Then maybe now its time to tell her how you feel."

"Daddy!"

"No, you don't want to hold off. For months after we met again I drove myself crazy trying to work up the courage to tell your mother but when I finally said those three words I felt like I'd lifted a boulder off my chest." Archie smiled. "And what better time for you to do it than at our reception tomorrow."

"How'm I gonna do it?"

"You'll know when the time's right. Now, we'll need to get up early and do some shopping for orchids, won't we?"

Jonny hugged him. "Daddy, I really hope she doesn't get mad at me."

"Oh, I don't think she will." He kissed his son's forehead. "Night, pardner. Tomorrow's gonna be a big day for both of us and I want you well rested."

"Night, Daddy!"

Father and son drifted off to sleep dreaming of the day ahead and the sweet surprises it would bring for both of them.
The Kind of Love To Last Forever

Chapter Summary

Archie and Marie renew their vows in a romantic ceremony on a beach in the seaside town of Vougliameni and little Ellie Hood gets a sweet and unexpected surprise during the reception courtesy of little John Wayne Hopper.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

You know our love was meant to be
The kind of love to last forever…

Chicago – You’re The Inspiration (Archie and Marie’s love theme)

Marie awoke early the next morning, a dreamy smile on her lips as she remembered that it was exactly five years ago on that very day that she officially became Mrs. Archibald Hopper. She turned onto her side and propped her head up on her arm to watch her husband sleep, still unable to believe even after all those years that such a wonderful man loved her, had given her three beautiful children of their own and Gisella was now as much his child as Jonny, AJ and Maureen were. Later on that afternoon they would renew their vows on the beach dressed as Aphrodite and Adonis like they had been on their wedding day and their friends would be wearing their costumes but Regina, Snow and Emma had to have theirs modified to fit more comfortably over their baby bumps. They would have a small reception in the ballroom of the hotel and the children would stay with Rumple and Belle to also celebrate Adriana’s birthday while Archie and Marie had their second wedding night that would be as wonderful as their first.

Her mind took her back to the day of their first meeting back in the Enchanted Forest while he was still a cricket and she rode to Rumple’s castle to visit with her sister before the curse stuck and took all of them away. She had been sitting with Belle sipping tea, discussing where Snow White’s messenger was until he hopped in the window and flew into the face of a woman who’d despised insects her whole life. She screamed, as her son once said, like she was in a horror show.

"Ahhhh...insect!"

"Madam, if I may..."

"Get away from me you disgusting thing!"

"Madam! Control yourself!"

"Get out of here...oh gods, Belle, you know I HATE INSECTS!"

A terrified Archie had taken flight, wanting to get away from her before she injured him worse than Cora Miller had when she burned his wing.

"Oh no you don’t!"
Marie took off after him with the infamous Bordreaux Broom in hand ready to turn the cricket that would become the love of her life into a splatter on the wall.

"Madwoman!"

"Marie...just open the door and let it out..."

"Disgusting things!"

Then she’d slipped and fallen on her back and he hopped onto her chest, pointing his umbrella in her face.

"You, Madam are insane. What have insects ever done to you?"

"It...it talks!"

"Of course I talk. You would've figured that out if you'd allowed me to instead of chasing me around here like a madwoman."

"A...a talking cricket!?"

"Marie, are you all right?" Belle asked, kneeling beside her.

"Is she all right? My lady, she assaulted me...with a broom!"

"You too, eh? The Bordreaux women like beating up men with brooms," chuckled Rumple, coming into the room. "Just ask Charming. Or Gaston. Or me, for that matter." He gave a rueful giggle.

"Get off me!" Marie yelled.

"Not until you apologize!"

"W...What?"

"You assaulted me and you owe me an apology," he said firmly. He sat down. "I'll wait."

Marie was incensed. There was a talking insect on her chest who had the nerve to ask an apology from her?

"I could just knock you off..." she said with a smirk.

"Are you going to apologize...or not?"

"Dearie, he wasn't always a cricket...once he used to be a human being. Right, Jiminy?"

"Yes."

"So what happened that you got turned into an insect...no don't tell me...you annoyed everyone."

"And you are annoying me!" He poked her gently with his umbrella.

"Quit that!"

"Is it really that difficult to say you're sorry?"

"I'm sorry, now would you please get off me."
"That's better."

They hadn't felt the connection forming between them but Belle and Rumple did and encouraged it as much as they could, first by inviting Archie to stay at the castle, thinking he would be exhausted after his long trip.

Archie stirred in the bed and turned to his side and on his back was the long scar from Cora’s attack on him when he and Regina attempted to steal Daniel’s heart back from the vault to release Cora’s hold on her daughter and prevent the Dark Curse and the Curse of the Broken Hearted from being cast. The other heart that was needed was in Wonderland. Marie pressed her lips to the scarred patch of skin, recalling how horrified she’d been when Archie took the stand for the defense in Regina’s trial and was asked to show it as evidence that Cora, not her daughter, had been the one most responsible for the misery all their lives had been during the curse.

"...Arista did you SEE that….she…she took off half his skin! Oh, Archie…” she sobbed. Arista embraced her.

"He's okay now, sweetie. Good gods, now you really should tell him how you feel because if this isn't a sure sign you're in love with him, I don't know what is."

"I can't…I can't…not now…"

Not ever…

"When?" the other dancer demanded. "He's perfect for you! He treats you a goddess, cares for your daughter like she's his own, cooks…and not all men do that. What more do you want?"

"I WANT to love him…but I CAN'T!"

"You've gotta try, Marie!"

"What if he…hurts me…like…like…"

"He's NOT like Gaston! Not all men are like that prick. You can't let him ruin this for you…"

"I know…"

"C'mon….let's get you back in there…he needs you. Didn't you notice he had his eyes on you most of the time?"

"Yes…but that doesn't mean he's in love with me…"

"Blind," Arista muttered. Keeping her arm around Marie's shoulders, she escorted the distraught women out of the bathroom and ran into Archie as he was walking down the hall.

"Marie! Are you all right?"

"She'll be fine now that you're here Doc," Arista said with a smile. Marie glared at her when she was certain he wasn't looking. "I'll meet you back in the courtroom, hon."

Archie fished a Kleenex out of his pocket and handed it to Marie to dry her eyes. "I…I can't believe she did that to you."

"I'm all right….Rumple healed most of the damage but I don't regret doing it."

She smiled through her tears. "Still trying to be a hero."
She recalled on their wedding night how they’d both seen each other’s scars, his from his attack by Cora, hers from the surgeries she’d had to improve her body thinking it was only way a man could love her and to repair the damage done to her when she’d been nearly raped and beaten to death by Gaston Devereaux. It was Gaston who had taken her innocence with violence when she was nineteen and in the stables at her father’s castle. He’d been obsessed with her, poisoning her finance before the curse. During the curse he’d killed Marie's godfather who had been supporting her and her young daughter financially and after the curse he threatened to kill Archie once he learned the two were dating. Marie broke off their relationship; not wanting Archie to become another victim of Gaston’s madness and after learning Archie spent the night with her though they hadn’t made love, Gaston stormed into her house to attack her again only this time she’d fought back and together they at last brought him to justice though Spencer had done a damned good job of putting her on trial, not Gaston, even going as far as accusing Archie of being the one who assaulted her.

"You've testified that you spent the night of July 22 at Miss Bordreaux's apartment and left the next day and that you did not share her bed, that's not true is it, Doctor?"

"On the contrary, sir, it is true. Due to her prior experiences with Gaston, Marie and I have never . . . had relations with one another. I . . . do not believe in sleeping with a woman until I am married to her."

"You expect us to believe you spent the entire night in an exotic dancer's home on the sofa?"

"Yes. I did. I would not dishonor her that way."

"You said you argued...it got of hand and YOU were the one who attempted to sexually assault Miss Bordreaux and frame my client, didn't you?"

"Excuse me? I did nothing of the kind! Yes, I argued with Marie, but I would NEVER harm her . . . or any woman!"

When that plan failed he’d changed tactics, even going as far as suggesting she'd been sleeping with Jonas Harris, her godfather so that he would leave her the bulk of his fortune. He had...to Gisella only he’d included a codicil that if Marie decided she did not want the inheritance, she could donate to breast cancer research...and she had...right after she and Archie were engaged because he wanted to support his daughter himself. Marie was terrified she would lose the man she loved and even considered begging Rumple to stop the trial before she took the stand but Archie wouldn't have it.

“You heard what I said in there. It’s what I believe. I knew from the night we met that you only spent that much time with a man his age because he just needed someone to talk to but others in this town….” He frowned. “They’re always quick to assume the worst. And why do I stay? How many times do I have to tell you it’s because I love you for you to believe it…to believe in me?” He gripped her shoulders gently and turned her around so that they were facing each other and gazing deeply into each other’s eyes. “We’re going to finish this, Marie. Together. He’s not going to hurt you anymore and neither is that viper defending him and I’ll be right there with you when you go up on that stand and tell them everything he’s done. Let them see the woman I do."

Now Gaston was dead, he’d been killed in prison shortly after Archie and Marie’s wedding and without any other obstacles in their lives; they concentrated on raising their family and building up Archie’s practice. During the curse Regina made it a point to remind him that he'd recieved his degree from a curse, a claim she could no longer make now that he'd passed the boards and was now certified in several fields and every year he he found something new to focus on.

He rolled over in bed again and took her in his arms, a loving smile on his lips. "Good morning my goddess,” he murmured as he kissed her.
"Mmmm....the groom isn't supposed to see...or sleep with the bride before the wedding...not that I'm complaining...and I would stay in this bed with you all day..." She sighed longingly. "But I know damned well that sister of mine or our daughter will be coming along any minute now to wake us up."

"We have tonight, darling."

"And what surprises do you have in store for me?"

"That's for me to know...and you to find out." he teased. Marie yanked the pillow out from underneath his head and swatted him with it.

"Now are you gonna tell me, baby?" she cooed.

"Ohhh....I don't think so my goddess! You're not getting the upper hand this time!" He flipped them over and brought his mouth down on hers, forcing her to release her grip on his pillow. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him back with equal passion. Being affectionate in public was not something they did often, there were still jealous, vicious tongues that continued to criticize their relationship even after five years of marriage and four beautiful children. In many eyes Marie Bordreaux Hopper was still that dancer at the Foxtrot who seduced and corrupted poor Archibald Hopper so that she could get her greedy hands on his money and give her bastard daughter a father. However, Archie was not afraid to show his devotion to his wife in public when the occasion called for it and one of of those times had been after Zelena turned him back into a cricket and Marie broke the spell with true love's kiss, prompting him to propose to her at last. The family was coming out of the sheriff's station to jealous and envious onlookers and Archie decided if they wanted something to see and talk about it, he would certainly give it to them and took Marie into his arms for a passionate kiss.

"...What does he see in her? She's one of those dancers!"

"Probably thinks he has money."

He lifted his mouth from hers and turned to face the two women speaking. "There are people in this town who’ve done far worse and you forget...I’ve heard about it but I’m not the type to air a person’s dirty laundry in public. And you also tend to forget we were all cursed for the last twenty-eight years and we should not be judged for our actions during it. I don’t give a damn what ANYONE in this town says, Marie is going to be my wife and Gisella is my daughter. And before you go about ruining someone else’s life with your gossip you might want to concentrate on improving your own! Now if you’ll all excuse me, we'll be going home."

All the battles we’ve fought...they’ve been worth it, she thought as he made love to her passionately, not just telling her how devoted he was to her, but showing her, taking her to the heights only he could until they drifted off into a blissful sleep.

"ARCHIE! MARIE! GIT UP YOU TWO. YE'RE GONNA BE LATE FOR YER OWN WEDDIN!'" they heard Rumple bellowing from the other side of their bedroom door as he rapped on it with his cane. "And if ye're no' out here in five minutes, I'm comin' in and ye'd better be decent!"

"Oh gods," Archie groaned. "We're getting up!" he called back. "I don't know what's worse. Having him screaming at us...or the kids!"

"I don't know either but we'd better get up before he does come in here," Marie said and crawled out of bed. The couple met the Golds in the living room.
"You're not even dressed yet!" Belle cried, gesturing to their robes.

"And ye might want to cover those up dearies," Rumple said with a smirk, pointing to the blemishes on their necks.

"You can just magic them...until later!" Archie informed his brother-in-law.

"Oh all right!" Rumple gestured and the blemishes became invisible to all other eyes except for Archie and Marie. "But next time, you cover them up yourselves."

"Oh really? And just how many have you needed to cover up Rumplestitskin? Hmm?" Archie quizzed. "Shall I remind you?"

"No. Now git in that bedroom and get dressed, cricket!" Rumple gave him a small shove toward Johnny's bedroom where his father's Adonis costume was hanging in the closet while Belle took Marie back into the master bedroom to transform herself into Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

"I can still remember the day we saw each other again in that damned club...as if it were yesterday," Marie said dreamily while Belle brushed her hair. "And that damned Zelena...shoving her plastic rack in his face. Gods I wanted to strangle her and he was so nervous..."

"But you rescued him."

"I didn't understand it then....my cursed self was always attracted to the pretty boy types, except for Gaston but there was something about him...."

"He was your true love, Marie. Your mind didn't remember it but your heart did as Archie often says."

She'd taken him to the private room, making the others think she was going to give him a lap dance but she knew Archie Hopper wasn't the type to enjoy that sort of thing.

“So this is...uhhh...the private room?” he asked her as they sat down.

She nodded and dimmed the lights. “We use this room if a customer wants a private dance...well I use it for that...and just to talk if that’s what they want to. Some of them actually do want to just talk.”

“I...don’t really want you to dance,” he confessed. “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to offend you...it’s just that...”

“It’s all right. I’ve been wanting to talk to you anyway. To thank you.”

He was stunned. “T...Thank me? For what? We’ve never met.”

She smiled. “No, but you’ve met my daughter. She plays with Pongo in the park. Her name is Gisella Bordreaux and my name is Marie though I go by Electra here.”

They spent most of their time talking about her daughter, until they heard Spencer and Zelena having sex in the other room. Not wanting to embarass Archie any further, she moved them out to the patio and made him a cup of tea.

“When do you think they’ll let you off the chain?” she called out.

“I don’t know....soon I hope...I’m sorry...I didn’t mean it like that...” he stammered.
“It’s all right,” she said softly, handing him a cup. “You’re too good for a place like this.”

“Well, ummm… it hasn’t been that bad,” he admitted. “I really don’t get out much because of what I do…and I just never gave it a thought.” He laughed. “I was planning on spending the evening at home watching a marathon on TV.”

“Nothing wrong with that. I do that sometimes either alone or with Sella.”

“Electra! You done in there yet! We got a show to put on!” demanded Merriweather Blue from the doorway. At the club her name was Aqua Mystique. When the schoolteacher saw Marie’s companion she screeched and dashed back into the main room of the club. Archie was so shocked to see her that he nearly dropped his cup.

“M… Miss Blue?!” he gasped. “But…but she’s a teacher!”

“Doing a little moonlighting. I’m not proud of what I do Doctor but I don’t lie about it either,” Marie said defensively.

“Marie, I didn’t mean to upset you….I seem to be putting my foot in my mouth a lot tonight.”

“It’s all right.”

“ELECTRA!” yelled Sly.

Marie sighed. “I’d better get going before he sends a posse for me and hopefully yours will take you home.” She stood up.

“I may not have wanted to be here…but I did enjoy talking to you.”

“Same here.”

They stared at each other for several minutes. Finally Marie looked away. “Maybe we’ll see each other in the park sometime,” she blurted out before she thought about it.

He smiled. “You might. I’m there every day.”

“Well, ummm… goodbye Doctor Hopper,” she said and hurried into the main room before Sly came after her. He despised lateness to the shows.

"And our first kiss at your cabin....oh Belle I could hardly breathe! Not that I can now every time he kisses me...when he holds me and even when he makes love to me..."

"Rumple and I could feel the deep connection between you even when Archie was a cricket." Belle picked up her sister's jewelry box. "Now, what necklace do you want to wear? Good Gods, Marie! Did your husband buy out every jewelry store in Maine and Europe?"

"No, but he's always buying me one expensive gift after another even when I tell him he doesn't have to. It's not how much money he spends on me that makes me love him. Give me that one. He bought it in Athens on our honeymoon." She pointed to a heart shaped pendant that looked like strings of golden threads woven together. Belle fastenened the necklace around her sister's neck and started weaving her hair into an elegant twist that would be held up by a gold circlet of an olive branch. Her wedding dress was a white satin and lace peplos and on her feet she would wear a pair of brown leather sandals and on her arm she would wear her cricket shaped bracelet. Their wedding rings were also olive branch bands with a cricket holding a rose, the symbols of the bride and groom. They'd taken them off the night before and gave them to Rumple and Belle for safekeeping until they
would exchange them again during the ceremony.

"You look beautiful sis...and I'm so glad we're actually going to get to be at the reception this time. You're going to miss Adriana's party afterwards...but she'll understand."

"I know. We get married the same day she's born and most of our kids have the same birthday!" Marie laughed. "Makes planning parties a bit easier."

She stood up. "Hopefully that husband of mine is ready."

In Jonny's room Archie stood in front of the mirror in his own costume. He was wearing a long white robe with a gold shawl, leather sandals and a gold olive branch circlet on his head. Rumple stood behind him dressed as Hades and would stand at his side as best man while Belle would be at Marie's side as Persephone. During their first wedding it had been Geppetto standing at his best friend's side as he should have but they were back home in Maine helping August recover from alcohol addiction and his rehab was progressing well according to the reports from Dr. Boyar.

"You look great Archie," Rumple praised.

"I'm five years older than I was when I wore this the last time." He chuckled. "But at least I don't have knots in my stomach!"

"No because now you know you were worried over nothing. You have your happy ending Archibald Hopper."

And I had to fight like hell to get it, he thought. "All right, Rumple. I'm ready."

On the beach an archway of white roses was set up for the couple to stand under while they exchanged their vows. Since it wasn't an actual wedding but a renewal of vows ceremony, there would be no minister presiding over the events and lounge chairs were set up in the sand for the guests. Henry and Gracie were recording the event for the family's travel diary as they would record Rumple and Belle's ceremony in Rome.

Rumple escorted his brother in law to the archway and the two of them stood there waiting patiently while Belle and Marie walked toward them and their husbands were speechless when they gazed upon their goddesses in their finery. Belle placed her sister's hand in Archie's and the couple faced each other to begin speaking their vows.

"My darling Archie," Marie began softly, gazing into her husband's eyes. "Five years ago today, we stood before each other having gone through so much pain over the years we were apart and pledged ourselves to each other. Every day since then we've been replacing every unpleasant memory we ever had of our pasts with new ones, making our lives better than we could have hoped for. Every day, every little thing you do makes me love you more and you never have to spend a fortune on me to make it mean something. Just seeing your smiling face is enough to leave me breathless. There are so many things I could recite, some of them private, but the rest have been with the family we've made together. I see you at my side again as we brought three of them into the world and through the love we had for each other and for her, we've made Gisella our child and in many ways they are all the best of both of us. I love you so much Archibald Hopper for all that you are, and all that you've given me and I'll still love you until the end of time."

Archie raised her hand and placed it over his heart. "Marie, my goddess....when I turn around and look back at my life during the curse and even before, it feels like one long major highway, but as I was on it, it was a wild zigzag of experiences that seemingly at times had no relationship to each other, and I thought to myself, 'How the hell did I get here? What could have possibly brought me
from that to this? I have my answer when I look at you: I was on that road searching for you and the family I wanted us to have together. The best part of my day is waking up in the morning and seeing you there beside me then seeing the beautiful children we made together. The best part of my night are your faces being the last things I see when I close my eyes. Even if someone is foolish enough to try to take you away from me again, my heart will never forget you and I'll find you. I love you, Marie Bordreaux Hopper and I'll love you forever."

"Oh that was so romantic...I'm going to swoon," Sophia sobbed. "Why can't you be like that more often?" she demanded of her husband.

Thanks a LOT Archie, Alessandro thought jealously. Make the rest of us have to work for it.

"Your son-in-law is a wonderful man," Penelope said through her own tears.

"That he is," Moe declared proudly. "I couldn't have asked for better ones for both of my daughters."

After the Golds handed them back their rings, Archie took his wife into his his arms and kissed her under a bright sunny sky. Adriana waved her hand and a rainbow appeared over them that showered them with little paper hearts in different colors.

"Honey that was so sweet of you," Belle said to her.

"Papa, you do something now," Adriana demanded of her father.

"How do you like this, dearie?" The sorcerer gestured and a heart was drawn in the sand with the couples' names and the dates of their wedding and renewal ceremony with the phrase true love conquers all written inside it.

After the ceremony was over everyone else walked back to the hotel except for the newly remarried couple who was being taken to the reception in a chariot Rumple conjured.

"Why the hell didn't I think of this the first time?" he mumbled. "Enjoy the ride, dearies."

"Oh we will," Archie murmured, his arm around his wife.

They had originally planned to have the reception and Adriana's party at the Grand Bretagne but Alessandro had worked out an arrangement with the manager of the hotel in Vougliameni that they would host the reception while the Bretagne would host the convention the other hotel booked since its ballroom was large enough to accommodate those guests and also the families would be staying overnight in the town to avoid the long trip back to Athens.

The menu for both events was a combination of Greek, Italian and American dishes most of it prepared by the kitchen staff of both hotels with a few items made by Archie, Rumple and Belle including Rumple's Golden Delights cookies, Belle's cake and Archie's famous "Hotter Than Hell" chili with labels for the mild and extra hot versions.

After dinner Archie rose from his seat and walked onto the stage, whispering into Alessandro's ear. His friend smiled, nodded and when he was certain Marie wasn't looking, Alessandro wired him up with miniature microphone.

"What is that husband of mine up to now?" Marie murmured to her sister.

"You'll find out," Belle said with a smirk. She had no intentions of ruining this surprise.

Archie came down from the stage and stood in front of her, smiling softly, a miniature microphone
clipped to his costume. As the opening notes to Chicago's "You're The Inspiration" began to play, Marie felt tears brimming in the corners of her eyes. Her husband had serenaded her many times over the years but never to their song.

"You know our love was meant to be
The kind of love to last forever
And I want you here with me
From tonight until the end of time
You should know
Everywhere I go
You're always on my mind, in my heart, in my soul
Baby, you're the meaning in my life
You're the inspiration..." he sang passionately and held out his arms to her. She went into them willingly and he led her out into the middle of the dance floor, still singing as he gazed into her eyes while they danced together. In those minutes all they could see was each other even though they were surrounded by family and friends. When the song was over Archie cupped his wife's face in his hands and kissed her.

"I love you, my goddess," he whispered.

"And I love you..."

"Oh Rumple, they looked so beautiful out there," Belle sobbed. "And we missed it the first time. But...they understood...we were having our little miracle."

"Aye mo chori and you'll finally have your sister at your side for our ceremony...like she should have been the first time." The couple walked over to the Hoppers and hugged them.

"Hey, let's get the REAL party started!" Jeff hooted.

"Not yet, Hatter!" Archie called out and motioned to Alessandro. He came down from the stage holding another microphone that he clipped to Marie's dress. She smiled, knowing exactly what her husband had in mind when the opening notes to Chicago's "Will You Still Love Me?" began to play, recalling a conversation they had about the song while they were dating, both agreeing that the song should have been a duet and if the band couldn't make it happen, they would.

"Take me as I am
Put your hand in mine
Now and forever..." Marie sang.

"Darling here I stand
Stand before you now
Deep inside I always knew..." Archie sang.

"It was you, you and me
Two hearts drawn together
Bound by destiny..." they sang together.

All of the guests were silent while the couple sang, many of them recording it on their phones, those of them who knew the original song thinking that it did indeed sound better as a duet. A large crowd of the hotel's guests had been lured to the ballroom hearing the couple singing and cheered loudly, asking them to do another song.

"Once In a Lifetime?" Archie asked Marie. She nodded and they began to sing another of Chicago's
lesser songs as a duet.

"Once in a lifetime  
Maybe the last time  
Just the right time to fall in love," Marie sang.

"Once in a lifetime  
For such a long time  
I've been waiting for you..." Archie sang.

They got several more requests to sing. Archie sang "Along Comes a Woman" solo while Marie sang "No Tell Lover", changing the lyrics a bit for a woman singing it to a man and they finished by singing "We Can Last Forever" together.

Once they were finished, Henry saved the videos and uploaded them then opened his Twitter account. He knew the band had a Twitter account and some of the members had their own accounts. He copied links to the videos to all of the accounts with a message: Your biggest fans, Archie and Marie Hopper singing your songs on their fifth wedding anniversary! He hoped that at least one of the members would respond back. The family knew they'd gotten to see Chicago in concert only recently but never had the chance to actually meet them.

"I hope they answer back, Dad. That would be so cool." Henry said to his father.

"So do I."

"Okay Hatter...now you can boogie down!" Archie called over to him.

"Don't think I can do a lot of boogying when I'm almost the size of a house," Emma groaned.

"I know I can't," Snow complained.

"I'll wait for a slow one," Regina said.

"C'mon guys!" Jeff dragged a reluctant Robin and David out into the middle of the dance floor and had Alessandro play the Bee Gees' "You Should be Dancing."

"Yay! They're gonna do the 'Spicable Me" dance!" Neal cheered.

Robin and David tried to keep up with their friend but found themselves lagging behind a bit in the moves making Jeff wish he were out on the floor with Emma instead.

"Daddy, why's Jeff smackin' his own butt?" Jonny asked.

His parents looked at each other and burst into laughter. "Never mind honey, never mind." Marie giggled.

"Work that booty!" Emma cattalked to Jeff. He turned his back to her and shook his rear provocatively.

"Come on David, shake your pelvis like Elvis!" Snow hooted. Her husband sauntered over to her to do his Elvis impression, not quite as gracefullly as the late King but enough to suit his wife.

"Ohhh Robin....give me some back, baby!" Regina purred, her outlaw more than happy to oblige.

Once their dance was over, Belle motioned to Marie, Emma, Snow and Regina. The women joined her in the corner while Sophia took the children out in the lobby.
"What is that wife of mine up to?" Rumple asked Archie. He shrugged.

"You ready?" Belle asked the group.

"Yeah, just don't ask me to sing. I'd break glass," Emma said.

"You're not singing dear...just move in when we do. You can handle that." Regina said to her. Emma smirked. "Oh, I can do that."

"Which one are we doing? The Mamma Mia version or the original?" Snow asked Belle.

"The original."

"Got it. Okay, ladies let's go."

Sophia grabbed more microphones and clipped them to the women's clothing when their husbands weren't looking then the women moved into the center of the dance floor and faced their men with seductive smiles on their lips as the opening notes of ABBA's Gimme Gimme Gimme (A Man After Midnight) started to play.

"There's not a soul out there
No one to hear my prayer
Gimme, Gimme, Gimme a man after midnight
Won't somebody help me chase the shadows away
Gimme Gimme Gimme a man after midnight
Take me through the darkness to the break of the day!" they sang as they approached their targets and attacked, grabbing their husbands and kissing them senseless then pulled them onto the dance floor. Sophia brought the children back in when it was time for the Chicken Dance and everyone paired up, laughing and chucking at each other. Alessandro started playing more songs to give the kids a chance to dance. While the others paired up Ellie stood in the corner by herself watching the others trying to dance, laughing and enjoying themselves, her eyes downcast. Jonny glanced over at his father where he was dancing with Marie. Archie nodded. The little boy gulped nervously and started walking toward Ellie, his hat in his hands. Nobody wants to dance with me. Nobody likes me, they think I'm a brat. M'tryin not to act like a brat but they don't care. They don't even pay 'ttention. Well I don't need em. I DON'T NEED ANYBODY so phooey on them! Ellie thought bitterly.

She turned around and started to walk away, not wanting the others to see her cry and make fun of her again but a hand on her shoulder stopped her in her tracks.

"Umm...Ellie...where ya goin?"

She spun around to face Jonny. The toddler was holding his Sheriff Woody hat in his hands, his fingers tracing patterns on the brim.

"Goin' outside," she said stiffly. "What's it to you?"

"Umm...well...ahhh...I was wonderin' if ahh..."

"What?"

He looked away, his face reddening. "Umm..."
"If you're gonna make fun of me, I don't wanna hear it so go 'way!" she snapped and gave him a slight shove.

"You wanna dance with me?" he blurted. "I mean...I really dunno how but Mommy an Daddy look like they're just movin their feet back an forth so....can't be that hard."

She gasped. "Huh?!

"You wanna dance?" he asked again.

"This some kinda joke John Wayne Hopper?" she demanded. "You don't like me. You make fun of me a lot so why you askin' me to dance now? Don't want pity if that's what you're doin!"

"Well....I kinda get mad when you get all uppity...but you don't do it all the time...." He was blushing again and shuffled his feet. "And you are kinda cute when you're mad."

The little girl was stunned into silence. He was talking to her like a boyfriend not a sometimes friend, which was what she considered him to be when he didn't poke fun at her or defended her as he had at the restaurant the day before. The only times she remembered him doing it were as he said, when she was in one of her royal phases. "Ummm...Jonny...somebody hit you over the head with something?"

"Uh-uh. Ellie, c'mon! I hate seein you standing here by yourself and I don't wanna dance alone. I look stupid."

"Why don'cha ask Maggie? You like her more'n me."

"Yeah as a friend but not...like a girlfriend..."

"Y...You want me to be your...girlfriend?"

"Yup," he croaked nervously. "I'm the one who left ya the flower on your swing that day you was upset 'cause you fell off and cut your leg. Daddy said when he was a cricket he left Mommy a rose to make her smile and kinda tell her he wanted to be boyfriend and girlfriend. I was kinda scared you'd tell me to buzz off if I just gave it to ya so...."

"M...Mommy told me I had a secret 'mirer but I didn't believe her," Ellie said through her tears. "Thought she was just saying it to make me feel better...an nobody else knew 'bout that flower but me an Mommy cause you guys were 'sposed to be in the house. Where were ya?"

"Hidin' in the bushes," he confessed. "Was so scared I was gonna get caught cause Daddy came to pick me up then...so I hurried up an went in the house 'fore you saw me...."

She giggled happily and threw her arms around him.

"This mean you wanna dance?" he inquired with a smirk.

"You bet! C'mon!" She grabbed his arm and pulled him over to where their friends were dancing, or at least trying to imitate the adults. Their parents paused in their own dancing. Regina felt tears brimming in the corners of her own eyes while she watched her daughter dancing with Archie's son, having at last been given the answer to a question she'd had from the moment she and her daughter discovered the orchid sitting on her swing. Regina wanted to believe Ellie did indeed have a secret admirer and the orchid hadn't just blown in on the breeze. Ellie simply chose to ignore it.

"Did you know about this, Archie?" she sniffled.
"Jonny came to me a while back and told me that there was a girl he liked but he wasn't sure how to tell her. I told him how I'd given Marie a rose while I was still a cricket to get her to smile...and it was my way of trying to tell her how I felt...without actually saying it," he admitted. "I thought it was Maggie but after I saw my son stand up for her yesterday I knew it was Ellie. She needs this and if our children are anything like us..."

"I think we're seeing the future here, dearies," Rumple said. "My astor has her mind made up she's marryin' Neal. Archie, it looks like you're going to be havin' Roland and Ellie for in-laws. As for Maggie..."

"She's our wild one," Emma chuckled. "She likes playing with Jason but I don't think it's anything but friendship. Don't wanna make the family tree any more complicated!"

"I think it's wonderful," Belle said dreamily. "Don't you, Marie?"

"Yes," Marie whispered softly, her eyes meeting her husband's as they recalled that day many years ago. "You didn't need to tell me you loved me Archie. You showed me. I was just too blind to see it then. The little things..."

"'Scuse me...I'll be right back!" Jeff said and hurried over to the DJ, whispering something in his ear. The other man nodded and flipped through his music collection until he found the track that had been requested.

"What the hell is that loon up to now?" Rumple muttered.

Emma shrugged. "Don't look at me. I have no clue."

"Emma he'd better not be planning something stupid or you know he's gonna get the broom," David cautioned.

"Dad, honestly, I don't know!"

"We'd like to dedicate this next song to all the young lovers out there!" Jeff said and winked at the other adults.

"Dammit, Hatter you'd better keep it clean or so help me God, my broom and Archie's umbrella have your name on them," Marie said through gritted teeth.

"They say we're young and we don't know
Well we find out until we're grown
'Cause you got me, and baby I got you
Babe
I got you babe
I got you babe..."

Out on the dance floor Jonny handed Ellie an orchid his father found for him in the flower shop, a bright smile on her lips as she took the flower and tucked it into her hair before she was hugged by an enthusiastic Adriana who was pleased to see that her friend was finally wearing a smile instead of a frownie.

"Ellie you not havin frownies anymore is the best birthday present ever!"

"It is?"
"Uh-huh."

"Well she's not gonna be havin' frownies anymore if I've got somethin to say about it," Jonny huffed as he put his arm around her shoulders.

"Ahh...great now you all got boyfriends so I'm gonna be bored!" Maggie complained.

"We can still do stuff, Mags," Jason offered.

"Kay but we're not gonna be boyfriend an girlfriend so forget it about askin!"

"Don't wanna be your friend with benefits neither! I'm not a manho!"

Regina and Robin dropped their glasses of wine. "Jason Robin Hood, where did you hear that?"

Robin demanded.

"Ummm...ummm...my bad mommy had lotsa friends with benefits," he blurted. Regina groaned.

"What's friends with benefits?"

"Never you mind Margaret Eva Hatter!" Jeff said firmly.

"S'where a girl goes to bed with her friend...and they're not boyfriend and girlfriend an they do gross stuff," Jason answered before his parents could stop him. Both of them wanted to crawl in a hole.

"Anyone care for goat stew?" Robin hissed.

"I'll settle for roasted witch!" Regina snarled.

"Well...on that note....why don't we start the bridal dance," Belle giggled. "I think my sister is ready to call it a day."

Rumple and Belle took their places while Archie and Marie stood out in the middle of the dance floor, Rumple holding a tray of shot glasses, Belle a purse. The monies they made during the dance would be donated to many Greek charities and they also planned to reenact the bride stealing custom.

Archie and Marie danced with their children first, little Maureen protesting loudly when her father had to hand her back to her older sister while AJ went quietly into his little brother's arms. "We'll see you tomorrow morning, little crickets," Archie said and kissed their cheeks. As the line grew shorter, the women and girls formed a circle around Marie while the men formed a line in front of Archie.

"Don't think ye'll be getting past me easily, dearie!" Rumple challenged his brother-in-law.

"No magic, Rumple!"

Archie stood in front of the men, tapping his foot impatiently while he looked for an opening and in the circle Marie was getting frustrated, wanting to be alone with her husband.

"Gonna be here a while, Hopper!" Rumple giggled.

"Oh, no I'm not!" Archie said determinedly and winked at his small son. The boy crept up behind his uncle and started ticking him in the ribs and forcing him to back away.

"Ohhh cricket, that's cheating!"

"Nope, cooperation, right pardner!" Archie said, hi-fived his son and marched over to the circle.
Belle and Andi stepped aside as he walked over to his wife, swung her up in his arms and kissed her hotly.

"Goodnight everyone! We'll see you in the morning," he called out while he carried her out of the ballroom. "Time for bed, my darling," he murmured.

And this wedding night would be even better than their first, since there were no longer any reasons for them to be shy around each other. They undressed each other slowly as they stood in front of the bed, wishing they'd both had enough courage to do so that first night while love songs from their favorite bands played on his phone and rose scented candles burned on the nightstand.

"My goddess," Archie murmured, his lips lingering on the side of her neck as he laid her down on the bed. "I do love you...."

Marie cupped his face in her hands and kissed him. "My Adonis...."

They didn't want to rush anything though they had both been waiting all day for the moment when they could be alone. They gazed deeply into each other's eyes while they held each other using all of their bodies, all of their emotions to express their deep devotion to each other until they could no longer hold back the need to become one. All through the night they celebrated another year of their life together knowing there were centuries more of them yet to come.

Chapter End Notes

Some of Archie’s wedding vows are inspired by actual quotes from Raphael Sbarge spoken during interviews or on his new show Murder In The First. If you ever get the chance to talk to him on twitter, do so. He is a sweetheart and truly cares about his fans:
CJ Moliere
Beware The Scorpion Sting

Chapter Summary

The families arrive in Italy and their first day is not without excitement as the Scorpions foil a robbery attempt.

Later on the following morning, Tink and Sparrowhawk returned to fly the group to Italy for the second half of their vacation. They were all excited, especially Belle who was looking forward to renewing her own vows at the Trevi Fountain and after all of the children were put to bed, she and Rumple stayed up late watching Three Coins In The Fountain and Roman Holiday. They wanted to visit several places around Italy and as they did in Greece, they would just play it by ear.

She was also pleased that Penelope and Kyria would be accompanying them for the trip, knowing how important it was to her father that he spend as much time with Penelope before they returned to the States. It was too soon for Maurice to propose but neither could deny their love was as true as hers was for Rumple and Marie's was for Archie. Even if her father decided to move to Greece with Penelope, she wouldn't mind it at all. His happiness was all that mattered. She just wasn't looking forward to their parting. It would not be easy.

Robin and David, unfortunately were both ready to check themselves into a hospital. Regina and Snow were becoming more irritable in the final weeks of their pregnancies, Regina being the worst of the two. Everyone was amused when Roland made the announcement that his father had been banished to the sofa for the night for keeping his wife awake with his snoring.

"Oh and unlike my wife, there's no compromising!" Archie teased.

"You wait, Hopper! Sooner or later she's just gonna leave you down there alone."

"Never happen," Archie said confidently.

"Don't count on it, dearie. Your wife is a Bordreaux and these Bordreaux women can be quite devious when they're in a snit," Rumple reminded him.

"Papa, come on. I wanna go to Italy!" Adriana cried.

"Calm down, dearie! We're going!" Rumple chuckled.

The flight time from Athens to Rome was far less than the flight time from the States to Greece, less than three hours. Sophia and Alessandro rode out with them to the airport, everyone thanking them for their fine hospitality.

"You are more than welcome in Storybrooke if you want to visit," Regina offered.

"Yeah, you gotta come to Storybrooke!" Ellie insisted.

"We will someday," Alessandro promised. "You take good care of Mum and Kyria."

"Not to worry dearie. They're in good hands," Rumple assured him.
The kids raced onto the plane, begging their parents to let them watch a movie during the flight and even the babies were excited. Their parents kept them entertained with their Beauty and the Beast and Jiminy Cricket puppets but Bobby kept grabbing the Beast puppet and tried to chew on its hair.

"Dearie, ye canna eat the beast!" Rumple teased.

Bobby wailed in protest. Valora, sensing her brother’s distress started crying too and seconds later all three infants were sobbing.

"Now, now ye imps...none o' that!" He picked up Bobby and Valora while Belle cradled Victoria in her arms and the two of them sang a lullaby to their children to calm them.

Regina and Snow were relaxing in their seats with their swollen feet elevated. "Oooh I cannot wait to have this baby," Snow moaned. "No matter where I sit or how I sit, I can't get comfortable and now the bed feels like I'm sleeping on a brick wall."

"At least your husband doesn't snore," Regina grouched. "I thought this pregnancy would be easier than the last one!"

Marie and Belle burst out laughing. "Never, ever make that assumption, Regina!" Marie said. "All three of mine have been different and certainly not easy."

"Well he better not pass out or else!"

"Jeff passes out again he's getting the broom to his ass," Emma threatened.

"Not the broom. No, not the broom!" Jeff moaned.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again. I HATE THAT BROOM!" David exclaimed.

"Mommy, can we see Italy from here?" Maggie asked. She peered out the window. "Aww this is dumb! All I see is sky an clouds!"

"That's because we're flying above the city Mags," Henry said. He and Grace were watching The Empire Strikes Back with the Happy Army bears. Several times over the years he wished he and Grace had their own bears for companions but they never asked Adriana about it because she only gave them to the younger children when she thought they needed them.

"Hey Major Rumple, you think Adriana would give me a bear of my own?" Henry asked their leader.

"Why dinna ye ask before, dearie?"

"Ahh I thought she only gave them to the little kids but I always have fun with you guys and for some strange reason I can't make one of my own." Henry laughed. "Driana seems to have cornered the market on bear animation."

"Tell ya what: I'll put in a good word for ya with Adriana and we'll see 'bout gettin you a bear...you and Gracie."

"Thanks, buddy."

"How far is this place we're staying from Rome?" Archie asked.

"Near the Coliseum. You're going to love it, Belle. They have a court where you can play boule, only they call it bocce."
"That's wonderful!" Belle cried and hugged her husband.

Robin whistled. "Place is costing you a fortune Rum."

"He can afford it," David chuckled.

"I certainly can and there's more privacy in a villa than a hotel."

"I just can't wait to see it and the city," Regina spoke up.

"It's beautiful Regina. We had a wonderful time while we were here. I'm just glad we'll get to see more of the country this time," Marie smiled softly. "And of course go to the opera."

"I still say you missed your calling Regina. With a voice like yours, you could be one of the finest singers in Europe," Archie praised.

"I'm happy with my life the way it is. Being a diva invites too much unwanted attention, attention I'd rather not have anymore. My mother would have loved it and so would Zelena. I'm happy just singing for our town."

"All right folks, we'll be landing in ten minutes," John Darling announced.

"YAY!" the younger children cheered.

A fleet of minivans awaited the family at the airport, provided by a private car service Rumple hired for them and each family had their own van with their own chauffer.

"Buongiorno, e benvenuti in Italia!" the drivers greeted them and sprung into action, gathering up the families' luggage and packing them into the vans though most of the men insisted on helping the drivers load the vans themselves, something the drivers weren't used to with wealthy clients. It was a refreshing change. It was a short drive from the terminal that offered very little in terms of sightseeing until they arrived at Villa Puccinello. The owner, Giovanni "Nutch" Pulcinello was rumored to be a descendant of the House of Savoy, the last of the Italian kings but he hadn't used his obscure title to build his fortune from himself and his wife Gianna "Gennie". The Pulcinellos were now in the States visiting their many children and grandchildren and often rented their villa to wealthy tourists.

Unfortunately, Villa Pulcinello was being cased regularly by a group of cat burglars and pickpockets that the police were having a difficult time catching. The villa had a state of the art security system and six full time guards on the premises, one of them a younger man who had just been hired before the Pulcinellos left for the States. The couple was unaware that the man had taken the job so that he would have inside information on how security at the villa worked and if there were any marks they could hit.

Just before his shift started the guard met with his friends at their hiding place a few minutes away from the villa.

"Got a huge score coming in...group of tourists from the States...rented the place for a whole month! We can hit them then clean out the house and the old fossils won't know a thing!"

"What about the other guys? Sanny's like a hawk...watches everything you do."

The young man smirked. "When he's not watching his little porn shows. Best time to move is when he's doing that. You could set off a bomb and he won't hear it."

"You just make sure he's occupied when we get there, all right? When's these tourists supposed to
He entered the passcode for the gates and strode down the driveway, a package under his arm. Santino or Sanny, the head guard was waiting for him at the guardhouse. "Gonna be a busy day Luc. Those tourists are on their way now and we got the club coming to play bocce on Sunday."

"I thought they weren't gonna do it with Nutch being outta town?"

"Nah. They're still playing."

Luc held out the package he was holding. "Got this the other day." The other man unwrapped it to find a collection of pornographic videos. "Haven't seen it yet but maybe we can watch it later?"

"I don't know...we've got those tourists coming."

"It's a group of Americans with a bunch of kids and they're already rich so it's not like they're gonna clean the place out. C'mon! I'd rather sit and watch this than listen to a bunch of whining American brats."

"Okay. Let's get 'em settled in first."

The guards assembled outside as a line of minivans pulled into the driveway in front of the main house, dropping off five families and a group of teenagers, most of them having young children and five infants. Luc groaned. He was part of the house security detail and the last thing he wanted to deal with was babies screaming at all hours of the night. It would also make robbing the villa a lot more difficult if the parents had to wake up every two hours to shut them up.

"Rumple...it's beautiful!" Belle whispered. Villa Pulcinello's design was inspired by the famous Villa Rotunda in Vicenza with twelve bedrooms, each with its own adjoining bath, a tennis court, indoor and outdoor Olympic sized swimming pools, a bocce court, a gazebo and a second story patio. In the center of the driveway was a water fountain with a statute of the Madonna with Child and in all of the windows there were small figurines of Jesus with lights in them that made it appear as if they were watching you as you passed by them. There were also many marble statues of angels throughout the courtyard.

"Whoa....this place is like a mini Belle Reve!" Bae whistled.

"The statuary is beautiful," Regina praised.

"It is indeed, dearie and I do like those figures in the windows."

"Signora Pulcinello had those custom made. She always says she believes the Lord is always watching over us and she wanted something to reflect that," the housekeeper spoke up. "Welcome to Italy. My name is Mariana and I'm the signor and signora's housekeeper."

"It's a pleasure to meet you dearie. I'm Robert Gold. This is my wife Belle and our children: Baelfire, Adriana, Victoria, Valora and Bobby."

"I like all the angels you have. They chase frownies away!" Adriana piped up.

"The Pulcinellos wanted me to let them know when you arrived so that they could greet you personally. They're using Skype."
"That would be wonderful!" Belle exclaimed.

Archie stepped forward. "I'm Archie Hopper and this is my wife Marie and our children: Gisella, Jonny, AJ and Maureen and our nanny Mary."

"Belle is my sister...and this is our father Maurice Bordreax and our friends Penelope and Kyria Palakas," Marie introduced.

"We're from Greece!" Kyria announced.

"Well, I hope you enjoy your stay."

"I'm Emma Hatter and this is my mad lot...my husband Jeff and our kids Henry, Gracie and Maggie."

"We're all mad here!" Jeff quipped.

"We're the Nolans...I'm ahh Emma's sister. I'm Mary, my husband David and this is our son Neal," Snow said. They agreed that claiming Emma was Snow's sister would be easier to explain than them being mother and daughter. Even the best plastic surgeon in the world wouldn't have been able to Snow appear younger than her daughter had Snow's aging process been accelerated.

"We're the other half of the mad lot," Robin joked. "We're the Hoods...yeah my name's Robin Hood. Dad loved the movies. Anyway, this is my wife Regina and our kids, Roland, Jason and Ellie."

Robin said smoothly.

"We're Bae's friends. I'm Andi, this is Becky, Ewan, Kat and Bobby but don't get confused if we call each other Wraith...that's me...Fury...that's Becky and Kat's nickname is Shadow while Bae's is Fire. We kinda have a club."

"Smooth Wraith smooth," Bae chuckled.

The families were then introduced to the butler, a man in his early sixties named Joe but he told them to call him "Egg".

Ellie eyed him curiously. "Why you want us to call you 'Egg'? You don't look like an egg."

Joe laughed. "It's what everybody calls me...been doing it since I was a bambino...said my head was shaped like an egg."

"That's kinda mean," Adriana remarked.

"Oh, I've gotten used to it. Have you ever played bocce, cara?"

"My mama plays boule. Is that kinda like bocce?"

"It certainly is and if you don't know how I'll teach you."

"Cool!"

Egg was not popular with Nutch's Sunday men's bocce league who all felt women did not belong on the court while he believed the sport could be played by anyone and never hesitated to teach someone when they asked him to.

The chef was a man in his early fifties named Nunzio. He'd been hired away from a five star restaurant by the Pulcinellos who loved his cooking and there even times when the couple joined him
the kitchen to prepare meals.

"You're in luck, dearie. There are a few of us who know our way around a kitchen and can give you a rest." Rumple boasted.

"Ah, grazie! I need a rest once in a while. All I ask is that you keep it clean and organized."

Marie giggled. "Oh you don't need to worry about that. Our husbands are as OCD about their kitchens as you are I'm sure!"

"Since the signore has had heart surgery he doesn't get to do some of the things he used to but he does like to cook."

"Yeah, Papa's been known to scrub the kitchen floor with a toothbrush to clean the grout!" Bae smirked. "You could eat off of it when he's done."

"And the toilets Bae," Adriana added.

Bae nodded."That's for sure!" He could also recall being made to do both those things as punishment for getting into trouble, both in Storybrooke and the Dark Castle.

Rumple eyed his offspring resignedly. "When you grew up as I have, dearies, then you'd know why I'm so fanatical about cleaning things." Rumple had grown up in squalor and dirt, and had developed a horror of filth and germs after witnessing first hand how poor hygiene and spoiled food had carried off the population of whole villages as a child.

"Well you'll find no dirt here, Signor Gold," Mariana assured him. "Well, why don't we get you all settled in."

Marianna and Egg escorted them to the second floor so that they could unpack their luggage before they would give them the grand tour of the villa. Most of the kids wanted to sleep in the same room and one of the bedrooms had been turned into a nursery for the twins and triplets. Luc volunteered to help with the luggage so that he could report back to his crew, noticing that all of the women wore expensive jewelery as did the spokesman of their group, wanting to get his hands on the man's wallet and the credit cards he was certain had unlimited amounts. His crew would be able to live comfortably for years on the haul they would make.

"No jumping up and down on that bed, John Wayne Hopper!" Archie said sternly when he carried his son's suitcase into the room he was sharing with Jason and Roland and caught the three boys trying to make the bed their trampoline. He snapped his fingers. "Down...all of you."

"Sorry Daddy," Jonny said sheepishly.

"This isn't a zoo guys and you need to remember to respect other peoples' property," Robin added.

"Okay..." they chorused.

Archie put in a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles DVD to entertain the boys while their fathers unpacked their luggage. Luc walked in carrying Zach and Zara's cage. Once he took the cover off, the two snakes hissed at him.

"Holy fuck!" he exclaimed, terrified of snakes.
Two fathers glared at him.
"Be nice guys," Jonny pleaded with the snakes.

We don't like him Jonny...he has a rotten smell about him, Zara sent.

You're just bein paranoid cause you don't know him yet.

I don't think so. You be careful....and we're going to be watching that one. One move and he gets bitten, Zach sent.

Mickey and Minnie flew out of their cage and circled the guard, chirping angrily.

"What the hell...you got a zoo or what?"

"Hey, they're my friends," Jonny protested. "Calm down guys....s'okay."

Zach and Zara are right. We don't like that man, Minnie sent.

The guard was even more terrified by the Golden Retriever, Dalmatians and the poodle standing in the doorway, all growling.

Major stalked into the room. The police dog was getting on in years, but he could still strike fear into a criminal's heart. He sniffed and his lip curled up. He didn't snarl, just glared.

The guard backed away nervously.

The shepherd whuffed at him pointedly. He didn't like the fear scent mixed with guilt scent that oozed from this one's pores. None but the guilty feared him.

Maj, what's wrong with you guys? Jonny asked him.

That one--he smells like a crook, Major woofed. Fear scent and guilt scent. We don't like it.

You gotta have proof 'fore you accuse somebody, ya know.

The shepherd's tongue lolled. Don't need to tell me the law, pup. Once I WAS the law. But I'm going to watch this one.

Kay.

"What do you think you are, Doctor Doolittle or something?" Luc asked the toddler.

His backside is mine! snarled Pongo.

Stand down, Pongo! Major ordered. We can't go around biting this idiot, unless he hurts one of us. If we do, we'll end up in the pound and sent home.

He's right, Perdy reasoned.

All right but no one insults my family.

Major nuzzled him. Let the idiot bark. It's all noise. If an idiot calls someone else stupid, he's giving them a compliment.

We'll all watch this joker...and we better tell the bears too, sent Kermit.
You do that, Major sent. The rest of us will be on alert status . . .makes sure nobody tries anything. You can each take a family to guard.

What can we do...we're crickets? asked Minnie.

Well we can burst his eardrums our chirping, offered Mickey.

And don't forget our master was able to do many things as a cricket, Perdy reminded her.

They all looked to the former police dog for guidance.

Luc stormed out of the room and went out to the patio to send a text message to his cohorts. We've got a serious problem. These fuckin people have a zoo with them! Dogs, snakes, frogs and bugs!

All of us split up . . .and if you smell or hear or see anything suspicious . . . follow and make sure they aren't going to harm any of our family. If they look like they're going to hurt anyone or are taking our master or mistress' property you take them down and hold them.

Got it! the others sent.

Major went himself to guard the infants, placing himself in the nursery and lying alertly on the floor.

Little Bobby sensed the dog in the room and gave him a small smile from the crib.

Belle opened the box containing the majors Adrianna assigned to her sliblings and placed them in the crib near the babies while Marie put Major Archie and Major Marie in the crib with her own children. The bears were not going to be animated as often at the villa much to their disappointment but they were contented to watch over their small charges.

What's going on Major? asked Major Severus, Bobby's Happy bear.

All of the bears sensed tension in the air and if anyone would know the cause it was the former police dog.

Major explained the situation to the bear and asked him to pass it on to the rest of the bears and Minions to be on alert for suspicious activity.

After everyone was settled in, they gathered in the living room. Marianna turned on the Pulcinello's desktop computer and connected to Skype to inform her employers that their guests had arrived. A petite, ginger haired lady in her late eighties appeared on the screen.

"Oh, hello! I'm Gennie!"

"Hey, hello there!" Nutch called out, appearing on the screen beside his wife. "You get settled in?"

"We certainly did Signor Pulcinello and I just wanted to thank you on behalf of everyone for your hospitality," Rumple said after everyone made their introductions to the Italian couple.

"Eh, just call me Nutch! We're going to come back before you leave so we can get a chance to see all of you."

"Your home is beautiful!" Regina praised.

"Yeah it's like a castle! We gotta castle too!" Neal bragged.

"Yeah, so do we!" Ellie piped up.
"My papa's got one too!" Adriana added.

Nutch was laughing on the other end of the screen. "I bet they're a handful, eh?"

"You're not kidding!" Emma exclaimed.

While the families were talking to the Pulcinellos, the bears, Minions, dogs, snakes and crickets stayed on alert. They hadn't seen the suspicious guard after they first got settled in but they knew he was lurking about somewhere. The dogs were downstairs with the families while the others kept watch in the rooms. When they were certain no one was around, Major Duke opened the window to Jonny, Jason and Roland's room so that Mickey and Minnie could fly out and Zach and Zara would slither out via the trees. The snakes and crickets had been assigned outdoor patrol.

They talked with the Pulcinellos until Angelo called them in for dinner, the chef insisting on cooking the entire meal himself despite Rumple and Archie's protests. Both men knew how stressful it was to cook meals for large groups and assured the chef that he would at least have some assistance for future meals when he needed it.

Out by the gates Luc and his crew waited impatiently for their opportunity to strike. One of them was carrying an animal tranquilizer he'd gotten from a friend who often raided the pharmaceutical cabinets at the vet's office where he worked for a quick high. None of them were going to risk the wrath of the dogs, especially the one they called Major. It looked like it could tear them apart.

After dinner Archie and Jonny led the dogs outside.

"Okay guys just go to the bathroom and run around a bit but ya can't mess up anything," Jonny instructed them.

Major snorted. What do you think I am? A pup?

Sorry keep forgettin'.

Ooooh I wanna play in the pretty gardens!

No, Pinkie! They're not yours an remember the last time how mad Regina was when you messed up her flowers!

Okay, okay I'll stay away!

Besides we have work to do, don't we? Major reminded his friends.

Three dogs barked in agreement.

"All right. We'll let you outside for an hour," Archie said and he and Jonny walked back into the house just as Bae and his friends were walking toward the patio door.

"We're gonna take a walk," Bae said. The truth was, he wanted some time alone with Andi as did the other boys with Becky and Kat and the gardens seemed large enough to afford them some privacy.

Major picked up the guard's scent near the front gates along with four others. He beared his teeth and snarled.

I knew it! Front gate! Move it!

The pack raced toward the gates, Major and Pongo in the lead. The dogs held the title for the fastest
time in the agility trials for the Storybrooke festival for the past five years with Pinkie and Perdy close behind them. One of the men at the gate spotted the dogs approaching.

"Oh shit! Rocco, get the damn dart gun out!"

Major knew what a gun was from his time on the force. Gun! Down! he barked in warning, then he sprinted and tackled the guard about the knees, knowing better than to jump up and risk taking a bullet, like he had the day his partner got killed in a shootout.

The dogs scattered, so they weren't bunched together and easy targets. Pinkie went for one man's ankles, growling and biting ferociously. The poodle had a nasty temper when roused.

Pongo tackled a third man to the ground and snarled right in the other's face.

His mate ran after another trying to flee and bit him right in the backside.

Rocco's hand closed over the gun, just as Major's closed over his arm, and the dog, who knew how to incapacitate a suspect, ground his teeth down firmly, with a low warning growl, advising the idiot to be still or else he'd bite off his arm.

"Fuckin dogs...somebody shoot em!"

Seeing some of his team out for the count, but still wanting to get the loot, Luc swore, and said, "Fucking dogs! C'mon, you guys, keep goin'." Leaving their comrades as bait, the rest crept up to the house.

"Hey guys, we're gonna go over here...have fun!" Ewan winked at Bae and Andi and led Becky away from the rest of the group.

At a statue of the angel Gabriel, Bobby paused and whispered, "Kat, I have a message for you, darling," then drew her close and kissed her.

As they were walking past the Madonna fountain Andi happened to look up at the second story window to see someone climbing into it, a bungee cord dangling from the sill. "Bae! They're breaking into the house! Into your dad's room!"

"Oh no they're not! They're gonna get stung!"

"Guys, get over here quick!" Andi cried out when she found their friends. "We've got some assholes trying to break in the house. They're in Rumple's room right now!"

"Well they're not goin' anywhere!" Ewan said determinedly.

"Let's sting 'em good guys!" Bae crowed and started climbing up the bungee cord with Andi behind him. Kat ran into the house to alert the rest of the family while Ewan and Bobby opened a first floor window to sneak in, both of them disturbed that the alarm hadn't gone off.

"Becky! Get the camera goin...we got an inside job here!" Ewan called out to her.

"Where the hell are the freakin' guards!" she grumbled.

Though they wished they had their gloves for the climb, if there was one thing Bae and Andi knew how to do, it was improvise. Their suspect was already in the room and they could hear another rummaging around. When they got inside, Belle's dresser was a shambles and her empty jewelery box lay on the floor and Rumple's wallet had been cleaned out.
"Sons a bitches!" Bae snarled. They heard a noise in Archie and Marie's room.

"Oh no you don't! C'mon Wraith!"

Kat was nearly out of breath when she entered the living room and found the rest of the family watching a movie. "There's...people in the house...trying to steal from us!" she gasped. "Bae...and Andi went after them..."

"WHAT?!" Rumple roared. He jumped to his feet, grabbed his cane and summoned Archie's umbrella and Belle and Marie's brooms."No one steals from ME dearies!"

A group of angry adults stalked toward the steps ready to show a couple of two bit cat burglars why it wasn't wise to mess with the likes of Rumplestiltskin and his family.

Bae thrust the door of his uncle and aunt's room open just as one of the burglars was trying to shove all of Marie's jewelry down the front of his pants. He tackled the man to the ground while Andi incapacitated the other with a lamp.

"Nice try assholes," Bae snarled. "Rule number one of burglary: never try to hit the house of an expert."

"Or try to rob ME!" Rumple said menacingly from the doorway.

"Great job Bae. We'll handle this!" Emma said firmly as Robin and Jeff hauled the men to their feet, bound them with the bungee cord and dragged them downstairs while Kat, Ewan and Bobby stood watch over the children. The deputy and the outlaw forced the two burglars to kneel on the floor while Rumple and Archie stood over them, glaring.

"We want everything you took. NOW!" Archie demanded.

David and Jeff pulled them up and started searching them, finding pieces of jewelery in their pockets along with the contents of Rumple's wallet.

"You're being awful quiet? Got something to say?" Emma inquired. Both men shook their heads.

Bobby stepped forward and smirked at them. "Spit 'em out boys. You don't want us going in after em."

"And we know where you put things," Bae hissed. "Because nobody knows how to hide goods like a former Scorpion!" His eyes flashed and he made one quick gesture and a bracelet was dangling from his fingers. "Capice?" Another flick of a wrist and the bracelet vanished up his sleeve.

"And ye might wanna lighten your load in the knickers too," Ewan added.

Then, demonstration over with, he shook his wrist and the bracelet was handed over to Emma.

"You heard them boys....hand it over...or we strip you!"

Rumple made a slight gesture and a pair of white gloves appeared in his pocket. He took them out, smiling devilishly. "Kat, ye might want to take the wee ones upstairs. This could get a bit messy," he said while he donned the gloves and snapped the elastic for emphasis.

The terrified burglars spit out several rings and one of Belle's necklaces, making the others wonder how the hell they managed to fit it all in there.

Kat sniggered as she led the kids upstairs. While Maggie was walking by them she started laughing.
"They're gonna give you a jumbo enema!"

"Better not have any in your crack cause it's gonna hurt!" Jason taunted.

Ellie kicked one of them in the foot. "Hope it scratched your willie up good and you get 'fection that makes it fall off!"

"Oh my God Robin....she's vicious!" Jeff whispered. "Why do they always have to aim south!"

Rumple was starting to think that a little curse of that nature sounded very appealing.

"You're gonna get twenty years to life, and some fat guy named Bubba's gonna make you his wife!" Adriana sang sweetly. "Congratulations!"

Once the kids were out of the room the boys started pulling items out of their underwear, including Marie's heart shaped pendant and ring.

"You bastard!" she hissed and swung the broom.

Belle was incensed when she found a rose pendant on the floor from the other boy's underwear. "That goes double for me!"

Becky walked into the house just in time to record the women dispensing their own justice with the Bordreaux Brooms.

"Now...I have...to have...it FUMIGATED!" Belle ranted.

"I should feel sorry for them," David hissed. He hated that broom! 'But I don't!"

"Me neither," Jeff added.

"So where the hell where the rest of the guards when this was going on?" Snow demanded.

"Allow me to enlighten you," Becky said and handed her phone to the former princess. The other guards walked into the house just in time to see their negligence caught on video.

Regina approached the group, her eyes flashing. "You were too busy watching porn while these people were trying to rob us blind and possibly harm us and our children?! Well, my dears, your ten seconds of entertainment better have been worth the punishment I have in mind for you."

"Daddy, the dogs caught more of em out by the gate!" Jonny announced.

"The police are on their way," Marianna announced.

Regina silently cursed all of them with a particularly nasty one that was similar to a punishment Bae had given her beloved sister....a case of the itches in a sensitive area....for the rest of their lives.

When the police arrived they were shocked to find that the group of cat burglars they'd been chasing for months had been successfully apprehended by a group of American tourists. They led the group away, all of them cursing in Italian, One of them tried to break free from the officers restraining him to try to scratch himself on the Gabriel statue in the garden.

Rumple gathered up all of Belle and Marie's stolen jewelery and cast a cleansing charm on them before returning them along with enchantments that would prevent them from ever being taken again. As he was cleaning up the bedrooms, Marie and Belle hugged the former gang members.
"Thank you Bae," Belle sobbed. Though she didn't wear most of the pieces in her box all the time, she cherished each one because they'd all been handmade by her husband.

Bae hugged her. "You're welcome, Mama. I just wish I'd figured out sooner there was a rat in here."

"Well we stung 'em good, didn't we Fire?" Andi asked.

"We sure did, Wraith!"

The Pulcinellos were shocked when Rumple called them on Skype later on that evening to tell them what happened at the house and the couple praised the group of teenagers for their bravery and were outraged by their security company's negligence, promising that they would hire another, more reliable crew to look after the villa and the family while they were staying there but they suspected the family was quite capable of looking after themselves.

Their first night in Italy had come to an end and if that evening was any indication, just as many surprises awaited them in this country as they had in Greece.
Chapter Summary

Henry and Grace get their own Happy Army Bears, the families learn a fascinating secret about the villa chef and Snow and Regina give birth!

Henry was awakened the next morning feeling something lightly slapping his cheeks and over in his sister's bed someone was trying to pull the covers off of her.

"C'mon...cut it out!" Henry groaned sleepily.

"Aww come on Henry, get up! I don't wanna spend my first day alone!" he heard a voice that sounded exactly like his whining in his ear. He opened his bleary eyes to see a medium sized living stuffed bear dressed in army clothes sitting on his chest.

"Who're you?"

The bear saluted. "Major Henry, reporting for duty, sir!"

"Cool!" Henry exclaimed. "Hey Gracie, get the heck up! Got a surprise waiting for you!"

"Whaaa..." she sat up abruptly and nearly knocked her new bear off the bed. "Oh, I haven't seen you before. Where did you come from?" she asked it.

"I'm Major Gracie," she said in a voice like Grace's.

"Awesome! We got our own Happy Bears!" Grace hugged her new friend. "But how...we didn't before?"

"I asked Major Rumple if Adriana would give us one even though we're older but Bae and his gang have one so..."

"So what do you want to do today?" Major Henry inquired of his new master.

"Ummm...you do know you can't be animated all the time right? Might scare the locals. They're not used to magic."

The bears crossed their arms over their chests, pouting. "But we want to do things with you like the other bears!" Major Gracie complained.

"I know and if we were back home you guys could run around all you want but we're in Italy and not everyone knows who we are so we have to be careful. Don't want you getting taken away for science experiments."

"NOOOO! I don't wanna be cut up!" Major Gracie screamed and ran out of the room.

"Oh crap! Gracie you better catch her before someone sees her!" Henry warned.

Gracie jumped out of bed and pursued her bear down the hall. The bear was still screaming and pounding on doors as she ran past them, waking up everyone in the house. "Hide me, hide me!
They're gonna come and get meee!

"What the hell...?" Robin mumbled.

"Who is that?" Regina asked.

"Ummm Mom, that's Gracie's new bear...we gotta catch her before they see her!" Henry answered breathlessly. "I'm trying to freeze her but it's not working!"

Regina would have tried herself but she was limiting her magic use until the baby was born and as far as she knew Rumple was the only one among them who could counter Adriana's animation spells.

"You'd better go wake Rumple or Adriana. They're the only ones who can freeze her."

"Come on Major Gracie, get back here!" Gracie ordered.

The terrified bear opened the door of the room where Ellie, Maggie and Adriana were sleeping and dived under the bed. "I'm not coming out! They're gonna cut me up!"

"Who's making all that noise!?" Ellie asked grouchily. "Shuddup! I'm tryin t' get my beauty sleep!"

"Hah. Then you gotta sleep a loooong time," Maggie teased. Her response was a pillow to the face.

Adriana crawled out of bed and poked her head under the mattress. "Major Gracie, why d'ya think somebody's gonna cut you up?"

"Because they are!" the bear insisted. "Gracie said I can't be alive all the time or they'll take me away."

"Because they can," said the leader of their army. "I know it's your first day but you gotta learn your lessons quickly dearie. Attention!"

The bear crawled out from under the bed and stood at attention. "Good. Now, here's your first lesson: when your mistress gives you a command, you obey it an you didn't listen to Gracie when she told you to stay put. Lesson two: when we tell ya you havta act like a normal stuffed bear, you gotta do it...but you can still see an hear things. Lesson three: your job is to chase away frownies and not make 'em. I don't wanna havta court martial you like I did the others when they went drinking. You stick to those rules an you'll be fine, kay?"

"Yes...ummm...what do I call you if Gracie's my mistress?"

"Umm...General Gold I guess."

The toddler grinned, liking the sound of it. "Yep...from now on they can all call me General Gold."

They heard Bae laughing from the doorway. "That or General Rumplette! You want us to call you Don Rumplette while we're at it?"

His sister spun around and gave him one of her father's famous Looks. "You're lucky you're not part of my army Bae or I'd be makin ya scrub toilets with a toothbrush for in...bordnation."

"Insubordnation, dearie," Rumple corrected with a chuckle.

The bear was suddenly transformed back into a stuffed toy. Grace picked her up. "Thank you for her, Adriana. I'll try to keep her out of trouble."
"I'm sorry I didn't give you and Henry one earlier but you guys chase away frownies a lot on your own."

The siblings usually had an easier time calming down their uncle and younger brothers and sisters than their parents did.

Angelo was shocked when Rumple and Archie walked into his kitchen ready to assist him with preparing breakfast for the group. It was a much more pleasant reception than the one they got from Arnaud, Maurice's chef when they returned to Avonlea after the curse was broken. The angry chef hurled pots and pans at them until Rumple challenged him to a cooking contest that he and Archie won but they still hadn't managed to win him over. He refused to be in the kitchen when they were present.

"Well, what would you like to make today?" Angelo asked his new apprentices.

"Fette biscotatte, eggs with poletta and pancetta?" Archie suggested.

"Very good choices!" the chef praised.

"I was thinking of a breakfast casserole too," Rumple spoke up and handed the chef a card from his recipe card box that he brought with him.

"We can do all of it!" Angelo walked over to the closet to retrieve aprons for his apprentices and chuckled when he noticed they had their own. Rumple's had a picture of a sorcerer's hat with the saying: Not All Men Can Be Wizards In The Kitchen while Archie's was a picture of John Wayne that had been photoshopped holding a spatula with the saying A Man's Gotta Cook When a Man's Gotta Cook.

They learned quickly that the Pulcinello chef was a bit eccentric as well, demanding that both men sing with him while they cooked and he would swat at them with his spatula playfully when they stopped.

"I do sing when I cook but..." Archie said to Rumple while he was rolling out the dough for the fette biscotatte. Suddenly he felt Angelo's spatula swat him on the shoulder. Rumple giggled and then the spatula was being waved in his face.

"You're not singing!"

"All right dearie!" he laughed.

"What is going on in there?" Belle asked from the dining room.

"As long as I don't hear cookwear being thrown around I'm happy," Marie chuckled.

"He kinda reminds me of the cook in Little Mermaid," Adriana said when she poked her head into the kitchen. "Papa, can I come in and watch?"

"Ahhh, a little helper. Come in, cara. Come in!" Angelo sang gleefully.

The little girl skipped into the kitchen with her Belle apron on and hopped onto a stool beside her father. "What're we making, Papa?"

"An Italian casserole, eggs with poletta and pancetta and fette biscottate. You've helped me with them before, dearie."
"Okay!"

"Bellissimo!" the chef cheered and suddenly the silverware drawer flew open and the spoons floated out along with glasses from the cupboard above it. The spoons tapped themselves against the glasses. Rumple's eyes widened with horror.

"Adriana!" he cried.

"But I'm not doing it!" she insisted.

And neither was he.

The chef backed away from them trembling. "Oh, no no no! Not now!" he cried. "Stop!" he commanded. The glasses and spoons fell to the floor, the glasses shattering.

Adriana's eyes widened. "Papa! He's one of us! Can you feel it?"

"Aye, dearie I can. Now."

The elder chef began to smile. "Ahh at last! It has been centuries since I have encountered one of my own kind...and with the strongest auras I have ever sensed!"

"Centuries!" Archie exclaimed. "How old...are you?"

"He's a mage, dearie. Time's hand is gentle upon him," Rumple chuckled. "You know I have a few centuries under my belt myself."

The elder sorcerer bowed. "Angelo Bonaventura at your service. "At one time I was an apprentice chef for the Borgia family....nasty lot some of them were."

"Aye, poisoners." Rumple grimaced. "Like one of my own apprentices, Cora. And her daughter Zelena."

"And their father, the Pope himself wanted to use my magic for evil and when I refused, he had me torture."

"That's horrible!" Archie cried.

"Evil men do evil things," Rumple said darkly.

"Si and Roderigo's evil knew no bounds. Many of the stories told him are not exaggerated. You cannot imagine how difficult it was to try to keep people like him from using my gifts for their own dark intentions."

"Couldn't you just--make him forget you had magic?" Adriana asked.

"I did, cara, when I left his employ but at the time I was a young apprentice without a master to teach me. What I know of the art now I learned on my own."

"It's hard to learn magic on your own," Rumple acknowledged.

The chef waved his hand and a glowing blue circle appeared on the wall in front of them. "Come, I'll show you my lab."

"That's a portal!" Rumple exclaimed.
"You sound surprised. Have you ever used one?"

"Yes, quite a few times, but I cannot make them," Rumple replied. "That's a skill I don't possess."

"Oh, they can be difficult to make at first but I've had plenty of time to practice. Now join hands. We must go through together or we'll be separated."

They all did so.

Angelo's lab was underneath the Pulcinello villa. Volumes of books on magic lined the walls in various languages. There was a large cauldron in the center of the room and an old oak worktable on which sat a large crystal ball. To give the lab a modern flair there were also posters from famous operas.

Archie chuckled when he poked his head around the corner and saw that the other room was a kitchen complete with a large screen TV.

"Very nice! I like it!" Rumple approved.

Angelo summoned a volume from the top shelf and floated it over to Rumple. "This book will instruct you how to make portals and I can also teach you how to do them as well but first I have a question. Your magic is not of this world. What world is it from?"

"It is called Fairytale Land. It's a world where people and creatures known here as stories and legends are real," Rumple explained.

"And who would you be in that land?"

"Rumplestiltskin, spinner of straw into gold. And also the Beast from Beauty and the Beast."

"And you?" he inquired of Archie.

Archie chuckled. "Jiminy Cricket."

Angelo summoned a spinning wheel. "Spin something."

Rumple conjured a handful of straw and sat down and began to spin. Soon the straw was transmuted into shimmering golden strands that wound around the bobbin.

"Excellent!" Angelo praised.

The group gathered around Angelo's worktable to look through some of the books he had when they heard the frightened voices of Belle and Marie in the kitchen. Angelo waved his hand over the crystal ball and the women's faces appeared in it.

"We're all right dearie," Rumple assured Belle.

"Where are you?"

"Take hands and walk through the glowing blue light on the wall," Angelo instructed. "It's all right. It won't hurt you."

"But..."

"It's fine Belle," Rumple insisted.
In the kitchen the sisters joined hands and stepped through the portal and appeared inside the lab. "What...what is this?" Marie gasped.

"Angelo's one of us, Auntie Marie!" Adriana announced happily.

"He is?"

"I am, my lady. I was once an apprentice chef in the Borgia house."

"Oh! And...is it true what they said about them?" Marie inquired with a grin.

"Oh come on Marie. It couldn't have been like Showtime portrayed it!" Belle protested.

"Actually cara, the show did exaggerate a bit yes but it and the books left out a few details of just how wicked the family could be."

"Do the Pulcinellos know what you are?" Belle asked him.

He shook his head. "Neither do Mariana and Egg. It has not been easy hiding my gift from them and as I told your husband, it has been difficult all these centuries not being around those of my own kind. I've had to use spells to change my appearance before anyone questioned why I do not age like other people and have changed my last name so many times I cannot always keep them straight. I can also imagine it is equally difficult for you having to hide who you are in this world."

"We don't have to hide who we are in Storybrooke. You can come live there," Adriana suggested.

"Cara, I cannot leave the Pulcinellos. They are my family. But...I can come to visit you." He tapped her nose playfully. "And once your papa learns how to make portals you can come visit me, si?"

"Then he's gotta hurry up 'cause we're only here for a month!"

Rumple chuckled. "I have a feeling I have a lot to learn."

"The most important lesson I think will be trying to access the magical sources of this world. You've encountered some barriers while trying to use magic in this land, have you not?"

"Aye."

Angelo summoned several more volumes from his shelves and packed them in a bag. "We are fortunate. Today is Thursday and Mariana and Egg take the day off. And since you've disposed of those worthless guards..."

"I'm surprised you didn't have wards on the house."

"Wards? You are speaking of protection spells?"

"Aye."

"I've tried casting them but for some reason they don't work for me."

"That will be my lesson for you."

The group returned to the villa through the portal, shocking the rest of the family when they explained who he was. Like Rumple, the other mages were as eager to learn from him as he was from them. He entertained the children during breakfast by repairing the glasses and making them and the rest of the dishes dance a la Beauty and the Beast. As the spoons floated past the babies, they
all tried to reach for one, laughed and blew bubbles while Adriana and Belle sang "Be Our Guest" in a faux French accent.

"This is cool!" Henry crowed while he and Gracie filmed the show with their phones.

They had planned to spend their second day in Italy touring Rome but they changed their plans and decided to spend the day getting to know the elder mage and explore the villa grounds and neither Snow nor Regina felt comfortable enough to do that much walking. Rumple conjured wheelchairs for them that moved by themselves so that the women could rest their aching feet and backs.

"It's going to be any time now, Regina. Can you feel it?" Snow asked her.

"Yes," the former queen groaned. "Take us to the pool," she commanded the chairs and they wheeled themselves over to the pool, lowering themselves so that the women could soak their swollen feet in the cool water while their children swam. The Pulcinellos had the pool partitioned so that there was a side for small children that they could sit in it without needing floatation devices and another for the adults and older children.

Adriana summoned all of the Happy Bears, her Rumplette doll and the Minions from the house so that they all could play in the pool with them. Henry and Grace were having a marvelous time having swimming races with their new bears.

"Do you have any other family, Angelo?" Rumple asked their new friend.

He shook his head sadly. "No, but every family I have lived with has made me feel like I am one of them. "And we rarely hear the laughter of children here at Villa Pulcinello. The signor and signora's children and grandchildren rarely come here to visit. Most of the time the Pulcinellos must go to them."

"I don't think that's right," Penelope argued. "When you're getting on in years, your children should be coming to visit you."

"Oh I agree signorina but the Pulcinellos would never refuse to visit their children. They are too kind."

"I can't wait til Mommy has the baby. Better be a girl or m'sending it back!" Ellie threatened.

"I wanna have a sister too," added Maggie. "I'll be sending a brother back with ya Ellie. We got too many now."

Their brothers frowned at them. "Thanks a LOT girls," Henry grouched.

Ellie and Maggie swam over to him and hugged him. "Aww ya know we love ya, right?" Maggie asked and punched him playfully.

"Holy crap Mags!" he cried and rubbed his shoulder. "You been taking boxing lessons or what?"

"Watched some of Rocky. He's cool."

"Yo Adrian!" Henry mocked. His sister punched him again. "Owwww!"

"Don't make fun of Rocky or I'll whup your butt."

Emma laughed. "Some girls have Snow White and the other Disney princesses as their idols, mine chooses a movie boxer for hers."
"Go 'head make my day...punk!" Maggie recited.

"Jeff! When did our daughter watch Dirty Harry!" Emma screeched at her husband. He threw up his hands.

"I didn't do it!"

"Do ya feel lucky?"

David was laughing from his chair. Emma spun around and glared at her father. "Oh, so YOU'RE the guilty party, eh Dad?"

"I thought I turned it off!" he protested.

"Well apparently you didn't," his wife scolded.

"Mommy, come in and swim!" Neal cried.

"Honey..."

"It'll make ya feel better," he insisted.

"I can't swim right now."

"You can sit."

"Oh....that concrete would be killer on us," Regina groaned.

"Well can't somebody make you a pillow or something?"

"Ummm....maybe."

Rumple gestured and the two expectant mothers were now sitting in the children's side of the pool on cushions.

"Ahhh....thanks Rumple," Snow sighed contentedly.

"You know I saw a woman actually give birth in water once," Robin joked. "I don't remember what TV show it was we were watching."

"How the hell can you give birth in water?" Jeff demanded.

"Yeah....wouldn't the baby...drown?" David cringed.

"Because, dearie, a baby takes its first breath of air when it's born, in the womb it breathes water, its surrounded by amneotic fluid."

"I heard it's actually more comfortable for the mom too. Jeff, I might want to do it," Emma said.

"From what I read online, you're floating and it's easier on your back and other muscles." Belle said. "I wish I had known about it with the triplets."

"So do I," Marie agreed.

"I don't know about you Regina but I'm feeling great right now," Snow murmured.

"So am I..."
"You are not giving birth in water Regina!" Robin protested.

"If I want to give birth in water I...ooohhhhhhhhh!"

Robin nearly fell out of his chair. "Oh no! Not now!" he cried.

"Ooooo...David.....I think it's time for me too..." Snow moaned.

"YES! I know!" he cried, clutching his own belly. "Damn Covade Syndrome!"

"Mommy, you're having the baby in the water--like a mermaid!" Neal blurted excitedly.

"Come on Regina, out of the pool...we're gonna find a hospital," Robin insisted.

"Oh no I'm not...we can make this like a birthing pool, can't we Rumple?"

Rumple nodded. "We can, dearies. If you think we need to."

"I want to give birth here...I'm comfortable," Snow insisted.

The Scorpions got the younger children out of the water and took them in the house.

"Hey, Bae!" Andi called to her boyfriend. "Your baby brother's an otter."

"What?"

She held up Bobby. "See?" She held a fluffy baby otter in her arms.

"What the...Papa!"

Rumple turned. "Bae, hold on a minute!" he began to increase the temperature in the pool to the same as what it would be in the womb.

"Oooh that's cool!" Jonny exclaimed.

"Okay. Now what's the problem?" Rumple asked coming up to his eldest.

"How the heck is he...that....and a cat?"

He pointed to Bobby in Andi's arms.

"Oh my God he is so cute!" Kyria squealed.

Rumple's eyebrows rose. "He was in the water . . .so the magic made him a water animal. Now, laddie, you're out of the water so let's become a person again." He gently drew a finger down the baby otter's tummy and willed the tiny shifter back into the shape he was born with. "And this time I'm magicking a ring on ye, Bobby!" he said, and did so.

The baby gave him a Look.

"Hey, don't ye give me that, lad!" Rumple scolded. "Ye behave and do what I say."

The baby wailed in protest, followed by his sisters.

Then they heard thunder in the sky.

"Maureen Jeannette Hopper don't you dare!"
Archie glanced down at his daughter's arm and her bracelet lay in the water. Marie fished it out and the storm clouds forming overhead vanished.

"Hush, ye wee imps," Rumple ordered his triplets. "If ye stop screaming I'll tell ye a story tonight."

There was nothing his youngest children loved more than Storytime with Papa.

His youngest son began cooing happily.

"Come on Regina...Snow, let's get you ready," Belle said to the expectant mothers.

"What should we do?" Jeff asked.

"YOU can go in house and watch TV!" Emma ordered.

"I'll call Dr. Jo in case we need her," Archie offered.

"Let's get you two into some different clothes," Rumple said, and waved his hand.

The two laboring women were now wearing soft V-neck tank tops and short flowing skirts that billowed slightly in the water, yet were no hindrance to them as they labored.

He also changed David and Robin's clothes into swim trunks and said, "Now, you two, get in the water and help your wives. You made this baby together, you can deliver it together."

"Hopefully it'll be easier!" Robin grouched.

He also changed his own clothes into a pair of blue and gold shorts, figuring he was going to have to play coach. "It's supposed to be a lot easier. On both mom and baby," he replied. "Now, I'm gonna put a monitoring spell on you, Regina and Snow, to make sure the baby is okay while this is going on."

Marie and Belle got in wearing their bathing suits while Archie and Emma sat on the edge of the pool, Archie holding his phone turned on speaker.

A blue circle of light surrounded the two women. Then the sound of twin heartbeats was heard.

"If you need your doctor I can bring her," Angelo offered.

"Right now, dearie, we're doing okay," Rumple said, wading into the water. "From what I've read, you don't need to worry about the baby breathing in water, as it won't do so until air touches his or her face. You should feel more relaxed and able to position yourself comfortably, ladies. Hold the side of the pool if you need to."

"I'm putting on some Enya." Emma said.

"Good idea! Music helps...and so does low lighting," he conjured a sort of shade over the pool so it was not so bright.

"I've read that if you do lunges it helps the contraction come easier," Belle said, putting her hands on Regina's shoulders. "And the water relaxes you so you don't tense up and there's less pain."

"We have to make sure all the chemicals are out of the water too," Archie said.

"Already done, dearie," Rumple said. "This water is as pure as magic can make it."
He gestured and the water rippled and became clear and also caressing against those in the pool. "Now all you need to do, ladies, is concentrate and let your bodies do what they were designed to do. Which is have babies."

The two women were more relaxed surrounded by their family for that was what they'd all become over the last five years.

"Hello...Doctor Jo...its Archie."

"Hello Archie. Is something wrong with one of the babies?"
"No but Regina and Snow are going to give birth...in a pool. Everything's fine but we wanted to call you in case we need anything."

She started reciting off a list of things the group needed and what they had to do and Rumple assured her they were well prepared.

"Keep me posted. I have a delivery shortly."

"Our kid is going to have duel citizenship," David joked.

"This is so much better than the last time," Regina said softly and moments later she was asleep.

Snow took a brief nap between her own contractions and had David feed her some ice chips.

Robin woke Regina up a short time later to massage her back and shoulders, his own discomfort lessened along with hers.

In the house the Hood and Nolan children peeked out the window to try to see but their view was obstructed by the shade Rumple made over the pool and Jeff and the teenagers were trying to keep them entertained.

"I wonder what you're gonna end up with--a brother or a sister, Neal?" Adriana asked.

"I don't care I just want another brother or sister." The toddler smiled. "Ya know what would be cool? If I get a sister like Ariel!"

"Hmm...you never know--it could happen," Adriana mused. "I mean, I got a little brother who can be a cat and an otter."

"Yeah but how's he do that?" Ellie asked.

"He's got his own kind of magic," Adriana answered. "Shifter magic."

"If I could do that I'd wanna be like Maleficent... a dragon."

"You already can call fire," the small Healer said. "Maybe you can have a dragon familiar."

"Can't find one here."

"Hope Mommy hurries up and has the kid already!" Roland complained.

"Ooohhh I think it's time to push!" Regina yelled.

"I'm ready!" Snow called back.
"Okay, ladies, get into the position that's most comfortable for you," Rumple called. "Robin and David, you support them from behind." He listened to the babies heartbeats. They were nice and steady. "Belle and Marie, you get ready to catch the babies. Ready--one . . .two . . .three . . .Push!"

The two women grunted and holding each others’ hands and the hands of their husbands they pushed as hard as they could.

"You're doing great ladies!" Marie encouraged.

"Now isn't this way a hell of a lot easier than normal?" Belle asked.

"YES!" they shouted.

"Come on Regina! You can do it," Robin coached. "Are you ready?"

"Are you?"

"Always."

"Come on my outlaw...we'll do this together."

"Can you see them yet?" Snow asked Belle and Marie.

"Not yet but you're almost there."

"One...two....three PUSH!" Rumple shouted.

They pushed again and felt the babies moving. "Rumple, I think I can see the head of Regina's baby!" Belle said after she took a second look.

"All right ladies....are you ready...again on three!"

"Come on Mom! Come on Gina! You can do it!" Emma cheered.

"This will be you in a few months, dear," Regina reminded her as they pushed again.

"We see them....we see the heads!" Marie cried out.

"Are they out?" Rumple demanded. "If they are, hold up! Rest and don't push till I say so."

"Yes they're out!" Belle answered.

"Okay, breathe . . .and relax. Dr. Jo says you need to give the baby time to align itself, so the cord doesn't become trapped . . .and your cervix relaxes." He flushed slightly talking about such intimate details.

"Rumple you're blushing!" Regina laughed.

"I'm not a doctor, dearie, I'm an attorney!"

"Well it's not like you haven't see some things before!" Marie teased.

"Marie!" Archie scolded.

"Oh like you haven't either?"

Now it was Archie's turn to blush.
Rumple checked his watch. "All right, on the next contraction, push!"

"Are you ready Snow?"

"When you are, Regina."

Under the water two babies emerged, a boy for Regina and a girl for Snow White. As Marie glanced down at Snow’s baby, her brow furrowed with concern. "Rumple...you'd better come and look..."

"What's wrong? What's wrong with my baby?" Snow exclaimed.

Archie leaned forward from where he was sitting, wondering if he needed to have his contacts changed. "Emma do you see....?"

"Oh my God...it looks like..."

"A fin!" they exclaimed in unison.

Rumple came to cut the cords, and as he went to see Snow's baby, he whispered, "Holy God, she has a tail...like a mermaid." As he cut the cord and gently lifted the baby girl free of the water to take her first breath, a silver and blue tail swatted the water.

"I don't believe it!" Snow whispered.

"Have you been cheating on me with a merman?" David teased. The baby's tail swatted the water again, splashing her father.

She had dark hair like her mother, and skin that shimmered like pearl, and the biggest set of ocean blue eyes they had ever seen. As she took her first gulp of air, she cried prettily, almost musically.

"Well it looks like Neal got his wish!" Emma laughed.

"Indeed. And I'm betting that like a true mer, once she's dry her tail will become legs," Rumple predicted. "Say hello to your mama and papa, little sea dearie." He handed her to her mother.

"And we have a handsome prince for Regina," Belle cooed.

Snow cradled her baby in her arms and kissed her small cheek. "A baby of the land and sea, just like Ariel."

"Our little pearl princess," David crooned. "She has your hair."

"Pearl...that's what I want to name her."

"Yes, Pearl Eva, for your mother," David agreed. "It's perfect..."

"Hello my little prince..." Regina crooned to her son.

Rumple came to see Regina's boy next. "Hello, wee imp!" he greeted the child, who had a thick tuft of dark hair and very dark blue eyes. "You're a handsome lad, aren't you?"

The baby smirked.

"Yes you are aren't you Rumplestiltskin Robin Hood?" Regina asked.
Her mentor's jaw dropped. "You're naming him . . .after ME?"

"Why wouldn't I? You're a second father to me."

"I . . .thank you, dearie," the old sorcerer stammered, tears in his eyes.

"I already have Henry named after my father and Robin and I agreed that if we had another son we would name him for you."

"Because you were the one who helped us get together, you know," Robin said. "And Roland was named after my father."

"Would you like to hold him?" Regina asked.

Rumple took the baby gently in his arms. "Hello, wee Rumple."

"Now how are we gonna tell them apart?" David joked.

"The baby will be Rum," Robin laughed.

Jeff brought the rest of the kids out of the house.

"Hey Nealio...guess what...we got an Ariel!" Emma informed her brother.

"Really? Awesome! What's her name?" he came to peer at the baby, who was still wet and had her tail.

"Pearl Eva ."

"Princess Pearl," the boy declared. "I like it!"

"Aww Mommy 'nother boy!" Ellie complained.

"It's the littlest outlaw, Dad!" Roland exclaimed.

"Well can't we give him one of those sex operations to make him a girl?"

Baby Rumple began to cry.

"Ellie you quit being mean or m'dumpin ya!" Jonny said firmly.

"Yeah and least you won't have to worry about a little sister that takes your dolls and wears your clothes," Jason said. "Hey, little brother. What's his name, Mom?"

"Rumplestiltskin Robin Hood."

"Cool! Can he spin straw into gold like you, Rumple?" Jason asked.

"We'll have to wait and see on that one," Rumple said, examining the baby's aura. "But he does have some strong magic."

"You're not gonna dump me, are you Jonny?" Ellie asked worriedly.

"Nah but you gotta be nice to little Rum, kay?"

"Dearie, you're his big sister, and you have to protect him, along with your brothers," Rumple told her. "He needs you."
She smiled at the baby. "And we can really kick the butts of anyone who picks on ya."

Baby Rum cooed at her, and then reached out his hand to grab hers.

She took it gently. "I'll help Mommy take good care of you till me and Jonny have our own kids!"

"Deal struck, dearie!" the older sorcerer giggled.

Henry and Grace stood on the edge of the pool with their phones recording the blessed events. "And today we welcome my brother Rum and my aunt Pearl!" he announced

"One more to go Jeff," Emma said. He patted her belly.

Adriana waved her hand and a rainbow appeared above them.

Then she clapped her hands and two new bears appeared. One was a soft fuzzy gold bear and the other was blue like the ocean. "Major Gold and Major Aqua, reporting for duty!" They saluted their General.

"Major Aqua, you're to report to Princess Pearl, and you know the Happy Army motto--a day without frownies is a happy day."

Aqua went and marched over to her new charge.

"Major Gold, you're to report to Prince Rum, and no frownies allowed."

The golden bear walked up and stood by the newest Hood proudly.

It had been a wonderful day with the arrivals of four new Happy Army Bears...and two very special children: a daughter of the land and sea and a son named in the honor of the legendary sorcerer who helped bring a family together.
Chapter Summary

Rumple and Belle renew their vows at the Trevi Fountain in Rome and enjoy a romantic second wedding night at Belle Reve.

Unlike any other
In her eyes I am...

Josh Groban - In Her Eyes (Belle and Rumple's love theme)

Although their wedding was the happiest day of her life, Belle felt something had been missing that day when her beloved sister chose not to stand by her side in fear that she would be ridiculed because of her occupation during the curse. Now she would at last have Marie at her side where she belonged and once again pledge to love her sorcerer in the shadows for all of their lives and beyond.

The moment she saw the Trevi Fountain in the pictures and videos her sister brought back from her honeymoon, she knew there was the place she wanted to renew her own vows and it reminded her of one of her favorite classic movies; Three Coins In The Fountain. She did not need to dream of finding romance...she lived it every day.

Rumple Gold would have said to anyone who asked before he was cursed that he was not worthy of love from anyone. Being abandoned by his father at a young age and abused by him and having his mother die having him had left him with a horrible self-esteem problem, and being cursed and possessed by a demon only made it worse. But meeting one lovely fiery beauty who believed in the lonely sorcerer in the shadows changed his life forever.

She alone of all women he had known before had seen the man behind the monster and her love had freed him to become the good and loving man he was today. For he had never considered himself a hero, but just a simple man who wanted nothing more than a family to love and to be loved. Now he had more family than he knew what to do with, and more love than he ever expected.

He was excited to renew their vows here, in the Eternal City, where lovers had come from time immemorial to pledge their hearts.

"You could not have picked a better place, my friend," Angelo said to him the previous evening in his workshop while they were practicing portal spells.

"And I believe your first test of your skill should be to create a portal to take your lovely bride to a special place. Now where would that be?"

"The Trevi Fountain," Rumple replied. "It's where we wish to speak our vows again."

"I mean for your wedding night, my apprentice," the chef said with a grin. "You will not have privacy here."

"Oh . . . can you suggest somewhere? I don't know your country the way I do my own."
"Hmmm...I was thinking more of your own land. The portals you make can cross worlds...I've just never tried it."

Angelo turned a page in his spellbook. "Creating a portal to a new world is something I could not do because I am from this land...but you can."

"I...there's my home, Belle Reve, in the Enchanted Forest," Rumple mused. "I'm sure my enchanted staff would welcome us for our second wedding night."

"Would they give you privacy, amico?"

Rumple smirked. "Yes, if I so ordered it. They know when to intrude and when not to. And I can always lock the door."

"Then show me what you have learned. Open a portal to your world and let us travel through."

Rumple concentrated, using the visualization techniques Angelo had taught him and called upon his magic. A glowing door of purple and gold light emerged and then showed a scene of a tranquil forest retreat, and a lovely castle surrounded by mountains.

"Excellent amico!" the elder sorcerer cried. "Now let us pass through." He took Rumple's hand and together they stepped through the portal to the front gates of Belle Reve.

They swung open at a touch of their master's hand and they walked into the courtyard. "Would you like a tour?"

"I would, si! It reminds me of the grand castles I lived in during the time of the Borgias..."

Rumple's eyebrows rose. "Well, welcome to Belle Reve. Let me warn you though, I have a hassock puppy named Gabby that may jump on you."

"Oh that's all right. I've had plenty of dogs in my lifetime that have taken a liking to me."

"Okay." Rumple touched the doors to the castle and they swung open, welcoming him back. As he stepped into the entryway, the enchanted furniture woke and rushed to meet him.

Angelo's eyes widened in wonder. Though he had the ability to animate objects, giving them voices and human characteristics was a skill he did not possess and one he wanted to learn.

Rumple turned to him. "My servants were once people, enchanted into furniture by my predecessor, Zoso, centuries ago. When I became master here, I couldn't transform them back because they would have aged in an eyelink and become dust. So they remain enchanted."

"Which is better for them. And how is your daughter able to animate her toys. Is it the same enchantment?"

"Adriana...has inherited my gift of transformation. But her spell is one that works with Light magic, and not dark. She takes a seeming of those she loves and projects it onto her toys, as near as I can figure it."

Angelo frowned. "The Borgias, especially Cesare wished to learn dark magic, specifically the art of mind control. He wanted to use it to lure Lucrezia into his bed." The elder sorcerer crossed himself. "His own sister..."

Rumple grimaced. "Such would be forbidden here in this land too. Incest is not something we
believe in. It is considered abomination according to our own religious beliefs."

"It's good to see some things do not change between worlds."

"Actually, I believe there are many similarities between this world and the century you grew up in." Rumple said.

"It would appear so yes. The clothing is similar."

"Heeyyyyy....who're you?" they heard a little voice ask on the floor in front of them.

Rumple knelt and picked up Tobias, his pepper shaker. "Tobias, this is Master Angelo, my friend and fellow magician from Italy. Say hello, lad."

"Ummm...hi. Where's Italy?"

"It's in the world Storybrooke is," explained Rumple. "But across an ocean."

"Is it a big ocean?" asked Wesley, Tobias's brother as he jumped up and down excitedly.

"Yes, very big," Rumple went and picked him up also. "This is Wesley, Tobias's brother. Wesley, this is Master Angelo."

"Hi."

"Well hello there, little one. I take it you are Rumple's helpers in the kitchen, eh?"

The two nodded. "We like to help Master Rumple cook!" Wes said.

"Uh-huh and Master Archie cause they make the best stuff ever," Tobias added.

Rumple blushed slightly. "Now lads, ye've only known me and Archie to cook here . . ."

"Ummm Master Robin tried to make somethin and so did Master Jeff....and...it made us all throw up!"

Rumple groaned. "I wasn't going to mention that little mishap, dearies . . . it's what happens when you get two former outlaws together in a kitchen who are used to eating in public taverns for over half their lives."

"Well I can assure you you will never throw up when I cook," Angelo said.

"The Master's home! The Master's home!" Gabby barked as he skidded down the stairs and over to Rumple where he jumped up on him and licked his hand. "I missed you!"

Angelo chuckled. "He's an excitable one, isn't he?"

Gabby turned and went to sniff and lick the other sorcerer. "Ohh! A guest! A NEW guest! Hello! Hello!" His tassled tail waved back and forth.

"Hello there," Angelo kneeled down to pet the hassock and scratched its back.

Gabby groaned happily. "Ooh, I like him, Master. He knows about the good spot!"

"I had a dog or two in my life and they all have the same spot that's just right to scratch."

"I think you've made a friend for life," Rumple giggled.
"Oh I don't mind. This is the perfect place for your wedding night, amico and I wouldn't mind coming back to visit a time or two."

"You will be more than welcome. Come, let me show you around." He led Angelo into the den, where Misty the loveseat was and some other enchanted objects.

"Rowl?" the loveseat feline asked when she saw her master's new guest.

"Misty, this is Master Angelo," Rumple soothed. "This is Misty, my cat sofa. She doesn't speak, I think Zoso only enchanted her to become furniture because he caught her going past him. Or if she does, she only chooses to do so when she wishes, like any cat."

Angelo patted the sofa affectionately. "I once had a cat as my familiar...Sophia her name was...but alas she took a draught that was meant for me..."

The sorcerer's eyes narrowed to slits. "Were I less of a man I would have cursed the Borgias myself but fate dealt them a rather unpleasant blow, did it not?"

"What goes around comes around, my friend," Rumple said softly. "Well then, I would like to see your workshop here."

"This way, dearie," and he led Angelo to his lab, which was warded but the wards relaxed when he touched the door.

Angelo was still learning how to cast wards but he'd managed to successfully cast one of them on Villa Pulcinello so that they would no longer be bothered by thieves.

"My wards here are keyed to me--and whoever I choose to allow entry with me," Rumple explained. "Think of them as a kind of alarm system like a watchdog. The "dog" knows my aura, and knows to permit any who come with me--as long as they are not dark. So a dark practitioner could never force entry into my lab by using me as a hostage--the wards would know and fry them."

"Excellent. I have not sensed any dark mages in Italy but that does not mean they are about....they can mask auras as we do."

"Yes . . . and they would because they were hunted in your land. Here, not so much, where magic is commonplace as grains of sand. Even the lowest hedge witch can sell her charms and potions at a market."

He entered the room and mageglobes lit at his approach and illuminated the room, which was a round room built of interlocking stone blocks and furnished with a long stone table, some comfortable chairs, a bookshelf with many magical tomes, and several cabinets with small cubbyholes which held potion ingredients. A cauldron was in a corner-and also scrolls in cases. There was a large rug in front of a fireplace and a stained glass window that showed an area of the garden. "I grow my herbs there," he pointed. "And some of the older and more dangerous spellbooks and scrolls are warded also. Don't want any curious apprentice prying where they shouldn't. So if they try to open one without knowing the keyword, they'll suffer singed fingers."

He chuckled wryly. "Of course, I didn't think to ward my potion ingredients like that, so my son came in here and nearly blew up my lab trying to make a perfume for his girlfriend a few years ago." Angelo chuckled. "Thank God my lab is hidden. The Pulcinello bambinos were a curious lot and would have blown up the villa!"

"Kids! Some days you want to hug them and others you want to spank them," the sorcerer sighed. "And it depends on the day!"
"Yes it does. This is a magnificent castle, truly and Belle will have a wonderful time. We should get back so you can get ready."

"Thank you! You will have to come back and stay sometime during the summer, when I have leisure to show you both the grounds and the inside," Rumple said. "Yes, Belle will have my head on a plate if I'm not ready for the ceremony."

It was also when he could tell the other mage the true story of this castle, and how it had been transformed after he and Belle had inhabited it with their family from the Dark Castle to Belle Reve. "Then cast the portal to take us back, apprentice."

Rumple did so, and they stepped through it and were whisked back into the kitchen of the villa in a twinkling. The spell drained his reserves a little, but since he was a master, he had magic to spare. However a younger mage would have needed to rest for awhile afterwards.

"Well sis, today it's your turn to be on cloud nine," Marie said softly to Belle while they were dressing for the wedding in the Hoppers' suite. "Even though your actual anniversary isn't til Valentine's Day but who cares. This is the perfect place to renew your vows."

Belle pulled on her petticoats and tied them, saying, "It's so beautiful, Marie! The moment I saw it in Three Coins in the Fountain I knew we had to come here so we could renew our vows. And best of all, you're going to be with me like you should have all along!"

"I know I know...and like I said before Archie was upset with me about it and with my not telling you the truth about who I was. I was so damned stubborn and self conscious back then because of Cora's curse."

"But now the curse is gone and so is she, and we can live as we choose," Belle said. "Help me with my dress?"

"Of course....thank God I didn't wear something like this on my wedding day....or a corset. Archie would have cut it off...then burned it." Marie laughed. "He did that with my corset after our dance the first time we went back to Belle Reve!"

Belle chuckled. "Rumple hates them too, says they're medival torture devices masquerading as ladies fashions. But this is one of his own designs, and it's a longline bra and it won't leave marks on me like stays used to."

"Archie said almost the same thing," her sister grinned. "Oh do you remember that ball where we set up a nasty little accident for those Villette trolls?"

Belle smirked wickedly. She smoothed the skirts of her turquoise gown, which had puffed sleeves edged in gold lace and in gold thread were roses and spinning wheels on the bodice, and layers of silk and tulle filled out the skirts. She had on sheer white stockings and matching heels with diamon rose buckles. Around her neck was a lovely locket with Bae's pictures of Rumple in it, it was a protection charm made long ago by her husband. More turquoise and iolite stones hung from her ears.

"Of course! And the nasty cats deserved what they got!"

"Axelle always had it in for us and that sister of hers always went along with what she did...so I thought frogs in the punch bowl was appropriate but a bit of an insult to the frogs that they had to put up with them."

"But oh it was funny to see them screaming like ninnies and running around knocking over the servants and banging into people like madwomen! You'd have thought they'd been assaulted!"
Marie scowled. "They have no idea what an assault feels like."

Belle shook her head. "No, they don't. And they should thank their lucky stars for that...although I doubt if they'd consider Gaston's attentions an assault if he'd bestowed them on those two harpies, which I'm not all sure he didn't! He always pursued everything with skirts!"

"I'm glad he's dead! Glad!! But...enough about him...let's finish getting you ready...but should I wear my green gown, Belle?"

"Why not? It's suitable for the occasion," her sister replied. She started to brush out her long hair, hissing when the brush tangled. "Oh! Dratted hair! Rumple can always untangle it for me, his fingers always manage to undo the knots."

"So did I, remember?" Marie took the brush from her sister's hand and carefully worked out the knots in Belle's hair, recalling the many times in their childhood when they used to brush each other's hair before bed and talk about their dreams for the future.

"Of course. And you could braid hair better than me, which was why I was always glad it was your job to do so, otherwise I would have looked like a ragbag!" Belle admitted. She had always preferred reading and other scholarly pursuits.

"Would you like it in a braid or a twist?"

"Twist it, so I can put it up on my head. It's hot here, and I don't want a lot of weight on my neck."

"I'll do a French Twist...besides, Rumple can always take it out later and run his hands through it." Marie sighed dreamily. "I love it when Archie does that...oh Belle we got the best of them...better than we ever dreamed of."

She started laughing suddenly. "Oh! Do you remember the time I found that book hidden in our tutor's desk? The one called 101 Ways to Attract A Man? And we spent the night reading it under the covers and plotting ways to use what we read to get the man of our dreams? But it turns out we didn't need anything--except to just be ourselves."

"No we didn't and of both of us, I never thought a man like Archie could love me...because of being in that damned club. But there you were after the first curse was broken telling me to go for it...even when I thought everything was falling apart you kept me believing I could have a love as wonderful as yours..."

And today as they had on Archie and Marie's anniversary, the two couples would stand together as Rumple and Belle reaffirmed their love for each other.

"Because I knew that if I could make Rumple believe in love again, after he was as damaged as you were, I could make you believe it too." Belle said.

"You always were the optimistic one," Marie said while she fastened her heart pendant around her neck. "Do you know where your husband is taking you for your wedding night?"

"No, he said he wouldn't tell me. It's a surprise. But I have a pretty good idea." Marie smiled slyly. "I know but I'm not supposed to tell..."

"Hmm...I bet I could tickle it out of you," Belle threatened. "You wouldn't dare..."

"Is that a challenge?" she purred.
Belle lunged at her, her hands reaching for a spot under Marie's arm, which she knew from their childhood was her ticklish spot.

"No....nnoooooo stop...you're gonna make me pee myself!" Marie giggled.

"Tell! Tell!" Belle chanted, and in an instant was transported back to their childhood in Avonlea and she was ten and trying to get Marie to tell her about a surprise Maurice had gotten her for her birthday.

"I can't... I promised Archie I wouldn't...he's gonna make me a red velvet cherry coke cake roll Belle and serenade me! Serenade me! Here!"

"Oh, all right!" Belle relented. "Perhaps Rumple will sing for me too when we get to wherever we're going."

"Belle, you know I need to have my baby serenade me."

She also knew Rumple was planning a moonlight serenade of his own at Belle Reve.

"You're lucky none of the Mad Crew had recorded him doing so and put it online."

"No but I just recorded this," Archie said from the doorway holding up his phone.

Belle gasped. "You didn't! I'm suing!" she cried, then started laughing. "Now I know I'm a lawyer's wife!"

"Come on...hand it over," Marie demanded of her husband.

"Nope..."

Marie winked at her sister. "Wanna help me get it?"

"Why not?" Belle said.

"Marie...don't you even think about...ooof!" Marie tackled her husband onto the bed and kissed him. "Grab the phone!" she yelled at Belle between kisses.

"That's...cheating...my goddess..."

Belle went and snatched the phone out of his hand. "Got it!"

"Now get rid of the evidence..."

"You're gonna pay for this my goddess..."

"Later, darling, later..."

Belle scrolled through the phone, and pressed delete. "It's gone, gone, gone!" she chanted.

Archie sat up. "Oh and I'm going to make certain Rumple pays you back nicely for that little distraction Belle," he said with a smirk.

"You'd have to make a deal with him," she grinned.

"Oh I think I can manage that."

"You'd better go get dressed darling," Marie reminded him.
"Oh damn....Rumple will have my head if I'm late..."

He jumped out of the bed and raced out of the room, his wife giving him heated looks.

"Save it, Marie," Belle urged. "Now we have to redo my hair . . ."

"All right." Marie opened her jewelry box and took out a set of ivory combs. "These were Mama's. Papa gave them to her when they were children and she wore them every day."

"They're beautiful," Belle said. She showed her sister a carved ivory rose bracelet. "They match this piece Papa gave my mama."

"He bought the set for both of them on the same day," Marie explained while she wove her sister's hair into an elegant French Twist and placed the combs.

Belle looked in the mirror. "So, what do you think? Will my beast like what he sees?"

"He always does, sweetie. That's the beauty of the men we married. They love us for what we are outside and in."

"Because they know what it's like to NOT be loved that way," Belle said sagely. "And if I had that--that tart Milah here right now I would beat her with my shoe for treating Rumple so disgracefully."

Marie laughed. "Or the broom...but you put quite a hurting on Antoine Devarge with that shoe when he threw you into that mud puddle and you got sick, didn't you?"

"Yes. For a shoe can be mightier than a sword!" Belle chuckled.

"Well, let's go round up the rest of the girls and our kids and get this wedding going so you can be alone with your beast."

"Yes, because I don't want to wait another minute," Belle said, and lifting her skirts slightly, hurried from the room.

"Mama, Mama! How do I look?" Adriana asked coming out of her bedroom in a duplicate of her mother's dress her father made for her months earlier.

"Oh, sweetie, you look perfect!" Belle said, thinking that Adriana was the perfect blend of her and Rumple.

"And Sella, Ellie and I got all the babies dressed," she declared proudly.

"Thank you, that was so thoughtful of you girls," Belle praised. The babies all had outfits made by her husband, but spelled so nothing, like baby drool or spit would mar them.

"Can we push em in the strollers to the fountain Belle?" Ellie asked.

"Yes, you can. Just be careful of the cobblestones, they get the wheels caught."

"Okay we will. "C'mon Jonny," She took the handles of the stroller her brother and Pearl were sleeping in and wheeled them outside while Adriana and Neal wheeled the triplets.

"Oh God....my son with a baby carriage....his father will pass out!" Marie moaned.

"Now, Marie," Belle laughed. "Archie knows that gender roles have reversed since coming here. And it's perfectly normal for a boy to play house."
"Oh he knows that it's just that they're growing up too fast for us.."

"They're not even five yet. Wait till they're fifteen! Rumple swears he's going to start needing to dye his hair."

"Archie's afraid he'll be bald by then!"

"Not if Rumple has anything to say about it," Belle giggled.
"Your limo awaits Mama," Bae said and bowed.

Belle eyed her oldest. "You look very handsome, Bae. Like your papa when he was younger. I'm sure Andi will need to borrow my broom to beat away the girls."

"Oh I can do that," laughed Andi looking every inch the duchess that she was in their world.

Bae took Belle's arm to escort her to the limo, as was his place as the eldest son.

The Hoods, Hatters and Nolans would ride in the other cars along with the children.

"Were gonna have one of these too, eh Gina?" Emma said.

"Maybe in a few more years."

"You look beautiful Belle," Snow said softly.

"Thank you, Snow." Belle said quietly.

"Are you...nervous Rumple?" Archie asked him.

Rumple looked up from straightening his swallow tail jacket and said, as he adjusted his tie, "I shouldn't be, but I am a wee bit."

"It's not like she's going to back out. She loves you...she always has."

"Oh, I know that...I'm just...hell, you know I want everything to be perfect." Rumple said, smoothing his waistcoat.

"Do you remember how I was before I got married and everything you said to me? Keep that in mind."

"Thanks, sometimes I need a reminder," Rumple fixed his hair. "Well, how do I look?"

"Great. Now we'd better get going before our wives take the broom to us."

Rumple shook his head. "Not today, dearie. Come, I don't like being fashionably late."

Ewan and Bobby were driving them to the ceremony both boys dressed in old Scottish garb.

"Belles gonna faint when she sees ye," Bobby teased.

"Do ye think so, laddie?" Rumple winked at him and drawled softly.

"Oh aye. Now if ye wore a kilt like a proper Scotsman..."
"My knees are too knobby, dearie. But maybe just for Belle I might . . ."

"And ye know what no' to wear beneath, aye?" Ewan teased.

"Aye, and ye dinna need to remind me," Rumple smirked.

"I don't think I could do that...would be too embarassed," Archie admitted.

"Yer lasses wouldna complain."

The two teenagers grinned. "Lad I don't know where you've been but I see that ye won first prize!" they sang and laughed.

"Now dinna be singing that kilt song lads!" Rumple scolded.

"Och come on Rumple, sing along, ye and Archie!"

"NO!" the men said firmly.

They arrived at the fountain first, pleased to see that there was not much of a crowd that had gathered. The wedding planner they'd spoken to earlier in the week assured them that they would have all the privacy they needed for their ceremony but Rumple was not taking any chances. He, Angelo, Henry, Emma and Regina would cast wards around the site to protect everyone from any uninvited guests.

The first cars to arrive carried the Nolans, Hoods, Hatters, Scorpions and the children. Robin sauntered up to the groom with a flask in his hand. "Need a shot, Rum?"

"Maybe two by the looks of him!" Jeff teased.

"You get him drunk and we get the brooms. Dammit don't you two ever LEARN?" David demanded.

"Aww calm down David we all need a little courage booster!" Robin said nonchalantly.

"Yes well I don't need a sore ass...you want to get him drunk you're on your own!"

Jeff handed the flask to Rumple. "Ahh take a shot!"

"No thanks. Alcohol and sorcerers do not mix, dearie! And I want to be able to speak my vows, not slur them. My courage is found here." He laid a hand on his heart. "And I believe you promised Emma you were going to quit drinking once this new baby was born, didn't you?"

Archie eyed the portal jumper pointedly. "Yes, he did and if he knows what's good for him he won't touch it...right?"

Jeff gulped. "You won't tell Emma...will you?"

"If you don't drink anything we won't have anything to tell her about, now will we?" Rumple demanded, his eyes hard. "You of all people know how I feel about alcoholics, Hatter. And if you don't by now, perhaps I'd better enlighten you some night!"

He waved the flask, which he could tell had some kind of whiskey in it, away. Just the smell of it brought back memories he had tried to put to sleep forever, memories of hole-in-the-wall taverns, dirt floors, the stench of vomit and unwashed bodies, and the curses of patrons as they lost at dice and cards, as well as the lash of his papa's temper.
"Bad move boys," Archie scolded.

The two men backed away, feeling guilty.

"Sorry about that Rum," David said. "I'll keep them in line."

"Thank you," he sorcerer said softly. "You understand too," he said, since the former shepherd had also grown up with an alcoholic father, though his had not been as abusive as Malcolm.

"Too well," David mumbled.

Their eyes met in shared understanding. For no one knew the demon in the bottle as well as those who had grown up under a parent who was a slave to it.

"Rumple think about Belle," Archie encouraged.

At that moment Bae drove up in the limo carrying his mother and aunt.

When Rumple saw the car, he quickly stopped the line of depressing memories. His Belle was here and he would be damned if he let something like this ruin their day.

In the car Marie squeezed her sisters hand gently. "Ready?"

"As I'll ever be," Belle agreed, giving her a squeeze back.

Maurice was waiting beside the car. "You look beautiful poppet."

"Thank you, Papa." She looked up, feeling the spirit of her mother Collette watching over her, a smile on her lips as she recalled all the discussions the two of them had about life and love.

"Someday Belle cherie, you will find a man who will loe you as you are, and that my darling is the truest love you can ever have. Hold onto it darling."

I have found it Mama...maybe not in the place you would have expected me to but I've found it....and now here we are...so many years later...with five beautiful children. You would like Rumple, Mama. I know you would.

Rumple waited calmly beside the fountain, it's gently burbling water soothing away the last of his dark memories, and sending them back to sleep. Go back to hell, Papa, where you belong!

Instead he thought of the women who had raised him, the kindly spinsters who had taught him the right way to treat others and ladies most of all. "Be kind, be gentle, and love will find a way to you."

And love had, in the most unexpected way.

Maurice kissed Belle's cheek and placed her hand in Rumple's. "I love you poppet," he whispered and returned to his seat beside Penelope who was weeping into her handkerchief.

Rumple smiled at his wife. "Shall we, mo chroi?"

"Yes, dear heart, we shall."

They processed up the line of their family, to where Archie and Marie waited alongside the fountain. When they reached the fountain's edge, they turned and faced each other, their hands still clasped.
Belle decided to let her husband speak first sensing something had been troubling him before her arrival and hoped her presence would be enough to chase his demons away.

Rumple swallowed, then gathered his thoughts, silently recalling what he had intended to say. Then he spoke, pitching his voice the way he did when he was in a courtroom, so all could hear his words. "Belle, before I met you I struggled with a soul-crushing curse, but besides that I also struggled with a poor self-image from growing up a bastard son of a coward alcoholic who abandoned me to the mercy of strangers. I felt that I was unworthy of being loved, even though the spinsters who raised me told me long ago that by being gentle, kind, and honest love would find me. But for so long love eluded me, it fled from me like a ghost, and I felt as the centuries went by that it was lost to me forever. For who could ever love a beast? Or a coward spinner? But I was wrong. For you found me, the lonely sorcerer locked tight in a prison of shadows, a prison born of fear and isolation and darkness, and you freed me. By doing one simple thing--loving me for all that I was, and all that I could be. You gave me back my heart, my soul, and my self-esteem. And all you asked in return was that I love you. That was the best deal i ever made, and I have never regretted it. Because of you I have what I have always dreamed--I have a family, a place to belong, five beautiful children, and my heart's desire. That's all I have ever wanted. So, I ask you now, the same thing I did long ago in Avonlea, will you go with me, Belle, forever?"

Tears were in Belle's eyes as she began to speak. "Before I met you, I thought that true love was the way I read about in my books...with a handsome prince that would come and take me away to his shining castle but I was wrong. For while a man may be beautiful on the outside his heart can hide a dark nature. Then one day a man came to our castle...a bit of a showman...but the show hid something that he was afraid to let others see..someone who wanted to be loved so much but no one was willing to venture into his shadows to see the true beauty that was within. And because I wanted to know him I made a choice to go with him...I knew it would not be easy to bring the light back into his life but I would not be like the others who were not strong enough to stay. Rumple, I made a promise to you that I would go with you forever and I always will. And I will always be your light when you feel your shadows gather around you. You are my my heart and my soul and I will love you in this life and beyond my gentle beast."

"In you, mo chroi, my heart has found its home, and to celebrate the love I bear you, I give you this, spun out of my magic and love." He gestured and a glittering golden ring appeared in his hand.

It was a tricolor rose ring and on the inside was written "Mo Chroi love Rumple." He slid it on her finger, next to her wedding band. "With this ring I vow thee my eternal devotion, until the end of all things, I am yours."

Marie was fighting back her own tears when she handed Belle Rumple's ring. "With this ring I vow thee my eternal devotion, until the end of all things, I am yours." Belle slid the ring onto his finger and raised his hand to her lips, kissing it softly. "I love you."

The Hoppers then handed the couple some coins to toss into the fountain.

Together they threw three coins into the fountain-one for love, one for luck, and one to return again to Rome someday.

Then Rumple drew Belle into his arms and kissed her breathless, the way all lovers dream of being kissed, yet so few ever experience. It was kiss of pure magic and pure joy.

It was with great reluctance that they parted long enough to be hugged by Marie and Archie.

"That was beautiful Belle!" Marie sobbed.
"Thanks, and I'm so happy you could share in our special day this time," her sister said.

"I wasn't going to be crazy enough not to again."

"I wouldn't let her," Archie added.

"Good thing, dearie, or else Belle would have broken out the broom!"

David and Snow hugged the couple next. "Beautiful ceremony, just beautiful. Now I want to renew our vows," Snow said dreamily.

"Where do you want to do it, honey?" David asked her.

"Our castle of course and everyone is invited. I want to have a winter ceremony."

"Sounds like fun," Rumple snickered. "It'll be a winter wonderland."

"Well we want to have a mad ceremony, don't we Em?" Jeff asked his wife.

"Because we're all mad here!" she giggled.

"That's about right," giggled Rumple.

"Well I don't want to be around mad people," Regina joked.

"Too late for that, my queen. We inducted ourselves into the Mad Crew and we can't check out!" Robin reminded her.

"Yeah, it's like the roach motel!" Bae teased.

Adriana jumped into the fountain followed by the rest of the children. They scooped water into their hands and splashed the couple.

"It's for luck Mama, Papa!" she sang joyfully.

"Oh no! Come on kids, get out of there!" Archie cried.

"Uncle Archie we're giving Mama and Papa good luck!"

Some of the people on the street stopped and frowned at them.

"Now dearies, come out of there," Rumple ordered. "This is a public landmark, not a swimming pool!"

"But it's fun!" his daughter protested.

"Jonny, Gisella! Out. Now!" Archie ordered firmly.

"Maggie, come on...get out of there," Emma crooked her finger at her daughter.

"Ellie, Jason, Roland, march yourselves out of that fountain," Regina ordered.

The three Hoods crawled out of the fountain and walked over to their father with their heads bowed.

"We're waiting Neal," David tapped his foot.

Reluctantly, Neal came out, looking slightly sheepish.
"What is going on here?' they heard someone say. Two police officers stood behind them.

"We're gonna get 'rrested!' Maggie cried and raised her hands. "Put your hands up!'"

"Don't worry, Maggie! Papa's a lawyer and he'll defend us!' Adriana cried, alarmed. Then she said, "I didn't they's 'llowed to 'rrest kids!'"

"Yeah they can an they can put us in little cells!'"

"M'not goin in a cell. Jonny'll bust me out, won't ya Jonny?' Ellie asked.

"I don't wanna go in the hoosegow!' Jonny wailed. "I didn't rob nothin' or kill anybody.'"

"We can bust out!' yelled Jason.

"Yup, cause Will taught me how to pick locks!' Roland said, eager to test his skills.

Behind him Robin facepalmed himself.

"I'll just burn the doors off like Charlie McGee!' Ellie boasted.

"Would it help if we said we're sorry an' we'll never do it again?' Neal asked, giving the policeman puppydog eyes.

"How come jumpin' in a fountain's a crime?' Adriana wanted to know. "I don't see no sign sayin' No Tresspassin' or Keep Out.'"

The two officers laughed. "Well, cara, this is a very important part of our nation's history....you wouldn't want us to do that to one of your landmarks, would you?"

Adriana now looked guilty. "No, sir. We didn't know . . . we just wanted to give my Mama and Papa good luck cause they got remarried . . .and it's good luck to splash people on their wedding day.'"

"Oh...this is your wedding day?'"

"It's a wee bit early but . . .since we were here on vacation, my wife and I decided to count our blessings and renew our vows. Some of our family couldn't be present the first time we were married, so it gave them a chance to participate also. We apologize for any inconvenience." Rumple explained with his suave charming manner. "It's all right signore. Just...try not to do it again.'"

"Well, children? What do you say?' he fastened a sharp Look upon them as they stood dripping wet before the fountain.

"We're sorry,' they chorused.

The officers couldn't help laughing. The children were adorable.

"Congratulations and may you enjoy the rest of your day.'"

"Can we eat now? I'm hungry!' Maggie asked.

Her siblings laughed. "Bottomless pit, that's you Mags!' Henry teased.

"So were you,' Regina reminded him. "Once you ate a box of scented crayons!'"
"Ewwww!" Grace screeched. "Gross!"

"Didja havta crap em out?" asked Jason.

"Betcha it was a rainbow!" Ellie giggled.

"Aww cut it out you guys!"

Grace grinned at her sibling. "Even I wasn't crazy enough to do that!"

"It was the crayon company's fault for making them smell good enough to eat," her brother objected.

"And he didn't eat the whole box, just bit a piece off each of them," Regina clarified.

"Oh you don't wanna know what I nearly gave Papa a stroke over eating," Bae said.

"Tell, dearie!" demanded his sister.

"Nope!"

"Papa, what did Bae eat that was really gross?"

Rumple groaned. "Are you SURE you want to know, dearie? I wish I didn't need to remember it."

"Tell me!"

"I wish you developed memory loss!" Bae muttered.

"Just for that, lad, I'm gonna tell her TWO things!" his father growled.

Adriana was nearly jumping up and down. "What is it?"

Bae wanted to crawl in a hole.

Rumple paused then said, "Well, you see, dearie, when Bae was walking, sometimes I had to go and sell things and I left Bae home with his mama . . ." Here Rumple grimaced. "And sometimes his mama was--err--indisposed and didn't watch him as well as she should have and one day I came home and found Bae sitting in the yard--it had rained and there were mud puddles and he was crawling in the mud and picking something up and eating it. I was horrified!"

"So I ran over and cried, "Bae, what are you eating, lad?" And I saw him eating . . . a bug!"

"Cannibal!" Jonny yelled.

"Eww! Gross!" Adriana cried.

"Well, I almost threw up right there," Rumple said. "But when I brought him inside to Milah, she was napping in front of the fire, all SHE said was, "Why are you making such a fuss, Rumple? Bugs are good protein!" I almost felt like telling her to go dig in the garden for her dinner!"

Archie, Jonny and the twins were pale. "Ewww Daddy, 'member when we saw those bags of crickets at that fair once?" Jonny asked his father.

"And they called them the 'other green meat'. The 'other green meat'? It was disgusting and they even flavored them!"

Rumple looked ill. "You know, I've eaten a lot of things when I was hungry, But I NEVER ate
bugs! Grass, tree bark, pine needles, yes. Bugs, NO!"

"An this guy held one up to Daddy and wanted him to try it. Gross! Daddy's not a cannibal!"

"What else, Papa?" Adriana persisted.

"Nothing!" Bae said quickly.

"Liar, liar pants on fire!" Ellie taunted.

"So what was it?" Neal asked Rumple.

"It was not good. Back then I used to dye my own thread, and one day I was making mulberry dye and I mixed some mulberry extract with some other plant juice to make the dye fast and put it into a big vat of water. Well, Bae climbed onto my workbench, he was like a little monkey, and he drank some of it. I was terrified, because too much could be poisonous to a small boy. So I dosed him with some milkweed syrup."

"I thought it was mulberry juice, okay!"

"I think that was the day I got my first gray hair."

"Well you won't be eating anything disgusting at my table!" Angelo boasted.

"Thank God for that!" Rumple said.

"I can't wait to see what you boys made for us," Belle said softly.

"And on that note...let's go eat!" Jeff crowed.

"Lead the way," Bae said, anxious to both fill his belly and get off the topic of childhood mishaps.

Mariana and Egg already had the tables and buffet set up in the back lawn of Villa Pulcinello by the time the party returned from the Trevi Fountain.

On a large buffet table were loaves of crusty Italian bread, accompanied by Caesar salad, clams in white wine sauce, prosciutto wrapped canteloupe, tomato salad with mozzarella and basil. For main dishes there were linguini carbonara, sausage and peppers, Roman veal scaloppini, and shrimp scampi. There was also margherita pizza and pepperoni pizza and an antipasto tray of olives, cheese, and fruit.

On a separate table were the desserts. Tiramisu, a cannoli cake, fruit, pignoli cookies, wedding cookies, and nuts toasted with cane sugar.

"Congratulations!" Mariana hugged the newly remarried couple.

"Gratzie," Rumple replied, and kissed her on both cheeks, which was the Italian way to greet people.

Egg kissed Belle's cheeks. "Bellissima, cara."

She blushed. "Gratzie Egg."

"You know cara if I were younger..."

"Oh? You'd what?" Belle giggled.
"Well, not meaning to step on any toes...."

"I'd run off with your husband!" giggled Mariana.

Belle laughed. "It's the leather, isn't it?"

"And the face...he ages like fine wine...better and better..."

"Oh yes..." Belle sighed.

Once everyone had their plates and sat down to eat, Rumple's eyes bulged when he glanced down at his son's plate. It was piled high with food.

"Where you gonna out all that?" Adriana inquired.

"In my mouth, Rumplette. Now go eat your pizza."

"Daddy this kinda tastes like the grilled cheese you make me," Gisella said.
"Aww crap I got this stuff all over my dress!" Ellie wailed.

"Ah who cares....you still look pretty," Jonny complimented.

Bae was eating his linguini carbonara and sighing in rapture. "Papa, you gotta make this at home."

"Or I can," his mother said. "And not traumatize the kitchen..."

"I love this shrimp scampi," Adriana said, licking the butter and garlic sauce off her lips.

Belle dipped an olive into her wine and held it out to her husband.

"Thanks, dearie."

"This pizza is amazing!" Kat said. "It reminds me of the one my mom used to make when I was little."

Belle was content feeding her husband from her plate of olives and cheese while their daughter held her hands over her eyes.

"Mama, can't ya do that later....don't wanna see ya making out here..."

"Yeah reminds me of the time Henry an Emma said they caught Mommy and Daddy makin tacos only it wasn't tacos," Neal muttered.

David nearly choked on his cannoli.

Snow slapped him on the back.

"Emma! have you been telling our son wild stories again!"

"Well what the heck was I supposed to say when I come over to your house in the middle of the afternoon and you two are still in bed...with the door wide open I might add and forgot YOU were supposed to have Henry for the day!"

"I can't wait until we're alone," Belle murmured.

"Neither can I," Rumple grinned. "But first, we dance, dearie."

"Lead on, my beast."

Rumple drew Belle to her feet. "Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for a waltz!"
"This has been the perfect day..." Belle murmured, laying her head on his shoulder.

Rumple began to twirl her gently across the floor, moving slowly both in deference to his injury and also so people could see Belle's dress flowing like seawater across the patio.

Every time they danced together she always felt as if she were dancing among the clouds. Years ago when she was young and naive she dreamed of prince for her true love, now she would never settle for anything less than her beast who treated her like a princess than a prince who never could.

Rumple gazed into her eyes and a part of him marveled at how lucky he was that this fine lady had chosen him, once a mere spinner, over all the fine nobles she could have had. "I love you."

"You know I will always love you....I made a deal forever dearie...and I'm sticking with it." She caressed his cheek lovingly.

"Good, because I will never let you go," he whispered. "Even if you tried to I would come back. I would fight for you and never stop until we were together again. You belong to me Rumplestitskin Gold and don't you ever forget it."

"As if I could," he laughed huskily. "Even when we were cursed, a part of me still remembered you in my dreams."

"Mine did too..only I couldn't see you clearly. You were always in the shadows like you tried to be when I came to your castle."

She smiled at him. "And as much as I love spending today with all our friends and family...there's nothing I want more now than to be alone with you..."

"Yes, dearie, me too. Shall we tell them goodbye and go to our wedding retreat?" he asked, purring softly deep in his chest.

"Where are you taking me?"

"You'll see." He dipped and twirled her about one final time then said, "Now dearies, it's time for us to bid you arrivaderci, but please stay and enjoy the food and music, for, as they say here, it's una bella notte!"

"Have a good night!" Archie called back, winking at his brother--in-law.

Then Rumple gave one of his traditional flourishes--and a gold and purple portal appeared in front of them. He picked Belle up and jumped into it . . .and they emerged in their bedroom at Belle Reve, but the bedroom had been transformed into something like a princess' boudoir, complete with satin sheets covered in rose petals, beeswax candles scented with honey, and there was a bubbling hot tub sunk into the floor with rose petals floating on the surface as well as flat candles.

One stained glass window was thrown wide, and the coo of mourning doves could be heard as a few fluttered up to the casement and pecked at the golden grain scattered there on the sill.

Beside the tub were mounds of ultra fluffy towels in gold and pink with Mr. & Mrs. Gold upon them and an assortment of crystal vials of bath salts and bubble bath. There was also a turquoise and white bikini and a gold Speedo.

"I can't think of a more perfect place to spend our wedding night..." she whispered.

Floating on a bamboo tray were glasses of fine Moscato D'Oro and a plate of muscadine grapes and
sharp provolone cheese.

As well as a plate of boar sausage, which was a Tuscan delicacy Angelo had given to Rumple, sliced into rounds.

"Your bath awaits, mo chroi," he gestured to the tub invitingly. Then he began to shed his clothing like a king snake舍ding his skin.

She was taken back to her wedding night, and while most brides would be nervous on their wedding night, she wasn't nor did he have anything to fear from her. The bond that forged between them in this very castle so many years ago always allowed them to break through each other's barriers.

Suddenly soft music began to play, the instrumental version of Josh Groban's "In Her Eyes" which was their chosen love theme.

She came toward him in the chipped cup bikini he made for her and held out her arms. "Let's dance again, my beast."

"With pleasure," he said, then waved a hand and he was wearing his gold speedo. Then he clasped her in his arms and twirled to the music, kissing her ardently.

"And now I think I'm ready for a nice...hot...relaxing...bath....."

"You took the words right out of my mouth," Rumple said huskily and then walked down the steps into the water.

When wet, his floofy hair floated about his shoulders like a sleek cloak and he could move freely in the pool.

The massaging jets came on and the water whirled gently, causing the tray and rose petals and candles to spin around.

"I remember waking up the morning after our wedding...and you disappeared on me....and I find you in the tub...tempting me with this..." She gestured to his Speedo.

"And that was when you broke my curse," he grinned. "And together we sent the demon wailing away into the dark."

"I'll send all your demons wailing away. I know something upset you earlier...but whatever it is....let it stay in the dark tonight..."

"It will...it was a momentary memory...of something best forgotten," he murmured. Then he began to sip the wine, enjoying the luscious taste of sweet and tart on his tongue.

"May I have a sip?"

He held out the glass to her.

Her eyes met his over the rim of the glass and she took slow teasing sips.

"Minx!" he said, then he took the glass from her and kissed her. "Drink to me only with thy lips..."

She took the glass from him and set it down. "Only my lips...I thought you loved all of me..."

"Your lips so I can taste you..." he said, a wicked gleam coming into his eyes. "Would you offer your throat to the beast?"
"I would offer my body, my heart...and my soul to the beast...."

"And by doing so you have transformed the beast into the man," he giggled.

She crawled onto his lap. "And I'm ready to be taken by both...shall we go to bed, dear heart?"

"Yes, now let's get dried off," he said, and they climbed from the tub and wrapped themselves in the corresponding towels.

Rumple dried Belle off with slow gentle sweeps of the towel, rubbing her till her skin gleamed, and she did the same to him, making him glisten as the oils from the tub were rubbed into his skin. He quivered all over, tantalized by her touch.

Then he drew her to the bed, and they lay upon the rose petals, crushing them, as he made slow love to her, bringing her to the brink of ecstasy, then following her over the edge into bliss. Together they soared, one body, one heart, one soul as they celebrated a love like none other, forever and always, a tale as old as time, a beauty and her beast.
Divine Blessings and a Little Roman Vice

Chapter Summary

The Golds and friends visit the Vatican and later the younger set goes clubbing and they find Divine Blessings and A Little Roman Vice!

The next morning three sets of parents were trying to wake themselves up over numerous cups of coffee and anything sugary they could get their hands on. Archie, Marie and Mary had been taking care of the triplets while their parents spent their wedding night at Belle Reve along with their own twins but all of the babies had been impossible to get to sleep that night. The triplets, sensing their parents were gone, cried constantly and little Bobby, clever baby that he was, was not content until he got his father's ring off his finger so that he could be a kitten. He seemed happier in cat form.

"At least we only had one baby to deal with...you had five," Snow joked to the Hoppers. "And I'm still not used to my Pearl turning into a mermaid any time she comes in contact with water."

"Yeah, I thought she was gonna try to swim away from me while we were giving her a bath!" David laughed. "And she loves to splash me!"

"Rum is a lot like is father...and godfather of course," Regina chuckled. "But it's strange....when we woke up last night and heard him crying Ellie was already in the room with him and sitting on the floor rocking him back to sleep...she said she didn't even hear him cry...she felt he needed her and it woke her up."

"She and Rum have bonded more since he was born," Archie said. "But...maybe he's an empath like Adriana. You should ask Rumple once they get back."

"Honey, all of our kids have bonded in one form another. Sella used to be like that with Jonny when he was a baby and she still is," Marie pointed out. "I can't say she ever sensed he needed someone before he started crying though."

"Well he still has a bit of the outlaw in him," Robin smirked. "I see him looking around, trying to figure things out....and he seems to have a fascination with Regina's locket."

"I'm waiting for it to vanish one day and be hidden somewhere," she added. "Because I know you taught Roland and Jason how to hide things and made them promise not to tell me!" She swatted him.

"Maybe Bae and his gang did."

"Oh no, you are not blaming that on a group of teenagers. You forget, I know your handiwork since you robbed me twice!"

"Three times my queen....but stealing your heart was the best job I ever pulled."

"And one you enjoyed, right," Snow grinned. "I know I enjoyed robbing Charming."

"And I enjoyed putting you up in that tree!"
"Paid for it later though."

David winced. "You have the brooms Marie, my wife has the foot!"

Just then a portal appeared on the wall and a well rested Rumple and Belle stepped out.

The sorcerer took one look at the exhausted crew and giggled impishly. "Long night, dearies?"

If looks could have killed, the poor man would have been dead where he stood.

"Our nieces and nephew were miserable without you here and Bobby somehow managed to get yet another one of your protections off so we had an otter when we were trying to give him a bath," Archie said.

"And we put it back on thinking that was the end of it but the little sneak got it off again and turned himself into a kitten and fell asleep on my lap while Archie was singing to him," Marie showed the couple a picture her husband had taken.

"Oh, look! Rumple, isn't he adorable," Belle cooed.

"Aye but he's still a stubborn imp."

"And the girls? Anything from them?"

"No, no magical feats but quite a bit of fussing," Marie giggled.

"We think our son is an empath and he seems to be projecting his emotions onto Ellie," Regina spoke up. "Last night he woke up needing someone but before we got to him Ellie was already there. She said she felt she needed her."

"He could very well be, dearie," Rumple murmured. "We'll know more once he starts to show his auras."

Emma shuffled into the dining room with Jeff at her heels. "Somebody point us in the direction of the caffeine drip please?" she pleaded. "This kid had me running marathons to the bathroom all night and it's even worse when this lug over here has to go at the same time!"

The other men sniggered.

"Oh shut up! I'm standing there praying to the gods I don't have an accident and she's taking her sweet time!"

"I do not want to go into the differences between how men and women use the bathroom. So, what're we doing today?"

"I want to go to the Colosseum and the Pantheon again," Marie said softly.

"There are some beautiful churches here too, Archie added. "We could go to the Vatican."

"Well we don't have to do it all today," Rumple chuckled. "But it's a good start."

They planned to spend the day touring the Vatican and Angelo cooked them all a large breakfast before they headed out for the day.

"The Pulcinellos are going to be home on Saturday," he announced.
"That's wonderful! We'll finally get a chance to meet them," Belle said excitedly.

"Papa, we'd like to go to one of the clubs," Bae spoke up.

His father frowned at him from across the table. "Baelfire Gold, I dinna want ye lot comin' home drunk in t'wee hours of the morning and waking the house up...or you know what ye'll be doing..."

"Yeah, yeah, we're gonna be cleaning till this place shines like the top of the Chrysler building," his son rolled his eyes.

"Oh, that's right...they are all old enough to drink..." Belle mused.

"Not that we haven't been doin' it already," Ewan sniggered. Becky kicked his foot under the table. "What? It's true!"

Angelo laughed from his seat at the table. "You put your kids to work? The Pulcinellos should have done that more with those sons of theirs. Hellions, they were."

Adriana snorted. "Yeah you get drink an act like goofs then you'll puke your guts out in the morning. S'what the Happy Army did so I had to ground 'em."

"Ah, they were bears. What do they know about drinking?" Bobby laughed.

"We know plenty lad...and some of us knew better than to be doing it!" Major Rumple spoke up and glared at Majors Duke and Bae. "And ye were the worst of 'em!"

"I'll say! You knocked me down the stairs. Twice!" Archie snapped at Duke.

"Not to mention puking all over the floor!" Marie lamented.

Her husband groaned. "And having to clean it up. I should've made you scrub it yourself!"

"Our bears were passed out by the time Rumple brought them home. I was dreading all sorts of chaos...I have more of them than anyone else!" Belle cried.

"They caused any chaos, dearie, and they would've regretted it," the sorcerer said direly.

"Maybe I'll have them help me around here today while you're gone...if that's all right with their young masters and mistresses of course," Angelo said.

Adriana nodded. "They's Happy Bears, so they'd love to help you, Mr. Angelo. They do stuff to make people's frownies go away."

"Yeah but what can he have 'em do...he cooks," Ellie pointed out.

"Yes but I could use some helpers for the dinner to welcome back the Pulcinellos."

"We can help," Major Rumple replied. "I help the General cook." He nodded at his mistress.

"An you do a good job...you helped us decorate Papa's birthday cake."

"Daddy...can we go see that place where those people the Doctor an Donna couldn't save lived?" Jonny asked his father.

"Pompeii..."
"There was a story about a boy and a dog that died there when the volcano blew up. Mama, you an' Papa read it to me," Adriana reminded them.

"The Dog of Pompeii," Belle recalled.

"And the dog was found with a collar around his neck with a tag that read, "This dog has thrice saved his master—once from a flood, once from a fire, and the third time from robbers." But he couldn't save him from Vesuvius," Rumple said sadly.

"I cried like a baby when I saw the Fires of Pompeii," Marie said. "And Gisella and I read that book years ago."

"Yes and then I had Daddy read it but he couldn't finish it because he cried," added Gisella.

"It reminded me of a dog I saw when we were travelling. I wanted to keep it but my parents wouldn't let me. It...it was hit by a wagon a day later..."

"Together in life and death," Rumple murmured. "I've read that the dogs are still welcome in Pompeii. That among the ruins they are allowed to live, in honor of that dog and his boy."

"You should be a teacher, Rum. You'd be good at it," said Regina.

Rumple raised an eyebrow. "Never thought about that, dearie. But I taught you, didn't I?"

"Yes you did...and since we have a magic council I propose we open a magicians school!"

"Cool, Mom! Can we name it Hogwarts?" Henry exclaimed.

"You wanna get sued?" demanded Gracie.

"We can call it Storybrooke's School For the Gifted," Rumple said. "That way only those who live there can tell the true purpose of it."

"Can non mages apply?" asked Grace.

Grace was highly intelligent, at the top of her class and also a budding inventor.

"Perhaps we can have two curriculums. One for mages and one for other students with different talents," Belle suggested.

"Yeah because Gracie, Doctor Nefario an Gru have been making some really cool stuff!" Neal praised.

"And one of the classes for both curriculums can be defense against the dark arts!" Henry exclaimed eagerly.

"We'll need that," Emma mumbled. "Though it's been peaceful lately...knock on wood."

"I can help teach art students," Bae offered.

"And I can teach cooking classes," Kat volunteered.

"Daddy you can teach people to live green!" Jonny reminded his father.

"I could teach Celtic mythology," Bobby mused. "And Ewan could teach Scottish music appreciation."
"Aye..."

"Yes but NOT the kilt song!" Belle shook her finger at him.

"Or else you're fired," Bae giggled. "Hey, who's gonna be the headmaster of this school?"

Everyone looked at Rumple.

"You want ME to be the principal?" he asked, his eyes wide.

"Why not?" Regina asked. "You know how to keep order better than I do."

"Yeah, Papa. You'll have those kids shaking in their shoes with Gold's Look of Doom!"

"Aye, and the cane on the wall t' remind all the 'prentices to behave or else their ass will regret it!" Ewan smirked.

"I don't beat children!" Rumple protested. "You know that, lad."

"Aye, but it's the LEGEND that counts," Ewan replied. "Scare 'em enough an' they'll toe the line."

"Daddy, m'ready to go see all those old places," Neal said and stood up. David shook his head at him.

"You didn't ask to be excused," he scolded gently.

"Busted Nealio!" Emma taunted. Her brother blew a raspberry at her.

The toddler sulked in his seat. "Hey Pearl, you wanna go swimming?"

"She can't yet," his mother reminded him.

The next thing they knew a baby otter was trying to jump up and down in his carrier.

"See! Bobby wants to go!"

The baby otter stared at his father with wide, sad eyes.

Rumple sighed. The eyes got him every time. "Oh, all right, wee imp. I suppose we can go for a quick dip."

"I think I could use one myself...it was hot last night," Marie complained.

Suddenly they heard a crack of thunder outside.

AJ, Valora, Victoria, Pearl, and baby Rum started wailing.

Maureen, sensing her brother's distress started rubbing her arm against the side of her carrier knowing that the tiny bracelet wrapped around it was the only thing that prevented her from helping her sibling and cousins be happy again.

Jonny smiled. "You can do it, Mo..." he whispered.

Finally the baby managed to get the bracelet off and smiled triumphantly as the rainclouds vanished and the sun was shining once again.

"Daddy, look! She did it!" Gisella bragged.
The Hoppers jumped out of their seats and peeked out the window.

"Amazing," Angelo breathed.

Archie picked up his daughter and hugged her. "That's my little cricket."

"We're going to have to teach the wee tempest control sooner rather than later," Rumple said, picking up the bracelet.

"Yes, I know Rumple but she can do so much good with her gift and so can the others."

The little weather mage had fallen asleep in her father's arms, exhausted.

Now that it was once again a beautiful morning, everyone went outside to take a quick dip before they started their latest adventure in Rome.

Bobby in otter form could swim like lightning, and had fun swimming rings around his papa and sliding down the slide a zillion times.

"He's making me dizzy!" Belle laughed.

Pearl was content to have her daddy hold her while she splashed her brother with her tail.

"Okay Bobby we have to go now."

Pearl swung her tail in Rumple's direction and doused him with water in protest.

"Pearl!" Snow cried.

Then two vines from a rose bush grabbed the sorcerer as he was about to climb out of the pool and dragged him back in.

"Archibald James Hopper Junior, you let him go this minute!" Archie ordered his son.

"Whoa!" Henry and Grace stared at the babies with wide eyes.

The little otter pouted and splashed Belle.

His sisters began to scream like banshees and several of the statues in the garden were lifted off the ground and floated in the air.

"Holy crap...everybody duck!" Bae yelled, recalling the royal fits Adriana would have that included throwing everything she could around with her magic.

"Hey! None of that, imps!" their father ordered, and the statues were suddenly lowered to the ground. "I think all of you need a nap." He picked up his son, wrapped the otter pup in a towel, then used his magic to change his son back to human form. Bobby fussed, but Rumple ignored him, calmly putting the ring back and saying, "Enough, laddie. 'Tis time for you to sleep."

Marie located AJ's bracelet and slid it back onto his wrist. The vines vanished.

Rumple rocked his son back and forth, and began to hum, projecting an air of peace, calm, and sleepiness over the babies.

Archie and Marie looked at each other in horror, both of them having been attacked by vines from a rose bush by Cora years ago at Belle Reve in order to obtain Marie's blood to cast the Curse of the
Broken Hearted on them and the others.

"Archie...we can't have him doing that..."

"I didn't even know he could do that." 

"An earth mage has dominion over plants and animals," Regina spoke up. Baby Rum was sleeping in her arms, unmindful of everything. She had noticed that when her son was very tired, nothing woke him.

"Mommy, he sleeps like the dead," Roland joked. "You think maybe he's gonna be a Dracula or something?"

"No, honey. But he's a newborn and they sleep alot. He'll wake up if he's hungry or needs to be changed," his mother laughed.

"I can do it, Mommy!" Ellie offered.

"You can help me when he wakes up, okay?" Regina told her daughter, relieved that Ellie wasn't jealous of the baby. Actually she was glad her son did not seem startled by loud noises or voices, since there were so many children in her house it was never truly quiet except in the middle of the night.

"Hopefully this kid will be like that but I doubt it given its pedigree," Emma laughed.

"Yeah it's more likely to be wired and bouncing off the walls," Jeff snorted.

"It's all that caffeine you drink Emma," Snow chastised her daughter.

Rumple's humming soon put his youngest son to sleep, and then Belle came out of the pool holding Val, who was yawning, while Bae had Victoria, who was sucking a fist, her eyelids drooping.

"Yeah, that's it shut your little eyes, babydoll," Bae crooned, wrapping her in a towel and then patting his sister on the back.

Usually what one triplet did, the others imitated, almost as if they were mindlinked, which Rumple believed might very well be the case.

"I'm ready to see Rome!" Emma stood up and brushed some dirt off her oversized tank top and shorts.

"I wanna get some gelato," the elder Bobby said, licking his lips. "I heard they have this one shop with fifty flavors . . .some of them only made on feast days."

"Better have chocolate or they're gonna feel the fury," muttered Becky.

"I heard that too," Kat said. "Maybe we can stop on the way back." She eyed Emma uneasily. "Umm . . .Emma, you might wanna get changed before we leave."

"Why? What's wrong with what I go on?"

"Nothing--if we were just gonna walk around," the small girl replied. "But the Vatican-well, it's like going to a really old fashioned Catholic church. And you don't . . .umm . . .wear shorts n' tank tops there because the priests . . .well they think it's disrespectful to show a lot of skin in God's house. Least that's what my Nonna always told us."
"Are you kidding me kid? This ain't the Dark Ages! People wear shorts to Church now! It's hotter than hell and I am not runnin around all covered up like you girls are."

"I could give you one of my gauzy shawls," Belle offered. "It's so light you barely know it's there."

"Emma, we don't want to be disrespectful.....now change!" her mother said firmly.

Emma rolled her eyes. "I can't believe this! I'm being ordered around by my mother when I'm a grown woman!"

Bae gave her a commiserating glance. "Papa always says you're kid's stil you're kid, no matter how old you are."

"That's right...and I can still turn you over my knee Emma," her father said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Not while I'm preggers, Dad."

Bae smirked. "That's for sure. Or just tell him he has to catch you first."

It was with great reluctance that Emma finally went back into the house to change her clothes and moments later they were enroute to Rome, everyone excited for what adventures they would have.

They decided to start their tour at the Sistine Chapel.

"I wonder if the place looks like it did in Angels and Demons," Becky mused aloud.

"Well, they did film there, so I'd say some of it does," Kat said.

"I would love to see their archives....especially the books." Belle said softly.

"And the artwork is amazing," Bae whistled.

"Come on, hon, let's go see this place." Jeff took Emma's hand and Gracie carried Maggie but before they could enter the chapel they were stopped by the guards.

"What?"

"Signore, aspete . . ." one began, barring Jeff's way forward with an outstretched arm. "Hold it!" the guard said in English.

"What the heck's going on here? We didn't do anything, I swear...see..." Jeff turned out his pockets. The guard shook his head. "I see you are wearing a hat into the chapel. It is not permitted, signore. This is the house of God."

"Are you serious? It's just a hat! Whaddya think I'm gonna do with it...rob the place?"

"Jeff!" Emma hissed. Robin was laughing behind them.

The guard frowned. "Signore . . .it would be like . . .not taking off your shoes in a Japanese house. It is the custom, si?"

"Ummm...I dunno..never been to Japan..."

"Jeff, take the hat off! I am NOT getting kicked out of the Vatican!"

"I can hold it for you until your tour is done," the guard offered. "It looks old."
"Yeah and you better take care of it too!"

"Jeff!" Emma shook her head. "You have to excuse my husband...he's slow..."

The guard's eyes twinkled. "This is—how you say—an heirloom? I will take very good care of it, signore. My word of honor." He took the hat reverently.

"Thanks." Jeff said and saluted him. Emma lowered her head.

Oh my God....we are going to get kicked out of here thanks to this moron I married. Calgon take me away!

"Enjoy, signore." the guard said. "You might want to stop and look at the robing room in the left wing. It has many hats from previous Popes displayed. Of all kinds."

"Could do that...come on gang...let's go."

"And no snide comments Hatter or I'll be using that hat to send you to the Bog of Eternal Stench," Emma threatened.

They filed past, the other guard giving Rumple, who had on a light linen Armani suit and Ferragamo tie with gold and blue gondolas, an approving nod as he walked by. "Bellissimo, signore."

"I completely agree, bellissimo, darling," Belle murmured.

"Gratzie," Rumple said, and he gave his cane a little flourish as he walked in.

"Daddy....why're all the people on the ceiling naked?" Jonny whispered to his father. His sister giggled beside him recalling asking him the same question when they visited Rome years ago.

"It's art, Jonny."

"Yeah but if this is a holy house...an they want us to be covered, why're the people up there naked?"

Before his father could answer, the toddler walked up to their tour guide. "Ummm I got a question...we're sposta be covered up an you got naked people on the ceiling. How come that's not bad?"

"Well . . . only some of the people in the pictures are . . . naked," the guide told the child, struggling not to burst out laughing. "You see—that panel there, Michaelangelo drew Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and back then they didn't have clothes because there was no shame in being naked before God. They were innocent and pure. But then . . . do you see the next panel, where Adam and Eve are holding fig leaves in front of them? Because after they ate the forbidden fruit of the tree, they learned to be ashamed of their bodies."

"Cause they were bad? How come them gettin married was bad? Mommy and Daddy are married an that's not bad...they don't wear fig leafs."

Archie facepalmed himself. Marie giggled.

"No, marriage is a sacred thing, but in the beginning, Adam and Eve were like the bambinos over there," she pointed to the twins. "Their bodies were nothing they felt they had to hide. But once they disobeyed God, they became ashamed and uncomfortable, so then they needed clothes, because they didn't want God or anyone to see that they were imperfect. And once Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden, they needed clothes to protect them from the sun, wind, rain, and cold."
"But my daddy says nobody's perfect."

"All right Jonny, that's enough..." Marie pleaded.

"True, but in God's eyes we are all perfect. It's only people who say one is better than another. Now in the next panel you can see Noah building the ark...and all the animals waiting..."

The toddlers stared at the wall with interest. "Did they build it cause they wanted to save two of every kind from the flood an they could have babies?" Ellie asked. "That's what Mommy said."

"Yes, they did, because otherwise all the animals would have been drowned in the great flood," their tour guide answered. "Actually it wasn't just animals, but reptiles, birds, and insects too. The only creatures who didn't have to worry were the fish and sea creatures."

"Cause they can swim! Like mermaids!" Neal exclaimed.

"But they forgot the unicorns," Adriana pointed out. "And the dragons. Because the unicorns were playing and they were afraid the dragons would burn the Ark down."

"You mean they died?" Ellie asked sadly. "That's mean!"

"Then they shoulda been 'rrested for animal cruelty," Maggie added.

"No, they didn't die," Adriana said. "God sent them to another world through a portal."

Rumple almost passed out. "Adriana, dearie, remember we talked about real and make believe?"

"All those animals on a boat making babies...ummm...wouldn't it get crowded?"

Emma gaped at her daughter. "Margaret Eva Hatter!"

"I think some of 'em took longer than forty days to have a baby," Adriana said. "An elephant takes two years to have one. Aren'tcha glad you're not an elephant, Emma?"

"Oh my God yes! I wouldn't be able to handle it that long!"

"I'm glad I'm a boy," Neal put in. "We don't gotta worry about that part."

"I thank God for that everyday, kiddo," Bae chuckled.

"So do I," Andi retorted. "Because if men had babies we'd of died out after you had the first one!"

"Because they can be such babies, even when they're sick," Snow smirked at her husband.

"I am not!"

"Daddy, last time you caught a cold you told Mommy you were dying and had to stay home from work to get better," his son informed him.

"And expected ME to wait on him hand and foot...while pregnant I might add."

"They're never gonna let us in here again, Gina. Archie's kid gives them the third degree about nudity on the ceiling and now we're talking about men having babies," Robin groaned.

"Hey Daddy...didn'cha rob a church once?" Jason asked.

Robin gulped nervously. "It...it was an accident...I didn't know it was a church...usually they have
some sign on the door...

"I hope ya put it back. otherwise God's gonna send his angels to arrest ya," Maggie put in. "They're the God Squad."

"Ummm...no....I spent it...."

"You'd better make a donation then," the little girl advised. "Otherwise the judges in heaven are gonna throw the book at ya."

"Daddy took that gold cause we were broke an needed food...an why'd a church have gold anyway. They're supposed to take a vow of poorness or something, right?" Roland asked their guide.

"Umm . . .yes, that's true," the tour guide said, gaping at them.

"The judge ain't throwin' the book at him, Maggie," Adriana put in. "Not if he's got a good lawyer."

"There are no good lawyers," a boy spoke up. "They're all cheats who're goin' to hell."

"Tommy!" gasped his mother.

"Hey! My papa's a lawyer and he ain't goin' to hell!" Adriana glared at him. "He helped lotsa people and he throws crooks in jail like Keith who raped Barbara Allen!"

"Gaston's burnin in hell for what he did to my mommy!" Gisella snarled.

"Sella!" her parents exclaimed.

"Well he is."

"Adriana, dearie!" Rumple groaned.

"My mom says they oughta put all the lawyers in a pool and see who floats back up...the one who tells the biggest bullcrap," said another child and laughed. "Bet your dad would!"

"Say that again 'bout my papa and I'll rearrange your face!" Adriana growled. "Then we'll see how good you talk!"

"Adriana...not in here! This is a house of God!" Belle snapped.

"Well, they--" she pointed to the two other children. "ain't bein' very Godly, Mama! Jesus said "do unto others" an' they're bein' nasty!"

"Thomas Alan Monroe, you apologize this instant!" his mother snapped. "Please forgive him, sir. I've just gone through a divorce and his dad is very bitter . . ." she said to Rumple. "Is it true you got a rapist put away?"

"Two," Marie answered. Archie put his arm around her shoulders when he noticed her shiver slightly.

"It is, dearie," Rumple replied. "For life. I'm a prosecutor."

"Then I'd like to shake your hand," the woman said, holding her hand out.

Rumple shook it firmly. "Pleased to meet you. I'm Mr. Gold."
Belle beamed with pride. Even though he was no longer the Dark One, he certainly proved he was still a force to be reckoned with and his best demonstrations of it had been in court where he won justice for those he defended...Regina, her sister and Barbara Allen.

The woman nudged her son, "Thomas, what do you say?"

The boy looked at his feet and mumbled, "Sorry, Mr. Gold."

"You're forgiven, lad. Next time, don't jump to conclusions."

"Huh? What's a--conclusion?"

"He means don't listen to your father," his mother sighed.

Several other women were now giving Gold approving glances.

"Do you handle patent fraud? My boyfriend stole my computer program for a new video game."

"Are you taking new clients?"

"How much do you charge for a consultation?"

"Err . . . " Gold coughed, alarmed now as he was surrounded by several women.

"Ladies, he's on vacation," Belle informed them. "But here's his business card." She dug into her purse and handed out several of them.

Marie laughed beside her. "Wonder if they've seen his video."

One of the women smirked when she approached him. "I've been wanting to meet the star of my favorite video."

"Excuse me?" Rumple stammered. Oh . . . my . . . GOD! he thought in horror.

"I knew I recognized you...without that little gold number...."

Rumple felt himself blush sharply. "Umm . . . that wasn't MY idea . . . my friends played a joke on me for my birthday . . . I can't believe you actually remember . . ."

"How could I forget...you sexy thing..."

Belle's hands longed to have her broom in them to teach this hussy a lesson.

"Ma'am . . . while I'm flattered . . . I'm also married with children." He gestured to his triplets and Adriana and Belle.

"So? I can still look. Not against the law."

"Look with your eyes, not with your hands," he said quietly. He could kill the Mad Crew right about now.

"Oh, fine!" she huffed and walked away.

"Is there a library here?" Belle asked their guide.

"Yes. The Vat is in the palace. It's a research library and is open to any who display certification for research on law, philosophy, theology, history, and science."
She was a grade school and middle school teacher and didn't think she had the qualifications to gain access.

"Is this for a course? Or would you like to just look around?"

"I would love to look around."

"You would have to make an appointment, as space is very limited. Since it's a manuscript library, only 200 scholars are permitted within the rooms at a time."

"That's so the manuscripts, some of which are hundreds of years old, don't become damaged by too many people handling them or breathing and oxygenizing the illuminations and artwork on some of the texts."

"Where can I make an appointment?"

"I can give you a pamphlet after the tour is over here. It will tell you everything you need to know."

"Thank you. I appreciate it."

"You are most welcome," the tour guide beamed.

"The guide told me you have a collection of hats. May we see them?" asked Jeff.

"Now don't be rushing the poor woman along Hatter!" Emma scolded.

"Daddy don't try em on like you did at that other place an got kicked out," Maggie warned.

"Thanks Mags!"

Now all eyes were on the portal jumper.

"I just tried a hat from a wax dummy on!"

"The hats in the wardrobe room are behind glass cases," the tour guide remarked.

"Do you have the robes too?" Belle inquired.

"Yes we have robes from several different Popes over the centuries."

"How bout the bad Borgia guy?" Jonny asked.

"Yes," she responded.

They were having a wonderful time touring the Vatican and as they were leaving the chapel the kids wanted a picture with the guards.

"We're allowed to do that aren't we?" Adriana asked her mother.

"Yes, if they don't mind."

Adriana walked up to one of them and imitating Puss In Boots from Shrek she gave them the sad kitty look. "Can we get our picture taken with you?"

The other children followed suit.

"Pleeeaaasse," they chorused.
Their parents shook their heads and laughed.

"Of course you may, bambinas."

The children were all smiles as they posed for their pictures with the guards while their parents took pictures with their phones. "Now what do you say to the nice men?" Belle asked them.

"Thank you!"

Their next stop was St. Peter's Basillica.

"Mama, is this where all the people come when they wanna see the new Pope?" Adriana asked.

"Yes, sweetie."

"You think we're gonna see him?"

"I don't know."

"On Sundays you could. We almost did but we didn't get here early enough, did we?" Archie asked his wife. Marie shook her head.

"I was a bit disappointed that we didn't because we heard he sometimes comes out and blesses the crowd."

Bae studied the statuary and artwork on the walls and ceilings in fascination, inspired to do some of his own once he got back to the villa. Artists paid homage to their own gods in their world but he'd never been inspired to recreate their likenesses on canvas as he was with the religious figures in this world. He was no Michaelangelo but every stroke of his brush or pencil was made from the heart and in his mind that was what made one truly an artist.

"I wanna go up on the roof!" Henry cried.

"Well I'm gonna be taking the elevator kid because that's too long of a walk for me and the baby," Emma insisted.

"You can go in the elevator. We're gonna walk." Jeff bragged.

Emma grinned at her husband. "You'll be whining halfway through and begging to come on the elevator with me."

"Maybe you should take the elevator Dad," Gracie spoke up.

Jeff frowned at his daughter. "Oh ye of little faith!"

"You guys can go to the roof. We're going to the treasury," Robin announced.

Rumple laughed. "Hands off the merchandise, dearie."

"Look, I may have robbed a church by accident once and I'm sure as hell not gonna do it again since I had some bad karma follow me for years Afterwards!"

"Where would you like to go, Belle?" Rumple asked his wife.

She thought for a moment. "I'd like to see the tombs of the previous Popes."
"All right. Bae, are you and your friends going to be here or do you want to go with one of the other groups?"

"Ummm...Papa...I think we're gonna go into town if you don't mind. Bobby's been whining he wants some gelato."

"All right. But be back at the villa for supper," Rumple agreed.

"We will."

"Do you have money?"

"Yeah...but if you're handing out..." Bae joked and held out his hand.

"Gimme monnneyyyy!" Becky sang.

"Here. Now don't spend it all in one place." He handed them all several Euros.

Their eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets. He'd given them at least a thousand dollars.

"Better hide that good mate or somebody's gonna try to steal it!" Ewan cautioned.

"We'll see you later, Papa," Bae called out as they were leaving.

"Be careful!" Belle warned.

"Dearie, they'll be fine. If I know one thing, I know our son has a good head on his shoulders," Rumple reassured her. "And they've survived worse than walking about a strange town."

"I know."

"Papa, the....the Popes aren't gonna pop put and scare us like those kids at that house we saw on Halloween, are they?"

"No, that was a pretend thing, Adriana. But this--this is real and no ghost will haunt you here. Dead is dead, dearie, and the Popes are in heaven now with Jesus." Gold explained. "All that's here are their remains, which are holy."

Belle took her daughter's hand and held it while they passed each tomb. "Papa, do you ever wish you woulda seen one of them?"

Belle smiled. "I know I would have loved to have met a few of them and would have asked them so many questions, especially St. Peter."

"Well, I might have . . . though I don't think they would've wanted to meet me," Rumple said softly, thinking of when he was cursed.

Adriana and her mother both scowled at him. "Why not? You're not bad Papa and maybe they coulda helped you break your curse early!" Adriana argued.

"And I don't want to hear that talk again," Belle added.

"All right, perhaps I was wrong," Rumple conceded. "Sometimes I think if I had met you sooner, Belle, my curse would have been broken before Cora ever cast hers."
"Papa...I feel something in here...kinda like...peaceful. Do you feel it?"

Rumple cocked his head and listened, but not with his ears, with his heart and his magical senses.

Slowly, he nodded, as a feeling of extreme peace and goodwill flowed over him, such as he had
never felt before, except perhaps as a baby long long ago in his mother's arms.

"Maybe that's them telling you they woulda wanted to meet you too," Adriana suggested.

His eyes narrowed, as his magical Sight caught a rainbowed aura surrounding the dead Popes
cases, all blue, gold, rose, and purple running in rivulets all over the gold cased caskets and
spreading over the room. He put a hand to his eyes to shield them from the brilliance.

"Rumple, what is it?" Belle asked.

"Mama, they're blessing Papa!" Adriana cried excitedly.

"Belle . . . the light . . . the aura . . . it's everywhere in this room . . . I can feel it . . . like sunlight on me . . . ." Rumple declared in hushed tones of awe and wonder. He held up a hand, which was bathed in
rainbowed light that only a mage accustomed to Seeing into the astral would be able to distinguish.

Again the feeling of welcome and peace flowed over him, followed by a soothing wave of
belonging.

Belle moved closer to him and wrapped her arms around his waist. "There...you see...they've
accepted you as you are, as you were...like I have."

Rumple put his head on her shoulder, squinting. "I . . . don't understand . . . I'm a white mage now
but . . . the demon left his mark on me . . . yet they say . . . I belong . . ."

"They want to make you happy Papa. Let them," Adriana advised. "And maybe they'll talk to
you..."

As if in a daze, Rumple walked forward and put his hands just above the casket and let the brilliant
aura run over him again. This time he heard . . . words . . . or perhaps they were feelings . . . and he
listened hard . . .

. . . what's important is not that you fall . . . but that you rise again stronger than before . . . out of
darkness comes light . . . if your heart is filled with love . . . you shall know Grace . . .

"Mama...they're talking..." Adriana whispered.

it brought tears to Belle's eyes to see her husband so filled with joy, his confidence restored with the
blessing of those closest to God and if they could believe in him, he could believe in himself.

. . . to forgive is divine . . . and if you repent all shall be forgiven . . .

"Even me?" Rumple hissed.

Yes . . . you love, therefore you are loved . . .

This time the aura flared like a star gone nova and for an instant a shadowy figure in robes and a
miter appeared.

"Peace be upon you, Rumplestiltskin Gold."
Then it was gone, as if it had never been at all. But the overwhelming feeling of love lingered in the room, along with the aroma of fresh baked bread and fresh cut flowers.

"Papa, who was that? Was it St. Peter?"

"It was . . .one of the great ones . . .a messenger . . ." Rumple said, awed. "It wished me peace and love."

"Thank you," Belle whispered to St. Peter's tomb.

Rumple was smiling now. "Come, let's move on, dearies. Although, perhaps Gina needs to visit here as well."

"That's a wonderful idea!" Belle said. They encountered the Hoods when they came out.

"Rumple, you're.....practically glowing..." Regina murmured. "Did you feel something in there?"

He nodded. "You need to go there, Gina. The whole room . . .it's filled with the most amazing aura . . .and a Light One visted me . . ."

"I don't know if he would visit me..."

"Honey, you won't know unless you try," Robin encouraged, knowing his wife often struggled with her own confidence issues because of her troubled past.

"Go. I didn't think so either . . ." Rumple urged. "The worst that can happen is nothing, dearie. But if a messenger came to me . . ."

"I'll try," she said softly and entered the vault, expecting that she would be unworthy of such a blessing.

Robin held her hand as they descended into the vault. "Do you feel anything honey?"

"Rumple was right. I DO feel...a presence here. Or it was here," she frowned.

Then she squinted as a rose gold aura was coming from the casket, almost like the sun rising. "Oh!"

She bowed her head.

"See Rum....they're gonna bless Mommy!" Ellie cooed to her baby brother.

The baby began cooing and holding his hands out, as if he was trying to hold the motes of sparkling lights he could see with his magical Sight.

The aura spread around the room and a feeling of utter delight and peace stirred the air around them, like a caress it ruffled the heads of the children and their parents.

Regina raised her head, weeping softly. "Even after everything I've done....you think me worthy..."

"Because they see what we do, my queen," Robin murmured.

. . .to forgive is divine, and you are forgiven your sins, child . . .out of the shadows into the light . . ."Never again will I surrender myself to darkness...," she vowed.

If the Evil Queen and the Dark One can be redeemed, so can others...if they have the desire to, she thought.

The redeemed are thrice blessed . . .God loves all his children . . .even those who stray . . .if they ask . . .
Once more there was a swift surge of energy, as if the light of a thousands suns was suddenly in the room.

Then a figure appeared against the dazzling brightness and laid a hand upon Regina's head. "Go with the grace of God, Regina Mills."
"Mommy...didja see that! Lookit Rum!" Ellie exclaimed.
"I didn't see anything," said Jason.
Regina crossed herself. "Thank you....thank you so much," she sobbed.

The baby was laughing, waving his arms excitedly, then suddenly he rose up out of his carrier, and hovered above it, babbling joyfully.
"Whoa! He flies like Superman!" Roland gasped.
"Rum...oh my...come down before you fall!" Regina cried and tried to reach for him.
"I've seen lots of things fly but I've never seen a baby fly...and now my baby flies!" Robin stared at his son in amazement.

"We're going to have to keep that under control, sweetheart. What other surprises are you going to have in store for me?"

Tired from his surfeit of magic and happiness, Rum yawned and rubbed his eyes. Then they closed and he was asleep, still smiling.

"That was so cool! We gotta tell Mister Rumple!" Ellie was practically jumping up and down by the time they emerged from the vault.

They met up with the others in the square. "Mister Rumple guess what...Rum can fly like Superman!" Ellie announced.

"Really, dearie? When did this happen?"

"In the vault...after....oh Rumple...you were right....they blessed me!" the former queen sobbed joyfully.

"I know. I can See it," Rumple said, and embraced her.

"That is so cool! Why's he sleepin? It wear him out?" Maggie asked.

"Yes, it would at this age," the elder magician said, gently peering at his slumbering namesake. "Oh yes . . .his gifts run to Air and Transformation . . . and Spirit...like my Adriana . . .he's an Empath."

"I thought so, especially since he bonded with Ellie so quickly."

"Uh-huh and I'm gonna take real good care of him til me and Jonny have lotsa kids," Ellie declared.

"Umm...Ellie, we gotta get married first," Jonny pointed out.

"Can we get married when we's sixteen? Mommy said they did that in our old world."

"NO!" two sets of parents shouted.

Their yelling woke Rum, who was cranky, and howled angrily.

"Oh dearie dearie dear," Rumple shook his head. "C'mere, little sprite." He picked up the wailing
infant from the carrier and walked away from the others, crooning softly in Gaelic to the upset baby.

Rum's howls faded as he promptly fell back to sleep, feeling the soothing aura of peace that still clung to his elder, sucking on a fist while Rumple patted his bottom.

"You'll wait until you're twenty-one and not before. Do I make myself clear, John Wayne Hopper?" Archie demanded of his son.

'Ummm...yeah..."

"That goes for you too, Ellie," Robin said to his daughter.

"Sorry Rum, didn't mean to wake you up. You forgive me, right?" Ellie asked her brother.

"We're lucky mine didn't wake up or we would've had utter mayhem on our hands," Belle said.

Rum sniffed and yawned, snuggling into Rumple's shoulder.

"That's for sure," Rumple agreed. "There now, sprite, go play in dreamland."

"M'getting hungry," Neal grumbled.

"My legs are killing me...this kid needs to pop soon," Emma groaned.

"Papa, can we get pizza?" Adriana begged.

"Yeah real Italian pizza!" Henry was nearly drooling at the thought.

"I see a pizzeria!" Grace cried and pointed.

"Daddy, that's the same one we ate at when we came here!" Gisella exclaimed.

"Oh, yes it is. I wonder if Paolo is still working there."

"C'mon, let's go!" Henry cried, dragging Emma across the street. "You can sit down there, Mom."

They all tramped across the street to the pizzeria, Rumple still holding the sleeping baby Rum in his arms, for the child was so peaceful he hated to disturb him.

"Thank God I saved some room this morning...." David whispered to Snow. "Everything smells so good in here."

"You need to try their mozzarella sticks. They're fantastic and homemade..." Marie suggested.

"Yeah just don't be making gooey eyes at each other while eating them....Mommy and Daddy did that and some guy came up to us and told them to get a room," Gisella muttered while her parents blushed.

"And we're gonna need a LOT of pizza so I hope they got enough ovens!" Jeff laughed.

"And garlic bread," Henry reminded them.

"And lots of forks and knives," Gisella said. "Because that's how they eat pizza here."

"Huh? Why?" he brother asked her.

"Because the pizza's so thin and hot you'll burn your fingers trying to pick it up," she replied. "And
"We...I...had to learn that the hard way," added Marie. "My fingers were sore for hours afterwards."

"So where do you think my grandson and his cronies are?" Maurice asked his son in law.

"Probably eating gelato somewhere by the Spanish Steps," Rumple remarked.

"I'm having a wonderful time and I do appreciate you all inviting us," Penelope said, including Kyria.

"We're happy to have you with us," Belle said, smiling.

"The news from home is a bit better...but we still have a long way to go."

"Changes start small and grow slowly," Rumple added. He was cradling Rum in one arm and sipping some Pellegrino Italian soda with his other hand.

All of the babies stared at the food with interest. David was holding Pearl in his arms while the Gold triplets and Hopper twins were in their carriers and the staff had been kind enough to give them another small table to set them on so that the babies could see their family members and Roland, Jason and Neal, deciding to be a bit mischievous started teasing them while they ate.

"Betcha wish you could eat this, huh?" Roland asked. Valora and Victoria’s eyes narrowed to slits. Little Bobby yawned. Neal took his time eating a piece of garlic bread while his sister glared at him.

"Keep it up Nealio and she'll find a way to get even," Emma warned.

"What's she gonna do...she's a baby."

Pearl dipped her fingers in the garlic sauce beside her father while he was holding her and threw some at Neal.

"Warned ya!" Emma snickered.

"Aww shuddup!" Neal whined while his mother wiped the sauce off his face and shirt with some napkins. Pearl wore a smirk of satisfaction as did the other babies. Belle, Regina and Snow took the triplets out of their carriers to give them the bottles they’d packed while Archie and Marie gave the twins theirs but all of them kept trying to grab at what was on the table. Maureen managed to get her hands on her father’s slice of pizza and mashed sauce and cheese through her fingers then patted his cheek, splattering sauce and cheese all over him. Henry and Gracie laughed and snapped a picture. Not wanting too be outdone by his sister, AJ imitated her and splattered sauce and cheese all over his mother.

Bobby tried to grab at the bottle of beer sitting in front of Jeff. “Oh no, no sweetie. You can’t have that!” Belle cried. Jeff and Emma started laughing.

“Kid knows where the good stuff is.”

“Yes, well my son is not going to be drinkin’.” Rumple said and moved the bottle away from the infant.

Valora reached one of Snow’s cheese sticks and was about to put it in her mouth when she stopped her. “No, no honey…”

Regina was having an equally difficult time trying to keep Victoria from snatching one of her sticks.
of garlic bread. “I think these ones have inherited your love of food, Rumple.”

“Uh-huh,” Adriana agreed. “Valora and Victoria sometimes have to be in the kitchen with Papa n’me while we cook but Bobby not so much. He just wants to go outside.”

“Cause he’s like me an AJ,” Jonny said.

After lunch they spent the rest of the afternoon touring the rest of the museums around the Vatican and Belle made an appointment to visit the library later on in the week. Angelo called Rumple and informed him that the Pulcinellos would sometimes go to St. Peter’s square on Sunday for Mass and also to try to see the Pope. Everyone agreed that they would attend at least one Mass before they left Italy.

When they returned to the villa later on that evening Angelo had a grand feast waiting for them and was pleased to report that the Happy Army had been well behaved. Rumple kept checking his phone for messages from Bae. Bae’s last update was from the cafe where they enjoyed the gelato and were going to try to find an art supply shop so that Bae could stock up on supplies.

Later on that evening they decided to visit one of the clubs and to their surprise no one carded them as they would have in one of the clubs in the States. The group claimed a table near the bar and ordered their drinks. After having one beer Becky stood up. “C’mon, I wanna dance!”

“Go on. We’ll join ya in a bit,” Ewan said. The boys stayed at the table having another drink while the girls got up and danced. A short time later two women approached the table and slid into the booth beside Bae and Ewan. “You are from America, si?”

“Ummm…yeah…” Bae answered.

“What is your name, caro?”

“Ummm…Baelfire.”

“And what is yours, caro?” the other woman asked Ewan.

“Ummm…Ewan…ahh…girls…ye…ye see we’re not here alone…”

“Ohhhh that accent. You are from Scotland like Jamie in Outlander?”

“Ummm…yeah…”

Bae began coughing nervously when he felt one of the girls put her hand on his leg under the table. “Ummmm…excuse me but…”

“Shite!” Ewan cried and jumped up. “Lassie what d’ye think ye’re doin under there!”

“Is it true you wear nothing beneath kilts?”

“Never ye mind!”

Bobby spit out his beer. “Oh my God Ewan they’re….!”

“We know!” Bae cried. “Hey lady, watch where you’re puttin the hands!”

“We can make your night a bit more interesting, caro,” one of the women promised.

“Yeah well, we’re not interested!”
“There a problem here?” a tall Italian man demanded as he approached the table. “You pay,” he ordered the boys.

“Like hell!” Bae snarled and glared at him. “We came here to have a good time not get picked up by a bunch of hookers!”

The man grabbed his collar and pulled him up. Ewan grabbed a beer bottle off the table and smashed it against the side of the man’s head. “Fury, Shad, Wraith! Let’s get the hell outta here!” he yelled over at the girls.

The girls, seeing their boyfriends were in trouble sprung into action. Kat grabbed a hot pizza off one of the other tables and threw it at the man. It struck him in the face and stunned him long enough to drop Bae. Bobby punched him in the face and tackled him to the ground. One of the girls grabbed Becky by the hair and Andi tackled her to the ground while Kat held the other off with her cooking spoon.

“Think about coming any closer skank and you’re gonna find I don’t just use this for cooking!” she snarled in Italian.

The woman advanced toward her, her fingers curled into claws. Kat swung her spoon and smacked the woman’s hand. She sank to her knees moaning in pain and cursed at Kat while the bouncers approached the table and hauled the women and their companion out. Several of the patrons filmed the incident on their phones.

"We've been having some trouble with that crew," one of them said.

"Yeah...well, we better get going." Bae said. The last thing they needed was having to spend another few hours in a police station having to defend themselves but fortunately a few of the patrons came to their defense and explained how the older man provoked the boys into the fight. They caught a taxi back to the villa.

Archie and Rumple were sitting in the living room reading books when they walked in. Rumple took in his son's dishevelled appearance and frowned.

"Baelfire Gold! What trouble did ye get into now?"

"Papa, please let us explain before you bite my head off," the teenager pleaded and he, Bobby and Ewan began to recount the incident at the bar with the girls adding the rest of the details. The sorcerer shook his head.

"I'll be putting stronger wards on ye next time," he sighed.

"So we're not in trouble?"

"I just don't want you getting in any more fights. This is a strange country and can be as dangerous as any other realm we encounter so I cannot beg you enough....please be more careful!"

"I will Papa. We all will."

"Go on to bed," Rumple murmured. The exhausted teenagers filed up the stairs and went to bed. Archie lowered the book he was reading and frowned at his brother-in-law.

"Trouble seems to find us anywhere we go, doesn't it?"

"It worries me more when our kids find it," Rumple said.
"I know. All we can do is try to protect them the best we can. Hopefully we won't have any more craziness on this vacation."

They could hope all they wanted but they were learning quickly that there were just as many if not more unexpected surprises outside their safe haven. It had been a day of divine blessings with a little bit of vice and they wondered what awaited them tomorrow.
A City Lost, A City of Love and Pet Rescue Americana

Chapter Summary

The families visit the lost city of Pompeii and have some unexpected encounters, foil a pack of con artists at the Colosseum, spend a wonderful day in Venice, the children plot to rescue a group of stray animals in the city and a sweet proposal is made.

Before they travelled to Pompeii and Venice, the group decided to explore the Pantheon and the Colosseum, two of Archie and Marie's favorite stops on their honeymoon five years earlier. There was already a large line when they arrived and outside a group of men dressed as gladiators were offering to pose for pictures with tourists and a group of young women were more than happy to oblige them.

“That sounds like fun,” Emma said and just as she was about to approach the gladiators, Neal tugged on her arm and tried to pull her back.

“You wanna go too, Nealio?” she asked him. He shook his head.

“You don’t wanna go near those guys, Emma. They’re not real gladiators,” he said.

“I know that, little brother. They're just actors hired by the site to give it an ancient Roman flair.”

“They’re not actors neither...they’re runnin a scam. Ya know….tryin to hustle ya outta your money.”

Emma frowned knowing that her brother wouldn’t make such a statement unless he knew it to be true and had seen the truth in their souls.

“Neal’s right Mommy,” Maggie spoke up. “I’m gettin’ that vibe Daddy calls em...ya know...these guys are gonna take your money when ya pose with ’em then they’re gonna try an pick your pocket. Somebody oughta ‘rrest ’em and throw ‘em in jail!”

The Scorpions looked at each other and smirked. All of them were expert pickpockets and if anyone knew how to outsmart pickpockets and thieves, it was them. Robin was also smiling.
Rumple groaned. “Don’t even think about it, dearies!”

“Why not, Rumple? If they’re scamming people, they deserve to be in jail,” Archie frowned at his brother-in-law. “The police obviously aren’t aware of it or they would’ve stepped in by now.”

“Can we no’ go one place without getting into trouble?”

“Trouble seems to find us, Rumple but I would feel terrible if we didn’t teach those charlatans a lesson,” Regina said. “They seem to prey on women the most.”

“Because they think a woman can’t outsmart them. Well, they’d find out quickly they can’t outsmart us, right ladies?” Belle asked her friends.

“Oh I would love to have my broom right now,” Marie murmured.

“We can’t use them here. Besides, I have my feet,” Snow reminded them. David winced, recalling the time his wife injured him with her foot before they were married and she’d even shot him with an arrow in the backside for his part in the ‘Manhood Intervention’. He avoided invoking her wrath as much as necessary for that purpose. Snow could be sweet and sassy, especially when crossed.

“If they’re targeting women, they won’t try their scam on you if they see you with us,” Archie pointed out.

Marie laughed wickedly.

“Are you suggesting we set a trap for them with ourselves as the bait?”

He sighed. “I don’t like thinking like this. It’s something my parents would’ve done.”

"Honey, I know you. You would beat yourself up thinking we could've done something and didn't," Marie argued.

"You would do the same Rumplestiltskin," Belle reminded her husband.
He sighed. "You're right, dearie."

They decided that they would split up before they got in line to go into the Colosseum, the men would stay with the children while the women stayed in their own group. As the women were walking past the fake gladiators one of them smiled.

"Would you like your picture taken with us ladies? Only five euros."

"Oh, what the hell. C'mon Gina! Always wanted to meet a gladiator!" Emma said, looking forward to seeing the looks on the fake gladiators' faces when they found out they were going to be outconned.

The men watched closely while the women posed for the picture, all of them seething when they noticed two of the gladiators snatching the ladies’ wallets out of their purses and hiding them. They waited until the pictures were done before they approached.

“My wife’s wallet. Give it back. Now!” Rumple said coldly, his hands gripping the handle of his cane so tightly that they were turning white.

“Ummm….excuse me? Are you accusing us of stealing?”

“That is exactly what we’re doing. I stood there and watched you take my wife’s wallet out of her purse,” Archie added, glaring daggers at them.

"Our wives too,” Robin, Jeff and David were wishing they were back in ancient Rome, eager to feed this pack of lowlifes to the lions.

"You ignorant American...." one of them growled, his fist raised in defiance.

"Hey you....don't you raise your fist to my papa or we're gonna beat ya with our canes a doom!" Adriana threatened.

A small group gathered upon overhearing the dispute between the gladiators and the men and among the spectators were the women that had their pictures taken earlier, all of them now panicking and
frantically searching their bags.

“They robbed us too!” cried an angry woman in French.

“I’m calling the police!” another said. “Nobody rips me off! You either give it back or I’m gonna go ancient Rome on your ass!”

The Scorpions tittered.

“You’re under arrest. Git up against the wall and spread em!” yelled Maggie.

“I’m gonna lasso ‘em!” Jonny cried excitedly.

“Oh no you’re not John Wayne Hopper!” his father admonished and pulled his son back.

“I’m gonna kick ‘em in the balls!”

“Eleanor May!” Regina exclaimed.

“Mommy you an Miss Snow say that’s the best place to aim cause they cry like babies.”

“Oh yes they do, don’t they Belle?” Marie asked her sister when the two of them assaulted a cruel baker in their village with brooms, hitting him in said sensitive area. It was during this incident that the legend of the infamous Bordreaux Broom was born.

“Yeah well I’d cry like a baby cause that really hurts!” Jason groaned. “And you hit me there once!” he reminded Ellie.

“Was an accident. Was tryin to hit ya somewhere else. Not my fault. Sides, we was playin Doctor Dodgeball an he fixed ya up so quit whining!”
“Yeah well let somebody hit you there and see how YOU like it!” Roland retorted.

“I don’t have balls, duh!”

Henry was laughing so hard he was having trouble keeping his camera straight.

“And welcome to another episode of Kids Say The Darndest Things!” Grace narrated on her phone. Several people in the crowd were laughing along with them until two police officers approached.

“What’s going on here?” one of them asked.

“Officers, these men have been posing as gladiators trying to get women to pose for a picture with them while they rob them. They’ve robbed our wives and several other women and we’ve all witnessed it,” Rumple explained. “Taking their wallets...and I believe other items as well.”

The officers immediately rounded up the gang of con artists.

“You better search ‘em good!” Maggie reminded them. “Prolly got stuff hidden in their underwear.”

The officers were trying not to laugh while they searched, finding wallets, a few cellphones, IPods, iPod Touches and cash. A few other officers arrived a short time later to take them to the station and many of the items were returned to their owners but some were not.

“Thank you for alerting us to this situation Signore Gold. We’ll be sure to keep an eye out in case there are others around.”

“Before you go, may we ladies have a picture with you?” Emma asked them with a grin. Both officers were young and very good looking.

“Of course, signora.”

As the women posed with the officers, they couldn’t help being amused seeing the jealous looks on their husbands’ faces.
“Ohhh I’m going to have a lot of making up to do for this one, Emma…” Regina purred.

“I’m looking forward to it,” Marie murmured.

“So am I,” agreed Belle with a dreamy smile, anticipating what her husband had in store for her.

Penelope laughed. “Oh my...is it wrong for me to say how cute Maurice looks when he’s jealous?”

“Not all Penny, not at all,” Snow giggled.

“Was that really necessary?” David groused to Snow.

“Oh hush! I’ll make it up to you later!”

Neal rolled his eyes. “Didn’t wanna hear that Mommy!” he complained.

“You better get used to it Neal,” Gisella advised. “Just make sure you don’t catch them making out.”

“Gisella!” her parents gasped.

“What? How many times did I catch you?”

“Never mind!” Marie cried.

Rumple wanted to book a private tour for them but hadn’t gotten a reservation in soon enough. Instead they were in with a larger group that would tour the Colosseum, the Forum and Palatine Hill. As they were walking through the site, they listened to the tour guide point out some of the highlights of the structure.

“It could hold over 50,000 people, segregated by class. The patricians would sit here,” he explained, pointing to the lower tiers. “And the common people would sit there.” He pointed to the upper tiers.
“The nosebleed section,” Ewan muttered.

“Some of the gladiators were considered the sports heroes of the day,” the guide went on. Some of the women in the group giggled.

“Among other things,” one of them said.

“There was a documentary I saw on the History channel once where women used to use gladiator sweat in beauty rituals,” Becky spoke up. Kat snickered beside her.

Grace made a face. “Gross! I wouldn’t want some guy’s BO on my face!”

“Did they really kill animals for fun?” Jonny demanded. “That’s mean!”

“Ummm….yes…they did consider it their entertainment…” the guide said nervously.

“Yeah well anybody who hurts an kills animals for fun oughta be locked up an the key thrown away!” Adriana cried.

“They killed people too!” Neal exclaimed. “Did they eat ‘em too?”

“No…”

“Mommy I don’t like this place….” Maggie whimpered.

“Me neither,” her uncle agreed.

As they had on Halloween night the previous year, all the mages could sense there were tormented souls who still haunted the ancient site.
"Papa, can you make the ghosts happy so they don't haunt this place anymore?" Adriana asked her father.

He shook his head. "I can't use magic here dearie. It's too risky."

He also suspected no amount of magic he could use would ease the suffering of those souls. The children stayed close to their parents until they exited the Colosseum and continued on to the Forum.

“Mommy, is this their office like yours?” Ellie asked her mother.

“Yes, it is, honey only Rome had senators like we do in the States and the emperors relied on them to help them make important decisions.”

“But Mommy, why did they kill Caesar? Didn’t they like him?”

Regina pondered that question for a moment. Ellie had inherited her mother’s passion for history and she was always eager to learn about the histories both of this world and their own. She’d tried to avoid teaching her daughter some of the darkest moments in history but Ellie had a way of finding things out on her own.

“Well ummm….they thought Caesar was not acting in the best interests of the people…”

“Was too busy in Cleopatra’s bed,” her husband chuckled from behind her. Regina spun around and glared at him. “Robin!”

“Well he does have a point,” David defended.

“When I want YOUR opinion, shepherd, I’ll ask for it!” Regina snapped.

“And she doesn’t need to know things like that now!” Snow kicked her husband’s foot. “Men!”

“So why didn’t they kick him out ‘stead of killing him?” Ellie asked.
“Yeah, ‘cause don’t you always say we oughta kick some of those crooked guys outta Congress Daddy?”

“Not easy to do that either Mags,” Jeff answered his daughter. “Though I’d love to throw some of them in my hat and send them to the Infinite Forest.”

Rumple giggled wickedly. “Well that would be fascinating to watch.”

Like most of the sites in Rome, the Forum had also been impacted by time, climate and wars so that not all of the grand structure was still left standing. Still if they closed their eyes, they could see the building as it was back in the day, a grand palace to the government of what had been the most powerful empire in the world at the time.

While Becky and Ewan stood in the very spot where the senators had their meetings, all of them were feeling a bit mischievous and decided to pay homage to one of their favorite movies.

“All fellow members of the Roman Senate, hear me. Shall we continue to build palace after palace for the rich or shall we aspire to a more noble purpose and build decent housing for the poor. How does the Senate vote?” Ewan recited.

“Fuck the poor!” Becky called out. The other Scorpions started laughing.

“Rebecca Halloway!” Archie snapped. “How many times have I told you about that mouth? Do you want another in school suspension on your record?”

“That’s enough you lot!” Rumple chastised his son and his friends.

“Sorry Papa,” Bae said sheepishly.

“Papa, is that the movie where they were riding on a chariot with the mighty joint?” Adriana asked. Rumple’s eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as did Belle’s, knowing exactly what their daughter was referring to.
“Bae! Were you watching that movie with your sister in the room?” Belle demanded.

“No! She was probably hiding under the table again!”

“I never get to watch anything really funny!” she pouted. “Less Bae’s watching it.”

“Well ye dinna need to watchin that, dearie! Next time Bae would you please for the love of all that’s holy lock the door when you’re having movie night?” Rumple pleaded.

“Ha ha...Becky’s gonna get the soap!” Jonny taunted. She blew a raspberry at him.

“I’m too old for that,” she scoffed.

“Don’t count on it, young lady. Your parents put me and Rumple in charge of you on this vacation and you’re not too old to have your mouth washed out!” Archie said firmly.

Bae sat down and pulled out a small notebook he carried with him and started sketching parts of the Forum. He had at least three sketchbooks full of drawings he made based on the sites he’d visited during his trip. He glanced over at his parents, nodded to himself and continued to sketch while the others continued to tour the site. Andi sat down beside him.

“Your father’s going to love that,” she murmured, pointing to where he’d sketched his father in emperor’s robes and his mother as an empress standing in front of the Forum as it looked in ancient times giving a speech to a crowd of people.

“Hey bro, you comin or what? We’re goin to the virgin temple next!” Bobby called out.

Their next stop was the Temple of Vesta, the former home of the legendary Vestal Virgins, a small portion of the structure still left standing as portions of it had been reused to construct churches and papal palaces.

Unlike most of the sites they visited, the Pantheon had been well preserved and still in use as a church dedicated to St. Mary and the martyrs. There were also masses held in the temple on Sundays and during the holy days. Angelo told them at the Pulcinellos sometimes attended mass there and one
of their sons had been married there. There was an aura of peace and serenity inside the Pantheon
unlike other structures they’d visited that morning.

“I am looking forward to attending a mass,” Belle confessed. “Will we come here on Sunday,
Rumple?”

“Let’s see what our hosts want to do first. If they want to go to the Vatican, we’ll go there and come
here the following Sunday.”

Both he and Regina were still reeling from the divine blessings they’d received while visiting the
Vatican, neither of them expecting it and reminded them that the long journey they both made down
the road to redemption had been well worth the effort.

They decided to finish their day of sightseeing in Pompeii and would spend most of the following
day in Venice. The moment they stepped out of their vehicles, they were all overcome by a feeling of
sadness, recalling the destruction and death the eruption of Mount Vesuvius brought to the once
beautiful city.

“There was nobody to save them Papa,” Adriana wept. Rumple picked his daughter up and cradled
her in his arms.

“No mo, astor….there wasn’t.”

As they had in the Colosseum, all the mages could sense the pain and sorrow of the spirits that still
haunted the site, the voices crying out in fear and sorrow, begging for help that would never come
and asking why the gods had forsaken them while they were being buried under rivers of burning
lava and clouds of ash. At the Garden of the Fugitives, everyone was shaken seeing plaster and resin
casts of victims that had been buried in the ash. There were also casts on other sites around the city.
The children stood in front of a cast of a child victim, weeping softly while their parents tried
unsuccessfully to hold back their own tears.

Who are you? Adriana heard a little boy’s voice asking her.

Adriana. Who are you?

Stefanos. How can you talk to me and no one else who comes here can?
I can talk to lots of things...and my friends can do stuff too. My cousin talks to animals.

He does!

Uh-huh.

Maggie kneeled down beside him. “I can hear him too. Can you, Ellie?”

“Hear what? Are you talking to this child, Maggie?” Emma inquired softly.

“Yeah...I think we can all hear him. Right, guys?”

Her friends nodded and even the babies were eyeing him curiously.

Are you like gods and goddesses? Stefanos asked them.

Nope, we’re True Love kids so we were born with magic, Ellie sent.

Can you bring me and my mama and daddy back?

Adriana shook her head sadly. My papa says we can’t bring back the dead.

And if we had that ability, we would child, Rumple sent, now hearing the small boy in his mind too.

Did the gods punish us? Is that why we died? the new voice belonged to an adult female, the boy’s mother Rumple suspected.

No, dearie. It was an act of nature that no one could have prevented…
Why do so many people come to see us? they now heard from the boy’s father.

Because you haven’t been forgotten, Regina answered back. Even after all this time you haven’t been forgotten.

That’s why we’re here. To remind you you’ll never be forgotten, added Henry.

“I can’t believe this….I can hear them too…” Emma whispered.

Did you have a dog or a kitty, Stefanos? Adriana asked him.

I had a dog….he’s here with me….but they didn’t find him like they found us and put the plaster on us.

What was his name?

“Julius!” Jonny cried.

That’s right little one.

Mama and Papa read me a story once about a blind boy and his dog….was that you? Adriana asked him.

No, but I heard about the story from some of the other children who come here, Julius answered.

It was really sad, added Neal. You stayed with Stefanos and his family?

I could never leave them. The animals of Pompeii…we stayed with our families to the end and we stay on…they need us still as we need them.

Now that they knew someone could speak with them, many other victims at the site began talking,
some of them angry but all of them stayed on, not wanting to be separated from their loved ones even in death as they had been in life.

Angelo had dinner ready for them when they returned to the villa that evening and sensed all of them had been troubled by what they encountered at some of the sites.

“That is why I avoid them,” he said. “So much sadness and pain for a mage to feel.

“Yeah but we want them to ‘member we don’t forget them,” Ellie argued. “We talked to a nice boy named Stefanon and his dog...like in the book The Dog of Pompeii.”

Henry cast a spell on his and Grace’s phones that had allowed them to record the conversations his mother, Rumple and the children had with the spirits and the siblings played them back for the chef to hear. He was impressed by the junior magician’s skill.

The Happy Army bears sat in the corner of the dining room, all of them waiting anxiously as their masters and mistresses sampled some of their culinary efforts, hoping they’d done a good job though they were still learning how to help cook.

“Angelo, you really outdid yourself this time,” David sighed contentedly and rubbed his chest.

“I had a little help from my apprentices here.”

“Well they did an excellent job,” Rumple praised.

“Yes they did...even you Duke,” Archie told his son’s bear. All of them were smiling. They knew they did a good job when the two best cooks in their town were satisfied and couldn’t wait to cook again the following night since there was little else for them to do while the families were sightseeing.

Everyone was awake early for their day in Venice. The women were looking forward to taking rides on the gondolas with their husbands and children but when they arrived in the city, there were none available.
“Maybe we should wait til tonight. There should be more available,” David suggested.

“And it’ll be more romantic,” Belle murmured.

“Mama, I’m gonna take Adriana with me...don’t wanna scar her for life if you and Papa start making out,” Bae laughed. Rumple groaned and shook his head.

Adriana snorted. “Then where’m I gonna go if you and Andi start, huh? For a swim?”

The two teenagers blushed. “Umm….maybe you should go with Mary then,” Andi spoke up.

“I can take the children somewhere while you go for a ride,” Mary offered.

“We wanna go on the boats!” cried Neal, leaving no room for argument.

“All right...you can go on the first trip with us then Mommy and Daddy can go on the second ride alone,” Snow proposed.

“Okay.”

“They better have gelato here or there’s gonna be a riot,” Bobby grumbled.

“Oh calm down mate!” Ewan held up his phone. “There are lot of them here.”

“You’re going on a gondola ride with me first, buster!” Kat threatened with a grin and waved her cooking spoon in her boyfriend’s face.

When none of the gondolas returned after a few minutes, they walked to the Piazza San Marco. Maurice pulled his two sons in law aside.
“What’s wrong Moe?” Rumple asked him.

“I have to run an errand and I’m going to need your help with it. One of you needs to keep the girls occupied, the other has to come with me.”

“This errand wouldn’t involve buying a ring, would it?” Archie asked with a smile.

He nodded. “I hope my girls don’t think I’m rushing things a bit but this time I’ve spent with Penny is the happiest I’ve been in years.”

“I’ll handle the girls. Rumple, you’d better go with him. You’re the jewelry expert,” Archie said to Rumple.

There were many stores in Piazza San Marco including a few jewelry stores, a craft store and clothing stores including a Gucci along with a few cafes. Everyone wanted to do some shopping first for themselves and for their friends back home.

“Where are Papa and Rumple?” Belle asked Archie. While their backs were turned, Moe and Rumple went into the Chopard Boutique to see what rings it had for sale.

“Ummm...Rumple wanted to do a little shopping on his own and your father wanted to tag along,” he said quickly. Marie eyed him suspiciously.

“Oh did he?” she demanded and pulled him aside. “What’s going on?”

“What makes you think anything’s going on, my goddess?”

“Because Papa never tags along with Rumple while he shops because Rumple tends to drive him nuts with how picky he is. Need I remind you how insane he drove you when you first went clothes shopping with him?”

“Well...your father wanted to make some changes to his wardrobe.”
Marie sighed. “Poor Papa. He’s not going to have an easy time of it.”

Archie had more confidence but he didn't press the issue fearing Marie would figure out the truth. Hiding anything from the Bordreaux women was difficult as the their husbands discovered when they tried to plan romantic surprises for their wives on birthdays and Valentine's Day.

Everyone was relieved they'd managed to beat the crowds and do their tour in the morning. Angelo warned them the Piazza was crowded most of the day and he, Rumple, Emma and Regina strengthened the protection spells they cast on the group to keep them safe.

Snow was entranced with the flock of pigeons that seemed to be following them around. Emma conjured her a bag of breadcrumbs so that she, David and Neal could sit down and feed them, knowing how much her mother loved birds. Two of them were content to sit on her shoulders while two others sat on Neal’s.

“They like us, Mommy!” he cried.

“They are beautiful….I wonder if they’re mates,” Snow mused.

“They might be honey,” David answered.

“I wanna take ‘em home!”

“Neal, honey, we can’t….”

“Yeah we can. I want a pet and I don’t have one!” he pouted.

“Neal, we’ll get you a pet when we get home.”

“Daddy, I wanna take these guys home!”

David sighed. His son could be as stubborn as Snow when he put his mind to something and it was not always easy to reason with him.
“We can’t and if you keep throwing a tantrum you’ll be staring at a wall. Do I make myself clear Neal Leopold Nolan?”

Neal shuffled his feet and stared at his shoes. “M’sorry Daddy.”

“Good. Now say goodbye to them...we have to get going.”

Neal bent down. “Don’cha worry birdies….think I gotta plan on how m’gonna get ya to come home with me.”

And his plan required the assistance of the two friends he knew who could communicate with animals better than he could: Adriana and Jonny.

Overnight the street had gotten flooded during the high tide and several frogs were hopping around.

“Hey Roland, you think we’re gonna find a mate for Kermit here?” Jason asked his older brother.

“I dunno….but do you really think Mommy and Daddy are gonna let ya keep it?”

“We got to keep Pinkie.”

“Yeah that’s ‘cause he wasn’t bein treated right but that mean pink lady and ya know Ellie freaks out every time Kermit goes near her cause she thinks he’s gonna give her warts.”

“Yeah well Kermit needs a Miss Piggy an I’m gonna get him one.”

“He doesn’t have Miss Piggy anymore...her name’s Denise. Daddy said so.” Roland pointed out.

“Well if I find a mate for Kermit her name’s gonna be Missy, ya know...not Denise!”
Roland shook his head. “Whatever but I still don’t think Mommy’ll let you keep a stray frog. She’ll wanna get you one at a pet shop.”

As they were walking a plan was forming in his mind. There was a mate for his frog somewhere in the city and he knew just who to ask about finding one.

“I’ve never seen so many birds!” Bae exclaimed. “And I’m having terrifying images of that Hitchcock movie in my head!”

“You! I was scared to death of birds for weeks after I saw it!” Becky cried.

“They aren’t bothering anybody and they’re kinda cute,” Andi said when one landed on her shoulder and chirped happily in her ear.

“Tell me that when one o’them shites on ya. Aww man!” Ewan groaned. He felt something warm and wet on his head. The others turned around and laughed when they saw his head and shoulders covered in bird droppings.

“Hey you asked for it bro!” Bobby chuckled.

“Birds have feelings too you know,” Kat added with a giggle.

“Dinna remind me.” He grabbed a handful of tissues out of Becky’s purse and started cleaning himself up.

“I heard this place gets flooded at night and people have fun in it….the water’s almost up to your waist,” Henry said to Emma.

“We won’t be able to stay too long Henry. Your sister will need a nap and your dad and I will need one too. Oh I cannot wait till I deliver this kid!”

“Yeah so I can stop peeing like a racehorse!” Jeff whined.
“Mama, there’s a library!” Adriana pointed to a building to the west in the Piazza called the Biblioteca Marciana.

“Wonderful! Do you want to go in?”

“Uh-huh!”

“I’d like to go too, Miss Belle,” said Grace.

“We’ll watch the babies for you,” Archie offered. The triplets were in their stroller and wide awake. Little Bobby was anxious to go in the water that still filled the streets but having a difficult time getting his ring off. As their mother started walking away, Victoria and Valora wailed loudly and flailed their arms.

“Mommy, they wanna come too.”

“Sweetie I don’t think they allow babies in the library,” Belle said sadly.

“We can ask.”

Grace picked up Victoria while Belle held Valora. “All right, I suppose it won’t hurt to ask...but I don’t know how we can keep them quiet.”

“You’ll keep quiet, won’t you dearies?” Adriana asked her siblings. They smirked and nodded their heads slightly as if they understood her. When the group walked into the library, one of the employees stopped them.

“Signora...your babies....”

“I know but I promise you they will be very quiet and won’t touch anything,” Belle insisted in Italian. “And my other daughter is very well behaved. We just would like to see some of your collection.”
“Ummm...I may get in trouble for this...but all right. You can bring them in but please, please, make sure they don’t mess anything up!”

“You have my word.”

The collection inside the state archives rivaled the one kept by her husband at Belle Reve and all of the volumes had been well preserved despite their age. She enjoyed pulling some of the classic texts off the shelves and reading them in their native language while they studied the beautiful murals on the ceilings that were as lovely as those found in the Sistine Chapel.

“Mommy, lookit that! A frownie moon!” Adriana pointed to the ceiling where there was a marble carving of a crescent moon with crossed arrows beneath it. “Why’s it frowning?”

“I don’t know honey.”

“It should be happy.”

“Don’t try to change it, please,” Belle whispered.

“I just don’t like frownies!”

“I know but you would disrespect the artist if you change their work,” her mother argued.


“Just a few books about famous inventors.” She was always looking for new inspirations for her projects and her heroes were the inventors of the past. She hoped one day to aspire to the greatness they all achieved and help make their new world a better place. She jotted down some ideas on the Notepad program she kept on her phone while she was reading and sent several messages to Major Gru and Doctor Nefario while she was reading. The animated stuffed toys also had cellphones that were magically modified to only give them the ability to talk to the Storybrooke residents.

Belle was grateful that even in an age where digital media was all the rage her library still had a lot of patrons, especially children who loved when she and Snow held Storytime every afternoon at four
and she wanted her younger children to appreciate reading actual books as much as she and Rumple still did.

While Belle and the girls were in the library Bae and his friends visited the Markus Art Gallery, featuring glass artwork including reproductions of Venetian goblets, jewelry and even some beaded scarves. Along with oil painting, wood carving and sketching, he was interested in sculpting and the beautiful creations he saw inspired him to make some of his own for family and friends. He bought his mother a set of star shaped glass ornaments to hang on the Christmas tree, little glass aquariums for his siblings, a set of black square glass plates for his father’s collection and a blue glass picture frame for Andi.

“This is great work. I’m an artist myself and I would love to do something like this.”

“If you’re interested in glass art, signore, here is the website address of someone who can help you,” one of the employees said and handed him a card while he was ringing up the sale.

“Thank you. I appreciate that.”

“And perhaps someday signore we may be able to feature your work here, yes?”

Bae chuckled. “Maybe...when I get the hang of it.”

The Hoods were at the Basilica di San Marco, Ellie and Regina were admiring a beautiful mosaic depicting the crucifixion.

“Mommy, why’d they put Him on that cross if He wasn’t bad?”

“Because sweetie, it was hard to accept that Christianity was becoming the new religion practiced in many countries. Jesus meant no harm to anyone, he was simply trying to instill faith in those who were still searching for it and inspire them to do great things. If there’s one lesson I want you to learn from this it’s that I want you to respect all faiths and customs as well as race, age, gender and preference. If more people in this world adopted a policy of tolerance there would be less conflict. Sadly, it took a curse and living in a new world for me to realize this. But that day in St. Peter’s I learned that despite the mistakes I made in my life, I was forgiven but that doesn’t mean I will ever revert back to the person I was back then. When you’re given a second chance after you’ve made a terrible mistake, you learn from it.”
“So after three days he came back?”

“Yes and that is what the holiday Easter is celebrated for. Christmas was the day He was born and that is the true meaning of the holiday.”

“So s’not about a bunny and a guy in a red suit and beard?”

“Not really...those traditions are still in place mostly for children but I want you and your brothers to always remember the true meanings of Easter and Christmas especially when you have families of your own. We have holidays like this too in our world, only they’re a bit different because we worship many gods as the Romans and Greeks did.”

They rejoined the boys and the rest of the group at Doge’s Palace in the courtyard where there were two large statues of Mars and Neptune, the entrance known as Giant’s Stairway.

“More naked people. Sheesh…” Jonny grumbled. His sister and Kyria started laughing as they went inside. When they walked into the Higher Council Hall it reminded Belle of the Grand Ballroom at Belle Reve and she could see the two of them dancing in their finery to a symphony performed by their enchanted orchestra.

“I just cannot believe how beautiful some of this artwork is,” Marie gasped. “Rumple is missing all of this!”

“I’m recording it for him,” Henry reminded her.

“I’m sorry we’re late, dearies.” Rumple said when he joined them.

“Where’s your bags if you went shopping?” Belle asked him.

“Oh I ahhh...sent them back to the villa,” Rumple lied smoothly and winked at Maurice.

Their shopping trip went better than he expected. They found the ring Maurice wanted at Salvadori called the Miraggi Spiral with a white gold band and an oval cut three carat diamond. Before they rejoined the others they stopped at Gucci to pick the perfect outfit for the evening. Moe planned to
propose to Penelope later on that evening during their gondola ride.

Belle and Rumple pulled their husbands aside, giving them a Look.

“All right now what is going on?” Belle demanded. “We’ll find out anyway so you might as well tell us.”

“Your father’s going to ask Penelope to marry him tonight,” Archie blurted, never being able to hide anything from Marie when she gave him the Look.

“He is! He is?” Belle cried excitedly.

“Calm down dearie before you ruin the surprise!” Rumple hissed.

“When?” Marie pressed her husband.

“When they go on their gondola ride.”

“Knowing you, you probably picked out a nice suit for him to wear,” Belle said to her husband.

His suit was a black wool mohair two button closure with a slim tapered silhouette and soft rounded shoulders, silk lining in the jacket. Used to casual dress after so many years, it was difficult for the florist and former lord to get used to wearing formal clothing again.

“And he was easier to shop for than Archie,” Rumple chuckled.

“You forget where I came from.”

“We should take Penny shopping. After all, she needs to be dressed for the occasion too,” Marie pointed out.

Rumple handed Belle his Black Amex card. “Take her to Gucci. Just tell her….your father wants to take her on a gondola ride and dinner...so she needs to dress for it.”
The two women were grinning when they approached their future stepmother. “Penny, why don’t you come to Gucci with us and we can do some shopping?”

“I’ll keep Kyria with me,” Maurice offered.

“You don’t mind?”

“Not at all.”

“Hey Sella, you know what would be cool...if your grandpa married my grandma and we can be related!” Kyria said to Gisella.

“Yeah that would be neat but where’s my grandpa gonna live? Greece or back in Storybrooke?”

“I dunno but it’ll still be cool!”

“You girls are up to something. I know you are,” Penny accused with a smile when the ladies led her over to the racks with the evening gowns.

“Well...you are going on a gondola ride with Papa and dinner...we thought you might want to dress for the occasion.” Belle said as she held up a floor length white silk cady evening gown with a crystal jewel neckline and straps. Penelope took it and held it out in front of her and could even imagine herself wearing it until she glanced at the tag.

“Oh no…” She put it back on the rack. Belle snatched it back.

“This one’s on us, honey.”

“Belle!”

“I insist. You’re going to look beautiful tonight, Penny.”
“Hmmm...maybe we should dress up too,” Marie murmured, having just the gown in mind for the occasion, unaware that their husbands had the same idea in mind.

Later on that afternoon they visited the Giardini Pubblici. The younger children enjoyed playing on the playground while the adults took a much needed rest from all the walking they did. Rumple summoned blankets from the villa and the fathers spread them out on the grass and Angelo sent them lunch through Mary’s magic bag. Fortunately they were in an area of the park where no one would see them using magic and Penelope and Kyria had gotten used to seeing it. Little Bobby finally managed to get his ring off and was content to lay on the blanket in cat form.

“I know we should put it back on but he’s so cute like this,” Belle murmured, picking him up and placing him on her lap while she stroked his fur.

Smelling food and sensing animal friendly humans close by, a group of stray cats made their way to the park. There had been more of them in the past until the animal protection organization Dingo began sterilizing and relocating them but there were still quite a few lurking around.

Rumple was about to take a bite of his tuna sandwich when a cat jumped onto his lap and bit into it.

“Hey! Get off, cat!”

“Meow!”

“Papa, he’s hungry,” Adriana said.

“Yes, well, why doesn’t he go home and...oh now dinna ye start!” Rumple groaned when another cat tried to eat his sandwich.

“Papa, we have plenty….and he’s really hungry. Can’t you give him some?” his daughter pleaded, giving him the sad kitty look. Rumple, unable to resist that look, tore off several pieces of his sandwich and threw them down to the cats. Another tried to crawl onto Belle’s lap and woke Bobby up then curled up beside him.

“Awww... that kitty wants to play with Bobby.”
Rumple pulled a ball of yarn out of his bag and tossed it onto the blanket. “There you go, dearies!”

“Driana, I wanna take some birds home with me but Daddy said I gotta wait til I get home,” Neal complained. “They were the ones we saw when we got here.”

“And I want the frog I saw.” Jason informed her.

Little Bobby was having a wonderful time playing with his new feline friend and some of the other cats were attempting to wheedle handouts out of the rest of the group.

Another cat crawled onto Emma’s belly while she was lying down, kneading it with its pawns but being careful not to scratch her.

"Hey you...paws off the hat unless you wanna go to the shelter!” Jeff warned a mischievous cat that had the brim of his hat in its mouth.

"I thought the birds were crazy, where'd all these cats come from?” Robin asked.

"I don't know but they're cute." Regina had a black cat sitting on her lap while she fed it pieces of her apple.

"I'm not a cat person but this guy makes a good massage therapist," Emma murmured.

"Don'cha always say your patients ought get pets so they feel better?” Jonny asked his father.

"Having a pet can help reduce stress and anxiety, yes. Sometimes during the curse Pongo was the only one who could cheer me up after a difficult day." They spent the rest of the afternoon in the gardens with their new furry friends but when they were getting ready to leave a chorus of mournful meows rang out. Adriana glanced up at her father with sad eyes as did little Bobby who protested when his father changed him back.

“Now, now, dinna give me that look. We can’t take them home!”
“But Paaa-ppaaa they’re hungry and they don’t have a home!” Adriana wailed.

“Better brace yourselves. she’s gonna blow…” Bae sing sanged.

The other children turned to their parents with the same look.

“No, no….Jonny…we can’t take any of them home….we already have the crickets, the dogs and the snakes….” Archie reminded his son though he felt terrible for doing it.

“We have the room!” Gisella protested and stomped her foot.

“Mommy I wanna kitty like that one!” Ellie yelled.

“And I wanna Missy for Kermit!” Jason added.

“Pinkie needs a mate too!” spoke up Roland.

“I want those birdies!” Neal glared at his father.

“And Socks and Major need mates so they can be happy!” Adriana was not giving an inch of leeway, having inherited her father’s gift of deal making but Rumple was determined not to let his treasure outwit him….this time.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you are watching Storybrooke’s Pet Rescue Americana,” Henry narrated.

“Henry I gotta side with them on this.” Grace said.

“Yeah, cause Mommy likes the kitty that’s givin her a ma...what?”

“Massage, Mags.”
“They’re not happy here! They don’t wanna go to the shelters ‘cause it’s hard for them to get adopted and some of them KILL animals. They KILL them!” Adriana screamed.

“Rumple, surely we can take one…” Belle proposed. “I can’t bear the thought that some of these poor cats will be euthanized if they can’t find a home…or die on the streets of starvation…be hit by a vehicle…”

All of the cats chose a human and rubbed their backs against them, purring. “See….they wanna come home with us.” Jonny pointed to an orange tabby sitting beside his father.

Little Bobby’s hands reached for the kitten he’d been playing with and his sisters were staring at a pair of white Angoras.

“I don’t know…” Rumple sighed. “The Pulcinellos are not going to be happy if we have all these stray animals at the villa. They only know of the ones we brought with us.”

“We can send ‘em to Storybrooke with the portal and the shelter people can take care of ‘em til we get back if they can’t stay with us!”

“But I can’t have all these cats in my house!” Rumple cried.

“She’s not suggesting we take all of them Rumple, just one.”

“That is exactly what she wants dearie and ye know it!” Rumple threw up his hands. “And ye’re encouraging her!”

“Of course I am. You and I both know we can find them good homes in Storybrooke, safe ones!”

All of the parents were deeply conflicted. They sympathized with the cats’ plight and were having the urge to take one or two home themselves but suspected taking all of them would cause chaos like the mall incident.

“I don’t want a repeat of the mall incident. Bae would you and your friends watch the kids please while we discuss this,” Rumple said to his son. “You lot…over here,” he said to the rest of the adults.
“Well Bae, are ya with us on the Kitty Side or the Meanie Side?” Adriana demanded of her brother and his friends.

“I’m on the kitty side,” said Kat.

“Umm...I know your heart’s in the right place Rumplette but Papa’s right. We can’t have all those cats in the house. Can you imagine the smell from the litter boxes…” His face paled at the thought. “And you’re too little to be a crazy cat lady!”

“What’s a crazy cat lady?”

“That’s what they called Mommy’s old boss when she worked at the call place. She had a whole family of cats and when she died, she left all her money to them but they got swindled out of it by her mean butler,” Gisella explained.

“Ya mean like the Aristocats?” Jonny asked her.

“That’s who they were.”

“Cool!” Kyria cried. “Where’d they go?”

“I don’t know,” Gisella answered. “They probably lived in the forest.”

“Driana, we gotta help the dogs, frogs and birdies too,” Neal reminded her. She smirked.


Adriana rubbed her hands together gleefully. “I gotta plan and m’gonna need your help with it Jonny since you can speak to animals better’n I can.”

“We can all help! M’not some weak little princess waitin’ for a prince to rescue me. I can do stuff!” Ellie protested.
“Okay...he’s what we’re gonna do…” Adriana gathered everyone into a huddle and they formulated their plan while the parents were in the middle of a debate.

“All right….we’ll take home the ones the kids want and call around to see if we can find a no kill shelter in the city,” Rumple said. “Are we all in agreement?”

“You know those kids of ours….they might be cooking up a scheme of their own, especially yours and Archie’s,” said Regina.

“They’ll have to get up early to outwit ME, dearie.”

Belle and Marie shook their heads having learned that Adriana had gotten the upper hand on her father over Christmas when she recorded him talking in his sleep, bragging that he managed to find the cookware set Belle bought him and pretended to be surprised. She would just let him learn on his own as he always did that it was not easy to outsmart a Bordreaux woman.

Rumple called the car service to tell them they wouldn’t be needed and opened a portal back to the villa with only six cats returning with them for now. Jonny sent a message to the others to inform the other animals they knew that if they wanted to go to Storybrooke they were to meet up at Villa Pulcinello that night. The cats raced back into the city, excited at the prospect of finding homes where there was warmth, good food and kind masters and mistresses.

Angelo was stunned to find six new faces at the villa and one of the cats took to him right away. It had been centuries since he’d had a familiar and realized how much he missed it.

“You have a familiar now so you can be happy again,” Adriana said while Angelo held his new friend on his lap and petted him. He named his familiar Peter after St. Peter. Regina named the black cat she’d brought with her Ebony, Adriana’s intended mate for Socks was named Angel for her white fur and blue eyes. Emma named her cat Patches since it was a calico. Gisella insisted her father name the orange tabby Thomas and Snow’s cat was named Stuart after one of the Minions.

Once they got the cats settled in Mary, Angelo and the Scorpions would keep the children entertained by having a movie marathon on the big screen TV in the Pulcinellos’ living room.

Belle waited for her husband at the foot of the marble staircase wearing her Princess Diana midnight blue evening gown with silver stars, smiling to herself when she thought back to the night she first wore it. It was the night of the school dance and she felt like a princess on her husband’s arm and
though the night ended in chaos when a fire nearly destroyed the school, there were many wonderful moments for them during the evening.

“Do I look alright?” Penelope asked nervously while she waited beside her in her gown.

“You look lovely,” Marie praised as she approached them in the red satin evening gown she’d worn to the opera on her honeymoon.

Emma came downstairs in an oversized maternity shirt and sweatpants. “I’m not the dress up type….” she mumbled.

“Despite my efforts,” Snow sighed. She was wearing a pink strapless gown with a princess skirt and sweetheart neckline.

Regina came downstairs in a black strapless gown with a long slit up the side of her pencil thin skirt.

“How the heck are you gonna be able to SIT in that thing Gina!” Emma exclaimed.

She smirked. “Don’t plan on wearing it that long….long enough for the ride…”

The men came downstairs in their tuxedos and matching vests except for Jeff who was following his wife’s example and wearing an old T-shirt and pants.

“We’re gonna be the hoboes tonight,” he said as he put his arm around her.

“Aren’t we always.”

The couples gathered in a circle in the hallway while Rumple opened the portal, making certain to choose a place where they wouldn’t be seen. He reached for Belle’s hand and they stepped through followed by the others. They appeared near the Grand Canal, all of them pleased to see that there were enough gondolas available for them.

Rumple handed the gondolier some euros. “Take us on the scenic route, please.”
“Of course Signore!”

They made themselves comfortable on the plush red velvet seat. Belle laid her head on her husband’s shoulder while he put his arm around her waist.

“This city is so beautiful at night,” she murmured. “It almost makes we wish we had something like this at home, or Belle Reve…”

“Ask and ye shall receive, dearie…” Rumple whispered back, capturing her lips in a sweet kiss. She closed her eyes, still seeing the beauty of the city in her mind and thinking that there was no place she preferred to be at that moment than in the arms of her sorcerer who did not always need to use magic to make her happy. Sometimes all it took was just a look or smile. Never again would he need to hide his light in the shadows.

Yet she also knew that her husband would always do his best to make every dream she ever had come true. Years ago in the castle when she was still his chatelaine she confessed to him her dream of seeing the world. It was dream they waited years to make come true but it didn’t matter….they had centuries to live out their dreams.

“Y...You would do that...for me?”

“Mo chori, dinna ye no’ know after all these years I’d do anything for ye?”

“As I would for you…” She stroked his cheek tenderly. “And all I ask for in return is your love….given freely, not because you feel obligated to…”

Having lived for centuries under the control of another, Rumple made a vow to himself that once he gained his freedom, he would never allow himself to be controlled again. Love was the reason he’d taken the curse but love had freed him.

“Sometimes I look at you and I still ask myself how you love me…”

“I give you my answer every day Rumple...but if you still need convincing…” She cupped his face in her hands and kissed him ardently. The gondolier smiled to himself yet he didn’t dare interrupt
their tender moment. Seeing moments like this was what made him enjoy his job.

“Are you convinced now, darling….?” she purred.

“Mmmm...maybe I need a wee bit more of it…” he teased.

“As you wish…”

They kissed again as the gondolier rowed under the Rialto Bridge, several tourists taking pictures of them on their phone but they barely noticed it. The people on the bridge thought they’d just captured a sweet moment between a May-December couple, not the real Beauty and the Beast who were attempting to spread the true message of the story: that the beast was not always a handsome prince in disguise and everyone deserved to be loved, regardless of age, sex and physical appearance.

“I stare through your shadow
I see something more
Believe there's a light in you
I am sure
And my truth makes you stronger
Do you realize
You awake every morning
With my strength by your side…” Belle sang softly, changing the lyrics to their theme song as her own tribute to her love.

I am not a hero
I am not an angel
I am just a man
Man who's trying to love you
Unlike any other
In your eyes I am…
This world keeps on spinning

Only you still my heart

You’re my inspiration

You’re my northern star

I don’t count my possession

All I call mine

I will give you completely

To the end of all time….”

Unbeknownst to them, the gondolier recorded them on his phone. He’d been a witness to many serenades, most of them making his ears bleed but this couple sang so beautifully together that they belonged on a stage for they were doing something most entertainers had forgotten these days...they sang from their hearts.

“I hope you have a lovely evening,” he said when they returned to the dock.

“Gratzie, signore. Buona notte.” Rumple said, taking Belle’s hand in his and leading her down the street to where the portal was still open. Only their group could see it and access it and it would close when the last couple stepped through it. Once they were standing near the foot of the staircase Rumple gave his wife a come-hither look. “The night doesn’t have to end yet, mo chori.”

She smiled and took his hand in hers. “Lead the way darling...”

Robin stepped into the gondola and bowed, holding out his hand. “My queen,” he murmured.

“You always make me feel like a queen, my outlaw,” Regina whispered.

She missed moments like this when they could be alone and though they were not completely alone, she didn’t mind. They would be later.

“In the summer we’re going to take more rides on the lake,” Robin promised her. “Ahh Gina….this has been a great vacation….even if we have had a few hiccups.”
She nuzzled his neck. “What’s life without a few hiccups….and I wouldn’t trade this life for the one I could’ve had if I had allowed Mother to dictate it forever…”

“She can’t hurt you anymore, Gina and anyone who tries to hurt you is gonna have to get through me first….not to mention our friends.” He kissed her softly and pulled her onto his lap. “I just...am not looking forward to going back to the grind but an outlaw’s gotta make a living!”

Even though they were a hardworking career couple, Regina and Robin always tried to find time in their busy schedules for each other and their children though their time alone as a couple was more limited to when after the children went to bed or on Saturday nights.

All too soon their ride had come to an end. They bade their gondolier goodnight and walked down the street to where the portal stood open. Regina took her husband’s hand in hers and they stepped through to their bedroom at Villa Pulcinello. Regina wrapped her arms around Robin’s waist. “Well, my outlaw...will you take me to bed...or risk losing me forever?” she inquired seductively.

He laughed and pulled her down on the bed with him. “Does this answer your question my queen?”

“It does indeed,” she murmured.

Snow and David took a brief walk before they returned to the dock to wait for an available gondola.

“This reminds me of our special date night when you took me for our sleigh ride,” Snow said dreamily. “We had to wait a bit for our Pearl but we have her now, don’t we?”

“We have some great kids…and grandkids,” he whispered in her ear. “Not bad for a former shepherd and an outlaw princess. Look at us now….seeing a whole new world.”

They sat huddled close together sharing kisses under the moonlit sky, grateful for these few hours they had to themselves admiring the beautiful city they found themselves in.

“How I know why this is called the ‘City of Love’,” David remarked, spotting a couple standing on the bridge in each other’s arms and chuckled when he recognized them as being their daughter and son-in-law. “Get a room you two!” he yelled up at them.
“Ha ha real funny!” Emma called back. “Why don’t you?”

“We will...when we get back!” Snow laughed.

“Oookay then...hurry up! We wanna go for a ride while we’re still young!” Jeff teased.

“Friends of yours?” the gondolier asked with a grin.

“You can say that.”

Emma and Jeff were waiting for them when they arrived at the dock, both of them tapping their feet impatiently. “‘Bout time,” Emma scoffed.

“Why didn’t you get another gondola?” her mother inquired.

“All taken.”

“Don’t stay out too late,” Snow cautioned with a smile as she and David climbed out of the gondola and started walking back toward the portal.

“Our daughter did suggest we get a room, didn’t she?” David asked as he took her hand and led her up the staircase, both of them giggling like teenagers.

The gondolier, seeing that Emma was pregnant, placed a footstool in front of the bench so that she could prop her feet up.

“Ooooh thank you….my feet feel like bricks right now,” Emma groaned. Jeff lifted her legs and placed them across his lap then took her shoes off, gently massaging her feet. “Hatter, you make one smart remark about smelly feet and I’ll whup ya.”

He laughed. “Remember that time in Portland when the Bug broke down and we had to walk to the motel in the rain? Our shoes were squeaking up a storm and when we took ‘em off...whew!”
“Yeah but we weren’t thinking about that the whole time, were we?” she asked, feeling more relaxed as his hands moved up her feet to her calves. “Better watch it Hatter...don’t wanna get arrested for public lewdness…”

“Don’t think he’ll mind this, will he?” He leaned forward and kissed her.

“No....” She wished they could do more once they were alone but being so close to the end of her pregnancy they knew it was too risky. For now she was content with what few intimacies they could have and drifted off to sleep just before they returned to the dock. After he secured the boat the gondolier handed the sleeping young mother to her husband.

“Buona notte.”

“Buona notte….and thanks,” Jeff said as he carried Emma back to the portal. She awoke when he laid her down on the bed.

“Damn….some company I was,” she moaned.

He lay down beside her and took her in his arms. “Sometimes I just like to watch you sleep Em.”

“After we have this kid, we’re gonna make up for all the fun we missed.”

“That a promise?”

“Guarantee,” she assured him.

Maurice’s palms were sweating when it was time for his ride with Penelope. All evening he’d been gathering his courage, trying to find the right words to say to the woman he’d grown to love so deeply almost from the moment they met.

“You look beautiful tonight, Penny,” he said softly. “Almost like a goddess…”
“Me? I’m just a professor…” she said modestly.

“You’re more than that to me. This time I’ve spent with you has been the happiest I’ve been in years….”

She sighed. “But you’ll be going home soon…and I don’t know if I could handle a long distance relationship….”

“Penny….sweetheart…”

“It’s not that I don’t love you Maurice…I do…but….” She choked up. “We’re from two different worlds…and I don’t know how we could make it work.”

He rose from the bench and kneeled beside her, difficult to do after having hip surgery and his knees weren’t as strong as they used to be but he didn’t care. He took her hand in his and gazed into her eyes. “Will you marry me?”

“Maurice….” she whispered.

“I never thought I could love again after I lost Jeanette and Collette but seeing how happy my daughters have been with their husbands….I’ve wanted that happiness for myself and never thought I’d find it…but I have…with you. We may be from two different worlds and I don’t want to go home without you.”

“I don’t want to go home with you,” she sobbed and helped him to his feet. He reached into his pocket and took out the box holding her ring. Her hand was trembling while he placed it on her finger. “Yes, I’ll marry you…I’d marry you tonight if you wanted!” she cried and kissed him passionately.

He laughed. “We need to tell the kids first but I suspect my girls already know. Their husbands can’t keep secrets from them to save their lives.”

“They’re probably asleep now. We can tell them and Sandro in the morning.”
As it came closer for the time for him to return home, Penelope feared it would be the end of their relationship but now as she gazed at the marvellous diamond ring on her finger she knew that her search for the right man had finally come to an end.

When they returned to the villa Maurice walked her down the hall to her room and took her in his arms for a kiss.

“Stay with me tonight,” she pleaded softly.

“Penny….it’s been a long time for me…” he confessed.

“It has for me too but you don’t know how many nights I lay awake wanting you here with me...but being too afraid to ask.”

“You don’t need to be afraid to ask anymore, sweetheart.”

She took his hand and led him into the bedroom, both of them thinking there could have been no better way to celebrate their new life together.

Like Emma and Jeff, Archie and Marie decided to take a brief walk around first before they went for their own gondola ride, wishing they had visited the city on their first honeymoon.

“Ahh, my last customers for the evening,” their gondolier said with a smile when they climbed into the boat.

“You’ve been very busy tonight,” Marie chuckled.

“Oh I don’t mind, signora.”

Archie put his arm around his wife’s shoulders and held her close to him as she rested her head on his shoulder.

“This vacation has been wonderful Archie....” she murmured. “But it’s more like a second
honeymoon to me…”

“It is our second honeymoon my goddess,” he reminded her.

“And you do have your little ways of making me feel like a goddess…Little things…”

“Darling…” He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her softly. She closed her eyes, replaying some of their most precious moments in her mind….their first meeting, their first kiss….their first wedding day and their second. He’d taken a ruined, broken woman and made her believe in love again because it was not what he saw when he looked at her.

She’d taken an enchanted cricket and made him believe he could have so much more in his life if he was willing to take the chance and the moment he had, he never regretted a single moment of it.

He asked the gondolier to stop near the bridge and let them off.

“Are we going back?”

“Not yet.” He took his cellphone out of his pocket and turned up the volume so that Luciano Pavarott’s version of Nessun Dorma was playing and held out his hands to her. “Shall we dance, Mrs. Hopper?”

“I’d love to Mr. Hopper,” she murmured.

A small crowd gathered, watching the couple dance as skillfully as some of the professionals they saw on TV or the stage but Archie and Marie only had eyes for each other. When the dance was over, Archie bowed to his wife and kissed her hand.

“Brava!” another couple praised when they approached them. “Are you professional dancers?”

“No...we’re on our second honeymoon,” Marie murmured.

“Well you both dance so well we thought you were professionals.”
“Oh my husband is one...a psychologist but who says a psychologist can’t be a great dancer.”

“If they all dance and act like him, I’d want to be on his couch,” another woman said, leering at him. Archie flushed scarlet.

“You can look all you want honey but you can’t touch. He’s mine.”

“Well...ahhh...we’ll be leaving now...buona notte!” Archie said quickly and led Marie away before she carved the woman’s eyes out.

The moment they stepped through the portal Marie jumped into his arms, nearly knocking them both over.

“Marie...what...?” he gasped.

“She may be able to just look...but I get the right to look...and touch...” she moaned.

He grinned.

“Well then, my goddess...why don’t we call it a day?” he asked.

“You don’t need to ask me twice...”

Later on that night a large group of animals arrived at Villa Pulcinello, including a major portion of the cat population in Venice. They perched themselves on the trees, the windowsills and a few of them were even daring enough to climb through the windows since a few of them had been left open to let in the cool overnight breeze.

Jeff got out of bed in a desperate need to use the bathroom and while he was walking past the window he screamed in hysteria and nearly tripped over his shoes on the floor when he saw a pair of glowing eyes reflected in the glass.
“Holy shit! Ches!?"

“Jeff...quit makin all that racket...m'tryin to sleep!” Emma groused.

“Honey….that freakin cat is HAUNTING ME!”

“What cat?”

“The Cheshire Cat...hello! Cat with a head and no body. Yeah he’s real and that fleabag was always trying trying to rattle me. Okay smartass, you had your fun now git!”

Emma turned on the lamp and sat up. “Jeff, you idiot...it’s just a regular ole alley cat but what the heck’s it doin here?”

“Oh I know what it’s doin here!” Jeff pulled on his robe and stormed out of the bedroom in search of a certain sorcerer.

At first Bae, Ewan and Bobby thought they’d left the TV on when they started hearing a chorus of cats meowing outside their window. Bae got up and turned on the light to see a group of them sitting on the windowsill scratching at the glass.

“What the hell, bro?” Bobby asked him. He glanced over at the other window. “There’s some over there too!”

“Awww shite!” Ewan jumped out of bed with a kitten attached to the leg of his pajama pants. “Git off! How’d ye git in here anyway?”

"Rumplette's got some 'splainin to do.." Bae sang and the three boys left the bedroom, Ewan hopping around like a rabbit trying to shake off the kitten that was still clinging to his pantleg.

David awoke hearing tapping on the window and turned over to see several birds pecking at the glass. “Snow....Snow...SNOW!”

“Whaaaaa...” she moaned sleepily.
“The birds….they’re attacking like in that crazy movie!”

“You’ve having a nightmare…go back to sleep.”

“Does THAT look like a nightmare to you?” he demanded, sitting her up and turning on the light.

“Oh my God….and are those...cats?” She pointed to a group of cats sitting on the windowsill staring in at them.

“I don’t know what the hell is going on around here but I’m gonna find out!” David grumbled and crawled out of bed. “RUMPLE! GET THE HELL UP MAN! WE’RE BEING INVADED!” he shouted.

Regina was having a lovely dream that she was not quite ready to wake up from when she heard shouting in the hall and ready to let the Evil Queen out to play on a certain prince until she looked on her vanity and saw a group of cats admiring themselves in her mirror, her new cat Ebony among them.

“What on earth...how...how did you all get in here?” she cried.

“Gina, hon...what is it?”

“What is it? What is it?! Ebony decided to invite her friends over for a little party!”

“Huh?” Robin rolled over and started laughing. “Oh my God...look at that…!”

Regina accidently left a tube of lipstick open and now there was a set of red pawprints all over the mirror, the table and the white rug.

“It’s not funny!” She waved her hand and the pawprints vanished. “You’re lucky I have magic and maybe not because I would have turned you all into maids to clean this mess up!”
“What are they all doing here?”

“I don’t know but ahhhh!” Regina screamed when something green leaped at her. She looked down to see a frog at her feet that she knew didn’t belong to her son. “I would bet my palace our children had something to do with it!”

While they were walking toward their children's room a white poodle breezed past them and nearly made Robin trip.

In the Hoppers’ bedroom their cat Tom happily escorted his mate and their three kittens up onto the bed to meet their new master and mistress. Tom plopped down on the pillow above Archie’s head while his mate took half of Marie’s pillow for her bed and the kittens crawled under the covers.

“Archie….there’s something in the bed….” Marie whispered, shaking his shoulder to rouse him.

“One of the kids havin’ a nightmare darling…” he murmured sleepily and closed his eyes to go back to sleep.

“MEEEEEOOWWWW!”

Tom’s loud screech woke both of the Hoppers up. “What the…? Tom, what are doing in here? You’re supposed to be in Sella’s room?”

“And who are you?” Marie asked, picking up the cat on her pillow and holding it up. Tom crawled out of his warm bed on Archie’s pillow and clawed at the cover as three tiny voices cried out beneath it. Archie lifted it up to find three kittens laying by their feet.

“Tom….is this your family?” he asked.

“Meow.” He nuzzled the kittens affectionately.

“Oh my God…Archie….we were going to take him away from his family! We can’t do that!” Marie cried.
He eyed her quizzically. “Does this mean I’m not gonna get a couch banishment if I suggest we take them all home?”

She glanced down at the kittens then back at the two adults. “I would never forgive myself if we didn’t take them all home.”

Archie chuckled. “Well since the kids named this one Tom...we may as well name them all after the Aristocats.”

After examining each of the kittens to determine their sex, Marie picked them up and placed them on her lap. “Okay...Duchess, Berliotz, Toulouse and Marie….welcome to the family.” The cats even resembled their famous cartoon counterparts.

“This bed’s gonna be a bit crowded,” Archie sighed.

“Just for tonight but then they can sleep in Sella’s room from now on.”

They lay back down to sleep while their new pets made their bed by their feet.

“....RUMPLE! GET YOUR LAZY ASS UP MAN. WE’RE BEING INVADED.”

“And I’m gonna turn that damned prince into a sheep!” Rumple grumbled while he and Belle crawled out of bed to see what the fuss was all about. They quickly got their answer when they discovered a group of cats in their room and several of them were playing with one of Rumple’s ties.

“Oh no ye don’t ye flea infested furballs! Gimme that back, now!” He leaned down and tried to grab the tie back and another cat jumped onto his ankle and scratched him. “OWWWW! Belle, git it off!”

Before Belle could come to her husband’s aid a female with plush gray fur white feet and chest with a crescent moon on her face bit the tail of the other cat and forced it to release its grip on Rumple’s ankle.

Back off you rabid son of a mange...this human is mine! Rumple heard in his head. He turned around to see the cat that had spoken hissing at the others, wearing a golden collar with the word
As for the rest of you...the humans in this house are under MY protection. You harm them and I will skin you in more ways than you can imagine!

The other cats backed away in terror.

Well well, where did you come from, dearie? Rumple asked her.

I was sent to you by the gods, Master. You are a powerful sorcerer, the most powerful one I have ever encountered yet you do not have a familiar. Every sorcerer needs a familiar to help him.

“Rumple….it's like she's...protecting you…” Belle whispered.

“As a familiar would, mo chori.”

Indeed, my master. She lowered her head and gently licked the scratches on Rumple’s ankle. Seconds later they vanished.

“And a powerful beastie…” He reached out with his senses to assess his new familiar’s skills, impressed with what he was seeing. “She can restore a portion of a mage’s energy simply by petting her and we’ve already seen she has the healing gift. Oh….ye’ve got the Roar of the Temple Cats of Basta and Vesta!” he giggled. “Ye’ll be shocking the pants off anyone with that, dearie!”

Just stunning them but you understand. My other gifts and knowledge I shall reveal when needed.

Fair enough.

Now then...your daughter has made a request that some of the animals of Venice come home with you and that is why we’re all here. Some of them are a bit...rough around the edges but a good home and a good human is what they need.

Are you suggesting we take them ALL home?
I am. And do not be angry with the children. Their hearts are in the right place...and they could only have learned such compassion from the ones who sired them.

Just then, the door to the bedroom flew open and Robin, Jeff, Bae and Regina walked in.

“Papa, Rumplette’s done it again!” Bae sighed.

“She had a little help,” he said and held up Magic.

Regina gazed at the cat in shock. “She’s a true familiar Rumple….how did you find her?”

“Actually, she found me.”

“Don’t tell me we’re gonna take all these animals home!” David groaned.

Well Rumplestiltskin, do we have a deal?

“We are,” Rumple replied to both questions. “Can any of you honestly tell me you’d be able to go home and not think about what could happen to them if we left them here? I tried not to...and I can’t...and where do you think our kids got it from? We’ve already bonded with some of them...the others we can let people in the town see them and decide. Not so long ago, many of us were in their situation...searching for a place to call home or wondering where their next meal was coming from. They have as much of a right to a good life as we do.”

Humans do not choose us. We choose them, Magic corrected.

“Well...what’re we gonna do with them in the meantime?” David asked.

“What any sensible person would do….feed them, house them...but most of all love them,” Belle advised.
“The Pulcinellos aren’t gonna like this…” Ewan groaned.

Gennie will be pleased that her friends have returned. She’s missed us since Nutch became ill.

“Magic assures me that won’t be a problem and a familiar always speaks the truth to its mage.”

Humans and animals returned to their beds for the night and in Rumple and Belle’s room Magic jumped up onto the bed and curled up against her sorcerer’s arm with her paws tucked under her purring softly.

We have chosen wisely, she thought and drifted off to sleep.

Authors Notes: This chapter is dedicated to our beloved cats the real Magic and Lucky.
Before they travelled to Pompeii and Venice, the group decided to explore the Pantheon and the Colosseum, two of Archie and Marie's favorite stops on their honeymoon five years earlier. There was already a large line when they arrived and outside a group of men dressed as gladiators were offering to pose for pictures with tourists and a group of young women were more than happy to oblige them.

“That sounds like fun,” Emma said and just as she was about to approach the gladiators, Neal tugged on her arm and tried to pull her back.

“You wanna go too, Nealio?” she asked him. He shook his head.

“You don’t wanna go near those guys, Emma. They’re not real gladiators,” he said.

“I know that, little brother. They’re just actors hired by the site to give it an ancient Roman flair.”

“They’re not actors neither...they’re runnin a scam. Ya know….tryin to hustle ya outta your money.”

Emma frowned knowing that her brother wouldn’t make such a statement unless he knew it to be true and had seen the truth in their souls.

“Neal’s right Mommy,” Maggie spoke up. “I’m gettin’ that vibe Daddy calls em...ya know...these guys are gonna take your money when ya pose with ‘em then they’re gonna try an pick your pocket. Somebody oughta ‘rrest ‘em and throw ‘em in jail!”

The Scorpions looked at each other and smirked. All of them were expert pickpockets and if anyone knew how to outsmart pickpockets and thieves, it was them. Robin was also smiling.

Rumple groaned. “Don’t even think about it, dearies!”

“Why not, Rumple? If they’re scamming people, they deserve to be in jail,” Archie frowned at his
brother-in-law. “The police obviously aren’t aware of it or they would’ve stepped in by now.”

“Can we no’ go one place without getting into trouble?”

“Trouble seems to find us, Rumple but I would feel terrible if we didn’t teach those charlatans a lesson,” Regina said. “They seem to prey on women the most.”

“Because they think a woman can’t outsmart them. Well, they’d find out quickly they can’t outsmart us, right ladies?” Belle asked her friends.

“Oh I would love to have my broom right now,” Marie murmured.

“We can’t use them here. Besides, I have my feet,” Snow reminded them. David winced, recalling the time his wife injured him with her foot before they were married and she’d even shot him with an arrow in the backside for his part in the ‘Manhood Intervention’. He avoided invoking her wrath as much as necessary for that purpose. Snow could be sweet and sassy, especially when crossed.

“If they’re targeting women, they won’t try their scam on you if they see you with us,” Archie pointed out.

Marie laughed wickedly.

“Are you suggesting we set a trap for them with ourselves as the bait?”

He sighed. “I don’t like thinking like this. It’s something my parents would’ve done.”

"Honey, I know you. You would beat yourself up thinking we could've done something and didn't,” Marie argued.

"You would do the same Rumplestiltskin,” Belle reminded her husband.

He sighed. "You're right, dearie."
They decided that they would split up before they got in line to go into the Colosseum, the men would stay with the children while the women stayed in their own group. As the women were walking past the fake gladiators one of them smiled.

"Would you like your picture taken with us ladies? Only five euros."

"Oh, what the hell. C'mon Gina! Always wanted to meet a gladiator!" Emma said, looking forward to seeing the looks on the fake gladiators' faces when they found out they were going to be outconned.

The men watched closely while the women posed for the picture, all of them seething when they noticed two of the gladiators snatching the ladies' wallets out of their purses and hiding them. They waited until the pictures were done before they approached.

“My wife’s wallet. Give it back. Now!” Rumple said coldly, his hands gripping the handle of his cane so tightly that they were turning white.

“Ummm….excuse me? Are you accusing us of stealing?”

“That is exactly what we’re doing. I stood there and watched you take my wife’s wallet out of her purse,” Archie added, glaring daggers at them.

"Our wives too,” Robin, Jeff and David were wishing they were back in ancient Rome, eager to feed this pack of lowlifes to the lions.

"You ignorant American...." one of them growled, his fist raised in defiance.

"Hey you....don't you raise your fist to my papa or we're gonna beat ya with our canes a doom!" Adriana threatened.

A small group gathered upon overhearing the dispute between the gladiators and the men and among the spectators were the women that had their pictures taken earlier, all of them now panicking and frantically searching their bags.

“They robbed us too!” cried an angry woman in French.
“I’m calling the police!” another said. “Nobody rips me off! You either give it back or I’m gonna go ancient Rome on your ass!”

The Scorpions tittered.

“You’re under arrest. Git up against the wall and spread em!” yelled Maggie.

“I’m gonna lasso ‘em!” Jonny cried excitedly.

“Oh no you’re not John Wayne Hopper!” his father admonished and pulled his son back.

“I’m gonna kick ‘em in the balls!”

“Eleanor May!” Regina exclaimed.

“Mommy you an Miss Snow say that’s the best place to aim cause they cry like babies.”

“Oh yes they do, don’t they Belle?” Marie asked her sister when the two of them assaulted a cruel baker in their village with brooms, hitting him in said sensitive area. It was during this incident that the legend of the infamous Bordreaux Broom was born.

“Yeah well I’d cry like a baby cause that really hurts!” Jason groaned. “And you hit me there once!” he reminded Ellie.

“Was an accident. Was tryin to hit ya somewhere else. Not my fault. Sides, we was playin Doctor Dodgeball an he fixed ya up so quit whining!”

“Yeah well let somebody hit you there and see how YOU like it!” Roland retorted.

“I don’t have balls, duh!”
Henry was laughing so hard he was having trouble keeping his camera straight.

“And welcome to another episode of Kids Say The Darndest Things!” Grace narrated on her phone. Several people in the crowd were laughing along with them until two police officers approached.

“What’s going on here?” one of them asked.

“Officers, these men have been posing as gladiators trying to get women to pose for a picture with them while they rob them. They’ve robbed our wives and several other women and we’ve all witnessed it,” Rumple explained. “Taking their wallets...and I believe other items as well.”

The officers immediately rounded up the gang of con artists.

“You better search ‘em good!” Maggie reminded them. “Prolly got stuff hidden in their underwear.”

The officers were trying not to laugh while they searched, finding wallets, a few cellphones, IPods, iPod Touches and cash. A few other officers arrived a short time later to take them to the station and many of the items were returned to their owners but some were not.

“Thank you for alerting us to this situation Signore Gold. We’ll be sure to keep an eye out in case there are others around.”

“Before you go, may we ladies have a picture with you?” Emma asked them with a grin. Both officers were young and very good looking.

“Of course, signora.”

As the women posed with the officers, they couldn’t help being amused seeing the jealous looks on their husbands’ faces.

“Ohhh I’m going to have a lot of making up to do for this one, Emma…” Regina purred.
“I’m looking forward to it,” Marie murmured.

“So am I,” agreed Belle with a dreamy smile, anticipating what her husband had in store for her.

Penelope laughed. “Oh my...is it wrong for me to say how cute Maurice looks when he’s jealous?”

“Not all Penny, not at all,” Snow giggled.

“Was that really necessary?” David groused to Snow.

“Oh hush! I’ll make it up to you later!”

Neal rolled his eyes. “Didn’t wanna hear that Mommy!” he complained.

“You better get used to it Neal,” Gisella advised. “Just make sure you don’t catch them making out.”

“Gisella!” her parents gasped.

“What? How many times did I catch you?”

“Never mind!” Marie cried.

Rumple wanted to book a private tour for them but hadn’t gotten a reservation in soon enough. Instead they were in with a larger group that would tour the Colosseum, the Forum and Palatine Hill. As they were walking through the site, they listened to the tour guide point out some of the highlights of the structure.

“It could hold over 50,000 people, segregated by class. The patricians would sit here,” he explained, pointing to the lower tiers. “And the common people would sit there.” He pointed to the upper tiers.

“The nosebleed section,” Ewan muttered.
“Some of the gladiators were considered the sports heroes of the day,” the guide went on. Some of the women in the group giggled.

“Among other things,” one of them said.

“There was a documentary I saw on the History channel once where women used to use gladiator sweat in beauty rituals,” Becky spoke up. Kat snickered beside her.

Grace made a face. “Gross! I wouldn’t want some guy’s BO on my face!”

“Did they really kill animals for fun?” Jonny demanded. “That’s mean!”

“Ummm….yes…they did consider it their entertainment…” the guide said nervously.

“Yeah well anybody who hurts an kills animals for fun oughta be locked up an the key thrown away!” Adriana cried.

“They killed people too!” Neal exclaimed. “Did they eat ‘em too?”

“No…”

“Mommy I don’t like this place….” Maggie whimpered.

“Me neither,” her uncle agreed.

As they had on Halloween night the previous year, all the mages could sense there were tormented souls who still haunted the ancient site.

"Papa, can you make the ghosts happy so they don't haunt this place anymore?" Adriana asked her father.
He shook his head. "I can't use magic here dearie. It's too risky."

He also suspected no amount of magic he could use would ease the suffering of those souls. The children stayed close to their parents until they exited the Colosseum and continued on to the Forum.

“Mommy, is this their office like yours?” Ellie asked her mother.

“Yes, it is, honey only Rome had senators like we do in the States and the emperors relied on them to help them make important decisions.”

“But Mommy, why did they kill Caesar? Didn’t they like him?”

Regina pondered that question for a moment. Ellie had inherited her mother’s passion for history and she was always eager to learn about the histories both of this world and their own. She’d tried to avoid teaching her daughter some of the darkest moments in history but Ellie had a way of finding things out on her own.

“Well ummm….they thought Caesar was not acting in the best interests of the people…”

“Was too busy in Cleopatra’s bed,” her husband chuckled from behind her. Regina spun around and glared at him. “Robin!”

“Well he does have a point,” David defended.

“When I want YOUR opinion, shepherd, I’ll ask for it!” Regina snapped.

“And she doesn’t need to know things like that now!” Snow kicked her husband’s foot. “Men!”

“So why didn’t they kick him out ‘stead of killing him?” Ellie asked.

“Yeah, ‘cause don’t you always say we oughta kick some of those crooked guys outta Congress Daddy?”
“Not easy to do that either Mags,” Jeff answered his daughter. “Though I’d love to throw some of them in my hat and send them to the Infinite Forest.”

Rumple giggled wickedly. “Well that would be fascinating to watch.”

Like most of the sites in Rome, the Forum had also been impacted by time, climate and wars so that not all of the grand structure was still left standing. Still if they closed their eyes, they could see the building as it was back in the day, a grand palace to the government of what had been the most powerful empire in the world at the time.

While Becky and Ewan stood in the very spot where the senators had their meetings, all of them were feeling a bit mischievous and decided to pay homage to one of their favorite movies.

“All fellow members of the Roman Senate, hear me. Shall we continue to build palace after palace for the rich or shall we aspire to a more noble purpose and build decent housing for the poor. How does the Senate vote?” Ewan recited.

“Fuck the poor!” Becky called out. The other Scorpions started laughing.

“Rebecca Halloway!” Archie snapped. “How many times have I told you about that mouth? Do you want another in school suspension on your record?”

“That’s enough you lot!” Rumple chastised his son and his friends.

“Sorry Papa,” Bae said sheepishly.

“Papa, is that the movie where they were riding on a chariot with the mighty joint?” Adriana asked. Rumple’s eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as did Belle’s, knowing exactly what their daughter was referring to.

“Bae! Were you watching that movie with your sister in the room?” Belle demanded.
“No! She was probably hiding under the table again!”

“I never get to watch anything really funny!” she pouted. “Less Bae’s watching it.”

“Well ye dinna need to be watchin that, dearie! Next time Bae would you please for the love of all that’s holy lock the door when you’re having movie night?” Rumple pleaded.

“Ha ha...Becky’s gonna get the soap!” Jonny taunted. She blew a raspberry at him.

“I’m too old for that,” she scoffed.

“Don’t count on it, young lady. Your parents put me and Rumple in charge of you on this vacation and you’re not too old to have your mouth washed out!” Archie said firmly.

Bae sat down and pulled out a small notebook he carried with him and started sketching parts of the Forum. He had at least three sketchbooks full of drawings he made based on the sites he’d visited during his trip. He glanced over at his parents, nodded to himself and continued to sketch while the others continued to tour the site. Andi sat down beside him.

“Your father’s going to love that,” she murmured, pointing to where he’d sketched his father in emperor’s robes and his mother as an empress standing in front of the Forum as it looked in ancient times giving a speech to a crowd of people.

“Hey bro, you comin or what? We’re goin to the virgin temple next!” Bobby called out.

Their next stop was the Temple of Vesta, the former home of the legendary Vestal Virgins, a small portion of the structure still left standing as portions of it had been reused to construct churches and papal palaces.

Unlike most of the sites they visited, the Pantheon had been well preserved and still in use as a church dedicated to St. Mary and the martyrs. There were also masses held in the temple on Sundays and during the holy days. Angelo told them at the Pulcinellos sometimes attended mass there and one of their sons had been married there. There was an aura of peace and serenity inside the Pantheon unlike other structures they’d visited that morning.
“I am looking forward to attending a mass,” Belle confessed. “Will we come here on Sunday, Rumple?”

“Let’s see what our hosts want to do first. If they want to go to the Vatican, we’ll go there and come here the following Sunday.”

Both he and Regina were still reeling from the divine blessings they’d received while visiting the Vatican, neither of them expecting it and reminded them that the long journey they both made down the road to redemption had been well worth the effort.

They decided to finish their day of sightseeing in Pompeii and would spend most of the following day in Venice. The moment they stepped out of their vehicles, they were all overcome by a feeling of sadness, recalling the destruction and death the eruption of Mount Vesuvius brought to the once beautiful city.

“There was nobody to save them Papa,” Adriana wept. Rumple picked his daughter up and cradled her in his arms.

“No mo, astor….there wasn’t.”

As they had in the Colosseum, all the mages could sense the pain and sorrow of the spirits that still haunted the site, the voices crying out in fear and sorrow, begging for help that would never come and asking why the gods had forsaken them while they were being buried under rivers of burning lava and clouds of ash. At the Garden of the Fugitives, everyone was shaken seeing plaster and resin casts of victims that had been buried in the ash. There were also casts on other sites around the city. The children stood in front of a cast of a child victim, weeping softly while their parents tried unsuccessfully to hold back their own tears.

Who are you? Adriana heard a little boy’s voice asking her.

Adriana. Who are you?

Stefanos. How can you talk to me and no one else who comes here can?

I can talk to lots of things…and my friends can do stuff too. My cousin talks to animals.
He does!

Uh-huh.

Maggie kneeled down beside him. “I can hear him too. Can you, Ellie?”

“Hear what? Are you talking to this child, Maggie?” Emma inquired softly.

“Yeah...I think we can all hear him. Right, guys?”

Her friends nodded and even the babies were eyeing him curiously.

Are you like gods and goddesses? Stefanos asked them.

Nope, we’re True Love kids so we were born with magic, Ellie sent.

Can you bring me and my mama and daddy back?

Adriana shook her head sadly. My papa says we can’t bring back the dead.

And if we had that ability, we would child, Rumple sent, now hearing the small boy in his mind too.

Did the gods punish us? Is that why we died? the new voice belonged to an adult female, the boy’s mother Rumple suspected.

No, dearie. It was an act of nature that no one could have prevented…

Why do so many people come to see us? they now heard from the boy’s father.
Because you haven’t been forgotten, Regina answered back. Even after all this time you haven’t been forgotten.

That’s why we’re here. To remind you you’ll never be forgotten, added Henry.

“I can’t believe this….I can hear them too…” Emma whispered.

Did you have a dog or a kitty, Stefanos? Adriana asked him.

I had a dog…he’s here with me….but they didn’t find him like they found us and put the plaster on us.

What was his name?

“Julius!” Jonny cried.

That’s right little one.

Mama and Papa read me a story once about a blind boy and his dog….was that you? Adriana asked him.

No, but I heard about the story from some of the other children who come here, Julius answered.

It was really sad, added Neal. You stayed with Stefanos and his family?

I could never leave them. The animals of Pompeii...we stayed with our families to the end and we stay on...they need us still as we need them.

Now that they knew someone could speak with them, many other victims at the site began talking, some of them angry but all of them stayed on, not wanting to be separated from their loved ones even in death as they had been in life.
Angelo had dinner ready for them when they returned to the villa that evening and sensed all of them had been troubled by what they encountered at some of the sites.

“That is why I avoid them,” he said. “So much sadness and pain for a mage to feel.

“Yeah but we want them to ‘member we don’t forget them,” Ellie argued. “We talked to a nice boy named Stefanon and his dog...like in the book The Dog of Pompeii.”

Henry cast a spell on his and Grace’s phones that had allowed them to record the conversations his mother, Rumple and the children had with the spirits and the siblings played them back for the chef to hear. He was impressed by the junior magician’s skill.

The Happy Army bears sat in the corner of the dining room, all of them waiting anxiously as their masters and mistresses sampled some of their culinary efforts, hoping they’d done a good job though they were still learning how to help cook.

“A Angelo, you really outdid yourself this time,” David sighed contentedly and rubbed his chest.

“I had a little help from my apprentices here.”

“Well they did an excellent job,” Rumple praised.

“Yes they did...even you Duke,” Archie told his son’s bear. All of them were smiling. They knew they did a good job when the two best cooks in their town were satisfied and couldn’t wait to cook again the following night since there was little else for them to do while the families were sightseeing.

Everyone was awake early for their day in Venice. The women were looking forward to taking rides on the gondolas with their husbands and children but when they arrived in the city, there were none available.

“Maybe we should wait til tonight. There should be more available,” David suggested.
“And it’ll be more romantic,” Belle murmured.

“Mama, I’m gonna take Adriana with me...don’t wanna scar her for life if you and Papa start making out,” Bae laughed. Rumple groaned and shook his head.

Adriana snorted. “Then where’m I gonna go if you and Andi start, huh? For a swim?”

The two teenagers blushed. “Ummm….maybe you should go with Mary then,” Andi spoke up.

“I can take the children somewhere while you go for a ride,” Mary offered.

“We wanna go on the boats!” cried Neal, leaving no room for argument.

“All right...you can go on the first trip with us then Mommy and Daddy can go on the second ride alone,” Snow proposed.

“Okay.”

“They better have gelato here or there’s gonna be a riot,” Bobby grumbled.

“Oh calm down mate!” Ewan held up his phone. “There are lot of them here.”

“You’re going on a gondola ride with me first, buster!” Kat threatened with a grin and waved her cooking spoon in her boyfriend’s face.

When none of the gondolas returned after a few minutes, they walked to the Piazza San Marco. Maurice pulled his two sons in law aside.

“What’s wrong Moe?” Rumple asked him.

“I have to run an errand and I’m going to need your help with it. One of you needs to keep the girls...
occupied, the other has to come with me.”

“This errand wouldn’t involve buying a ring, would it?” Archie asked with a smile.

He nodded. “I hope my girls don’t think I’m rushing things a bit but this time I’ve spent with Penny is the happiest I’ve been in years.”

“I’ll handle the girls. Rumple, you’d better go with him. You’re the jewelry expert,” Archie said to Rumple.

There were many stores in Piazza San Marco including a few jewelry stores, a craft store and clothing stores including a Gucci along with a few cafes. Everyone wanted to do some shopping first for themselves and for their friends back home.

“Where are Papa and Rumple?” Belle asked Archie. While their backs were turned, Moe and Rumple went into the Chopard Boutique to see what rings it had for sale.

“Ummm...Rumple wanted to do a little shopping on his own and your father wanted to tag along,” he said quickly. Marie eyed him suspiciously.

“Oh did he?” she demanded and pulled him aside. “What’s going on?”

“What makes you think anything’s going on, my goddess?”

“Because Papa never tags along with Rumple while he shops because Rumple tends to drive him nuts with how picky he is. Need I remind you how insane he drove you when you first went clothes shopping with him?”

“Well...your father wanted to make some changes to his wardrobe.”

Marie sighed. “Poor Papa. He’s not going to have an easy time of it.”

Archie had more confidence but he didn’t press the issue fearing Marie would figure out the truth.
Hiding anything from the Bordreaux women was difficult as the their husbands discovered when they tried to plan romantic surprises for their wives on birthdays and Valentine's Day.

Everyone was relieved they'd managed to beat the crowds and do their tour in the morning. Angelo warned them the Piazza was crowded most of the day and he, Rumple, Emma and Regina strengthened the protection spells they cast on the group to keep them safe.

Snow was entranced with the flock of pigeons that seemed to be following them around. Emma conjured her a bag of breadcrumbs so that she, David and Neal could sit down and feed them, knowing how much her mother loved birds. Two of them were content to sit on her shoulders while two others sat on Neal’s.

“They like us, Mommy!” he cried.

“They are beautiful….I wonder if they’re mates,” Snow mused.

“They might be honey,” David answered.

“I wanna take ‘em home!”

“Neal, honey, we can’t….”

“Yeah we can. I want a pet and I don’t have one!” he pouted.

“Neal, we’ll get you a pet when we get home.”

“Daddy, I wanna take these guys home!”

David sighed. His son could be as stubborn as Snow when he put his mind to something and it was not always easy to reason with him.

“We can’t and if you keep throwing a tantrum you’ll be staring at a wall. Do I make myself clear Neal Leopold Nolan?”
Neal shuffled his feet and stared at his shoes. “M’sorry Daddy.”

“Good. Now say goodbye to them...we have to get going.”

Neal bent down. “Don’cha worry birdies….think I gotta plan on how m’gonna get ya to come home with me.”

And his plan required the assistance of the two friends he knew who could communicate with animals better than he could: Adriana and Jonny.

Overnight the street had gotten flooded during the high tide and several frogs were hopping around.

“Hey Roland, you think we’re gonna find a mate for Kermit here?” Jason asked his older brother.

“I dunno….but do you really think Mommy and Daddy are gonna let ya keep it?”

“We got to keep Pinkie.”

“Yeah that’s ‘cause he wasn’t bein treated right but that mean pink lady and ya know Ellie freaks out every time Kermit goes near her cause she thinks he’s gonna give her warts.”

“Yeah well Kermit needs a Miss Piggy an I’m gonna get him one.”

“He doesn’t have Miss Piggy anymore...her name’s Denise. Daddy said so.” Roland pointed out.

“Well if I find a mate for Kermit her name’s gonna be Missy, ya know...not Denise!”

Roland shook his head. “Whatever but I still don’t think Mommy’ll let you keep a stray frog. She’ll wanna get you one at a pet shop.”
As they were walking a plan was forming in his mind. There was a mate for his frog somewhere in the city and he knew just who to ask about finding one.

“I’ve never seen so many birds!” Bae exclaimed. “And I’m having terrifying images of that Hitchcock movie in my head!”

“You! I was scared to death of birds for weeks after I saw it!” Becky cried.

“They aren’t bothering anybody and they’re kinda cute,” Andi said when one landed on her shoulder and chirped happily in her ear.

“Tell me that when one o’them shites on ya. Aww man!” Ewan groaned. He felt something warm and wet on his head. The others turned around and laughed when they saw his head and shoulders covered in bird droppings.

“Hey you asked for it bro!” Bobby chuckled.

“Birds have feelings too you know,” Kat added with a giggle.

“Dinna remind me.” He grabbed a handful of tissues out of Becky’s purse and started cleaning himself up.

“I heard this place gets flooded at night and people have fun in it….the water’s almost up to your waist,” Henry said to Emma.

“We won’t be able to stay too long Henry. Your sister will need a nap and your dad and I will need one too. Oh I cannot wait till I deliver this kid!”

“Yeah so I can stop peeing like a racehorse!” Jeff whined.

“Mama, there’s a library!” Adriana pointed to a building to the west in the Piazza called the Biblioteca Marciana.
“Wonderful! Do you want to go in?”

“Uh-huh!”

“I’d like to go too, Miss Belle,” said Grace.

“We’ll watch the babies for you,” Archie offered. The triplets were in their stroller and wide awake. Little Bobby was anxious to go in the water that still filled the streets but having a difficult time getting his ring off. As their mother started walking away, Victoria and Valora wailed loudly and flailed their arms.

“Mommy, they wanna come too.”

“Sweetie I don’t think they allow babies in the library,” Belle said sadly.

“We can ask.”

Grace picked up Victoria while Belle held Valora. “All right, I suppose it won’t hurt to ask...but I don’t know how we can keep them quiet.”

“You’ll keep quiet, won’t you dearies?” Adriana asked her siblings. They smirked and nodded their heads slightly as if they understood her. When the group walked into the library, one of the employees stopped them.

“Signora...your babies....”

“I know but I promise you they will be very quiet and won’t touch anything,” Belle insisted in Italian. “And my other daughter is very well behaved. We just would like to see some of your collection.”

“Ummm...I may get in trouble for this...but all right. You can bring them in but please, please, make sure they don’t mess anything up!”
“You have my word.”

The collection inside the state archives rivaled the one kept by her husband at Belle Reve and all of the volumes had been well preserved despite their age. She enjoyed pulling some of the classic texts off the shelves and reading them in their native language while they studied the beautiful murals on the ceilings that were as lovely as those found in the Sistine Chapel.

“Mommy, lookit that! A frownie moon!” Adriana pointed to the ceiling where there was a marble carving of a crescent moon with crossed arrows beneath it. “Why’s it frowning?”

“I don’t know honey.”

“It should be happy.”

“Don’t try to change it, please,” Belle whispered.

“I just don’t like frownies!”

“I know but you would disrespect the artist if you change their work,” her mother argued.


“Just a few books about famous inventors.” She was always looking for new inspirations for her projects and her heroes were the inventors of the past. She hoped one day to aspire to the greatness they all achieved and help make their new world a better place. She jotted down some ideas on the notepad program she kept on her phone while she was reading and sent several messages to Major Gru and Doctor Nefario while she was reading. The animated stuffed toys also had cellphones that were magically modified to only give them the ability to talk to the Storybrooke residents.

Belle was grateful that even in an age where digital media was all the rage her library still had a lot of patrons, especially children who loved when she and Snow held Storytime every afternoon at four and she wanted her younger children to appreciate reading actual books as much as she and Rumple still did.
While Belle and the girls were in the library Bae and his friends visited the Markus Art Gallery, featuring glass artwork including reproductions of Venetian goblets, jewelry and even some beaded scarves. Along with oil painting, wood carving and sketching, he was interested in sculpting and the beautiful creations he saw inspired him to make some of his own for family and friends. He bought his mother a set of star shaped glass ornaments to hang on the Christmas tree, little glass aquariums for his siblings, a set of black square glass plates for his father’s collection and a blue glass picture frame for Andi.

“This is great work. I’m an artist myself and I would love to do something like this.”

“If you’re interested in glass art, signore, here is the website address of someone who can help you,” one of the employees said and handed him a card while he was ringing up the sale.

“Thank you. I appreciate that.”

“And perhaps someday signore we may be able to feature your work here, yes?”

Bae chuckled. “Maybe...when I get the hang of it.”

The Hoods were at the Basilica di San Marco, Ellie and Regina were admiring a beautiful mosaic depicting the crucifixion.

“Mommy, why’d they put Him on that cross if He wasn’t bad?”

“Because sweetie, it was hard to accept that Christianity was becoming the new religion practiced in many countries. Jesus meant no harm to anyone, he was simply trying to instill faith in those who were still searching for it and inspire them to do great things. If there’s one lesson I want you to learn from this it’s that I want you to respect all faiths and customs as well as race, age, gender and preference. If more people in this world adopted a policy of tolerance there would be less conflict. Sadly, it took a curse and living in a new world for me to realize this. But that day in St. Peter’s I learned that despite the mistakes I made in my life, I was forgiven but that doesn’t mean I will ever revert back to the person I was back then. When you’re given a second chance after you’ve made a terrible mistake, you learn from it.”

“So after three days he came back?”
“Yes and that is what the holiday Easter is celebrated for. Christmas was the day He was born and that is the true meaning of the holiday.”

“So s’not about a bunny and a guy in a red suit and beard?”

“Not really...those traditions are still in place mostly for children but I want you and your brothers to always remember the true meanings of Easter and Christmas especially when you have families of your own. We have holidays like this too in our world, only they’re a bit different because we worship many gods as the Romans and Greeks did.”

They rejoined the boys and the rest of the group at Doge’s Palace in the courtyard where there were two large statues of Mars and Neptune, the entrance known as Giant’s Stairway.

“More naked people. Sheesh…” Jonny grumbled. His sister and Kyria started laughing as they went inside. When they walked into the Higher Council Hall it reminded Belle of the Grand Ballroom at Belle Reve and she could see the two of them dancing in their finery to a symphony performed by their enchanted orchestra.

“I just cannot believe how beautiful some of this artwork is,” Marie gasped. “Rumple is missing all of this!”

“I’m recording it for him,” Henry reminded her.

“I’m sorry we’re late, dearies.” Rumple said when he joined them.

“Where’s your bags if you went shopping?” Belle asked him.

“Oh I ahhh...sent them back to the villa,” Rumple lied smoothly and winked at Maurice.

Their shopping trip went better than he expected. They found the ring Maurice wanted at Salvadori called the Miraggi Spiral with a white gold band and an oval cut three carat diamond. Before they rejoined the others they stopped at Gucci to pick the perfect outfit for the evening. Moe planned to propose to Penelope later on that evening during their gondola ride.
Belle and Rumple pulled their husbands aside, giving them a Look.

“All right now what is going on?” Belle demanded. “We’ll find out anyway so you might as well tell us.”

“Your father’s going to ask Penelope to marry him tonight,” Archie blurted, never being able to hide anything from Marie when she gave him the Look.

“He is! He is?” Belle cried excitedly.

“Calm down dearie before you ruin the surprise!” Rumple hissed.

“When?” Marie pressed her husband.

“When they go on their gondola ride.”

“Knowing you, you probably picked out a nice suit for him to wear,” Belle said to her husband.

His suit was a black wool mohair two button closure with a slim tapered silhouette and soft rounded shoulders, silk lining in the jacket. Used to casual dress after so many years, it was difficult for the florist and former lord to get used to wearing formal clothing again.

“And he was easier to shop for than Archie,” Rumple chuckled.

“You forget where I came from.”

“We should take Penny shopping. After all, she needs to be dressed for the occasion too,” Marie pointed out.

Rumple handed Belle his Black Amex card. “Take her to Gucci. Just tell her…your father wants to take her on a gondola ride and dinner…so she needs to dress for it.”

The two women were grinning when they approached their future stepmother. “Penny, why don’t
you come to Gucci with us and we can do some shopping?"

“I’ll keep Kyria with me,” Maurice offered.

“You don’t mind?”

“Not at all.”

“Hey Sella, you know what would be cool...if your grandpa married my grandma and we can be related!” Kyria said to Gisella.

“Yeah that would be neat but where’s my grandpa gonna live? Greece or back in Storybrooke?”

“I dunno but it’ll still be cool!”

“You girls are up to something. I know you are,” Penny accused with a smile when the ladies led her over to the racks with the evening gowns.

“Well...you are going on a gondola ride with Papa and dinner...we thought you might want to dress for the occasion.” Belle said as she held up a floor length white silk cady evening gown with a crystal jewel neckline and straps. Penelope took it and held it out in front of her and could even imagine herself wearing it until she glanced at the tag.

“Oh no…” She put it back on the rack. Belle snatched it back.

“This one’s on us, honey.”

“Belle!”

“I insist. You’re going to look beautiful tonight, Penny.”

“Hmmm...maybe we should dress up too,” Marie murmured, having just the gown in mind for the occasion, unaware that their husbands had the same idea in mind.
Later on that afternoon they visited the Giardini Pubblici. The younger children enjoyed playing on the playground while the adults took a much needed rest from all the walking they did. Rumple summoned blankets from the villa and the fathers spread them out on the grass and Angelo sent them lunch through Mary’s magic bag. Fortunately they were in an area of the park where no one would see them using magic and Penelope and Kyria had gotten used to seeing it. Little Bobby finally managed to get his ring off and was content to lay on the blanket in cat form.

“I know we should put it back on but he’s so cute like this,” Belle murmured, picking him up and placing him on her lap while she stroked his fur.

Smelling food and sensing animal friendly humans close by, a group of stray cats made their way to the park. There had been more of them in the past until the animal protection organization Dingo began sterilizing and relocating them but there were still quite a few lurking around.

Rumple was about to take a bite of his tuna sandwich when a cat jumped onto his lap and bit into it.

“Hey! Get off, cat!”

“Meow!”

“Papa, he’s hungry,” Adriana said.

“Yes, well, why doesn’t he go home and...oh now dinna ye start!” Rumple groaned when another cat tried to eat his sandwich.

“Papa, we have plenty….and he’s really hungry. Can’t you give him some?” his daughter pleaded, giving him the sad kitty look. Rumple, unable to resist that look, tore off several pieces of his sandwich and threw them down to the cats. Another tried to crawl onto Belle’s lap and woke Bobby up then curled up beside him.

“Awww... that kitty wants to play with Bobby.”

Rumple pulled a ball of yarn out of his bag and tossed it onto the blanket. “There you go, dearies!”
“Driana, I wanna take some birds home with me but Daddy said I gotta wait til I get home,” Neal complained. “They were the ones we saw when we got here.”

“And I want the frog I saw.” Jason informed her.

Little Bobby was having a wonderful time playing with his new feline friend and some of the other cats were attempting to wheedle handouts out of the rest of the group.

Another cat crawled onto Emma's belly while she was lying down, kneading it with its pawns but being careful not to scratch her.

"Hey you...paws off the hat unless you wanna go to the shelter!” Jeff warned a mischievous cat that had the brim of his hat in its mouth.

"I thought the birds were crazy, where'd all these cats come from?" Robin asked.

"I don't know but they're cute." Regina had a black cat sitting on her lap while she fed it pieces of her apple.

"I'm not a cat person but this guy makes a good massage therapist," Emma murmured.

"Don'cha always say your patients ought get pets so they feel better?" Jonny asked his father.

"Having a pet can help reduce stress and anxiety, yes. Sometimes during the curse Pongo was the only one who could cheer me up after a difficult day."

They spent the rest of the afternoon in the gardens with their new furry friends but when they were getting ready to leave a chorus of mournful meows rang out. Adriana glanced up at her father with sad eyes as did little Bobby who protested when his father changed him back.

“Now, now, dinna give me that look. We can’t take them home!”

“But Paaa-ppaaa they’re hungry and they don’t have a home!” Adriana wailed.
“Better brace yourselves. she’s gonna blow…” Bae sing sioned.

The other children turned to their parents with the same look.

“No, no…Jonny...we can’t take any of them home….we already have the crickets, the dogs and the snakes….” Archie reminded his son though he felt terrible for doing it.

“We have the room!” Gisella protested and stomped her foot.

“Mommy I wanna kitty like that one!” Ellie yelled.

“And I wanna Missy for Kermit!” Jason added.

“Pinkie needs a mate too!” spoke up Roland.

“I want those birdies!” Neal glared at his father.

“And Socks and Major need mates so they can be happy!” Adriana was not giving an inch of leeway, having inherited her father’s gift of deal making but Rumple was determined not to let his treasure outwit him….this time.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you are watching Storybrooke’s Pet Rescue Americana,” Henry narrated.

“Henry I gotta side with them on this.” Grace said.

“Yeah, cause Mommy likes the kitty that’s givin her a ma...what?”

“Massage, Mags.”
“They’re not happy here! They don’t wanna go to the shelters ‘cause it’s hard for them to get adopted and some of them KILL animals. They KILL them!” Adriana screamed.

“Rumple, surely we can take one…” Belle proposed. “I can’t bear the thought that some of these poor cats will be euthanized if they can’t find a home…or die on the streets of starvation…be hit by a vehicle…”

All of the cats chose a human and rubbed their backs against them, purring. “See….they wanna come home with us.” Jonny pointed to an orange tabby sitting beside his father.

Little Bobby’s hands reached for the kitten he’d been playing with and his sisters were staring at a pair of white Angoras.

“I don’t know…” Rumple sighed. “The Pulcinellos are not going to be happy if we have all these stray animals at the villa. They only know of the ones we brought with us.”

“We can send ‘em to Storybrooke with the portal and the shelter people can take care of ‘em til we get back if they can’t stay with us!”

“But I can’t have all these cats in my house!” Rumple cried.

“She’s not suggesting we take all of them Rumple, just one.”

“That is exactly what she wants dearie and ye know it!” Rumple threw up his hands. “And ye’re encouraging her!”

“Of course I am. You and I both know we can find them good homes in Storybrooke, safe ones!”

All of the parents were deeply conflicted. They sympathized with the cats’ plight and were having the urge to take one or two home themselves but suspected taking all of them would cause chaos like the mall incident.

“I don’t want a repeat of the mall incident. Bae would you and your friends watch the kids please while we discuss this,” Rumple said to his son. “You lot…over here,” he said to the rest of the adults.
“Well Bae, are ya with us on the Kitty Side or the Meanie Side?” Adriana demanded of her brother and his friends.

“I’m on the kitty side,” said Kat.

“Umm...I know your heart’s in the right place Rumplette but Papa’s right. We can’t have all those cats in the house. Can you imagine the smell from the litter boxes…” His face paled at the thought. “And you’re too little to be a crazy cat lady!”

“What’s a crazy cat lady?”

“That’s what they called Mommy’s old boss when she worked at the call place. She had a whole family of cats and when she died, she left all her money to them but they got swindled out of it by her mean butler,” Gisella explained.

“Ya mean like the Aristocats?” Jonny asked her.

“That’s who they were.”

“Cool!” Kyria cried. “Where’d they go?”

“I don’t know,” Gisella answered. “They probably lived in the forest.”

“Driana, we gotta help the dogs, frogs and birdies too,” Neal reminded her. She smirked.


Adriana rubbed her hands together gleefully. “I gotta plan and m’gonna need your help with it Jonny since you can speak to animals better’n I can.”

“We can all help! M’not some weak little princess waitin’ for a prince to rescue me. I can do stuff!” Ellie protested.
“Okay...he’s what we’re gonna do…” Adriana gathered everyone into a huddle and they formulated their plan while the parents were in the middle of a debate.

“All right….we’ll take home the ones the kids want and call around to see if we can find a no kill shelter in the city,” Rumple said. “Are we all in agreement?”

“You know those kids of ours….they might be cooking up a scheme of their own, especially yours and Archie’s,” said Regina.

“They’ll have to get up early to outwit ME, dearie.”

Belle and Marie shook their heads having learned that Adriana had gotten the upper hand on her father over Christmas when she recorded him talking in his sleep, bragging that he managed to find the cookware set Belle bought him and pretended to be surprised. She would just let him learn on his own as he always did that it was not easy to outsmart a Bordreaux woman.

Rumple called the car service to tell them they wouldn’t be needed and opened a portal back to the villa with only six cats returning with them for now. Jonny sent a message to the others to inform the other animals they knew that if they wanted to go to Storybrooke they were to meet up at Villa Pulcinello that night. The cats raced back into the city, excited at the prospect of finding homes where there was warmth, good food and kind masters and mistresses.

Angelo was stunned to find six new faces at the villa and one of the cats took to him right away. It had been centuries since he’d had a familiar and realized how much he missed it.

“You have a familiar now so you can be happy again,” Adriana said while Angelo held his new friend on his lap and petted him. He named his familiar Peter after St. Peter. Regina named the black cat she’d brought with her Ebony, Adriana’s intended mate for Socks was named Angel for her white fur and blue eyes. Emma named her cat Patches since it was a calico. Gisella insisted her father name the orange tabby Thomas and Snow’s cat was named Stuart after one of the Minions.

Once they got the cats settled in Mary, Angelo and the Scorpions would keep the children entertained by having a movie marathon on the big screen TV in the Pulcinellos’ living room.

Belle waited for her husband at the foot of the marble staircase wearing her Princess Diana midnight blue evening gown with silver stars, smiling to herself when she thought back to the night she first wore it. It was the night of the school dance and she felt like a princess on her husband’s arm and though the night ended in chaos when a fire nearly destroyed the school, there were many wonderful moments for them during the evening.
“Do I look alright?” Penelope asked nervously while she waited beside her in her gown.

“You look lovely,” Marie praised as she approached them in the red satin evening gown she’d worn to the opera on her honeymoon.

Emma came downstairs in an oversized maternity shirt and sweatpants. “I’m not the dress up type....” she mumbled.

“Despite my efforts,” Snow sighed. She was wearing a pink strapless gown with a princess skirt and sweetheart neckline.

Regina came downstairs in a black strapless gown with a long slit up the side of her pencil thin skirt.

“How the heck are you gonna be able to SIT in that thing Gina!” Emma exclaimed.

She smirked. “Don’t plan on wearing it that long....long enough for the ride...”

The men came downstairs in their tuxedos and matching vests except for Jeff who was following his wife’s example and wearing an old T-shirt and pants.

“We’re gonna be the hoboes tonight,” he said as he put his arm around her.

“Aren’t we always.”

The couples gathered in a circle in the hallway while Rumple opened the portal, making certain to choose a place where they wouldn’t be seen. He reached for Belle’s hand and they stepped through followed by the others. They appeared near the Grand Canal, all of them pleased to see that there were enough gondolas available for them.

Rumple handed the gondolier some euros. “Take us on the scenic route, please.”
“Of course Signore!”

They made themselves comfortable on the plush red velvet seat. Belle laid her head on her husband’s shoulder while he put his arm around her waist.

“This city is so beautiful at night,” she murmured. “It almost makes we wish we had something like this at home, or Belle Reve…”

“Ask and ye shall receive, dearie…” Rumple whispered back, capturing her lips in a sweet kiss. She closed her eyes, still seeing the beauty of the city in her mind and thinking that there was no place she preferred to be at that moment than in the arms of her sorcerer who did not always need to use magic to make her happy. Sometimes all it took was just a look or smile. Never again would he need to hide his light in the shadows.

Yet she also knew that her husband would always do his best to make every dream she ever had come true. Years ago in the castle when she was still his chatelaine she confessed to him her dream of seeing the world. It was dream they waited years to make come true but it didn’t matter….they had centuries to live out their dreams.

“Y...You would do that...for me?”

“Mo chori, dinna ye no’ know after all these years I’d do anything for ye?”

“As I would for you…” She stroked his cheek tenderly. “And all I ask for in return is your love….given freely, not because you feel obligated to…”

Having lived for centuries under the control of another, Rumple made a vow to himself that once he gained his freedom, he would never allow himself to be controlled again. Love was the reason he’d taken the curse but love had freed him.

“Sometimes I look at you and I still ask myself how you love me…”

“I give you my answer every day Rumple...but if you still need convincing…” She cupped his face in her hands and kissed him ardently. The gondolier smiled to himself yet he didn’t dare interrupt their tender moment. Seeing moments like this was what made him enjoy his job.
“Are you convinced now, darling….?” she purred.

“Mmmm...maybe I need a wee bit more of it…” he teased.

“As you wish…”

They kissed again as the gondolier rowed under the Rialto Bridge, several tourists taking pictures of them on their phone but they barely noticed it. The people on the bridge thought they’d just captured a sweet moment between a May-December couple, not the real Beauty and the Beast who were attempting to spread the true message of the story: that the beast was not always a handsome prince in disguise and everyone deserved to be loved, regardless of age, sex and physical appearance.

“I stare through your shadow
I see something more
Believe there's a light in you
I am sure
And my truth makes you stronger
Do you realize
You awake every morning
With my strength by your side…” Belle sang softly, changing the lyrics to their theme song as her own tribute to her love.

I am not a hero
I am not an angel
I am just a man
Man who's trying to love you
Unlike any other
In your eyes I am…
This world keeps on spinning
Only you still my heart
You’re my inspiration
You’re my northern star
I don’t count my possession
All I call mine
I will give you completely
To the end of all time….”

Unbeknownst to them, the gondolier recorded them on his phone. He’d been a witness to many serenades, most of them making his ears bleed but this couple sang so beautifully together that they belonged on a stage for they were doing something most entertainers had forgotten these days...they sang from their hearts.

“I hope you have a lovely evening,” he said when they returned to the dock.

“Gratzie, signore. Buona notte.” Rumple said, taking Belle’s hand in his and leading her down the street to where the portal was still open. Only their group could see it and access it and it would close when the last couple stepped through it. Once they were standing near the foot of the staircase Rumple gave his wife a come-hither look. “The night doesn’t have to end yet, mo chori.”

She smiled and took his hand in hers. “Lead the way darling...”

Robin stepped into the gondola and bowed, holding out his hand. “My queen,” he murmured.

“You always make me feel like a queen, my outlaw,” Regina whispered.

She missed moments like this when they could be alone and though they were not completely alone, she didn’t mind. They would be later.

“In the summer we’re going to take more rides on the lake,” Robin promised her. “Ahh Gina….this has been a great vacation….even if we have had a few hiccups.”
She nuzzled his neck. “What’s life without a few hiccups….and I wouldn’t trade this life for the one I could’ve had if I had allowed Mother to dictate it forever…”

“She can’t hurt you anymore, Gina and anyone who tries to hurt you is gonna have to get through me first….not to mention our friends.” He kissed her softly and pulled her onto his lap. “I just…am not looking forward to going back to the grind but an outlaw’s gotta make a living!”

Even though they were a hardworking career couple, Regina and Robin always tried to find time in their busy schedules for each other and their children though their time alone as a couple was more limited to when after the children went to bed or on Saturday nights.

All too soon their ride had come to an end. They bade their gondolier goodnight and walked down the street to where the portal stood open. Regina took her husband’s hand in hers and they stepped through to their bedroom at Villa Pulcinello. Regina wrapped her arms around Robin’s waist. “Well, my outlaw…will you take me to bed…or risk losing me forever?” she inquired seductively.

He laughed and pulled her down on the bed with him. “Does this answer your question my queen?”

“It does indeed,” she murmured.

Snow and David took a brief walk before they returned to the dock to wait for an available gondola.

“This reminds me of our special date night when you took me for our sleigh ride,” Snow said dreamily. “We had to wait a bit for our Pearl but we have her now, don’t we?”

“We have some great kids…and grandkids,” he whispered in her ear. “Not bad for a former shepherd and an outlaw princess. Look at us now….seeing a whole new world.”

They sat huddled close together sharing kisses under the moonlit sky, grateful for these few hours they had to themselves admiring the beautiful city they found themselves in.

“Now I know why this is called the ‘City of Love’,” David remarked, spotting a couple standing on the bridge in each other’s arms and chuckled when he recognized them as being their daughter and son-in-law. “Get a room you two!” he yelled up at them.
“Ha ha real funny!” Emma called back. “Why don’t you?”

“We will...when we get back!” Snow laughed.

“Oookay then...hurry up! We wanna go for a ride while we’re still young!” Jeff teased.

“Friends of yours?” the gondolier asked with a grin.

“You can say that.”

Emma and Jeff were waiting for them when they arrived at the dock, both of them tapping their feet impatiently. “‘Bout time,” Emma scoffed.

“Why didn’t you get another gondola?” her mother inquired.

“All taken.”

“Don’t stay out too late,” Snow cautioned with a smile as she and David climbed out of the gondola and started walking back toward the portal.

“Our daughter did suggest we get a room, didn’t she?” David asked as he took her hand and led her up the staircase, both of them giggling like teenagers.

The gondolier, seeing that Emma was pregnant, placed a footstool in front of the bench so that she could prop her feet up.

“Ooooh thank you….my feet feel like bricks right now,” Emma groaned. Jeff lifted her legs and placed them across his lap then took her shoes off, gently massaging her feet. “Hatter, you make one smart remark about smelly feet and I’ll whup ya.”

He laughed. “Remember that time in Portland when the Bug broke down and we had to walk to the motel in the rain? Our shoes were squeaking up a storm and when we took ‘em off...whew!”
“Yeah but we weren’t thinking about that the whole time, were we?” she asked, feeling more relaxed as his hands moved up her feet to her calves. “Better watch it Hatter...don’t wanna get arrested for public lewdness…”

“Don’t think he’ll mind this, will he?” He leaned forward and kissed her.

“No….” She wished they could do more once they were alone but being so close to the end of her pregnancy they knew it was too risky. For now she was content with what few intimacies they could have and drifted off to sleep just before they returned to the dock. After he secured the boat the gondolier handed the sleeping young mother to her husband.

“Buona notte.”

“Buona notte….and thanks,” Jeff said as he carried Emma back to the portal. She awoke when he laid her down on the bed.

“Damn….some company I was,” she moaned.

He lay down beside her and took her in his arms. “Sometimes I just like to watch you sleep Em.”

“After we have this kid, we’re gonna make up for all the fun we missed.”

“That a promise?”

“Guarantee,” she assured him.

Maurice’s palms were sweating when it was time for his ride with Penelope. All evening he’d been gathering his courage, trying to find the right words to say to the woman he’d grown to love so deeply almost from the moment they met.

“You look beautiful tonight, Penny,” he said softly. “Almost like a goddess…”

“Me? I’m just a professor…” she said modestly.
“You’re more than that to me. This time I’ve spent with you has been the happiest I’ve been in years…."

She sighed. “But you’ll be going home soon…and I don’t know if I could handle a long distance relationship...”

“Penny….sweetheart…”

“It’s not that I don’t love you Maurice...I do...but….” She choked up. “We’re from two different worlds...and I don’t know how we could make it work.”

He rose from the bench and kneeled beside her, difficult to do after having hip surgery and his knees weren’t as strong as they used to be but he didn’t care. He took her hand in his and gazed into her eyes. “Will you marry me?”

“Maurice….” she whispered.

“I never thought I could love again after I lost Jeanette and Collette but seeing how happy my daughters have been with their husbands….I’ve wanted that happiness for myself and never thought I’d find it...but I have...with you. We may be from two different worlds and I don’t want to go home without you.”

“I don’t want to go home with you,” she sobbed and helped him to his feet. He reached into his pocket and took out the box holding her ring. Her hand was trembling while he placed it on her finger. “Yes, I’ll marry you...I’d marry you tonight if you wanted!” she cried and kissed him passionately.

He laughed. “We need to tell the kids first but I suspect my girls already know. Their husbands can’t keep secrets from them to save their lives.”

“They’re probably asleep now. We can tell them and Sandro in the morning.”

As it came closer for the time for him to return home, Penelope feared it would be the end of their relationship but now as she gazed at the marvellous diamond ring on her finger she knew that her
search for the right man had finally come to an end.

When they returned to the villa Maurice walked her down the hall to her room and took her in his arms for a kiss.

“Stay with me tonight,” she pleaded softly.

“Penny….it’s been a long time for me…” he confessed.

“It has for me too but you don’t know how many nights I lay awake wanting you here with me…but being too afraid to ask.”

“You don’t need to be afraid to ask anymore, sweetheart.”

She took his hand and led him into the bedroom, both of them thinking there could have been no better way to celebrate their new life together.

Like Emma and Jeff, Archie and Marie decided to take a brief walk around first before they went for their own gondola ride, wishing they had visited the city on their first honeymoon.

“Ahh, my last customers for the evening,” their gondolier said with a smile when they climbed into the boat.

“You’ve been very busy tonight,” Marie chuckled.

“Oh I don’t mind, signora.”

Archie put his arm around his wife’s shoulders and held her close to him as she rested her head on his shoulder.

“This vacation has been wonderful Archie….” she murmured. “But it’s more like a second honeymoon to me…”
“It is our second honeymoon my goddess,” he reminded her.

“And you do have your little ways of making me feel like a goddess…Little things…”

“Darling…” He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her softly. She closed her eyes, replaying some of their most precious moments in her mind….their first meeting, their first kiss….their first wedding day and their second. He’d taken a ruined, broken woman and made her believe in love again because it was not what he saw when he looked at her.

She’d taken an enchanted cricket and made him believe he could have so much more in his life if he was willing to take the chance and the moment he had, he never regretted a single moment of it.

He asked the gondolier to stop near the bridge and let them off.

“Are we going back?”

“Not yet.” He took his cellphone out of his pocket and turned up the volume so that Luciano Pavarott’s version of Nessun Dorma was playing and held out his hands to her. “Shall we dance, Mrs. Hopper?”

“I’d love to Mr. Hopper,” she murmured.

A small crowd gathered, watching the couple dance as skillfully as some of the professionals they saw on TV or the stage but Archie and Marie only had eyes for each other. When the dance was over, Archie bowed to his wife and kissed her hand.

“Brava!” another couple praised when they approached them. “Are you professional dancers?”

“No…we’re on our second honeymoon,” Marie murmured.

“Well you both dance so well we thought you were professionals.”
“Oh my husband is one...a psychologist but who says a psychologist can’t be a great dancer.”

“If they all dance and act like him, I’d want to be on his couch,” another woman said, leering at him. Archie flushed scarlet.

“You can look all you want honey but you can’t touch. He’s mine.”

“Well...ahhh...we’ll be leaving now...buona notte!” Archie said quickly and led Marie away before she carved the woman’s eyes out.

The moment they stepped through the portal Marie jumped into his arms, nearly knocking them both over.

“Marie...what...?” he gasped.

“She may be able to just look...but I get the right to look...and touch...” she moaned.

He grinned.

“Well then, my goddess...why don’t we call it a day?” he asked.

“You don’t need to ask me twice...”

Later on that night a large group of animals arrived at Villa Pulcinello, including a major portion of the cat population in Venice. They perched themselves on the trees, the windowsills and a few of them were even daring enough to climb through the windows since a few of them had been left open to let in the cool overnight breeze.

Jeff got out of bed in a desperate need to use the bathroom and while he was walking past the window he screamed in hysteria and nearly tripped over his shoes on the floor when he saw a pair of glowing eyes reflected in the glass.

“Holy shit! Ches!?”
“Jeff...quit makin all that racket...m’tryin to sleep!” Emma groused.

“Honey….that freakin cat is HAUNTING ME!”

“What cat?’

“The Cheshire Cat...hello! Cat with a head and no body. Yeah he’s real and that fleabag was always trying trying to rattle me. Okay smartass, you had your fun now git!”

Emma turned on the lamp and sat up. “Jeff, you idiot...it’s just a regular ole alley cat but what the heck’s it doin here?”

“Oh I know what it’s doin here!” Jeff pulled on his robe and stormed out of the bedroom in search of a certain sorcerer.

At first Bae, Ewan and Bobby thought they’d left the TV on when they started hearing a chorus of cats meowing outside their window. Bae got up and turned on the light to see a group of them sitting on the windowsill scratching at the glass.

“What the hell, bro?” Bobby asked him. He glanced over at the other window. “There’s some over there too!”

“Awww shite!” Ewan jumped out of bed with a kitten attached to the leg of his pajama pants. “Git off! How’d ye git in here anyway?”

"Rumplette's got some 'splainin to do..” Bae sang and the three boys left the bedroom, Ewan hopping around like a rabbit trying to shake off the kitten that was still clinging to his pantleg.

David awoke hearing tapping on the window and turned over to see several birds pecking at the glass. “Snow....Snow...SNOW!”

“Whaaaaa...” she moaned sleepily.
“The birds….they’re attacking like in that crazy movie!”

“You’ve having a nightmare...go back to sleep.”

“Does THAT look like a nightmare to you?” he demanded, sitting her up and turning on the light.

“Oh my God….and are those...cats?” She pointed to a group of cats sitting on the windowsill staring in at them.

“I don’t know what the hell is going on around here but I’m gonna find out!” David grumbled and crawled out of bed. “RUMPLE! GET THE HELL UP MAN! WE’RE BEING INVADED!” he shouted.

Regina was having a lovely dream that she was not quite ready to wake up from when she heard shouting in the hall and ready to let the Evil Queen out to play on a certain prince until she looked on her vanity and saw a group of cats admiring themselves in her mirror, her new cat Ebony among them.

“What on earth...how...how did you all get in here?” she cried.

“Gina, hon...what is it?”

“What is it? What is it?! Ebony decided to invite her friends over for a little party!”

“Huh?” Robin rolled over and started laughing. “Oh my God...look at that…!”

Regina accidently left a tube of lipstick open and now there was a set of red pawprints all over the mirror, the table and the white rug.

“It’s not funny!” She waved her hand and the pawprints vanished. “You’re lucky I have magic and maybe not because I would have turned you all into maids to clean this mess up!”

“What are they all doing here?”
“I don’t know but ahhhh!” Regina screamed when something green leaped at her. She looked down to see a frog at her feet that she knew didn’t belong to her son. “I would bet my palace our children had something to do with it!”

While they were walking toward their children’s room a white poodle breezed past them and nearly made Robin trip.

In the Hoppers’ bedroom their cat Tom happily escorted his mate and their three kittens up onto the bed to meet their new master and mistress. Tom plopped down on the pillow above Archie’s head while his mate took half of Marie’s pillow for her bed and the kittens crawled under the covers.

“Archie….there’s something in the bed…” Marie whispered, shaking his shoulder to rouse him.

“One of the kids havin’ a nightmare darling…” he murmured sleepily and closed his eyes to go back to sleep.

“MEEEEOOOWWWW!”

Tom’s loud screech woke both of the Hoppers up. “What the…? Tom, what are doing in here? You’re supposed to be in Sella’s room?”

“And who are you?” Marie asked, picking up the cat on her pillow and holding it up. Tom crawled out of his warm bed on Archie’s pillow and clawed at the cover as three tiny voices cried out beneath it. Archie lifted it up to find three kittens laying by their feet.

“Tom….is this your family?” he asked.

“Meow.” He nuzzled the kittens affectionately.

“Oh my God…Archie….we were going to take him away from his family! We can’t do that!” Marie cried.
He eyed her quizzically. “Does this mean I’m not gonna get a couch banishment if I suggest we take them all home?”

She glanced down at the kittens then back at the two adults. “I would never forgive myself if we didn’t take them all home.”

Archie chuckled. “Well since the kids named this one Tom...we may as well name them all after the Aristocats.”

After examining each of the kittens to determine their sex, Marie picked them up and placed them on her lap. “Okay...Duchess, Berliotz, Toulouse and Marie….welcome to the family.” The cats even resembled their famous cartoon counterparts.

“This bed’s gonna be a bit crowded,” Archie sighed.

“Just for tonight but then they can sleep in Sella’s room from now on.”

They lay back down to sleep while their new pets made their bed by their feet.

“....RUMPLE! GET YOUR LAZY ASS UP MAN. WE’RE BEING INVADED.”

“And I’m gonna turn that damned prince into a sheep!” Rumple grumbled while he and Belle crawled out of bed to see what the fuss was all about. They quickly got their answer when they discovered a group of cats in their room and several of them were playing with one of Rumple’s ties.

“Oh no ye don’t ye flea infested furballs! Gimme that back, now!” He leaned down and tried to grab the tie back and another cat jumped onto his ankle and scratched him. “OWWWW! Belle, git it off!”

Before Belle could come to her husband’s aid a female with plush gray fur white feet and chest with a crescent moon on her face bit the tail of the other cat and forced it to release its grip on Rumple’s ankle.

Back off you rabid son of a mange...this human is mine! Rumple heard in his head. He turned around to see the cat that had spoken hissing at the others, wearing a golden collar with the word
“Magic” written in Latin.

As for the rest of you...the humans in this house are under MY protection. You harm them and I will skin you in more ways than you can imagine!

The other cats backed away in terror.

Well well, where did you come from, dearie? Rumple asked her.

I was sent to you by the gods, Master. You are a powerful sorcerer, the most powerful one I have ever encountered yet you do not have a familiar. Every sorcerer needs a familiar to help him.

“Rumple….it's like she's...protecting you…” Belle whispered.

“As a familiar would, mo chori.”

Indeed, my master. She lowered her head and gently licked the scratches on Rumple’s ankle. Seconds later they vanished.

“And a powerful beastie…” He reached out with his senses to assess his new familiar's skills, impressed with what he was seeing. “She can restore a portion of a mage’s energy simply by petting her and we’ve already seen she has the healing gift. Oh….ye’ve got the Roar of the Temple Cats of Basta and Vesta!” he giggled. “Ye’ll be shocking the pants off anyone with that, dearie!”

Just stunning them but you understand. My other gifts and knowledge I shall reveal when needed.

Fair enough.

Now then...your daughter has made a request that some of the animals of Venice come home with you and that is why we’re all here. Some of them are a bit...rough around the edges but a good home and a good human is what they need.

Are you suggesting we take them ALL home?
I am. And do not be angry with the children. Their hearts are in the right place...and they could only have learned such compassion from the ones who sired them.

Just then, the door to the bedroom flew open and Robin, Jeff, Bae and Regina walked in.

“Papa, Rumplette’s done it again!” Bae sighed.

“She had a little help,” he said and held up Magic.

Regina gazed at the cat in shock. “She’s a true familiar Rumple….how did you find her?”

“Actually, she found me.”

“Don’t tell me we’re gonna take all these animals home!” David groaned.

Well Rumplestiltskin, do we have a deal?

“We are,” Rumple replied to both questions. “Can any of you honestly tell me you’d be able to go home and not think about what could happen to them if we left them here? I tried not to...and I can’t...and where do you think our kids got it from? We’ve already bonded with some of them...the others we can let people in the town see them and decide. Not so long ago, many of us were in their situation...searching for a place to call home or wondering where their next meal was coming from. They have as much of a right to a good life as we do.”

Humans do not choose us. We choose them, Magic corrected.

“Well...what’re we gonna do with them in the meantime?” David asked.

“What any sensible person would do….feed them, house them...but most of all love them,” Belle advised.
“The Pulcinellos aren’t gonna like this…” Ewan groaned.

Gennie will be pleased that her friends have returned. She’s missed us since Nutch became ill.

“Magic assures me that won’t be a problem and a familiar always speaks the truth to its mage.”

Humans and animals returned to their beds for the night and in Rumple and Belle’s room Magic jumped up onto the bed and curled up against her sorcerer’s arm with her paws tucked under her purring softly.

We have chosen wisely, she thought and drifted off to sleep.
Cultural Differences

Chapter Summary

The Pulcinellos return to the villa and the families attend a Mass at the Vatican. Belle, Bae, Archie and Marie challenge a group of male sexist bocce players to a bocce game to prove that it is no longer a man's sport.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

~ Cultural Differences ~

Nutch and Gennie Pulcinello were excited to meet their guests when they finally returned home that weekend. They enjoyed seeing their children in the States but it was always wonderful to return home and relax. They were both getting on in years and travelling across the globe was becoming more difficult and eventually they wouldn’t be able to do it at all. The couple had many questions for Egg while he was driving them back to the villa.

“They have more bambinos?” Nutch asked.

“Oh yes….Signora Mary and Signora Regina had them in the pool but they’re adorable little bambinos. The boy’s name is Rum and the little bambina is Pearl.”

“I cannot wait to meet them!”’ Gennie exclaimed.

“They have also expressed a desire to attend Mass with you in the Square this Sunday.”

“Wonderful! Not many young people these days are willing to attend church services anymore or they’re talking and texting on their phones. Very disrespectful in the House of God.”

“Oh I agree signora but these families have been wonderful in the time they’ve been in the villa and even rid us of a few pests.”

“Angelo had better have the kitchens well stocked because I will be making some of my best dishes and treats for them,” Gennie declared.

“Oh Signor Rumple and Signor Archie help Anglo cook,” Egg pointed out.

“Wonderful!”

Back at the villa all of the families had spent most of the previous evening preparing a homecoming celebration for their hosts. The children made a banner that they hung over the archway. Adriana, with her father’s help wrote: WELCOME HOME NUTCH AND GENNIE in Italian and the other children drew little pictures on it including a rainbow, a smiling sun, trees, grass, flowers and insects. Rumple also made the couple a flags to hang with their family’s crest woven in with his gold thread and two afghans, one depicting the Resurrection and the other of the Virgin. Belle, Marie, Regina, Emma and Mary went around with Mariana making sure the house was clean from top to bottom and
the Scorpions mowed the lawns, watered the plants and washed all the statuary. Robin, David and
Jeff cleaned the swimming pool. Angelo and Archie spent most of their time in the kitchen preparing
a grand breakfast feast for the weary travellers, making certain everything was prepared according to
Nutch’s dietary needs.

Everyone was standing out on the walkway waiting for them when Egg brought the car to the front
of the house. As soon as the door opened they all smiled.

“Bentornato a casa!” they called out.

“Oh...oh my goodness!” Gennie cried, pressing her hand to her chest as she glanced down at the
group of small children holding up their banner. “How adorable!”

“We wanted you to have happy faces to see when you came home,” Adriana spoke up.

“Uh-huh an we all put somethin’ in there,” Neal added.

“Well, we’re going to hang this up along with some of the things our little bambinos have made us.”
Robin and David retrieved several of the couple’s suitcases from the trunk of the car and started
carrying them into the villa.

Nutch looked around and nodded in approval. “Egg, the man you had do the lawns and gardens this
time did a much better job than Enzo. Make sure you pay him extra, por favore.”

“You can thank these youngsters signore. The boys mowed the lawns and the girls tended to the
gardens and washed everything.” Egg gestured to where Bae and his friends were standing.

“Nice to see young people who take pride in outside chores.”

“My papa drilled it in my head that if you’re gonna do something better do it right and we were glad
to help out,” Bae boasted.

Rumple beamed.

“We know you must be tired after your long journey and probably hungry so we have breakfast
ready in the dining room,” Archie said.

“Oh we’ve been hearing that you and Rumple are master chefs,” Gennie giggled.

“Oh Angelo exaggerates a wee bit,” Rumple said modestly.

“After breakfast why don’t you join us in the sitting room and we’ll give you the gifts we picked up
for you in the States.”

“Oh Signora Pulcinello, you didn’t have to do that!” Regina cried. “Just being given the opportunity
to stay in your beautiful home is enough for us.”

“You’ve been such wonderful house guests. We insist.”

The babies awoke at the sound of the elderly couples’ voice and instead of crying and being terrified
as they often were with strangers they sensed the Pulcinellos were good people, smiling and cooing
at them. Nutch kept trying to make them laugh by making silly faces and tickling their tummies and
feet and Little Bobby tried to grab his hair and eat it.

“Now, now lad, no eating Nutch’s hair,” Rumple chastised gently.
“Our youngest great grandson tries to do that,” Nutch laughed.

Archie and Angelo’s breakfast menu was a combination of traditional Italian and American cuisine with coffee and hot chocolate to drink, cereal, yogurt, croissants, biscuits, sausage, eggs, toast, ham and bacon along with fette biscottate. The couple nodded with approval while they ate. They believed that when a guest came to your home, you always made sure they never left your table hungry and they were pleased these American families held the same standards and everything was delicious.

“We’ve been told you wish to attend Mass with us this Sunday,” Nutch said.

“Yes. Will you be going to St. Peter’s or do you attend services at a chapel near here?” Rumple inquired.

“We’ll be going to St. Peter’s and maybe you will have to opportunity to see His Holiness,” Gennie replied.

“Oh, I’d love that,” Belle said softly.

“Is he gonna come out and talk to us?” Adriana piped up.

“No, bambina but we must leave early so that we can be in a good place. There are not that many seats but we’ve gotten tickets so that everyone can attend.”

“How much are the tickets? I can compensate you…” Rumple began.

Nutch shook his head.

“The Church doesn’t charge for tickets to attend Mass in the Square but in some cases you do need to get them early...Christmas and Easter.”

“I can understand why. It’s probably crowded there for those holidays,” Snow said.

“Oh it is, cara but fortunately we are always given good seats.”

“When we visited the Vatican….I felt….something…..” Regina murmured.

The Pulcinellos looked at each other. “Were you blessed by the Saints, cara?” Gennie inquired gently.

“I believe I was yes, and so was Rumple,” she admitted. “We’ve gone through some...rough times in our lives...and you have no idea what that meant to us.”

“I think we can, cara. You see people do not always believe God is watching over us but He is and when He has blessed you it truly is a wonderful gift...the greatest gift you could ever receive.”

“Will you be having the bocce game too Signore?” Egg asked Nutch.

“Yes. Do you play bocce?” he asked the group.

“Marie and I have a boule league. It’s similar to bocce,” Belle answered.

“Yes it is, cara. You can use the court to play any time you wish but I warn you...my Gennie is very good.”

“Age and treachery will always defeat youth and skill,” she teased.
“And I taught her well!” Egg chuckled.

“That you did, my friend.”

“Do you have a league, Gennie?”

“No, I don’t. I play with my children and Nutch used to be in the Sunday league.”

“I usually rest on Sundays after Mass,” Nutch said. “Or watch TV.”

“I work on my knitting or bake with Angelo in the kitchen.”

After breakfast they all gathered in the living room where Rumple gave them the afghans he made and the Pulcinellos presented their gifts to the families including adorable little matching outfits for all of the babies, coffee mugs and t-shirts for the adults and stuffed toys for the other children then they went upstairs to take a nap while everyone else went outside to lounge in the pool or play on the bocce court.

Rumple, Emma and Regina cast a charm over the Pulcinellos’ bedroom so that the elderly couple wouldn’t be awakened by the children playing loudly in the lawn. Angelo allowed them to sleep until dinner time and when they awoke both were surprised that they hadn’t heard anything during their sleep.

“Having so many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, we’re used to noise. I do hope you didn’t make everyone tiptoe so we could sleep.”

“No, Nutch. Our kids just made sure they stayed far enough away from your windows so that you wouldn’t be awakened by the noise,” David said smoothly.

Everyone got ready for bed early since they would have to wake up early to attend the Sunday Mass. While their husbands bathed the kids and got them ready for bed, the wives got the outfits they and their families would be wearing for Mass. To Rumple’s surprise he had an easy time waking his son and his friends that morning. The Scorpions were as excited to be attending Mass as the rest of the family, especially Kat whose cursed memories were of being a devoted Catholic.

“You all look lovely,” Gennie praised when they all came downstairs the following morning in suits and dresses, even the babies were wearing little suits and dresses that Rumple made for them and when they arrived at St. Peter’s Square there was already a large crowd gathered, most of them elderly. The group quickly found their seats and turned off their phones. The babies were sleeping in their carriers but they woke up shortly before Mass began.

“Papa, there he is!” Adriana cried excitedly and pointed to the balcony where Pope Francis was standing. “There’s the Pope!”

“Shh, dearie.”

Gennie and Nutch made the sign of the cross and the others followed suit. Gennie handed each of the adults a set of rosary beads to hold in their hands and the moment they were placed in Regina and Rumple’s palms, they once again could see a rainbowed aura surrounding them along with feelings of welcome and peace.

Belle reached across her chair and took her husband’s hand in hers while he fought back his tears, the rosary beads she’d been given by Gennie wrapped around her fingers. Robin took his handkerchief out of his jacket pocket and handed it to his wife while she wept beside him, her own rosary beads clutched tightly in her hand.

People do not always believe God is watching over us but He is and when He has blessed you it
truly is a wonderful gift...the greatest gift you could ever receive…

Other people sitting around them were amazed that a group that had so many young children did not have a baby screaming or crying but the babies simply sat in their carriers listening attentively the Pope began to speak.

“Dear brothers and sisters, good morning! This Sunday, we continue reading from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, in which Jesus, having accomplished the great miracle of the multiplication of the bread, explains to people the meaning of the "sign".

As he had done earlier with the Samaritan woman, starting from the experience of thirst and the sign of water, here Jesus goes from the experience of hunger and the sign of bread, to reveal Himself and to offer an invitation to believe in Him.

The people seek Him and listen to Him, because they remained enthused by the miracle; they wanted to make him king! However, when Jesus affirms that the true bread, given by God, is Himself, many are shocked, and begin murmuring among themselves, "Do we not know his father and mother? Then how can he say, 'I have come down from heaven'? " And they begin to murmur … Then Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him," and adds: “whoever believes has eternal life.”

This word of the Lord amazes us, and makes us think, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him,” and “whoever believes has eternal life”.... It makes one reflect. It introduces the dynamic of faith, which is a relationship: the relationship between the human person and the person of Jesus, where the Father plays a decisive role, and, of course, also the Holy Spirit. That is implied here. It is not enough to meet Jesus to believe in Him, not just in reading the Bible, the Gospel; not even enough in witnessing a miracle ... So many people were in close contact with Jesus and did not believe. Indeed, they also despised and condemned Him. And I ask myself: Why? Were they not attracted by the Father? No, but because their hearts were closed to the action of the Spirit of God. If you keep your heart closed, the faith doesn't enter! We open or close our hearts. But instead the faith, which is like a seed deep in the heart, blossoms when we allow ourselves to be "drawn" from the Father to Jesus, and "go to Him" with an open mind, without prejudices; then we recognize in His face the face of God, and in his words, the Word of God, because the Holy Spirit has made us enter into the relationship of love and of life between Jesus and God, the Father. So we receive the gift of the faith.

Therefore, with this attitude of faith, we can understand the meaning of "Bread of life" that Jesus gives us, and that He describes in this way: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." In Jesus, in His "flesh" - that is, in His concrete humanity – God’s love, which is the Holy Spirit, is everything. Those who let themselves be attracted by this love go to Jesus in faith, and receive from Him life, eternal life.

Someone who lived this experience in such an exemplary way was the Virgin of Nazareth, Mary: the first human person who believed in God by accepting the flesh of Jesus. Let us learn from her, our Mother, joy and gratitude for the gift of faith. A gift that is not "private" but shared: it is "for the life of the world"!"

He then led the assembly into the recitation of the Angelus.

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”
“Dear brothers and sisters. Seventy years ago, on August 6th and 9th of 1945, the terrible atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki took place. Even after much time has passed, this tragic event still arouses horror and repulsion. It has become the symbol of the enormous destructive power of man when he makes a distorted use of advances in science and technology, and is a permanent warning to humanity to divorce itself forever from war and ban nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction. This sad anniversary calls us above all to pray and work towards peace, to spread the ethic of brotherhood and a climate of peaceful coexistence among peoples worldwide. From every land, one voice should rise: no to war and to violence and yes to dialogue and peace! With war, one always loses. The only way to win a war is never to wage it!

I am following with deep concern the news from El Salvador, where recently the hardships of the population have gotten worse because of famine, economic crisis, acute social conflicts and growing violence. I encourage the dear people of El Salvador to persevere together in hope, and I urge everyone to pray that justice and peace flourish again in the land of Blessed Oscar Romero.

I greet all of you, Romans and pilgrims; in particular to the young of Mason Vicentino, Villaraspa, Nova Milanese, Fossò, Sandon, Ferrara, and the altar servers of Calcarelli.

I greet the motorcyclists of San Zeno (Brescia), committed to young recovering children hospitalized in Rome’s Bambino Gesu Hospital.

I wish you all a good Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me!

Good lunch and goodbye!”

“Wasn’t that a wonderful Mass?” Gennie asked their guests while they were leaving.

“Yes it was,” Rumple murmured.

“I wanted to see the Pope!” Adriana whined.

“Maybe someday you will, cara,” Gennie assured her.

“Daddy, did those places really get bombed?” Jonny asked his father. Archie nodded sadly.

“Yes they did, son.”

“And lotsa people got hurt?”

“Yes they did, sweetie,” Regina answered her daughter.

“Did they die?”

“Yes.”

“I want to use my inventions to help make this world a better place, not destroy it,” Grace spoke up.

“We know you do honey and that’s what the Pope was trying to say...people need to focus their talents on bringing peace to this world rather than destroy it,” Emma said.

“He’s also saying we should try to talk our differences out inside of fighting about them,” Henry added.

“We’ve all seen enough fighting,” Regina mumbled.

“I was surprised he didn’t mention us, Grandma,” Kyria frowned.
“He has honey,” Penelope assured her.

“Are we the Pilgrims he was talkin’ about, Mommy?” Neal asked his mother.

“We came here from the States so yes, you can say we are pilgrims.”
“I used to watch Masses like this on TV when we were at the warehouse,” Kat said. “And sometimes I even dreamed I was here with my family….but now that I’m actually here it feels like a dream come true.”

It was late in the afternoon when they returned to the villa for a late lunch. The children were eager to tell Angelo, Egg and Mariana everything they learned from the Pope at Mass that day that all of them started speaking at once.

“Now, now, one at a time,” Regina admonished.

“It’s wonderful to see that they enjoyed it so much.”

“Oh they did Egg and even the little bambinos here were listening,” Nutch pointed out.

“Gino called and said that they won’t be over to play bocce this evening.”

“Is something wrong?” Gennie inquired worriedly

“No but they forgot they had family coming in from Sicily. Vito’s team will probably go with them so if the rest of you want to use the court go ahead.” Nutch informed the others.

“I’ll come out and watch.”

“Why don’t you play with us, Gennie?” Belle invited.

“Oh I’ll just watch. I’ll wake you up later cara,” she said to Nutch and gave him a kiss before he went into the house.

Angelo, Mariana and Egg brought lunch out to the terrace for everyone while Belle and Marie were getting the court set up to practice playing bocce but just before they started a group of elderly Italian gentleman approached the court.

“No women are allowed on the court today,” their leader informed them. Gennie watched them with a scowl on her lips, thinking back many years to when she and Nutch were first married and she’d been told the same thing. She was going to enjoy seeing her American guests show them that bocce was no longer just a man’s sport.

“Should I…”

“No, Egg. I know the signoras can handle the likes of them.”

“What do you mean ‘no women allowed’?” Belle demanded, hands on her hips. “The Pulcinellos gave us permission to play!”

"You sit. We play," Vito replied and pointed to the vacant bench. "Women do not play bocce here on Sundays."

"Is that so?" Marie glared at them. "What's the matter, boys? You think we can't play or are you afraid we'll beat you?"

They laughed. "You, beat us? Signora, we have been playing since before you were even born. You cannot beat us."
"We'll see about that!" Belle huffed. "Why don't you let us play and you'll find out a woman can play this game as good as a man?"

"Just the two of you?" Mario inquired and chuckled.

"Oh no, dearies. Three." Rumple said, coming to Belle's side.

"Make that four," Archie added, standing beside Marie.

"You cannot play on the court holding that cane! You'll ruin it!" Dante yelled at Rumple.

"Then I'll play," Bae said icily, more than willing to defend his mother's honor in his father's place. Rumple beamed with pride at his son. He and Belle had come a long way from their beginnings just as he wanted them to all those years ago.

The four bocce players stared at the group and smirked, confident that theirs would be an easy victory since they had all been on first place teams in the league's tournaments for forty years.

Though Bae had only played boule a few times with Belle, he always managed to score a point or two during a game and so could Archie though he didn't play often either. Neither of them was going to stand by and allow women they both loved being insulted by a group of elderly sexists without stepping forward to defend their honor. After watching the older men playing, they realized that bocce was almost exactly the same as boule. One of the men explained the rules of their game to the group and Belle, who was designated as the Gold-Hopper team captain met in the center of the court with Vito, the captain of the mens' team. He held a lira in his hand. Belle chose 'tails' or code. Vito tossed the coin in the air, landing on the tails side.

"We'll take green," she said. "Go ahead Marie."

She tossed the pallino and it rolled into the middle of the court followed by her green ball. Her ball rolled over to the jack, leaving a gap between them. One of the men picked up a red ball and stood in the corner of the court, aiming his ball at the side wall. The ball bounced against the side of the court and moved into a closer position than Marie's ball.

"We need to try that!" Marie whispered to Belle. They always threw straight balls as did the other women in their league.

"Bae, did you see where his ball hit?" Belle whispered to Bae.

The teenager nodded.

"Try to get your ball to hit the same spot," she advised.

"I'll try, Mama."

Bae picked up a green ball and threw it. His ball bounced several inches away from the spot where the other man's hit and rolled past it. They could hear the men snickering behind them.

"Dammit!" Bae cursed. "Sorry, Mama."

"It's okay honey. It was a good try. Now let's see what I can do."

She picked up her ball and threw it, the ball bounded against the board in the same spot Bae's had and rolled a few inches away from his.

Archie was nervous when he picked up his ball. He was their team's last chance to score a point in
the round and he never enjoyed having to shoot last when they played at home though they were
doing it just for fun.

"Marie...what should I do? Bouncing it off the side isn't working."

"Just try to get close honey. Throw it how you want to."

He sighed heavily. "All right."

He threw a straight ball that swerved past the red ball and pallino.

"Good try, honey," Marie said softly.

Dante, Sal and Mario and each threw their balls and managed to get all of them close to the pallino,
scoring four points in the round.

"Look at them...grinning like Cheshire cats," Regina said angrily. "If I knew how to play I'd wipe
those looks off their faces in short order."

"If my daddy gets really mad he's gonna throw a fast one and knock em all out!" Jonny declared.
"He did that one time when some lady got in Mommy's face 'cause she wanted to have some ball
measured and the lady didn't wanna do it cause she thought she got the point. Daddy threw a really
fast one, made em all scatter and got Mommy's team two points."

"Oh, I'd love to see that," Emma laughed.

"So would I because we all know Archie can be a force to be reckoned with when he gets mad," Jeff
spoke up.

"So can my son. Those men have no idea what they're in for, do they, dearies?" Rumple asked them,
giggling impishly.

The two teams walked up to the opposite end of the court to start the next round with the red team
throwing first. Vito bounced both the jack and his red ball off the side wall and the two balls were
touching.

"Damn! How are they gonna beat that?" Robin asked Rumple.

"They'll have to try to break it by hitting the red ball or the pallino," Rumple explained. "Belle's done
it hundreds of times and so has Marie."

Belle stepped forward and threw her green ball hard, bouncing it off the side of the board around the
same area where Vito threw and struck the red ball. It rolled away from the pallino, giving Belle's
team the point for the moment.

"Great shot dearie!" Rumple cheered. Sal stepped forward with his red ball and bounced it in the
same spot as Belle's and knocked hers out of scoring position.

"Go ahead Bae," Marie said to her nephew.

"Don't you want to go?"

"Go on Bae. Give it a try," Belle encouraged.

Not wanting to give the men another chance to gloat, Bae hesitated a few seconds before he threw
his ball, aiming at the spot on the board his opponent threw to. To his delight his ball rolled past the
red one and closer to the pallino.

"ALL RIGHT FIRE!" the Scorpions cheered.

"Great shot Bae!" Marie praised.

Mario glared at him as he threw his ball but he didn't throw it hard enough and it rolled too far away from the others, forcing Dante to have to throw their final ball to try to score a point in the round. He decided to throw a straight ball. It bounced against Bae's ball, moving it so that it was touching the pallino.

Marie bounced her ball off the opposite side of the court and it rolled into scoring position on the other side of Bae's. Archie picked up his ball and gazed out at the court, to analyze where would be the best place to take his shot. He threw a straight ball in the center that rolled close to where one of the red balls was.

"Two points," Vito said.

"I don't think so," Belle disputed. "We need to measure that because I think Archie's ball is closer than that red one," she said as she walked out onto the court.

"It is not!"

Mario walked over to the scoreboard to move it.

"Hold it right there, dearie!" Rumple ordered. "She wants it measured, you have to measure it...or have you forgotten the rules?"

He, David, Robin, Bobby, Ewan and Jeff all stood up, ready to spring into action if the men dared to try to cheat.

"Marie, I can't tell from where we're standing. They look the same to me," Archie said. Marie walked out onto the court and stood in several positions, looking at the balls from several angles then returned to where her husband and nephew stood. "They do but yours might be closer by a hair."

A measuring stick was brought out. Belle kneeled down on the court and held the pallino in place while Vito measured the distance from each ball with the ruler, snorting in disgust. "Move it to three!" he barked and walked away.

"Good shot baby!" Marie cried and hugged her husband.

"We're still one point behind, Mama." Bae reminded her.

"We can still show them," Belle said confidently and handed the pallino to him. "Just throw it like you do your green ball but you have to get it past that line, okay?"

"Gotcha."

He threw the jack, it was barely past the line and followed it with his green ball, groaning in frustration at the gap he left between the two of them. Sal picked up his red ball and threw it rolling it closer than Bae's. Belle took her turn next, aiming at the jack and knocked it away from the red ball and closer to Bae's.

Vito was next and threw his ball. It rolled right beside Bae's, too close for anyone to determine who
was closer and forcing them to measure a second time.

"Your turn!" he said smugly to Belle's teammates.

"Do you want to go or should I?" Archie asked his wife.

"You can if you want to."

"Maybe you should go last...in case I miss."

"Honey, don't worry about it. It's just a game."

"I know but..."


Archie's face reddened.

Jonny was laughing from where he sat with his friends. "Uh oh. Now they're gonna get it. Daddy's mad."

"He gonna knock em all out?" Ellie asked him.

"Yup. You just watch."

Archie threw a hard straight ball that struck the pallino and the two balls that surrounded it, forcing the pallino to roll closer to the other red ball.

"Dammit!" he cursed.

The members of the red team wore smirks of satisfaction.

"Jonny, I don't think he wanted to do that..." Ellie said.

"Nope but it's okay. Mommy can get it back in there. C'mon Mommy!" Jonny yelled.

"Too bad we can't help them," Adriana said glumly.

"Why can't we?" Maggie asked.

"'Cause that's cheating an they wanna win fair, right Daddy?" Neal asked his father.

"That's right son."

"Well those guys prolly try to cheat, huh, Sella?"

"They did but Aunt Belle won't let them, Roland."

Marie threw her ball next and unfortunately she couldn't get any closer. Dante threw his ball and it rolled close to the pallino along with Mario's scoring the team three more points.

"Ready to give up yet?" Mario asked them.

"It ain't over til the fat lady sings," Bae retorted.

"She's gonna sing an opera here shortly," Sal taunted.
"Arrogant asses," Rumple hissed from his chair, also frustrated that he couldn't help the team with a little magic but he knew how important winning fairly was to Belle. Mario threw first for the red team in the round, Archie for the green team but he couldn't get his ball close enough forcing Marie to throw. Her ball struck the red one and moved it out of scoring position. Vito was next and hit Marie's ball out. Belle urged her son to throw next and Bae, nervous, didn't throw it hard enough. Belle aimed her ball at the pallino and threw it, making the smaller ball roll toward Marie's. Sal bounced his off the opposite end of the court as did Dante with Dante scoring their team another point. The score was now eight to three and twelve points won the game.

"They need four points to win," Bae sighed.

"I know it's just a game but dammit I cannot stand their taunting!" Archie growled.

"Me neither. I wanna whup their asses good and send them crying back to the villa."

"Bae, I want you to throw first, then Marie, then Archie then me," Belle said.

"Okay, Mama."

Marie smiled at her sister, knowing what she was planning. They were going to keep changing their throwing order to try to prevent the other team from scoring any other points while they scored their own to try to tie the game or get a point or two ahead, all of them paying close attention to where their opponents were throwing their balls and trying to use the same strategies. They were able to do this for several more rounds until the score was eight to seven.

Archie stepped out to throw the first ball for the next round, the jack rolling close to the wall.

"Oh crap. Wall hugger. I hate those," Bae complained while his uncle threw his green ball. It rolled in front of the pallino and was touching it.

"Good job, baby. You 'kissed' it!" Marie praised and kissed him. Vito stood at an angle on the court and threw his ball, barely missing the pallino and Archie's ball. Sal threw next, attempting to knock it out with a straight ball that curved. He cursed and stepped back to allow Dante to throw. He also threw a straight ball that separated the green ball and the pallino. It rolled back over to Archie's ball.

"Sweet!" Bae crowed. Dante glared at him and threw his ball, knocking Archie's to the back wall.

"Aww shit...now they have three!"

"For now," Marie mumbled and bounced hers off the side board, getting it closer to the pallino. Belle threw hers in the same spot, moving their team ahead one point.

"Damn....this game can get as intense as baseball or football!" David exclaimed.

"Oh yeah. We've had to arrest quite a few people for brawling down at the Rabbit Hole."

"Let's not forget the great 'Catfight At The Gold Corral'" Jeff joked.

"Don't remind me!" Rumple groaned.

The Golds hosted the previous year's summer league boule tournament and Pat Allen and Mrs. Muffet had nearly come to blows during a game when Mrs. Muffet blamed Pat for losing the first game when she couldn't score a point on her last ball. The two women were tearing at each other's hair when Rumple stepped in and levitated both of them until they calmed down. One of the neighbors heard the noise and called the police but when Jeff and Arthur showed up, they were both shocked to see two old ladies hovering in the air trying to beat each other up.
"Yeah Pat and Missus Muffet get really serious during a game," Jonny said. "Member before we left when Missus Muffet pushed Missus Allen into our pool and Daddy got really mad."

"And once again we had to make a house call...and rescue your dad because they ganged up on him for getting in the way!"

"Thank God I don't play!" Snow exclaimed.

"Yeah and Mommy chased Missus Muffet with the broom cause she tried to pull Daddy's hair."

"Then...then.....Missus Muffet stole Uncle Rumple's cane and tried to challenge Mommy to a duel!"

"And once again, I had to suspend her," Rumple sighed.

The score to the game was now ten to eleven with the red team one point away from winning the game and Dante was throwing first. His ball rolled in front of the jack. His teammates were smiling, all of them confident that that game was theirs. Belle handed Bae one of the green balls. He threw a straight ball down the court and missed the red ball.

"Shit!" he muttered under his breath.

"It's okay Bae," Belle assured him.

"Mama, I really wanna beat those guys."

"Game's not over yet," she said and stepped up to take her shot. She hit the red ball and it rolled away from the pallino.

"Who's in?" Bae asked Marie.

"I can't tell....it looks like ours from here....but when I go over here it looks like theirs."

They heard the other players in the red team grumbling behind them when Belle and Vito started measuring the balls again. When they were finished, Vito motioned to Sal to throw the next ball, his rolling closer to the pallino.

"Ready to sing yet cara," he taunted as he passed Belle. Bae glared at him.

"You'll be singing soprano if you insult my mama one more time," the teenager threatened, thinking this particular elder was not worth the respect his father drilled in him since he was a child to show to his elders. Marie stepped into the court with her ball in hand and concentrated before she took her shot. She bounced her ball off the side of the wall, separating Sal's ball and the pallino but the red ball was still closer.

Archie picked up his ball and threw a hard straight ball, hitting Sal’s ball back to the wall. Vito threw another hard straight ball that barely missed Archie’s ball, bouncing off the wall. The score was now tied at eleven.

They had Archie throw first. He bounced the pallino off the side and it rolled into the middle of the court then followed it with his green ball making them 'kiss' each other.

“Great shot, baby!” Marie cried and kissed him.

Vito picked up a red ball and threw another hard straight ball making Archie’s ball and the pallino separate. The pallino rolled closer to the red ball.
“Go on Bae,” Belle said. He bounced his ball off the side but it was not close enough to score a point. Marie picked up her ball next and aimed it at the pallino. It rolled back over to Archie’s ball. Sal glared at them while he took his shot, also aiming for the pallino and missed it. He cursed in Italian and handed the last red ball to Dante. His ball knocked Archie’s back out.

“Come on Mama! You can do it,” Bae cheered.

She glanced over at her husband. Rumple smiled encouragingly.

I know this is just a game, but oh how I want to teach these boys a lesson. This isn’t just a man’s sport anymore.

Then she saw Gennie smiling at her and threw her ball. It knocked Date’s ball out leaving hers the only one close enough to score the point.

“You did it Mama! You did it!” Bae cried, picking her up and spinning her around while Archie picked up Marie.

“No honey, WE did it!” she said softly and hugged him back then embraced her waiting husband.

“I knew you could do it mo chroi,” he said softly.

Gennie rose from her chair and walked over to them, glaring at her husband’s friends who were ranting and cursing in Italian. “Takes you back, doesn’t it?” she demanded, “You said I couldn’t play either but I proved you wrong, didn’t I?”

“They should never have taught you!” Vito growled.

“Well I did and I’m not ashamed of it. Gennie’s had more team championship trophies than you have and you know it!” Egg huffed.

“We’re leaving!”

The children blew raspberries as the men stormed off. “Whatta buncha sore losers!” Ellie teased. Nutch came out of the house a few minutes later.

“What’s all the excitement about?”

Gennie grinned at her husband. “Well, cara, once again we women have proven that bocce is no longer a man’s sport.”

Nutch chuckled. “That is something to celebrate!” He held up his glass of water.

“Egg, can you teach us to how to play now?” Adriana asked him while she held a ball in her hand.

“I certainly can. Who else wants to learn!”

“We do!” Ellie, Maggie, Gisella, Kyria, Jonny, Roland, Neal and Jason all raised their hands.

“All right, come over and I’ll teach you. Now first….this is the pallino…..” he began, holding up the small ball.

“Mommy, come on…play with us!” Ellie shouted over to her mother.

“That does look like fun,” Regina said softly.
“Ah what the heck...I’ll give it a shot. C’mon Mary...Grace...get offa your butts!” Emma ordered.

Belle and Marie grinned at each other. “Looks like we’re going to have to add more teams to the league, sis.” Marie said.

“And it looks like we’ll need to put in another court,” Nutch joked.

“You know cara, that’s not a bad idea at all...and I know just the place for it.”

Gennie Pulcinello smiled, thinking back to when she was a young bride watching her husband play bocce, thinking she would never know how to play herself until one man was kind enough to take her under his wing and make her one of the finest players in Italy. For as long as Egg lived, there would never be another woman too afraid to learn what had for years been considered a ‘man’s sport’.

Chapter End Notes

Pope Francis’s speech is from an actual Sunday Mass given on August 9, 2015. This chapter is dedicated with love and respect to the real Nutch and Jennie Pulcinello whom are very dear friends of my family, the Wednesday Night Women’s Bocce League of Altoona, PA and especially to the real Joseph “Egg” DeStadio, for teaching the first generation of women bocce players so that our league is still going strong after 40 years and proving that it is no longer just a man’s sport! Thank you Egg! - CJ Moliere
A World of Magic and Miracles

Chapter Summary

The families hosts learn their secrets through a miracle performed by little Adriana, Maurice and Penelope get married, Storybrooke gains a few new residents and Emma gives birth!

Everyone in the family was expecting Maurice and Penelope to have a long engagement but they were all in for a shock when the couple announced over dinner one evening that they planned on getting married before they left Italy. With Gennie and Nutch's blessing she'd also invited Kyria's parents to stay at the villa a few days Kyria missed Sophia and Alessandro terribly and Penelope had been worried about them the entire time she was away with the financial crisis still going on. Alessandro was sad to report that the situation was still not improving.

"B...But, Papa....have you even decided where you're going to live yet?" Belle asked.

"We're going to live in Storybrooke," her father replied.

"Sandro, have you given the Grande Bretagne your notice?"

"Yes, Mum."

Archie's eyes widened. "Sandro...you're quitting?"

He nodded. "Archie, I don't feel confident living in Greece anymore. I know it's been my home since I was born....but I have to think of Sophie and Kyria." He glanced over at Regina. "Madam Mayor...I know this is bit sudden...but does your town take in outsiders?"

Gennie raised an eyebrow. "Why wouldn't it?"

"Oh ah, we're a bit of a tight knit community," Regina explained. "It's not that people aren't welcome in our town but we're trying to avoid the problems other towns have. Our crime rate is one of the lowest in Maine thanks to Emma, Jeff and their deputies." She nodded at Emma.


"Don't give this lump a swelled head Regina. He doesn't have any hats to fit it," Emma joked.

"And to answer your question Sandro, yes you are more than welcome to live in our town. I'm sure Rumple can find you a place."

“I certainly can dearies and if you wish, on the same street Archie and Marie live.”

“Oh, that would be wonderful!” Sophia cried.

"This is great!" Kyria cried. "We're gonna live in your town and we're gonna be related, Sella!" She hugged her friend.

"These raviolis are amazing," Robin reached for the bowl and added two more spoonfuls to his plate.
"Eat up cara, there are plenty more," Gennie encouraged.

“I want some too!” Jason demanded. His father frowned at him.

“What do we say, Jase?”

“Can I have some more…please?”

“That’s better.”

“I think this kid is gonna be more Italian than American. I’ve been eating more here than I have anywhere else,” Emma laughed. She’d always had a fondness for Italian food but once they got to Italy no other food seemed to satisfy her. “One of you HAS to make these raviolis when we get back home,” she informed Archie and Rumple. “Would try myself but I can’t cook worth a crap and neither can Jeff.”

“I’m still learning,” Regina admitted. She’d spent most of the curse trying to learn how to cook but she never felt she was quite up to Rumple and Archie’s levels.

“You’re a great cook Mom,” Henry said diplomatically.

“Thank you, honey.”

“I was thinking that we could all go to Sorrento before you leave. It’s a lovely place…actually, it was where I was born.” Gennie smiled wistfully.

“That sounds great Gennie.” Snow was grateful that their hosts were willing to be tour guides for them in the final weeks of their visit. They had already seen so many of the beautiful places this world had to offer and loved every moment of it.

“Are we gonna visit the adventure rooms too, Dad?” Grace asked her father.

“Yep. We have a record to maintain,” Jeff bragged.

“Well maybe this time we’ll beat ya!” David said confidently.

“You're on!”

Everyone went to bed early for their trip to Sorrento but some of the beds were terribly crowded because their new pets insisted on sharing them with their masters and mistresses. Magic made herself comfortable on the pillow above Rumple’s head.

Dearie, can’t you sleep on the floor? He conjured a plush black velvet cat bed on the floor. There.

Now isn’t that comfortable.

I must protect you, my master.

Magic, I am quite capable of protecting myself. Now go on.

Fine. But if your dreams disturb you I will come right back up here.

I haven’t had a nightmare in a while. There’s been no reason to.

“Rumple if she wants to sleep here, let her sleep here. I don’t mind,” Belle said softly. Magic walked over to her side of the bed and brushed her back against Belle’s arm. “You are such a sweetheart.”

Then she started giggling.

“And just what is so amusing?” Rumple demanded.
His wife grinned. “I’m trying to imagine you shifting into a cat….you’d be the most adorable one….”

He scowled. “Now why would ye be wanting me to be a cat?”

“Our son has to get his shifting abilities from somewhere. Don’t tell me you never did.”

“Oh, it was a long time ago after I became the Dark One in fact. Bae remembers it well and he made a sketch of it. It’s in one of his notebooks. We were going for a walk in the forest as we always did because when I wasn’t having to make deals with one silly sod after another I did try to spend as much time with my boy as I could doing the same things we used to do when I was just a humble spinner. The darkness didn’t start to cause a wedge between us until I’d been the Dark One a century. We were walking through the forest when we found ourselves surrounded by a pack of wolves.”

Belle shivered. Magic growled.

“I could have incinerated the lot of them with just a flick of my wrist but I’d given my son my word that I wouldn’t resort to violence unless I absolutely needed to and teleported him to a safe distance while I spoke to the wolves as one of their own and learned why they’d been attacking people at random in the woods. Food was scarce in that portion of the forest with so many other predators lurking about. I made a deal with them. If they gave me their word that they would not harm another human being I would make certain they and the others in their pack would never go without a meal again. I also warned them that I would be watching and if they broke their deal with me, they would no longer be safe from their own predators.”

“Did they honor your deal?”

He smiled. “They did mo chroi and so have their descendants. No animal has been hunting or has been hunted for food in that portion of the woods for centuries. Food comes to them whenever they wish it to.”

Very clever, Master! Magic praised.

“Rumple, I’d like to go back to the Enchanted Forest to see the descendants of the pack…can we?”

He didn’t tell her but he visited the pack himself in his wolf form once a year before the curse and started to again once they discovered the means to travel back the Enchanted Forest after the curse.

“I’m going to be paying them a visit this holiday season so yes, you can go with me. You have my scent so they won’t harm you.”

“As long as you haven’t made some sort of truce with bats, I’m fine. I hate bats!”

Rumple giggled recalling another incident in the castle while she was still his chatelaine when she ran into his workshop during one of his experiments in sheer terror. It was the first time he’d ever seen the normally brave young woman so frightened.

“Rumple, get it out, get it out of here!” she cried, the hand holding the infamous Bordreaux Broom trembling. She’d tried chasing the thing out of the castle with her broom but it was daring enough to fly directly over to her and made itself comfortable on the handle until she dashed off in search of Rumple.

“Get what out dearie, and didn’t your mother teach you how to knock?” he teased.

“Oh you…you…imp! Stop sitting there making jokes and help me!”
“I would if I knew what you were prattling on about.”

“There’s a bat in the castle!”

“Is that all? You mean you haven’t chased it off with your broom? It hasn’t failed you before.”

“I…I hate bats….they can bite you and turn you into one of those….those things that feed off your blood and the blasted thing flew right over to me and made himself comfortable on the handle of my broom!”

Rumple stood up. “You cannot become Nosferatu by the bite of a bat, Belle. That’s an old superstition. Now let me take care of this flying pest and then I’ll enlighten you on the true origins of the undead.”

They stalked down the hall and found the bat perched atop one of the torch holders. Belle swung her broom in an attempt to knock it off and missed. Rumple opened his mouth and the chatelaine stared at him in shock as he made a series of squeaks and the bat began to respond to him.

“You speak bat?” she asked incredulously. He didn’t answer her and continued communicating with the bat and a window at the end of the hall opened. The bat squeaked at Rumple several times before it flew away.

“Do you want to tell me what that was?”

“I was merely asking him why he was here,” he replied. “He’s not the first creature to seek sanctuary in my castle. Many animals do, especially those who are feared and hated by humans because of their appearance or their nature and they feel they have nowhere else to go.” He sighed. “There is nothing worse than feeling unwanted.”

“Is that why he was here….seeking sanctuary?”

“He’ll stay outside from now on, but yes. Now then, I believe I promised you I would enlighten you with the truth about Nosferatu.”

“Thank you Rumple….I’m sorry if I behaved like a ninny but they do terrify me.”

“Oh it’s fine.”

“…Well, he was a harmless bat but the ones in this world are creepy,” Belle said after her husband reminded her of their nocturnal visitor that Bae named Blackie. Tell your mate not to worry, Master. I will make certain no one harms her.

“Magic will look after us, won’t ye dearie.”

Magic purred in agreement.

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They were going to be spending several days touring Sorrento and the island of Capri. The Pulcinellos owned a smaller home in Sorrento that they rarely used and everyone would be staying there while Angelo stayed behind at Villa Pulcinello to take care of the animals. They would still return home via Neverland Airlines but now that the mages knew how to create portals of their own it would be far easier for them to explore new lands than it ever had been before.

They started their tour on the streets, seeing as many stands on them as they had in other towns and
villages they visited with thousands of souvenirs for sale as well as original items along with plenty of fruits and vegetables, especially lemons.

“Mommy, why’re most of the places painted yellow?” Ellie asked.

“I don’t know honey.”

“One thing’s for sure…there are a LOT of lemons here!” Robin laughed, indicating two lemon stands on either side of the cobbled street.

“That’s because they’re grown here, cara,” Gennie explained. “You will not find lemons that will taste any better. And later on we can try some limoncello. I think you will enjoy it.”

“I think we tried some when we were on our honeymoon, didn’t we?” Archie inquired of his wife.

“Yes. They were sampling it at one of the restaurants we went to dinner at in Rome our last week here.” Marie answered.

“There are many different kinds,” Nutch spoke up.

The Golds were standing outside the Sorrento Cathedral, thinking that with its 20th century design it looked a bit out of place in the Renaissance themed village.

“Come inside with us and you’ll see appearances can be deceiving, cara,” Gennie said with a smile. The view inside was breathtaking. There were three naves separated by pillars with various Nativity scenes depicted on the ceilings and on the altar.

“Will they be holding Mass here today?” Rumple inquired of their hostess.

“We’re a bit late for the morning Mass.”

“Oh darn! I would have wanted to hear it!” Belle sighed.

“We’ll have another chance honey,” Gennie reassured her.

Emma had to sit down several times due to exhaustion. “Oh God, I really cannot wait to have this kid and I’m gonna have it in a tub of water like you did,” she said to her mother and Regina.

Her parents had been asking her for months what they were going to name their child but Emma and Jeff wanted to surprise them. They were having a boy and decided his name was going to be Lewis Carroll David Hatter since Jeff’s father’s name was Lewis and Carroll in honor of Jeff’s favorite writer and David for Emma’s father.

“Well I hope you have a name for the poor child. I don’t want to be having to ask!” Snow grouched.

Emma smiled. “Oh, he’ll have a name…aww crap!” she said and clapped a hand over her mouth.

“Bit late now hon!” Jeff teased. She glared at him.

“We’re having another grandson!” David murmured into his wife’s ear. They would celebrate later when they were all alone. As far as the Pulcinellos knew the Charmings weren’t Emma’s parents. They wanted to keep it that way.

They decided to take a bit of a break in the Piazza Tasso. Suddenly Adriana spotted a horse drawn
“Papa, I wanna go for a ride!” she cried. “I think I’d like to too,” Belle said with a smile.

“Why don’t we all go for rides?” Regina suggested. She would have loved to have horse drawn carriages in Storybrooke park but it simply wasn’t large enough to accommodate them.

Rumple stopped the coachman when he returned with his previous passengers and asked him how much he charged for a ride and where they would go. “We’d all like to go for a ride...if the horse is not too tired.” He nodded at Archie. Archie motioned to his son and the toddler approached the horse. It lowered its head to allow him to pet it.

Hi! I’m Jonny. What’s your name?

Ceasare, special child. I have not encountered one like you before who can speak to us as if you are a horse yourself.

I can talk to lotsa things...even insects ‘cause my daddy usta be one and my little cousin can turn into a kitty and an otter. My other cousin can make you feel better if you don’t feel good.

I sensed that the moment I saw all of you.

We wanna go for a ride but you’re not too tired, are ya?

Oh no. I love giving people a tour of our beautiful village but there are some tourists who can be rude.

Does your master treat you good? I know some people treat horses like crap an it makes me really mad.

He treats me well so you need not worry.

“Mommy, he kinda looks like Diamond,” Ellie spoke up. Diamond was Regina’s horse.

“Yes, he does, sweetie.”

Each child took turns petting Ceasar. His master chuckled. “He’s gonna get a swelled head from all the attention,” he joked.

No, I won’t.

The Golds got into the carriage first while the others waited back at one of the cafés.

“You speak our language very well for Americans,” the coachman, whose name was Paolo praised.

“We have an ear for languages,” Rumple replied in Italian.

“Is this your first trip to Italy?”

“Yes and this country is absolutely beautiful, what we’ve seen of it,” Belle murmured. “I simply can’t decide which place has been my favorite yet.”

“That’s the idea Bella,” Paolo said with a grin.

The triplets were enjoying the scenery from the comforts of their parents’ arms and Bae’s but several times Bobby attempted to wriggle off his brother’s lap to do a little exploring of his own. Once Bae caught him trying to pull his ring off, he motioned to his father and Rumple quickly cast an
enchantment to strengthen it. Bobby blew a raspberry in protest.

“Well Papa he’s got our attitude for sure!”

“Oh aye.”

Bobby stuck his tongue out at his father.

“Now dinna ye be sassing me ye wee imp!” Rumple shook his finger at his son and the baby shook his tiny one back, Valora and Victoria mimicking him with identical smirks on their faces. “And ye can just cut it out too!”

Belle and Adriana couldn’t help giggling. Rumple gave the three infants his Disappointed Look. They immediately stopped, sensing their father was unhappy with them. When the carriage returned to the café, the Hatters were ready to go on their ride, Emma looking forward to the much needed rest.

Henry and Grace took dozens of pictures and videos on their phone to add to their diary with Paolo explaining some of the history behind the places they saw. Though he was speaking Italian, Henry used a spell that would translate his words to English for their audience back home. Emma was now on magic restriction from Rumple and Regina. She was grateful Jeff was less annoying with his Couvade Syndrome during this pregnancy than he was when she was carrying Maggie.

When it was the Charmings turn to take their ride Paolo was shocked when Neal insisted on sitting in the driver’s seat beside him.

“If you don’t mind….” David began.

“Oh, he’s fine signore.”

“Get a better view up here anyway,” Neal huffed.

Snow smiled. Though her son was in fact a prince, he never put on airs or boasted about it as he once told Ellie when they got into one of their disagreements. Her son was the complete opposite of her prior to her mother’s death. She’d been a spoiled brat, she was the first to admit it now and difficult with the servants whom she considered her inferiors but learned her lesson quickly prior to her mother’s death.

The Hoppers were waiting for their turn to ride when Paolo returned along with Ellie, who insisted she wanted to ride in the coach with Jonny. Jonny, however, was being a bit mischievous and wanted to ride the horse.

“John Wayne Hopper, you’re going to sit in this carriage with the rest of us,” his father informed him sternly. “You can ride the horses when you get home.”

“Yeah an I’m not sittin here by myself so get your butt back here!” Ellie crossed her arms over her chest.

“Umm Ellie, we’re not married yet so why you actin like a wife?”

“Cause we’re playin house an you’re my husband and if ya don’t get back here you’re sleepin on the couch.”

Their parents stared at each other with mouths agape. “Eleanor May!” Regina gasped.
“Oh and we all know where she got THAT from!” Archie grumbled to Marie.

“Works every time.” Marie boasted.

“Tell me about it!” Robin grouched. “Or I get hung by my underwear from a tree.”

“You deserved it for messing up our decorations!” Archie reminded him.

Paolo happily took each family on the same tour through the village though it was starting to get a bit crowded as time went on. It was dinnertime when everyone returned to the Pulcinello villa. Angelo was waiting for them outside shaking his head.

“What’s wrong?” Nutch asked.

“One of the dogs has gone a bit….crazy!”

“Which one?” Rumple asked, concerned it was Major since he was the eldest of all of the dogs. The shepherd came out of the house and snorted.

Not me. That crazy poodle…running around here like he’d gotten into a drug dealer’s stash. Seen enough stoned people working the K-9 unit to recognize the signs.

How did this happen?

He started playing with one of the cat’s toys and it had catnip in it. Now that stuff is supposed to calm us down but you give it to a small dog like Pinkie and he will act as high as a cat on it.

Just then Pinkie raced out of the house and over to where Roland and Jason stood, barking excitedly. His fur was covered with marinara sauce, ground beef and spaghetti noodles.

“Pinkie…oh no what have you done!” Regina moaned.

“Made Beefaroni?” Jason joked. His parents frowned at him.

“He wrecked my kitchen, scared the bejesus out of all the cats, knocked the snake cages over, nearly made the frogs fly…oh oh…..it’s indescribable!”

Regina turned to their hosts, ashamed. “We’ll clean up the mess….I’m terribly sorry about all this.”

The elderly couple burst into laughter. “We’ve seen worse but let’s go have a look,” Nutch quipped.

Their guests were horrified. Nearly every room in the villa was a mess from their pets’ hijinx. While they were trying to clean up the living room first they heard Perdy whimpering in Jonny’s bedroom. Pongo ran downstairs to the toddler and barked frantically.


“Pongo? What’s wrong boy?” Archie inquired worriedly.

“Umm…Daddy….Perdy’s havin puppies an she’s havin em right now.”

“What?! I mean I thought she might have been….”

“I’m going up to help her,” Marie said.

“But…”
“This is a woman’s job! Come on, Belle!”

“I’ll get some towels,” Gennie offered.

Zach slithered over to his master and hissed. Jonny’s eyes widened. “Awww Zach, are you kiddin?”

“Now what?” Archie sighed.

“Ummm….Zara’s havin babies too!”

“This a villa or a maternity ward?” Bae laughed.

“I wanna see!” Ellie exclaimed.

“Wait til she gets older and finds out just how hard giving birth is,” Emma whispered to Regina. While the women and girls gathered upstairs in the boys’ bedroom to give emotional support to Perdy and Zara the men and boys were forced to wait downstairs with a very nervous Dalmatian and garter snake, both of them wondering just how many babies they would be expecting.

How am I gonna find enough mice for eighty snakes!

I’m gonna have problems of my own if I have the fifteen puppies in that movie!

Keep calm….your masters will help you out, Major assured them.

Hah! Wait til YOUR mate has offspring and then we’ll talk, Pongo snorted.

I’m past breeding age.

Upstairs the women made Perdy a comfortable bed on the floor and brought out the spare cage to put Zara in while she gave birth. Perdy began to deliver first, Zara an hour later.

“You’re doing great Perdy…you too Zara!” Belle cheered.

I think….I’m almost done, Perdy panted.

So am I, Zara sent tiredly.

Fourteen puppies lay on the bed beside their mother. Marie held the fifteenth in her hands wrapped in a blanket. Perdy gazed up at her with sorrow filled eyes.

“Oh honey, I’m so sorry…” Marie croaked.

“What’s wrong with it Mama? Why isn’t it moving?”

Belle glanced over at her daughter and shook her head. “It….it’s gone sweetie…”

“You mean it’s dead?”

Belle nodded.

“Make it better Driana! You can do it!” Gisella pleaded.

“Sweetie, she can’t bring back the dead….none of us can.” Gennie murmured. “It’s God’s will.”

“It’s not dead…it can’t be and SHE can make it better! C’mon Adriana, please…you gotta try!”

“Sella, stop talking nonsense!” Marie begged.
“No! I’m not gonna sit here and lie about who we are anymore. Miss Gennie, Adriana’s got magic and she can make the puppy better! A lot of us have magic!”

“But that’s not possible…”

“Do it Driana! Show her!” Maggie encouraged.

Adriana walked over to Marie and held out her hands. “I gotta try Mama. I can’t let her die…” She turned to Gennie. “You can lock us up if you want but we’re not bad….we just wanna help.” She cupped the puppy in her hands and called on her healing magic, discovering that the dog’s airway was being obstructed by inhaling some of the birthing fluid. Golden light surrounded both of them and moments later everyone saw and heard the puppy moving in the little girl’s hands.

“Oh my…my goodness……” Gennie gasped, falling to her knees and crossing herself.

“Gennie, we’re so sorry we didn’t tell you the truth before….we thought maybe…you wouldn’t understand……”

“Not understand miracles? Cara, what do you take me for?”

“But….but…”

“No ‘buts’ Belle. What does this faith teach us? To believe that miracles can occur anytime and anywhere and if God does not make them happen himself, he has his angels here on Earth do his will for him and your child, cara, without a doubt is one of those angels….one with the power to heal.”

"The puppy wasn't dead," Adriana explained. "But it couldn't breathe cause it had water in its throat. So I just took the water away."

"And performed the miracle you were meant to do, little angel." Gennie patted her head affectionately.

"Gennie, you'd better brace yourself...because we're more than just magicians...." Regina began. Belle carried the puppy over to the bed and laid it down next to its mother and siblings. Perdy licked her puppy’s head and barked with joy.

“Maybe we’d better go downstairs and leave Perdy and Zara to care for their children.” Gennie suggested. Zara hissed softly in agreement while she tended to the twelve baby garter snakes in the cage with her.

Adriana ran downstairs first and threw her arms around her father. “Papa….Gennie knows who we are now….an she’s okay with it…”

“Wait…what...! Mo astor, what happened!”

“Your daughter showed me her special gift…and saved one of Perdy’s puppies,” Gennie announced.

“How…?”

“You mean she….did….magic!” Bae gasped. “Rumplette!”

“I HAD to!” she cried. “The puppy was choking on water an I had to get rid of it or she was gonna die. I didn’t want her to die so I saved her!”
“Gennie….did you see her…?” Nutch whispered.

His wife nodded. “She is a Healer, Nutch, one of His angels….here on Earth….just as we’ve always believed.” Gennie brushed tears from her eyes. “I never thought I would ever see a true miracle but I have…I have!”

“Are all of you….?”

“Most of us…including Angelo.” Rumple answered.

The chef bowed his head in shame.

“You? You Angelo?”

“I’m not a healer like they are….but…I am a magician who once served in the house of Pope Alexander VI but I assure you I did NOT participate in their crimes. I did not tell you because I feared…you would not understand…”

“Angelo, old friend, as I told the ladies, you should know Nutch and I believe in miracles, and angels….and you have been our angel since you came to live with us…keeping us company now that our children have moved away and our bellies full with your wonderful cooking.”

“Papa…I’m tired now…..” Adriana murmured.

“I know you are, mo astor.” Rumple picked her up in his arms and carried her over to the sofa. Gennie unfolded the blanket he made for them and handed it to him.

“Is she all right?” Nutch inquired.

“She tires easily after using her magic since she’s still so young,” he explained. “She’ll be all right once she gets some rest.”

“Angelo, why don’t you make us some tea?” Gennie suggested. “We have a lot to talk about.”

The elderly couple listened with fascination as Rumple and Regina began to reveal the full truth of who they were and each mage was asked to show them some of their talents. The Pulcinellos enjoyed seeing the childrens’ talents the most.

“These children have gifts that can change our world, make it a better place,” Nutch said.

“That’s what they’re trying to do….one step at a time.” Archie ruffled his eldest son’s hair affectionately.

“Though we can understand your concerns for wanting to limit their uses of them.”

“Right because we do not want them to abuse their magic. I’ve done that in the past and never want to do it again!” Regina insisted.

“That is why you were blessed in the Vatican cara,” Gennie reminded her. “You’ve accepted responsibility for your mistakes in the past and God has forgiven you.” Little Bobby was curled up on Gennie’s lap in his cat form while she stroked his back. “He’s going to be quite the charmer, aren’t you?”

Bobby purred contentedly.

“I’m still shocked you two are cool with this….most people would freak out or want to sell us for
experiments or something,” Robin spoke up. Ellie screeched and buried her face in his chest. “M’not gonna be like that girl in The Shop, Daddy!”

“Anybody tries to get ya, I’ll lasso em to a tree!” Jonny growled.

“Will your baby have magic too, Emma?”

“Oh I’m certain of it, Miss Gennie. What kind I don’t know. Rumple will be able to tell sooner than I can since he’s kind of our expert in magic. Whatever it is, the kid’s gonna be told often enough it has to be used for good. There’s too much evil in this world as it is.”

“And everyone in your little town is a fairy tale character?”

“Not all of us but most are, yes.”

“Oh, I’d love to meet them all.”

“You will eventually since you’ll be able to travel there without needing to take a plane,” Angelo said to Gennie. “And I will be taking you to see your children from now on. Those long flights are tiresome.”

The families were still reeling from the shock of encountering another couple willing to accept them as they were, especially one as set in their ways as the Pulcinellos but they were learning that there were far more open minded people in this world than they were aware of.

The next day they travelled to Capri to spend a few days at the beach. Unlike the beach they visited in Greece, this one was NOT clothing optional and the Pulcinellos suggested a boat ride through the Blue Grotto, named for the effect that occurred when the sunlight that passed through the underwater cavern and reflected on the water and illuminated the cave with a beautiful blue hue and the prices for the boat rides were not very expensive at all. They would keep watch over the babies along with Angelo.

Since the entrance to the cavern was so small, visitors were required to lie down in their boats.

“This is so cool!” Andi exclaimed. “I feel like I’m laying on a huge waterbed.”

Bae chuckled. “Remember that old waterbed we stole from the furniture shop? Anyone else got near it, you laid the smackdown on them.”

“I loved that bed…but YOU and Dickie broke it horsing around!”

“It was an accident but boy did you girls give us hell over it.”

Once everyone was inside the cave, they were permitted to sit up again. In their boat, Rumple put his arm around Belle’s shoulders and kissed her softly while their skipper sang a beautiful folk song. In Belle’s mind she heard her husband’s voice instead while he carded his fingers through her hair.

“We need to come back here again…just the two of us,” she murmured.

“That can be arranged mo chroi…that can be arranged.”

“I’m so glad we finally decided to come here….it’s been a wonderful vacation….a honeymoon that was well worth the wait.”

“Ti amo Bella mia…Ti amo...”
“I love your accent when you speak Italian.”

He giggled. “Then ye dinna like my Scots one?”

“Ye ken better than that!” She poked his chest with her finger.

“Oww…ye need to cut your nails, sweetheart!”

“Oh, I’m sorry darling. I didn’t realize they’d grown so long.”

He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. “Ye can make it up to me later,” he whispered.

She smiled seductively. “Are ye telling me ye’d like me to unwrap the Gold one tonight?” she whispered back.

“Aye.”

“Can we go to the cabin and you can wear your Speedo?”

“Aye!”

“Then it’s a date, Mr. Gold.”

Archie and Marie were content to lie in each other’s arms in their boat. “I wish I’d brought you here on our honeymoon,” Archie said softly.

“I’m glad we came here for this one,” Marie murmured and snuggled closer to him.

Jonny turned around and rolled his eyes. “Aww if you guys are gonna make out, I’ll go ride with Ellie.” His sister was in Alessandro and Sophia’s boat with Kyria.

Marie sighed. “I think we need some time alone.”

Her husband grinned. “It is Saturday night, my goddess.”

“Mmmm…so it is…and we’re overdue for a date night….our last one here.” She raised her head and kissed him. “And I don’t care where we go…I just want to be alone with you.”

“I think I have just the place in mind.”

After all, he did make a vow to her that he would make every dream of hers come true. It was taking time but he had plenty of time to do it.

Regina wanted to go back to her palace for the evening. Like Rumple, she had her palace remodeled so that it no longer held any traces of the Evil Queen and she renamed it Rocinante in honor of her beloved horse. Work began on the project the following Christmas and she’d just been informed that it was complete. Snow was overjoyed to see her former childhood home restored become a joyful place once again and the last door to close on the painful past.

“And there’s an added bonus….a pool,” Regina whispered. Her husband grinned.

“Oh, so you want to go skinny dipping?”

“Don’t you?”

“You know I do.” Robin pulled her onto his lap for a kiss. Regina smiled to herself knowing that her outlaw would make their evening very interesting indeed.
Though their intimacy was limited by Emma’s condition, they were as excited to be alone as the other couples. “Whadda ya say we have a nice little game of poker?” she suggested slyly.

“Thought you didn’t want me to gamble.”

“I’m not gonna mind if you lose your shirt tonight…in fact….I’m gonna make sure you do,” she cooed.

“You’re on, hon. You’re on!” he crowed. He would happily lose this game if it meant spending a few pleasant hours with his wife.

Snow also wanted to return to their palace for the evening knowing there was little chance they would be disturbed. Fall was setting in in the forest and David enjoyed taking her on moonlight walks and then spending the rest of the evening relaxing by the fireplace. They wanted to return to Greece and Italy again, only this time alone or just with their children.

“We’ll make it our second honeymoon,” David vowed.

“Next summer?” Snow asked hopefully.

“Next summer,” he promised, sealing it with a kiss.

For their date night, Penelope would at last have the opportunity to see Maurice’s palace at Avonlea. He also planned to visit the lake where the famed goddess Ninia resided, the same goddess who granted the wishes of his two precious daughters and sent them the men who would love them forever and give them the family they wanted. He recalled his own wish to her years before though he hadn’t mentioned it to his daughters.

She’d pictured his world in her mind dozens of times since they met but it was much more beautiful than she imagined. He unrolled the blanket he brought with him and they sat beside the lake, soaking their feet in the warm water.

“Where is this goddess you’ve spoken of?”

“I have to summon her.”

“How do you do that?”

Maurice took her hand in his. “Ninia for love I wished from thee. To this spot I return to ask you to bestow your blessing upon me,” he chanted.

Penelope’s eyes widened with amazement as a young woman with silvery blond hair rose from the water and smiled at them. “At last you have come back. I have waited so long Maurice Bordreaux,” she said in an angelic voice.

“Are you…Ninia?” Penelope asked.

“I am.” She smiled. “In your world I am known as Aphrodite or Venus.” She laughed at the other woman’s shocked expression. “Every culture has a goddess of love my dear.” She turned to Maurice. “Now do you believe?”

“I do…and I’m sorry….I was a foolish lad,” he said sheepishly.

“What does she mean, Maurice?”

“When I made my wish to her years ago she told me I would be thrice blessed in love. I called her a
fool but she told me I would return one day a believer.” He smiled. “I just never expected to find love in another land.”

“True love transcends time and space Maurice and sooner or later it always finds you or in your case, it finds you again.” She waved her hand and bright golden light surrounded the couple. “Not even death will part you now and I have given you the same blessing I have given your daughters…the lifespan of a sorcerer. This extends to your offspring as well Penelope.”

“You mean….we’ll live longer than most people?”

“Yes.”

She pressed her hand to her heart. “Thank you! Thank you so much!”

Maurice wrapped his arms around his fiancée and kissed her softly. “Thank you my lady,” he said to Ninia. The goddess nodded at them before she vanished.

They lay back on the blanket and gazed up at the stars, his arm around her shoulders. “I don’t think I can wait another day to marry you,” Maurice said softly.

“You want to elope? Won’t your daughters be upset?”

He sighed. “They would be. Belle was upset with Marie when she and Archie were thinking about eloping and put a stop to it. I have no doubt they’d both give me a tongue lashing if I did it. I suppose we’ll have to wait until we get back to Italy.”

“It doesn’t matter. I already feel like we’re married,” she confessed.

They would spent the rest of the night at Maurice’s castle. He was worried that Penelope would feel out of place seeing portraits of Jeanette and Collette on the walls but she assured him that she didn’t mind it at all. “They are you daughters’ mothers. I can’t ask you to take them down. Now, I wouldn’t protest a bit if you asked me to take ones down of Vasili but I don’t have any. He wasn’t worthy of any memorial.

“But I am going to have your portrait done, darling,” he vowed.

“I don’t think I can sit that long!” she cried.

“Oh I think my grandson can find ways to entertain you since he is whom I’ll asking to do it.”

“He is a talented artist,” she agreed. “Sometimes I still can’t believe it….that you’re all real…and more wonderful than the stories portray you.”

“Your world has its wonders too but once in a while I enjoy coming back to my roots.” He linked his arm through hers. “Shall we retire?”

“Maurice….the servants would be scandalized….we’re not married yet! We’d get away with that in my world but not in this one!”

He smiled. “I’m the lord of this castle and I’ll share my bedchamber with whomever I choose. And you are going to be my lady soon enough.”

“Well…since you put it that way….”
The next day everyone returned from their private getaways to lounge on the beaches of Capri. The children made several sandcastles and forts while their parents took pictures and videos. The Scorpions challenged each other to a game of beach volleyball and for Gennie and Nutch, it was like spending time with their children and they’d practically adopted their American guests. They children wanted to take their pets but their parents wouldn’t allow it since they had no idea what chaos they would cause.

“I shoulda wore a full suit!” Emma grouched, gesturing to her bikini. “People are probably looking at me wondering and thinking a whale got washed up.”

“Anybody does that and I’ll be sending their asses to Siberia!” Jeff threatened, thinking his wife looked amazing in her red bikini.

“Oh, you’ll be feeling better once you have the baby,” Regina reassured her.

“You certainly did!” Robin exclaimed. She tossed the magazine she was reading at him.

“Yeah….can’t do a lot of stuff….makes date nights kinda….dull.”

“Oh, I don’t know. I think we managed just fine.”

“I do NOT want to be hearing this stuff!” David snapped from his blanket.

“Then don’t listen Dad!” Emma retorted.

“Well, I don’t either,” Snow huffed.

Emma rolled her eyes. “That’s the problem going on vacation with the ‘rents….no privacy.”

“But they can still scold you no matter how old they are, isn’t that right, cara?” Gennie giggled from underneath the umbrella chairs Archie set up for her and Nutch.

Snow grinned. “That’s right.”

Rumple, Belle and Adriana were searching for seashells along with the triplets. Belle had been looking at several sites online that gave her ideas for crafts to make with their cache and Rumple was even going to start selling them in his shop along with some other items he found when he attended an estate sale in the village. Rumple was having a difficult time keeping the triplets in their carriers, all of them eager to go swimming, Bobby pouting because he couldn’t change into a cat or an otter. The Nolans and the Hoods were having an equally difficult time with Rum and Pearl with Rum wanting to fly like the birds he was seeing and Pearl wanting to swim with Bobby.

Later on Bae set up his easel and had everyone pose for his latest set of portraits. He planned to paint them once they returned to the villa. Henry and Grace had a small work area set up along the shoreline so that Grace could measure the amount of energy the tides were producing for her alternative energy project while Henry recorded a mini documentary that she would present to her science class in the fall.

“This could really work, Gracie,” Henry praised.

“Yeah and you can have a career as a filmmaker too.”

“I think I am gonna do that,” he said. “Maybe even write my own movies.”
“Well, you have a lot of background material to work with from our families.”

He turned his camera to where the Golds were walking along the beach. Rumple and Belle spread a blanket out and Adriana pulled her small craft box out of her mother’s basket. “Mama, I wanna make sparkly seashells!” she cried.

“Okay, let’s get the glitter and glue out and we’ll make some.”

Rumple pulled out a roll of gold chain he spun a few days earlier and set it down. “You can put them on these dearies and make necklaces,” he suggested. “Or you can use some of my dyed leather cords.”

“Perfect!” Belle exclaimed.

He sat back and watched all of them work with a small smile on his lips. Suddenly Valora snatched one of the seashells and tried to put it in her mouth. “Oh no you don’t dearie!” he cried and summoned her pacifier and changed its shape to look like a seashell. “There you go.”

Victoria scowled at him. He grabbed hers out of the basket and changed it to match her sister’s. “Is that better my wee sprite?”

She lay her small head on his shoulder and drifted off to sleep.

Jonny, Gisella and Kyria were chasing their parents along with beach playing a game of cops and robbers. “Sella, Kyria, you tackle em and I’m gonna cuff em!”

“Gonna have to run faster than that, kid!” Alessandro taunted.

Marie and Sophia stuck their tongues out at the children. “Can’t catch us!”

“Marie….over here!” Archie called out from behind a palm tree. The next thing he knew he was being tackled to the ground by his daughter.

“Hey Jonny, I got ‘im!” she called out. “Okay you, on your feet!”

“Dangit! Caught again!” Archie groaned in his best John Wayne voice. Kyria caught up with her father and ordered him to march over to the others. Jonny grabbed several pairs of toy handcuffs out of the bag he was carrying and handcuffed both sets of parents.

“What’s the charge, Sheriff?” Marie demanded.

“Public….indecency. No kissin on the beach!”

“Hey you, if I wanna kiss my man, I’m gonna kiss my man.”

“Then you’re goin to the clink doll.”

“They may as well bust all of us then!” Jeff called out and grabbed Emma for a kiss.

“I’ll just bust you but Emma gets a pass ‘cause she’s ‘specting.”

The two former thieves looked at each other and chuckled. “Oh if he only knew the scams we used to pull with me pretending to be pregnant!”

“Worked, didn’t they…especially in the supermarket. You can stuff a lot of things down your shirt if they think you’re having a kid,” Kat said. It was one of the scams she and Robert would pull as well.

Jonny shook his finger at them. “You guys should be ‘shamed of yourselves!”
“We were doin’ it to survive kid,” Robert argued.

“Tell me about it,” Ewan sighed. Two days before their departure everyone gathered on the back lawn at Villa Pulcinello. Maurice stood under an archway of Rumple’s spun gold with a daughter on each arm wearing one of his finest white satin doublets and with black velvet breeches brought over from the Enchanted Forest. Per the bride’s request, everyone was dressed as their Enchanted Forest counterpart and Gennie, Nutch, Angelo, Mariana and Egg were wearing original outfits Rumple made for them.

“Are you nervous, Papa?” Belle asked softly.

“Not at all, my girl. Not at all.”

Gisella, Ellie, Adriana and Kyria waited behind them, each of them holding a basket of roses that they would toss along the lavender velvet carpet.

“Let’s go get you married, Papa,” Marie said with a smile. The trio marched up to the altar while Ewan played Greensleeves on his bagpipes. Maurice would have two men standing at his side as his best men, his sons-in-law. It was a bit of a break with tradition but it was his way of thanking the two men who brought such a wonderful woman into his life.

“It’s time Mum,” Alessandro said to his mother. Penelope’s gown was a perfect replica of the gown worn by actress Annabelle Wallis as Jane Seymour in Season 3 of the Tudors with a bodice and underskirt of pale satin with gold embroidered roses with a matching overskirt. “You look so beautiful….like a queen.”

“I feel like a queen honey,” she murmured.

And at the altar her king waited.

Gisella, Kyria, Ellie, and Adriana marched ahead of her, tossing out white rose petals from the baskets they carried followed by Emma, Regina and Snow on the arms of their husbands. Sophia was being escorted by Baelfire.

As Penelope stepped out from underneath the archway, the small orchestra the Pulcinellos hired played “Henry Marries Jane Seymour” from the Tudors soundtrack.

“Who gives this woman in marriage?” Father Donato inquired.

“I do. Her son, Alessandro Palakas,” he announced proudly and kissed her cheek before he placed her hand in Maurice’s.

Like all of the other couples, Maurice and Penelope would speak their own vows during the ceremony, vows that they both stayed up late the night before writing out and committing to memory.

Maurice cleared his throat before he addressed his bride. “Penny, the day I met you was one of the best moments of my life, a complete surprise but I’ve come to expect them from this family.” He laughed. “I never thought I would have the chance to love someone again and have someone love me….and be willing to accept me as I am, not easy to do for anyone.” He reached out and caressed her cheek. “I don’t know how many years we have left of this life but I promise you I will do my best to make those remaining years the best ones of our lives.”

Penelope smiled and patted his hand gently. “For the longest time I thought I was happy just spending my time teaching my classes, researching old legends and spending time with my family….but at the end of the day I went back to any empty house. Then one day a handsome lord
came along and swept me off my feet, showed me what I was missing in my life...someone to come home to at the end of the day. I'm not from a noble house but from the moment we met you've made me feel like a queen and for the rest of our lives together, I'm going to love you more than any queen has ever loved her king.”

Belle was in tears as she handed Penelope her ring. Rumple was smiling when he handed Maurice his.

"With this ring I give myself to you and no other," they said together.

Maurice took his bride into his arms and kissed her passionately. From her seat Adriana waved her small hand, showering them with white roses.

“That was a beautiful gesture bambina,” Egg nodded in approval. The truth had been revealed to him and Mariana the day before but to everyone’s surprise they had already suspected the truth, witnessing some of their magic without the families even being aware of it. Like the Pulcinellos, they were willing to accept them and would keep their secret safe from those who would want to exploit them.

“It’s your turn now Ellie. Do you remember how to do it?” Henry asked his little sister, bringing her forward. She nodded and blew into her palms. In the sky there was a small explosion followed by a series of fireworks in various colors and shapes including a heart with Maurice and Penelope’s names inside it.

“Sweetie, that was wonderful!” Mariana cried.

Ellie nodded at Adriana. The two girls joined hands and concentrated forming a brilliant rainbow of fireworks with a smiley face.

Suddenly little Valora tugged on her father’s arm. “What is it dearie?”

She pointed to the entrance to the garden where two shadowy figures stood. Rumple smiled softly and placed his hand on his wife’s arm. “Come with me sweetheart.”

“Is something wrong?”

“No, just something you need to see.” He walked over to Archie and whispered in his ear. The therapist’s eyes widened with shock.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Bring Marie with you.”

“What is going on with you two?” Marie demanded of her husband as they were walking toward the garden entrance, stopping in her tracks when she spotted the shadowy figures.

“M….Mama?”

“Mama! Is it really you?” Belle sobbed.

The two figures held out their arms, their daughters hesitant, fearful that they would only be embracing empty air but the moment they felt their mothers’ arms around them, they were taken back to their younger days full of wonderful memories of the ones that helped shape them into the women they were today.

“I’ve missed you so much,” Belle wept into Collette’s shoulder.
“I am so proud of you ma cherie,” Jeanette murmured as she stroked Marie’s hair.

“We’re both proud of you,” Colette added. “Our beautiful daughters…and the wonderful families you have.”

“Why couldn’t we see you before?”

“We’ve always been here ma Belle, watching over you.”

“You should talk to Papa,” Marie said.

Jeanette shook her head. “Your papa has finally moved on darling.”

“And your mama and I can rest now knowing that his heart is in good hands,” Collette added.

“I wish you didn’t have to go…” Belle whispered.

“We live on in here cherie,” Collette placed her hand over her daughter’s heart, her essence fading away along with Jeanette’s, their daughters clinging to them as tightly as they could, wanting to enjoy what moments they had left with them for as long as they could.

"Be good to our girls," Jeanette said to their husbands as she faded from sight.  
"Always," Archie pledged and embraced his sobbing wife.

Rumple took his handkerchief out of his pocket and gently wiped the tears from his wife’s eyes.

“I wish Papa could have seen them….just once;” Belle sniffled.

“He couldn’t sweetheart. They were only here long enough to see that you and your papa were happy. It’s what they’ve always wanted,” Rumple said wisely. “Come on mo chori. Your papa’s waiting for you.”

Maurice led his new bride onto the terrace and took her in his arms for their first dance as husband and wife to Frank Sinatra and Celine Dion singing “All The Way.”

“This is the happiest I’ve seen my mum in years,” Alessandro remarked to Archie while they watched the couple dancing together. “Kinda wished we’d introduced them sooner.”

“So do I but if there’s one thing I’ve learned it’s that timing means everything. I guess Penny and Moe were not supposed to meet until now.”

Penny laid her head on her husband’s shoulder. “I wish my mum and dad could see this,” she murmured.

“Oh, I think they can.” Maurice raised his head and glanced up at the sky, knowing in his heart that both sets of parents were looking down on them, content with their childrens’ choices of spouses.

They invited the other couples onto the terrace to share the next few dances with them. Adriana spotted Nutch and Gennie sitting in their seats, both of them tapping their feet in time with the music.

“Why aren’t you dancing?” she asked.

“Oh cara, I can’t anymore,” Nutch confessed sadly. “My heart…”

“I can fix it,” she cried.

“Oh honey we don’t want you to exhaust yourself. We’re fine just watching all of you dance.”
“You sure? Cause I can try to fix it.”

Nutch ruffled her hair affectionately. “I’m sure you can bambina but one miracle at a time, eh.”

“Okay,” she sighed. “Can I sit with you?”

“You sure can!” Though they couldn’t dance anymore, they were content to watch the younger couples, recalling the glory days of their own youth when they could dance until the sun went down.

A few hours later Maurice and Penelope bid goodnight to their family and had Rumple open a portal to the Enchanted Forest. The couple would be spending their honeymoon back at Avonlea. Penelope was nervous about meeting Maurice’s people but he assured her that she would win them over easily with her charm and intelligence.

Though they were going to miss their new Italian family, everyone was ready to return to Storybrooke two days later. Maurice and Penelope would not be back for another week or so. Angelo, Mariana, Egg and the Pulcinellos planned on visiting them in Storybrooke during the Christmas holiday after they went to see the couple’s children. Regina sent a message ahead that a new family would be returning with them but the Palakas were not exactly strangers to the townspeople since Archie had been communicating with them for years. Lenore Phillips was looking forward to having new neighbors and another child to play with Hannah.

“We have some wonderful news for you as well,” Tink announced once everyone was on the plane. “Wendy and Peter are expecting!”

“Marvelous!” Belle exclaimed. “Did they visit Ninia like my husband suggested.

“They certainly did and she gave them the fertility blessing.”

Belle and Marie looked at each other burst into laughter.

“What’s so funny?”

“Oh, they’d better be ready for more than one bundle of joy, that’s all,” Marie said.

“You mean…oh my!”

“At least HE won’t have this damned Couvade Syndrome,” Jeff muttered.

Sparrowhawk snickered. “Actually he does!”

“Poor bastard.”

Regina swatted her husband. “Watch it you or you’ll be dangling from a tree in your underwear when we get home.”

“May need a manhood intervention.”

If looks could kill Jefferson Hatter would have been dead where he sat. He backed away from Rumple and Archie in terror. “Hey, relax you two. I was just jokin.”

“Ye better be Hatter or ye know what ye’ll be getting.”

“Shall we send Majors Belle and Marie with the brooms as a reminder?” Belle demanded. “Hatter for the love of God, why the hell did you have to bring that up!” David cried. “No more manhood interventions. We got our asses whipped the first time and….”
“And the second time was an epic fail if I remember correctly,” Archie chuckled. “Word to the wise….forget it because I have a feeling Wendy would be as bad as our wives with the punishment.”

“Okay, okay, I’ll forget it!”

Emma shook her head. “And if you know what’s good for you, Hatter, you’ll be awake when I have this kid or we’re gonna be having a repeat performance with the broom. Get me?”

He was determined to avoid that at all costs.

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Months later

Rumple was closing up the shop for the day when the door swung open and Jeff and Emma staggered in clinging to each other and moaning in pain.

“Gold…” Emma panted.

Rumple slapped his forehead. “Not again!” he cried. “Where in the bloody hell is your father this time!”?

“Dunno….tried calling…got no answer! Ooooh can we hurry up before I have this kid in the middle of your shop!”

“Ye can just wait til we get to the hospital! I’m no’ delivering the baby myself.” He grabbed his keys off the rack and pulled out his cellphone. “Belle, I’m going to be late for dinner tonight since I have to play labor and delivery taxi driver…again!”

Belle laughed on the other end of the line. “I’ll keep it warming in the oven for you.”

“All right, come on ye lot!”

The couple climbed into the backseat. “Oh God it’s worse than the last time…” Jeff cried.

“You act like YOU’RE the one havin the kid…..oh no….ummm…Rumple…you’re gonna have to have the car cleaned….”

“What?!” he cried.

“My water broke!”

“Where’s a rocket sleigh when I need one,” Rumple muttered, slamming his foot down on the gas pedal. He arrived at the hospital a few minutes later. Two orderlies were waiting outside with wheelchairs for the expecting couple and as they were taking them down the hall to the delivery room he called David’s cellphone.

“Oh, damn! Rumple, we’ll be right over. Had a sewer backup at the house.”

“Let Robin deal with it and get over here to see your grandchild be born!”

“How are doing, Emma?”

“Feeling great now,” Emma murmured. Water births were quickly becoming popular in Storybrooke and Dr. Jo had her staff set up a special room for them that included a pool large enough to
accommodate the couple and the attending medical staff.

Jeff nodded enthusiastically. “So much better than the last time.”

“All right Emma, get ready to push!” Jo instructed.

Jeff clasped her hand in his. “Ready when you are hon.”

Emma was finding her third delivery much easier than her first two, the combination of being in water and having her husband at her side lessening her pain.

“That’s good Emma, very good! Just a few more. On three...one two three….PUSH!” Jo commanded.

She gave one final push and moments later Lewis David Carroll Hatter made his debut…with a rather shocking surprise for both of his parents.

“Oh my God! Where the heck did that come from!” one of the nurses exclaimed.

“Don’t just sit there! Get me outta here!” Jeff screamed, dangling over a portal that suddenly appeared the moment his son was born. One of them reached for his hands and yanked him out of the hole while the others moved back to avoid getting pulled in themselves. As soon as mother and baby were transferred to a comfortable bed the portal vanished.

“Well Lew….I think we know what your talent’s gonna be,” she murmured.

Jeff stroked his son’s head affectionately. “You’re gonna see the world little man but can you please do that to someone else, not me!”

“There’s our new grandbaby!” David announced from the doorway with Snow and Neal beside him. “Oh look at him….he’s beautiful Emma,” Snow sobbed. The baby had his mother’s eyes and a small patch of his father’s hair.

“He almost sent his dad to who knows where,” Emma laughed.

“What?” her parents gasped.

“He can make portals…made one right in the birthing pool and almost sucked his dad into it.”

“Better have Rumple make him a bracelet or something or he’ll send all of us off to Nowhereland if he’s having a tantrum,” David said.

“We’ll help him keep his magic under control, Dad.”

“Let’s get a picture everyone!” Jo held up her cellphone. David stood on Jeff’s side of the bed while Snow stood beside her daughter and Neal lay by his sister’s feet.

“Well, you just finished your first journey, didn’t you little wanderer,” Jo said affectionately and tickled Lew under his chin.

“He’s got a whole world out there he needs to see, don’cha, Lew?” Neal asked him. His nephew gave him a small smile.

Their quest to explore their new world had only just begun but they were determined to help make it a better place….one day, one miracle at a time.
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