To Make Your Heart Race

by fergus80

Summary

Killian “Hook” Jones is NASCAR’s bad boy, who is forced to do some community service to clean up his act. Emma Swan is the counselor at the local Children’s shelter who is done with men and relationships after her latest in a long stream of nightmares. (You do not need NASCAR knowledge to read this.) 3rd place winner in the 2016 Captain Swan Fan Fic awards - Best WIP over 50k.

Notes

For @xpumpkindumplingx Merry Christmas Sweetie.
Chapter 1

NASCAR Star Killian Jones Caught Speeding
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STORYBROOKE, N.C. -- NASCAR driver Killian Jones was clocked by a North Carolina Sheriff going 147 mph in a 45 mph zone last Tuesday and has been charged for careless and reckless driving and speeding. The judge has issued a large fine, and instead of suspending his license, has issued 100 hours of community service in Storybrooke where the speeding had occurred.

The Sheriff who pulled over a black Camaro sports car near the small North Carolina town was surprised to find it was former Formula One and current NASCAR driver the 28-year-old Killian “Hook” Jones. The Sheriff said that shockingly the bad boy driver, known for being a hot head, was “nothing but respectful and apologetic.”

Officials from Mills Racing - for whom he drives the #71 in the Sprint Cup championship - had no immediate comment on the incident. Jones came in second place in the standings on Sunday at Homestead in the final race of the Sprint Cup for the 2015 season. NASCAR officials have stated that Jones must complete his 100 hours before he is allowed to race again, when Sprint Cup resumes in February.

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Killian sat in the chair looking at his fingernails, only slightly listening to Regina. She was yelling, like she usually was at him for some of the crap he pulled. Though he knew, just like she did, that she would eventually calm down, get it behind her, because he was a hell of a driver and at the end of the day made her and her company, her father’s former company, very rich.

He also knew that the bitch act, while not fully an act, was mainly put on for show. She was in a man’s world, and had to adapt. He was actually her first driver, since the other drivers left when her father died and she was named the head of Mills racing. He had messed up big time in Formula One, after a rather large heartbreak, and needed a second chance, outside of there and outside of Europe. They helped each other, and that’s why he could do this, “Regina… knock it off, and just tell me why you are REALLY upset, lov.”

Regina clenched her fists, and stood up from her desk, leaning towards him. “Killian… you could have gotten yourself killed.”

He gave her a small smile, “Please, I go much faster than that on the tracks. It actually felt like I was on a leisurely stroll.”

She sighed, “Killian this is serious. You are lucky the judge didn’t take your license. But you have to get the 100 hours of service done, and soon.” She turned to her computer and pulled up her email, “Lucky for you it is the holiday season, and there are plenty of opportunities to help out.”

He groaned, and she shot him a look to stay quiet, then pointed her finger at him, “Oh no. You will do this. And it will be something with children or puppies. Something cute and heartwarming.” He rolled his head back against the chair looking up at the ceiling. “Jones…”

“Majesty?” He knew she hated it when he called her that. He received a glare in return and smirked picking his head back up to look at her.

Regina took a deep breath, “I have emailed you a schedule, who to meet with, where and when for
the rest of this week and next. You will get an email each week until your 100 hours are done. If you miss even one thing on these schedules, you will sit out next season.”

He stood up at that, “What?”

She closed her eyes, took another breath, and looked up at him, “The bad boy image needs to stop.” She raised her hand to hush him, “I know, it sold like crazy. It got you to where you are. I know why you have been like that.” She shook her head and sighed, “Killian it’s been 4 years…”

“Don’t…” He closed his eyes, memories starting to come back.

“You need to push past…”

“Don’t tell me what I need to do!”

She stood quickly, “It wasn’t your fault! You need to get over it! You need to move on!”

His blue eyes were a storm of emotions, his knuckles turned white fisted at his side, his jaw clenched repeatedly. He had to get out of there, he closed his eyes and turned around and headed for the door, and opened it. “I will do the time. Please grant me a few days around Christmas, my brother and his family are flying in.” He didn’t even wait for the response and slammed the door behind him.

Emma wanted to scream. She had double the case files because the other counselor had resigned a month ago, and being this time of year, they were having a hard time finding a replacement. AND since it was this time of year, the holidays, she also had the added stress of all the volunteer activities that were going on that she had to be a part of as well.

She reached for her coffee mug, only caffeine was going to get her through this. “Of course,” she wanted to bang her head against the wood surface, she was out. She debated continuing work and not taking the time to get more coffee. But she knew she needed the boost. She got to her feet, and made her way towards the kitchen, yelling at two kids as they ran past, “No running inside!”

She got there just in time to see her co-worker, friend, and shelter’s group therapist, Tink putting on a fresh pot. The other blonde smiled at her, “I see I’m not the only one after a pick me up. I assume not decaf.”

Emma shook her head, “Oh heck no, I need full strength to get through the files.”


Emma was just watching the brown liquid of life pour into the pot, willing it to brew faster “and that is…”

“We have a famous volunteer starting tomorrow. He’s going to be with us for most of the season.”

Emma rolled her eyes, “Great…” That meant more work, more than likely press. Which could bring in money, but more than likely more hassle. And those types, were only there for the picture, not to actually get their hands dirty.

“He’s from that racing car sport, thing…” Emma looked over at Tink in question. “I don’t know what it’s called. But I guess he has to do some community service for something he did.”

Emma saw the brewing had stopped, and pulled the pot out and filled up her mug and set it back. “Wonderful. Here cause he has to be and not cause he wants to be.” She was hoping that she wasn’t
assigned to any of his projects.

She is putting in cream and sugar as Tink pours her own cup, “So besides work. Got any plans for the season?”

“Just going over to my brother and sister-in-law’s for Christmas.”

“Are you taking anyone?”

Emma eyed her, “Tink…”

“Emma it’s been six months since that bastard and you broke up. Maybe it’s time…”

“Don’t talk about him…”

“I’m not… I’m talking about you.” She sidled up to Emma, “I know you have had bad luck, but that doesn’t mean they are all bad.”

Emma started to walk for the door, “I have case files to get back too. I would like to get as many kids placed in a good home as possible before the holiday.”

“Emma…”

“Later Tink.” She said as she left and walked back to her office.

He pulled up to the address on his schedule, and yawned. It was the off season, and he was up way too early. He should still be asleep, he looked at the clock, it was 7:50 am, “Bloody hell.” He took a drink of his starbucks, and got out of the car. He shivered, and zipped up his leather coat, and headed for the door of the Storybrooke Children’s Shelter.

He took one more drink, took a deep breath, walked inside, and almost collided with three kids running through the hall. He twirled around, missing each one and keeping his coffee from spilling.

“Nice work. I guess your job prepares you for that,” came a male voice from behind him. He turned around to see a man in glasses with red hair, sticking out his hand. “Archie Hopper, I run the shelter.”

Killian smiled at the man, “Killian Jones, and to be honest. I’m usually the one running down the others.”

Archie laughed, and motioned for him to follow him. They headed back to a small office. “This is my office, you can leave your coat and what you need in here.” He opened a drawer with a key, and Killian eyed him. “The kids are great, but… we do need to be careful. Some come with a troubled past, and we wouldn’t want to leave out temptation.”

Killian set his coffee on the desk, removed his coat and handed it to Archie. Leaving him in his navy blue sweater, and jeans. He picked his coffee back up took another drink. “Okay, what do you want me to do?”

Archie locked the drawer and made his way out of the office with Killian right behind him.

Emma wanted to scream, this was not a good morning. A pipe broke in her apartment so she had no water to take a shower, her hair was now in a greasy braid. The truck fixing said pipe was parked
behind her car, preventing her from leaving, until she could find them to move it. Meaning she was running late. On her drive in, as she was downsizing her coffee, and a car moved into her lane, making her swerve and dump her coffee on her nice white shirt. Well used to be her nice white shirt.

She was already late, didn’t have time to go home and change. She just wanted to get to her office, and get the cardigan on the back of her chair, to hide the stain. And then get some coffee in her, instead of on her.

She was almost there, when her name was called, “Emma!” She kept walking pretending not to hear. “Emma wait!”

“Archie,” she called over her shoulder as she had her key in the lock to her door. “Give me two minutes to drop off my stuff and get some coffee and I’ll come see…”

“No need, just take a minute. I want to introduce you to Killian Jones…”

Resigned she turned around with a sigh, looking down at her coffee stained shirt, great. Then her eyes traveled to the Vans tennis shoes, then went up to the dark wash jeans, the dark blue tight fitted sweater over what she could tell was a very toned chest. Next was the stubble covered sharp jaw, but she swallowed when her eyes met his bright blue.

He gave her a slow smirk, knowing she had checked him out, and from the look in her eyes, liked what she saw. And boy oh boy, did he like what he saw. He put out his hand, “Nice to meet you.”

She blinked a second, fuck an accent too? She then reached out to shake his head, “You too.” She looked down, “I apologize… it’s a very long story, and I don’t have enough coffee in me to tell it.” She got her door opened as all three walked in. She sat down her purse, quickly grabbed her black sweater and put it on, buttoning it over the stain as Archie was telling the man what she did here, and how they were down one counselor.

Emma grabbed her mug and started for the door, she looked at the two men and motioned with her cup. “Ah yes, Emma.” Archie motioned for her to go.

Killian lifted his cup, “Actually, if you don’t mind if I could get some more?”

“Follow me, I’m on auto-pilot.”

Killian smiled and followed the blonde to the kitchen, watching her move in her tight black pencil skirt. This might not be as bad as he thought it was going to be. He watched her go, get her coffee, add in a cream, and one regular sugar. Wrap her hands around it, sniff it as it was the best thing ever, a smile lighting up her face, as she took her first sip.

When she opened her eyes, her green met blue, and he quickly moved to pour his own cup, and then adding a little sugar. He looked back to Archie, “So, I think I have met everyone. Right?”

“Right. So for the morning we need help restocking and organizing the food stock. We went through a lot for Thanksgiving, but we have also got in a lot of donations. We need to figure out what we have, so we know what we need to use the money we got to buy the rest.”

Emma looked up from her mug and then back and forth between the men, “Wait. I may have just woke up… but what are you here for?”

He gave her a slow grin, “I’m going to be here for the next few weeks to do some volunteer work.”

“You’re a volunteer?” All she got was a grin in return, and a raised eyebrow, she looked at Archie,
“I thought he was replacing one of the staff we are low on.”

“We are working on that. But between the season, and our budgets…” He trailed off and her shoulders slumped.

Killian looked to Archie, “Is there something wrong with...?”

Archie waved his hand, “No worries. I’m sure once the holiday is done, and we get our normal donations, everything will work out.”

“Well boys, I will leave you to it. I have work to do.”

Killian gave her a dazzling smile. “It was a pleasure to meet you Ms. Swan,” he said emphasizing the Ms.

She gave a cautious smile back, “It’s Miss Swan, and I go by Emma.” With that she hurried out of the kitchen and into the safety of her office. She closed the door behind her, and leaned against it. She took a deep breath. Between the accent, the blue eyes, the stubble, not to mention the rest of him, she didn’t know what she was going to do these next couple of weeks.

She took another deep breath, and went to her desk to get to work.

It was a little before noon when there was a knock on her door, she barely looked up before the door opened and in walked Tink. Emma rolled her eyes, “Come in… oh wait.”

Tink laughed and closed the door behind her, carrying two lunch bags, “I know that if I don’t come in here and make you eat, you will forget.”

“I’m busy.”

Tink took the folder out of Emma’s hand. Folded it, sat it back on the desk, and sat Emma’s own lunch bag in front of her. She then sat down in the chair in front of the desk, opening her own bag. Emma sighed and started taking her food out of the bag. She opened her cup of applesauce and started eating.

“So…” Tink started, “Did you meet Killian?”

Emma looked up to see the smile on her friends face, “Yes I did.”

“And…”

“And what?” She asked and then took another bite.

“What do you think? Hot right?”

Emma rolled her eyes, in her head she would admit it, outloud, that was another story, “What I don’t get is why he is here. Why is he volunteering?”

Tink started laughing, “I told you.”

“What are you talking about?” She took out her bottle of water and started to take a drink.

“He’s the sports car driver guy I told you about yesterday.”

Emma almost spit out her water and started coughing, “What?” she finally got out. Tink just kept
laughing as Emma slowly was able to breath again. “He’s here for community service?” Her brain was trying to reconcile what she was hearing. The hot mystery man was a race car driver. A celebrity race car driver. He did something wrong to warrant community service. And that is why he was here, not out of the goodness of his own heart. She sighed, of course. Of course he wasn’t here because he wanted to be. She was never just going to meet a nice guy.

Not that it would matter if he was or not. Emma was done with dating. She was done with men. It never turned out well. Her last was just one of the too many very bad, horrible relationships that had told her it was better to be alone. It was just another reason to try to avoid him while he was here.

She looked up and saw Tink studying her. “Oh Stop.”

“Emma… First, if he just got community service, whatever he did wasn’t that bad. Second, on to you. Not everyone is going…”

“Stop. Tink. Stop.” She saw her friend about to start again, “I’m not ready. I don’t know when or if I will ever be ready. I attract bad guys that are bad for me.”

“Maybe you attract all kinds of guys. But you only let in the guys you think you are worthy of. And the problem with that Emma, is you don’t value yourself enough to let better ones in.”

Emma felt that like she just got slapped across the face. With eyes wide she looked at her friend.

Tink looked down, knowing she had went too far, but maybe, really just perfectly. She got up from her chair, “I’ll see you later.” And with that she walked out of the office shutting the door behind her. Emma stared at the door, mouth still agape at her friend’s statement.

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Killian was parking in the same spot again the next day. He had reorganized the entire food stocks the day before, and had only took a break when the gray haired cook had pulled him out of the room, and thrust a lunch into his hands. Forced him to call her Granny, and pushed him to a table to eat.

He sat with a few other children, ranging in the ages of six to ten. He remembered those days, remembered having only his brother. He had looked at their faces, and was thankful that he had Liam. He smiled at them, and one little boy finally spoke up and asked him a question about racing. And then his lunch turned into a question and answer period.

He had ate bites of his lunch here and there between questions. He was surrounded by more children, asking everything under the sun. He was making motor sounds with his mouth, and pretending he had a steering wheel in his hands, when he saw her out of the corner of his eye.

She had come in, and stopped. He felt her watching him as he continued with the kids. When he turned his ‘car’ back in her direction, and turned his ‘wheel’ with the ‘ooohs’ and ‘ahhhs’ of the kinds around him. He saw her move to get a cookie from Granny and then head back out the door, braid swing behind her as she left.

He gripped the real steering wheel in front of him, “Bloody hell.” He said to no one. He couldn’t get her green eyes, her blonde hair, her voice out of his head. What the hell was wrong with him? It wasn’t like he wasn’t around beautiful lasses all the time. But he knew this was different. Those women were there because he was rich. Because he was famous. Because he was the ‘bad boy.’ Emma wasn’t like that. He could tell. And something about her, just… well… he didn’t know, but he wanted to.

He looked at the seat next to him, and at the two cups of coffee in the holder. “Come on Jones. You
can run laps at over 200 miles per hour. You have crashed and burned many a car and walked away. You can give a cup of coffee to a beautiful lass.”

He took a deep breath and got out of the car. This time he left the coat in the car, quickly grabbed the cups, and hit the button on his keys. He heard the beep as he made his way to the door to get inside to where it was warm. He made his way back to where he remembered her office was, and was glad to see the door open.

He made his way over and saw that she was just getting in. Her blonde hair loose and flowing this morning, wearing a long red sweater and black leggings going into a pair of knee high black boots. Setting her things down, and turning on her computer, he reached out and rapped his knuckles against the door. She looked up, and gave a shocked look.

“Hi. I know we didn’t meet on the best of circumstances yesterday. I do believe you had a coffee mishap, and not a great morning.”

She gave a soft smile, “You could say that.”

He walked towards her slowly, and lifted the red cup to her, “Hopefully this can make today a better one.” She looked to the cup, and back to him. “One cream and one real sugar, right?”

Her eyes widened, “Yeah, how…”

Killian gave her large smile, “I guess you weren’t fully awake, but I was there when you did make your coffee.”

Emma swallowed and accepted the coffee, their fingers slightly touching as she took the cup. She felt the charge run up her hand, and down her spine, and she swallowed, “Thank you.”

He nodded, and put his hand at his side. Rubbing his fingers against his jeans, they were still tingling. “Well, I better go see what Archie has in store for me today.” He started to walk towards the door, and then turned back to her right before he walked out. She was still looking at him, “I’ll see you around, Emma.”

She blinked a few times and then sat down in her chair. She moved the coffee to her other hand, as she looked at her fingers. She shook her head. It was just a static charge off the carpet. That is all. She took a sip of the coffee then smiled, “Shit.” The coffee was exactly how she liked it… maybe even better.

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He was in the process of wrapping some of the early donated toys, when Granny came and got him again. He didn’t protest this time, knowing it was pointless. He took the lunch, and talked with the kids again, but this time got done earlier than the day before.

Killian went back into the kitchen to find Granny, “So… I noticed Miss Swan came in here yesterday for a cookie…”

She looked over at him and gave a slight laugh, “Sweet tooth too huh?” He gave her a nod, as she walked over to a tray of cookies that was cooling. “She usually comes in a little after lunch to grab one too.” She got a smile on her face, and grabbed two napkins, and took a cookie into each and walked back to him. “Here you go,” she said handing him both.

He was shocked, “How did you know I was going…”

Granny smiled at him, “Just so you know. Her favorites are snickerdoodles. She loves cinnamon.”
She pointed at the cookies, “But the chocolate chip will do.”

He gave her a brilliant smile, and bowed his head slightly, “Thank you.” He turned around and headed back to the offices, leaving Granny with a smile on her face.

Emma just needed to get through this email and she could take a break and go get something sweet and grab another cup of coffee for a pick me up. She had just pushed send, when there was a slight knock on her door. He was back… “Hi.”

Killian gave her a grin, “Hi.” He walked towards her desk, and extended his arm with one of the napkin wrapped cookies. “Fresh out of the oven.”

She opened her mouth, but couldn’t think of what to say. She took the cookie, smiled, “Thanks.”

He bit into his own, “Wow, these are good.”

Emma smiled again, “Granny makes them from scratch. Actually cheaper that way, and tastes better.” She looked up from her desk at him, as she sat the cookie on her desk. She eyed him for a second, his eyes on her as he chewed. “What are you doing?” she finally asked.

He raised an eyebrow at her, “What do you mean love?”

“First thing, I’m not your love.” She could see him about to react, and she waved him off. “And two, I know you are only here because you have to be.” She saw him swallow. “I don’t know if you think that I am now some distraction while you are here or what. But, I’m not interested.”

He took a moment to look at her, reading her. “I call people love out of habit and culture. I don’t do it to offend.” She looked down a little uncomfortable for not having thought of that. “Two, yes I am here because of community service. I did something stupid. Went far over the speed limit on a back road. Testing out a new car of mine, and letting off steam. It was stupid and reckless. I apologized to the officer. I apologized to the judge. I don’t plan or want to do it again.”

Emma looked to say something, and he gave her a tentative, polite handraise to please let him continue, and she waved for him to do so. “I will admit I did not want to come here. At first. Seeing you…” he looked at his feet, “Well, I thought maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. But…” He looked back up at her. “What really made me WANT to get up today and get here, was the kids I met yesterday.”

“The kids?” she asked, disbelief in her eyes. Her arms crossed as she sat back in her chair.

He tilted his head to look at her, “You don’t even know me, and you are so quick to disbelieve me?”

She shook her head, “I may not know you. But I know your type.”

“My type? And what exactly is my type?”

“You have money, so you are used to throwing that around to get out of your problems. I’m sure you would have much rather paid a much bigger fine. Than have to serve time here with us. You are famous, so you like people knowing who you are, flailing at you. Like the kids yesterday. It made you feel better about yourself, because they fawned all over you.” She saw him about to protest, but she stood and kept going on. “And you are used to throwing out your reputation and all the rest, and I’m sure having women throw themselves at you because of it. But, I’ll let you know. That is not me.
I’m not like that. And I don’t like men like that. So I’m not interested.”

She sat back down in her chair, and turned back to her computer.

“Well Swan,” he shook his head. “I may have money, I may have a reputation, and I may be what you call famous. But you don’t know me.” He turned to walk back to the door, “You don’t know me at all.”

She saw the hurt in his eyes as he walked out, sighed and looked at the ceiling. “Crap.”
Emma sat on her sofa at home, a glass of wine in hand, and Netflix playing Friends in the background. But she wasn’t really paying attention to what was on her TV screen, mostly what was on her laptop. She knew she had went too far with him today. She could have just said she wasn’t interested, but instead she decided to take out all of her negative feelings from her past relationships and hurl everything at him.

She sighed, she knew she was going to have to apologize. But, she was hoping to find a reason that she was right and then make the need null and void. She was researching him. She had learned a few things from her brother the sheriff. And first thing she did was pull up the articles of what had happened making the community service necessary.

She almost spit out her latest sip of wine, the sheriff that pulled him over was her brother. “Why didn’t he tell me about this?” She thought back to conversations at Thanksgiving. “Okay… maybe he did, but I tuned out.” She looked at the time, just after 8 o’clock, and reached for her cell.

It rang twice, and she smiled at the “Hello?” on the other end.

“Hey David.”

“Emma. Not that I’m not happy to hear from you. But why are you calling, you don’t usually call during the week.”

She laughed, “Everything is fine. We have a new volunteer at work, that you actually know. And I just wanted to call to snoop.” She heard laughing on the other end as they started to talk all about Killian Jones.

Emma walked to her office and sat her bags down, and went to go look for Killian. While he was the bad boy of NASCAR. Yes, she did now know what the sport was called after her research. She did find out some interesting things, which meant he deserved an apology.

Her brother had only said nice things, except for the speeding part of course. She had found that he was only in the states for the last four years, after a couple incidents during some Formula One races. The details were sketchy. But what she found out, that caused her to want to apologize, was what she found in his bio.

She looked at the back room, looked in the kitchen. Looked to see if he was getting coffee. Nothing. She started to walk to Archie’s office. Her mind replaying what she found. His father seemed to be missing from the bio, which led her to believe he didn’t know him or had left when he was young. His mother died before he was a teen, and his older brother, just barely of legal age raised him.

She watched the kids playing or reading around her, as she walked to the office. The kids that were around his age when he lost his mother. She sighed. She wasn’t looking forward to this. She saw Archie at his desk working, again no Killian. “Hey.” She said, and Archie looked up. She suddenly had a pit in her stomach, did he go volunteer somewhere else because of what she said.

“Emma, what can I help you with?”

“I… ahh… I haven’t seen Killian around. Is he done volunteering?”

Archie smiled, “Oh no, he’s with us most of the month. But he has a few days here and there at other
places. He is at the animal shelter today. They are doing an autograph session, all funds go to the shelter and also hopefully people will adopt while they are there.”

She nodded, “Sounds like a good plan.”

“Agreed. We can’t exactly do that here, but he’s been doing a good job. Hasn’t been slacking or taking his time. And the kids really like him.”

She swallowed, and nodded, “Good to hear. Okay then, I’ve got to get back to work.”

“Oh Emma…”

Emma peaked her head back in to look at her boss. “Yeah?”

“He’ll be back on Monday.”

“Oh. Okay.” She headed back to her office.

Archie then turned back to his computer with a smile.

“So when are you getting in?” Killian asked and then took a sip of his beer.

“We should be in around 4 o’clock on Sunday, little brother.”

“Younger brother, Liam, I have told you…”

His brother laughed over the phone, “And I have said when you get taller than me, then I will change it…”

“Liammmm,” Killian whined and then took a large drink from the bottle.

Laughter greeted him, and then he could hear the phone shifting, being filled with a sweet voice, “Is he being mean again Killian?”

He smiled at Elsa’s voice, he nodded with a pout she couldn’t see, “Yes, he is.”

“I am not!” he could hear in the back ground, with a loud shhhh from his wife.

“Are you sure you don’t mind me, the boys and your overbearing brother staying with you for a whole week? We could get a hotel…”

“Elsa, I want you here. I have this big house all to me-self. It would be nice to have it filled with family for Christmas.” He took another sip of beer, “Besides this close to the holiday, it would be too hard to find a room.”

“Killian, I don’t want to impose, we can find…”

He shook his head, “Elsa. I really want you, those adorable munchkins and my idiot brother here with me for Christmas.”

“We can’t wait to see you either. The boys are very excited to see their Uncle.” He can hear a shuffle over the phone, “Okay, here is your older brother back.”
He smiled, he always liked Elsa. She had his back with his teasing brother. “So Killian, how is the community service going?”

Killian sighed, “It could be worse.” He then thought about Emma’s words and his heart sank, “It could be better.”

“What is she?”

Killian choked on his beer, “Excuse me?”

“I was beginning to believe I wouldn’t ever hear that tone in your voice again.”

“Liammm, stop. There isn’t anyone...”

“Please tell me brother, just please tell me she isn’t a racing groupie.”

He rolled his eyes, “She is not a groupie!”

“Ahhh hah! I knew it.” Liam laughed, “Tell me all about her.”

Killian sighed, “Liam, it’s... she’s...” He hung his head, “She hates me. It doesn’t matter.”

“What did you do?”

“Why do you assume it was something I did?”

“Because I know you.”

“Thanks a lot, brother. But honestly, I didn’t do anything wrong.”

“What did you do?”

And with that Killian told him everything he knew about Emma Swan. From her blonde hair and green eyes, to the way she liked her coffee. How she had liked sweets, and how she had told him she had no interest and exactly what she thought of him. “So, as I said. She hates me, and it is pointless to try anything further, but to try to stay out of her way so I can finish my hours.” He sighed again, “Because I can’t afford upsetting her further, the center refusing my hours, and Regina keeping me from racing next year.”

Liam didn’t say a word for a minute, he didn’t say anything. Killian moved the phone from his ear to look to see if it was still connected. “Liam?”

“I’m here, just thinking.” A loud breath came over the line, “You want my honest opinion?”

“Well that would be the most helpful.”

“Sounds like she isn’t angry at you.”

Then Elsa’s voice chimed in, “Agreed, she’s angry at men in general, or men in her past.”

“Bloody Hell, am I on speaker phone?”

“Sorry Killian, I hear you talking about a woman, and I got excited. I’m just going to go tuck the boys into bed.”

With that, he could hear the phone click, his brother laugh, “She’s right, though, little brother.”
Killian ran his hand through his hair, and partially listened to the rest of the conversation and said goodbye. In one week his family would be there. A couple of those days he was scheduled to still volunteer, he just hope he would still be allowed to. No matter what his brother and Elsa said, he knew his best bet, was just to avoid her. Not anger her, and not get his sorry ass thrown out.

Emma was early Monday morning to work, carrying a large stack of case files, amongst her other things. She dropped them all off at her desk, and started her search. She started with the break room since she needed to get her coffee as well. She frowned when it was empty, but made her own cup. She then left there and headed for Archie’s office, but no one was there. She walked to the kitchen and found Granny already there putting bread into the oven.

“Morning, Granny.”

“Morning Miss Swan.” She straightened back up and moved over to her cutting board, “Storage is all cleaned up and tidy. He did a great job.”

She did a double take at the older woman, and then gave a soft smile. Nothing ever got past those eyes of that woman. “I’m sure he did.”

“I believe we got all the supplies in for the stockings.” she let the information hang in the air as she continued cutting the carrots.

Emma smiled, “Good to know.” She said and walked out of the kitchen with a sip of her coffee. She headed back to the warehouse where he had wrapped gifts the other day. Trying to keep the mysteries of Santa still intact for the younger children if possible. She slowly opened the door and poked her head inside.

There he was, taking one of the felt stockings, and putting in the various small gifts into it. A small pack of crayons, a deck of go fish or other card game, a candy cane, a small chocolate santa, pair of gloves, a pack of gum, and a small plastic slinky. It wasn’t much, but it would make the children happy. He hadn’t notice her come in. She leaned against the door frame, and then with a sigh, “Morning.”

Killian almost dropped the stocking, she had scared him. He looked up quickly, confirmed the voice, and then looked back down. He had been trying to avoid her. “Morning Miss Swan, is there something I can do for you?” It took all his willpower not to call her love, since she hated it so much.

Emma could tell that he was deliberately not looking at her. “I… uhhh… no. I don’t need anything.” Why was she having trouble saying it. She just needed to apologize. But his demeanor was making her feel like he didn’t want her there. Shocking Emma, after what you called him.

“Well then, if you don’t need me for anything. There are quite a few of these to do, and I know Dr. Hopper would like them all done before I leave today.” He put the stocking in the box and then moved onto the next, still not looking up at her.

Emma sighed, “I just wanted…”

At that he took a breathe and then looked up at her, but his eyes just wouldn’t meet hers. “Listen Miss Swan. You have told me exactly how you feel. I have taken the hint. I will not pester you any further.”

“But…” she tried to interrupt.
“I will stay out of your way. I will do what the Shelter needs of me. I will earn my hours, and I will be out of your hair, lo-Miss Swan.” He grimaced at what he almost said, and then looked back down at his stockings. “Now, I should get back to work.” With that he turned his back to put more things into the stocking.

She swallowed hard, and backed out of the room. With a heavy heart she walked back to her office. He didn’t want to talk to her, heck he didn’t want to look at her. She needed to get back to work. Maybe she could figure out another way to say she was sorry.

Lunch was over and Emma went to the kitchen much earlier than she usually did. She figured this might be her best bet to apologize. She got two oatmeal cookies from Granny and made her way back to the warehouse. She opened the door and was surprised. All the stockings were done, boxed up, and everything was cleaned.

She headed to Archie’s office to try and see what Killian was doing now. When she got there, her boss was sitting at his desk reading his email. He saw her and motioned her in, “Emma, what can I do for you?”

“Just seeing what hard work you have our guest doing now. I figured he could use the sugar to keep up his energy.” She said while holding up the cookie.

Archie smiled, “He did well with those stockings. I’m surprised he got them done this morning. But he’s out for the rest of the day.”

“What?”

“The toy drive in town took a page from the shelter last week. He’s there doing autographs and pictures for the contribution of toys.”

“Oh.” She looked at the cookies, “Well, would you like one?”

“Thank you, I love oatmeal,” he said and reached for the cookie. He then turned back to his computer. “He’ll be back tomorrow.”

Emma nodded and headed to her office. Leaving the guilt to stir in her stomach for another day and her mind left to wonder what other heartache those blue depths had gone through. I guess I have another night of research ahead of me, she thought.

She was decked out in her pajamas, actually a cami and yoga pants, and walked back to the couch with a glass of wine. She opened her laptop, queued up some music. And then started to search. She wanted to know what happened in Europe, why did he leave? He had a good career, even won a the championship one year. He was on his way to win another one, when things seemed to go wrong.

She sipped her wine, and kept following the links. The problem seemed to have started just over four years ago. There seemed to have been a change in him, but why she couldn’t figure out. Killian seemed to have started to single out other drivers, deliberately taking them out of the race. The only link, all the cars he crashed where from a Gold Racing. There was nothing stated in the articles. But there had to be a reason for it.

She turned to Youtube, and watched his interviews. He gave plenty of interviews, filtering with the camera and the female interviewers. But around the same timeframe the interviews stopped. He
would wave reporters away, storm off to his trailer. Then there was the news that he was leaving the series. He left while the year was still going.

Emma looked up from her computer, took another sip of her wine. “It doesn’t make sense.” She said to no one. “What the hell happened?”

She put her laptop on the coffee table and started walking around her living room, drinking as she did so. Trying to piece it all together. Use what her brother taught her about being a cop. There wasn’t any crash where he got hurt. Thank goodness. He didn’t have problems with his manager or crew until the incidents. There wasn’t anything listed about a vedeta with Gold Racing. She couldn’t find incidents of where those drivers ever did anything negative against him.

“If it isn’t racing…” She smiled, “Then it’s personal.” She sat back down and started looking at pictures. Pictures of him winning races. Winning the championship. Waiting for the race to start. The only people ever there with him not part of the race team, if anyone was, was his brother and sometimes his sister-in-law. Which was peculiar.

There was no reason he should be single. Not that she was interested. Bull shit, she told herself. But with as many women who threw themselves at him, there was just no way. “Unless, he didn’t have one, he has several.” She shook her head at herself. There was no reason to be rude.

She hated to do it, but she went over to the Sun newspaper. Emma hated looking at the gossip rags, but she was getting desperate. She typed his name in the search bar, and then weighed through the articles. There seemed to be only a couple blurred images, of him and a woman together. Various times.

It looked like it could be the same woman. Brunette and slim, but nothing else could be made out. Sunglasses, scarfs around her head. Him in a ball cap and sunglasses as well, in the middle of the night. They did not want pictures, hands up, usually a middle finger with them. Emma smiled at that. She looked at the date of the articles, if it was the same woman, they were together for at least two years… prior to when the incidents started.

“Interesting,” she headed over to the US gossip sites and started to look him up as well. This time, not the same woman. And neither of them hid. However, it seems to be different women in the pictures. Not just the same one. None of them seemed to repeat either.

It felt all too familiar. “Heartbreak.” She knew all too well about it. How many times had she done the same thing, after a bad breakup. On to just one night stands. Not willing to get your heart broken again.

She took another drink. There was only one thing that didn’t make sense. Why try to crash the other cars. It wasn’t like it was just one driver, like another driver stole her… She looked up, “Shit!”

Emma googled Gold Racing. She looked over the main website, and found it was owned by Robert Gold. Nothing else was of course on the website. So she went back to the Sun, to look him up. And then her mouth hung open. Mr. Gold was married to a slim brunette named Milah. This time there were clear pictures of her. Even though Emma did not want to admit it, the woman was beautiful and much younger than her husband.

She finished her wine, and poured some more. Then googled Gold’s wife. Pictures, pictures, more pictures. And then Emma gasped as she read the headline, “Wife of Robert Gold of Gold Racing found dead.” Her heart rate increased as she clicked the link. Her mouth hung open as she read the article, with her heart breaking.
Emma sat her wine glass down, and clicked another article, and read that as well as the next and the next. She couldn’t help but notice the date of the woman’s death was just about a week before Killian had started targeting other drivers of Gold Racing. From the articles it was declared the woman had deliberately overdosed on various medications while at home, her husband having come home to find her dead on the bathroom floor.

Her heart hurt, her brain was running in circles. In some ways she wished she had never looked it up. In others she was trying to tell herself it could all be coincidence. That the woman might not be one in the same. But she knew that wasn’t the case. She just had to figure out a way to see him tomorrow, apologize, but not let him know what she had figured out.

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Killian leaned against the door frame to Archie’s office. “Morning.”

The redhead looked up at him, then at his clock and then back. “You’re early.”

“Trouble sleeping, so I got up early. So… what am I doing today?”

“We had a bunch of toy donations over the weekend.”

“I’ll get them wrapped like the last ones.”

“Perfect.” Killian started to turn and leave Archie’s office. “Oh, Killian. We have a fundraising event on Friday night.”

Killian nodded, “I know. It’s already on my schedule.”

“Fantastic.”

With that he headed back to the warehouse where the presents and gift wrap were waiting for him. He had to admit, after wrapping so many, he was getting pretty good at it. He rubbed his forehead. He had not slept well the night before. He couldn’t get her out of his head. Part of him wanted to know what she was going to say the yesterday, but at the same time, he couldn’t bare to hear her what her come back was.

He yawned as he cut another sheet of gift wrap. He needed another cup of coffee, he looked at his watch and shook his head. Right now there was no way he could chance heading to the break room, because she would be there getting her own coffee.

He tapped the one edge of the paper to the box when the door opened. He looked up, and the person he was trying to avoid was there in front of him. She looked hesitant, much like the day before. He took a breath, “Can I help you?”

Emma walked into the room and stuck out her hand with a red starbucks cup. “I’m not as observant as you are, so I don’t know how you like it. But this is black.” She motioned to the small paper bag in her other hand with her own cup of coffee. “But there is creamer, and sugar, and artificial sweetener in here.”

He wasn’t sure what to make of this. He looked at the cup in her hand, and then back to her. He accepted the cup and took it from her, “Thank you.” She then handed him the paper bag, and he took it as well. He took a sugar and stir from the bag, took off the lid to the coffee, added the sugar, stirred and looked back up at her.

She shifted on her feet in front of him, “I don’t know exactly what to say, or how to say…”
“You don’t need to say anything.”

“I do. What I said last week. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“Miss Swan…”

Emma winced, “I’m sorry.”

Killian blinked a few times, but couldn’t speak.

“You are right… and damn that is not easy to say.” She gave a small laugh, which seemed to lighten the mood because he did too. “I didn’t know you at all. I had no right to say that to you. Forgive me?”

He took a deep breath, looked into her deep green eyes. Then his own traveled down to her lips that she was biting, and then back to her eyes. Maybe Elsa was right. “Forgiven lo- Miss Swan.”

She noticed the almost slipup. “The sorry is for everything I said, even your habits and culture.” He smiled, she remembered what he had said. She let out a breath, “Okay, on that note. I need to get to work. I’ll see you around.” She turned and started through the door.

“See you around, love,” he said with a smile. She grinned at the term, only he couldn’t see it as she walked out of the room.
Chapter 3

Killian still wasn’t sure what to do with Emma’s apology. Did she just feel guilty but still believed it. Did she think that she was wrong, or right but shouldn’t have said it? But at least she was on speaking terms with him. But what should he do. Part of him wanted to try to prove that at least in part that she was wrong, but another part just didn’t want to anger her again and possibly get kicked out.

He finished his lunch and threw out his trash. Then he saw Granny walking towards him with two fresh baked cookies in her hand. He smiled at the older lady, it looked like the universe had a funny way of telling him which part of his thoughts to follow. He walked over to her.

“I had a feeling snickerdoodles would be perfect today.”

He smiled at the woman, “Thank you, Granny.”

She grinned, and turned to back into the kitchen with a parting, “Good Luck.”

His head quickly turned to look at the retreating woman, and then laughed as he walked back towards the offices.

Her door was open, but he could see her sitting at her computer typing. His knuckles lightly rapped at the door, and her head turned to see him. Her face showing shock at first, and then a small smile, “Hi.”

He took a breath. “This didn’t go so well last time, but since they are snickerdoodles, maybe that will help?” He slowly walked into the room and reached out to her with a cookie.

Emma swallowed, gathered her wits and accepted the cookie. “Thank you, Killian.”

“You are welcome, Emma.” He took a bite of his own cookie, it was still warm, and really, really good. But the awkwardness continued. His knuckles lightly rapped behind his ear, and then he took a breath. He moved the rest of the cookie into his left hand and held out his right. “Hello, I’m Killian Jones. Nice to meet you.”

Emma blinked a couple times, looked at his hand and then back to him. She then got it, and smiled, she took his hand and shook it. “Nice to meet you Killian. I’m Emma Swan.”

He took another bite of the cookie. “Bloody hell these are good.”

She laughed, “Right?”

He grinned and looked down a second. “I know you aren’t interested in me, love. And I promise I won’t try anything.” His eyes looked back up at hers, and the look on her face was almost like she was disappointed. But he let it go, she had already made her choice very clear. “But I was hoping we could at least be civil, maybe even friends for the rest of the time I am here.”

Emma nodded quickly, “Yes. Of course, that would be best.” Her heart felt like it was constricting. Why did she want to correct him, tell him that he was wrong. That she did want… him. She shook the thoughts away. He was just here until his hours were done, and then he would be gone from the shelter and her if things were to continue.

Knowing so much about him, and his background, meant he could not be a one night stand with her,
not anymore. But knowing he was going to leave, he couldn’t be anything else either. Her heart
couldn’t take the chance.

He could see that she was torn about something, and part of him hoped it was him. He wondered
what could have happened to make her so untrusting. He had his own reasons not to start
relationships, that was until her saw her. For some reason, she made him want to try again. But that
shot was ruined. “I need to get back to wrapping the presents.” He pointed at her cases, “and it looks
like you have work to do.” He walked to the door, and gave her a small smile. “See you around
love.”

She watched him leave, she looked down at her desk, and closed her eyes. She tried to tell herself
this was a good thing. Just stay civil. Don’t get hurt. But why did her heart tell her that she was going
to regret it.

The rest of the week continued much the same. He bought her a coffee with one cream and one
sugar and left it on her desk for her in the mornings. In the afternoon she would grab an extra cookie
and bring it to him while he was stacking the latest food donations, wrapping more gifts, or putting
together some new furniture for the place.

Neither allowed anything else. Fear of what could go wrong was too much of a motivator to make
them want to follow any other thoughts or feelings. Before they knew it, Friday was there, and
everyone left early to get ready for the Event.

The Event was a big to-do which Emma hated. Okay, she didn’t hate them. She just hated going to
them alone. Going alone meant at least one of the guests was going to hit on her. And of course she
had to be nice to them because they were donating large sums of money to the shelter.

She pulled into the hotel parking lot and pulled up to the Valet. The man opened her door, and she
took the ticket he offered and then walked inside. She followed the signs to the event in the main
ballroom. Only a few guests had already arrived. But Archie and Tink were there and standing by
the bar. Perfect, exactly what she needed to get through the night. “Glass of whatever white wine
you have open.” She told the bartender.

Tink sidled in next to her, “You will need these.” She handed her two blue raffle tickets.
She smiled back at her friend and took them, “Only two free drinks this year?” She then handed one
to the bartender and took the glass from the bar.

The two blondes started the short walk back to Archie. “We are low on money, so we can’t waste it
on the drinks.”

Emma nodded, boy did she know that. She was hoping the donations tonight would help out through
next year. She looked over at Tink in a knee length Christmas green velvet dress. “You look nice.”

They stood next to Archie, and Tink gave a tiny curtsey with a laugh, “You know green is my
signature color.” Tink then gave a look at Emma, “You decided not to get in the spirit.”

“What is wrong with black? Isn’t a little black dress all a girl needs?” Emma asked looking down at
her long chiffon black off the shoulder dress. “Okay maybe little long black dress. But it’s cold
outside.” The girls laughed and Archie started to join in their conversation.

Emma was halfway through her glass of wine, when Tink elbowed her lightly in the side. Her eyes
looked to her friend and then turned her head in the direction of the doors. She willed her mouth not
to hang open as she watched Killian walk into the room. He was dressed in what was obviously a tailored black suit to perfectly fit his frame, along with a crisp white shirt and black tie. His hair still slightly disheveled, which she was now positive it was done on purpose.

She looked back at her friend, and Tink smiled. “Oh that reminds me, I need to get to the door so I can hand out tickets now that everyone is starting to show up.” Tink waved goodbye to Archie and Emma and headed towards the door, and gave Killian two drink tickets along the way.

Emma watched him put them into an inner coat pocket as he walked towards them. She swallowed and took a large drink of her wine, hoping it would bring back her courage.

“Dr. Hopper.” He nodded at Archie, then turned to her. “Miss Swan, you look… stunning.”

Emma smiled, “You look…”

He gave a rare smirk that she had missed all week, “I know.”

She rolled her eyes but the smile stayed on her face. She then took another drink of her wine.

Killian noticed that her wine was almost gone. “Would you like another glass of wine, Emma? I’m headed to the bar myself.”

“That would be great. Thank you.” She went to give him the last ticket she had.

He waved her away, “What are you having?”

“Whatever white they have will do.”

He nodded and headed over to the bar. He tried to refrain from looking back at her. He had almost stumbled walking in when his eyes had landed on her. Stunning was an understatement. The dress hugged her beautiful curves. The off the shoulder number and the simple necklace accentuated her graceful neck, and perfect cleavage. She was certainly living up to her last name tonight.

Killian got the attention of the bartender, “The best rum you have, straight. Also what whites wines do you have?” The man gave him a list to look at while he poured the rum. “I’ll take this one.” He said pointing to one of the better wines on the list. The man poured the drink and sat it on the bar. Killian took out two twenties and gave them to man and told him to keep the change.

He picked up the drink and turned to find Emma standing alone. “Your wine, love.”

She took the glass, “Thank you.”

“Where did Archie go?”

She motioned around the room with her other hand, “To greet the guests. Which I should be doing.” She sighed.

“Which it sounds like you hate.” He took a sip of rum.

“Hate is too strong of word. Just… don’t… want… too.” She said almost like a petulant child. He tried to stifle a laugh poorly and she took a drink of wine. She blinked twice as the taste registered, and then looked over at him. Something she was trying to avoid doing. “This is just not any white wine. This is way too expensive…”

“Nonsense. Besides you said whatever white will do, and I chose.” He then gave her a brilliant smile, “But it’s good, is it not?”
Emma grinned and tilted her head with a small shake in agreement, “It IS good.” She took another sip, then looked back at him again. With a loud sigh, “I guess I better mingle.”

He smiled back, “Good luck.”

“Thanks,” she said and walked over to a group in the corner. Introducing herself.

Killian started to make the rounds at the party as well. They moved back and forth between the various party goers. He would look for her to see how she was doing, occasionally he would hear her laugh, making him smile. A few times he would look up and see her eyes were on him only to quickly move back to the people she was talking to. Every time it happened he began to wonder maybe, just maybe… no way, he was deluding himself.

She had tried to stick to large groups, or married couples while she was talking. But she slipped up when she went to the bar. Now she was partially cornered against it, talking to a very flirty, large donor to the shelter. She looked around the ballroom. It was now very crowded, which was a very good sign for the shelter. In fact almost half the people she had never seen before. But now, she was trying to find Tink, or Archie, or… him. For some reason she knew if she could find him in the crowd, that he would come rescue her.

She found Tink slow dancing with a man Emma had never seen in her life out on the dance floor with a crowd of other people. Her friend would be no help. She smiled politely again at the man in front of her, gave a few nods, tried to excuse her to the ladies room.

He begged another minute from her for the fifth time.

“There you are, love.” She heard from behind her as an arm wrapped around her waist. Shockingly she didn’t jump, but leaned into it. “I was wondering where you went.” She tried not to smile at the look on the other man’s face. He turned to the older man, and reached out to shake his hand. “Killian Jones, nice to meet you.”

The man swallowed and looked between the two of them, shook Killian’s hand, and introduced himself as well.

“I hate to interrupt the two of you,” he then turned to Emma with the most flirtatious smile she had seen from him, “But love, I was hoping you would join me for a dance.”

Emma smiled back at him, and reached out for his hand, interlacing their fingers, “I’ve been waiting for you to ask me all night, babe.” She added the last with a small smirk, and enjoyed the way his blue eyes darkened.

He removed his arm from around her, and held out her hand. “Lead the way.” He then turned to look at the man, “Excuse us.”

She walked out into the middle of the crowd, and instantly his hand was back on her hip, his other extended but she kept there fingers laced together. With a quick step she was pulled close to him, and her eyes looked up at him in shock as he started to dance.

“I…” she looked around and tried to look at her feet, “I don’t know how to dance or do whatever this is.” She motioned with her hand and then put it back on his shoulder.

Killian grinned, “You are doing just fine. There is only one rule.” He took another step forward and she instinctively followed his movements, “Pick a partner who knows what he’s doing.”

A few steps in she seemed to catch her rhythm, and started to enjoy herself. She turned her head to
look up at him, those sparkling eyes making her heart rate increase. “Thank you.” He tilted his head in question. She smiled, “For… well… saving me.”

“You looked really uncomfortable.” Killian’s thumb absently stroked against her hip. “If you only were looking for a way to get away. I can maneuver us to the other side of the dance floor.” He swallowed lightly, hoping that she wanted to stay. So he could hold her against him, just a little bit longer. She smelled like honey, vanilla and her beloved cinnamon.

Her heart beat a little faster, it was time to make a decision. Part of her told her to get off the damn dance floor. The other part wanted to stay in his arms and dance the night away, the only question was vertically or horizontally. At the thought her spine went rigid.

The moment her body stiffened in his arms, he took a small step back and his eyes hit the floor. He started to glide them to the edge of the dance floor. He knew he shouldn’t have hoped.

His actions made her decision very clear, and she couldn’t believe she was doing this. “Stop now? I was just getting the hang of it.” His eyes instantly met hers, and his smile almost blinded her.

Killian pulled her close once more, only to spin her out and twirl her back in. She was giggling as she crashed back into his chest, her hand instantly finding his shoulder and his her waist. “You appear to be a natural, love.”

They moved together across the dance floor, both enjoying themselves. She looked up at him to ask, “Where did a race car driver learn to dance?”

He laughed, “What is it love, you don’t believe that NASCAR drivers can dance, or did you only see them able to line dance?”

She laughed, “I’m a horrible person.”

“No, no you aren’t.” He twirled her out and then back in again, he loved the giggle she gave as he did so. “And you are pretty accurate about most of them.” He leaned in and said the rest quietly into her ear, “Just not about me.”

She gave a small shudder and then looked back up at him, “I seem to keep being wrong about you.”

“Well Swan, instead of assuming something, how about you pose the question to me?”

“Okay then, how did you learn to dance?”

“Prior to turning a teenager…” he turned to look around the room for a second, and her brain automatically translated, before his mother died. But she didn’t say anything, she didn’t want him to know she already knew. He looked back at her, as he continued to lead her across the dance floor. “I was in a public school back home, and part of the mandatory curriculum for boys to become proper gentleman was dance.”

“They taught you that in public school? Public schools have basically pulled art and music here.”

Killian shook his head, “British term. Public schools would equate to private schools here in the states. State schools would be what you consider public.” He gave a soft smile, “Forgive me love? I’ve only been in the states for four years.”

Emma grinned, “Nothing to forgive.” She looked around and sighed, “I should get back out there and mingle with the donors.”
“I guess I have already been too greedy with your attention,” he said as the song ended and he started to guide her off the floor.

The next song came on, Emma wasn’t sure if she even heard it before, “Wait.” He stopped and looked down at her. “I love this song. One more dance?”

With a small nod and a smile he pulled her back into his arms and they started to dance one more time. This song was a little slower, both her hands went to his shoulders, his wrapped around her waist as they mimicked everyone else on the dance floor swaying slowly to the music as if at a high school dance.

Blue eyes stared down into green, as they continued to sway. Neither seemed willing to take their eyes off each other. He slowly moved them around the floor and moved closer and closer to the edge at the back of the room, and near an exit door to the back hall. When the song ended, he took her hand and whispered in her ear, “Follow me.”

She didn’t even question it and followed him out the door. As soon as the door was shut she was pushed back gently against the wall. His hands rested lightly on her hips. His eyes stared into hers, “Emma…” she saw him swallow. One of his hands lifted from her hip and slowly reached out for the side of her face.

She took a breath, knowing he would stop with one word from her. But she didn’t want to. Her eyes moved to his lips, saw his teeth biting at his bottom one. They then moved back to his eyes. His fingers lightly stroked the side of her face, then slid back into her hair. Fingers tangling into it at the nape of her neck, as he slowly leaned down to her. His lips brushing gently at hers, both their eyes closing. He deepened the kiss, and then he felt her arms move around his neck, into his own hair, pulling him closer. Her tongue teased his lip and he opened instantly, a moan escaped when her tongue brushed with his. The kiss, her lips, her tongue, her body against his, felt perfect, felt right.

Emma wanted him closer, and as if he heard her thoughts he pressed his body into hers against the wall. She let out a whimper at feeling his warm, toned body pressed against her. Her mind thinking of everything that she wanted to do with him and to him. Their tongues danced, their bodies rubbed against each other. His hand not in her hair was at her lower back, trying to pull her closer.

She wanted him, she wanted this. She wanted him too much. Her brain started to surface from the passion and her thoughts started to take over. Fear swept through her, and her hands slipped between them and she lightly pressed at his chest and broke the kiss. “We have to stop. I can’t… I can’t do this…” She then broke away from him without meeting his eyes and turned to walk down the hallway, leaving him standing there alone.
Chapter 4

She wanted him, she wanted this. She wanted him too much. Her brain started to surface from the passion and her thoughts started to take over. Fear swept through her, and her hands slipped between them and she lightly pressed at his chest and broke the kiss. “We have to stop. I can’t… I can’t do this…” She then broke away from him without meeting his eyes and turned to walk down the hallway, leaving him standing there alone.

Killian knew he should let her go. He couldn’t afford to upset her, but he also knew his heart couldn’t afford not to take a chance. He ran after her, and caught her before she turned the corner. His hand clasped her wrist and tugged gently turning her to face him. His was shocked to see the tears running down her face. “Emma…”

She shook her head, “Let me go…”

He closed his eyes, and loosened his grip on her wrist but then opened his eyes to look at her and he glided his fingers up her bare arm to clasp her shoulder. “I will let you go, but… tell me why love. Why? Why can’t you do this?”

Emma shook her head and looked down. His other hand went under her chin and gently raised it to look back into her eyes. She sniffed, “I… I can’t just…” she shook her head, “I can’t just have one night with you.”

He blinked a couple of times, and then the realization hit. “You think I’m trying for just a one night stand with you?” Her eyes were moving back and forth as if she was trying to read him. He looked up and tried to get his barrings, “I thought when we were dancing you agreed to ask me questions without assuming things again.” He looked back down at her and saw her eyes widened a little. His fingers moved from her chin to cup her cheek. “I don’t know exactly what it is that I feel between us, but I want a lot more than that.” He leaned his forehead against hers, “I’d like to date you, if you will let me.”

She pulled back to look at him, “How?”

He was confused, “I’m pretty certain you know how dating works Emma.”

She shook her head, “You are only here until you serve your hours. A week or two tops. I can’t allow myself to do that when you are just going to leave and…”

He cut her off, “What are you talking about? I’m not leaving.” She gave him another confused look. “I live a town over on Lake Norman, Emma. It’s a short drive. I’m living at my home and I drive over to the shelter in the morning. Mills Racing is a twenty minute drive from my house. I’m not going anywhere.” He could see her trying to process what he said.

“But you go all over the country…”

“Yes, I do travel all over the country. But I live here. I am home basically every week.” He looked into her eyes still trying to read her, trying to figure out what this really was about. But he knew he couldn’t push her, her walls were up. He could tell Elsa was right. “Emma, love, if you feel even a small amount of what I feel between us,” he swallowed, “give it a shot.”

He moved his other hand up to cup her other cheek, both his thumbs moving to wipe away her tears. She wanted to trust it, she wanted to trust him. But part of her, the part of her scared from her past was too afraid. The other part of her, that part that still had hope wanted her to try. She looked into
his blue eyes, so impossibly blue, and she could see him hoping she would just try. She took a deep breath and then nodded, “Yes.”

Killian smiled back at her, “Tomorrow night too soon?”

She let out a small giggle, “Eager?”

He moved a lock of her hair behind her ear, “I’ve been eager since I met you Swan.”

“So tomorrow then.” Emma took a deep breath at looked at the door back into the ballroom, “But right now I have to go back in there, and all I want to do is go home.”

“Are you okay, love?”

She nodded, “Did I mess up all my makeup?”

“You look beautiful.”

She blushed a little and took his hand, then both of them walked back into the ballroom. This time making rounds around the room together.

This time as Emma mingled around the room, she was not cornered by the single men or even non-single men. She smiled up at Killian next to her, he was very effective at keeping them at bay. He was also marvelous at mingling with the donors. Telling them all about his time with the kids, and what a great job the shelter was doing, but that they needed more funds. Let them know that they were down staff, but still trying to do what was right for all of them.

As they talked with everyone, it was almost completely unconsciously, but their hands always found each other’s. Or his would rest at the small of her back as he guided her across the room. Seemed that once that part of their walls had been broken it was impossible to stop.

Then the music died down, and there was a few soft taps of a microphone. “Ladies and Gentleman!” Everyone turned to see Archie standing at the front of the room. “I will not take up too much of your time, and let you get back to the party. But I want to thank you all for coming tonight, we all appreciate it. The children appreciate it.” He motioned around the room, “This year we have a record number of people here and we also have surpassed our goal for donations.”

Everyone clapped in the room, along with cheers. Killian and Emma grinned at each other as Archie continued. “So, again I, and everyone at Storybrooke Children’s Shelter thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and Happy Holidays! Now… back to the party.” A round of applause went up again, as Archie turned off the microphone and blended back into the room.

Emma grabbed Killian’s hand and pulled her behind him, which just made his smile bigger. “Archie…” She got next to her boss and he turned towards her. “That is fantastic news!” “It really is, Emma. So much so, we can afford another counselor.” “Really?!” she was beyond thrilled.

Archie smiled. “Yes, really. You have been working too many hours. You need to take a break as well. I don’t want you to burn out.” “I agree. You could use a break.” Killian said, his thumb gliding over the back of her hand.

“Oh really?” She asked him.
“Yes, really.” Archie agreed and smiled at the two of them, but decided not to comment at their entwined fingers.

Killian gave a small pull at her hand, and got her attention back. “I’m going to head to the bar and get us some water. I’m sure you’ll be okay here Swan, right?”

She grinned, “Yeah, I think so.”

“Good, I will be right back.” He turned and reluctantly let her hand go as he headed back to the bar.

Emma tried to shake off the feeling of loss from him leaving as she turned back to Archie. “So how far did we surpass the goal?”

He shook his head, “It’s unbelievable. By well over a million dollars.”

Her eyes got large, “What?”

“Between all the extra people here tonight, and then one large… one very large anonymous donation. Yeah…”

“Anonymous?”

“Well, basically anonymous.” Emma gave her boss a strange look and he leaned in closer. “It was a donation from a Foundation that asked to stay anonymous.”

“To the public yeah, but…”

“Honestly, I know the name of the foundation, but we have no information on who owns or even set it up.”

Emma was confused, she tried to understand. “What is the foundation?”

He smiled back, “Never heard of it actually. It’s called ‘The Lost Boys and Girls’.”

“Really?”

“How much was their donation?”

Archie smiled, “A million dollars.”

Her mouth hung open, “Wow.”

“Exactly. But the name of the foundation is even hush hush, so…”

She made the motion of zipping her lips, “Not a word.”

“Emma, I know you want to head home. Go on. Get out of here. See you on Monday.”

She smiled, “Thanks Archie.” With that she turned around and saw Killian walking back with two bottles of water. She walked towards him, and he handed her a bottle. “Thanks.” She opened her bottle and took a drink.

“More than welcome love. Figured after the wine, it might do you some good.” He opened his own bottle and took a drink as well, “and me as well.”
She took another drink, “Well Archie just dismissed me for the night.”

“Oh really?” He angled his elbow to her, and she slid her hand in to hold on. “Then let me lead you out of here.” With that they both walked towards the exit of the ballroom and towards the main entrance of the hotel. “Are you okay to drive home, Emma?”

“Yeah, I’m good. Three glasses over six hours plus the hor dourves I’m just fine. I’m not a lightweight.”

He laughed, “Good to know you can handle your liquor.”

“And you? While I wouldn’t mind you having to work a few more hours at the shelter, I don’t think drinking and driving would do your career any good.”

“Honestly?” He tilted his head and moved a tad closer to her.

She smiled and looked up at him, “That is the best policy with me.”

“I only had one drink. The water was really for you.”

She squeezed his hand and pulled him to the front door and stepped outside. They both gave their tickets to the valet. Emma shivered and Killian immediately took off his jacket, “It’s only a second, I’m fine.”

“You are shivering Emma. Take it.” He pulled it around her shoulders, and pulled her closer with it. “Better?”

She rolled her eyes, “Maybe.”

Killian laughed, “Only maybe? Well what else can I do to warm you up love?” He watched her eyes dilate in front of him, and he leaned in closer and kissed her cheek, then pulled away. “I’m looking forward to our date.”

“So am I.”

“Can I borrow your phone?”

“It’s in my car, why?”

“Well I was going to give you my number, so I could either arrange a meeting place or get your address to pick you up if you are comfortable with that.”

“I doubt you are a murderer so…” She saw his eyes flutter and look away for a brief second, and then set back on her. Then she remembered Milah and thought maybe she struck… something. “So I can give you my number and you can pick me up.” He handed her his phone and she put in her contact info, including her address, which got a raised eyebrow from him.

With that both their cars pulled up, and a driver got out of each waiting for them. “I hate to say goodnight Swan. But looks like both our rides await.” they walked through the opening between the back of her car and the front of his. “Tomorrow, seven o’clock, wear something casual and comfortable.” He saw her questioning eye, “You’ll see.”

She leaned up and kissed his cheek, “Goodnight Killian.”

“Goodnight love.”
They both turned and got in their own car and headed home.

Why was she so fucking nervous? Emma continued to pace. Around her living room, back into the bathroom to check her makeup, back to her livingroom. She looked at the clock, why the hell did she get ready early? So she could pace for another fifteen minutes. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “It’s just Killian.” She shook her head, that was part of the problem, it was Killian.

For a brief second she thought she should call or text him and tell him she had changed her mind. But she really didn’t want too, and heck she didn’t even have his number. He had hers. She shouldn’t have put her address in his phone, and then he would have texted her today to get it. She took another deep breath.

The issue really was, that she was looking forward to it, because she really liked him. She had tried not to like him, she really had. But it didn’t work. And now here she was pacing around her apartment trying not to freak out.

Also, as she looked in the mirror again, what was he taking her out to do? She was in a pair of jeans, knee high boots, and a large warm red sweater. She gave a smile to her reflection in the mirror as to what she wore underneath. She shook her head, she wanted to try for a real relationship, she didn’t want to ruin it by just falling into bed with him. A small part of her was telling her it wouldn’t ruin anything.

She was scared, starting another relationship. After the hell with Neal she had stopped trying for years and years, and then she felt like it was time to try again only to be burned again by Walsh. People told her that everyone had bad breakups. But they just didn’t understand just how bad, just how horrible those relationships ended.

Emma was broken out of her memories by a knock at her door. “Just a second!” she called out and gave one more look into the mirror before she went for her door. She stood in front of it, took a deep breath and then let it out slowly. She then opened the door to find Killian standing there, a large smile on his face, his eyes moving over her, taking her in. She did the same. He was in boots, dark jeans and a black sweater with a black peacoat. Her eyes got to his before his got to hers. “So…” She put her hand on her hip, “This okay?”

“Perfect Swan. You look beautiful.” He pulled his hand out from behind his back and pulled out a dozen of mixed white and red roses.

She was shocked, “Wow… uhh… thank you.” She took the flowers from him and smelled them. “You can come in while I get these in some water.” He followed her in and leaned against the archway into her kitchen as he looked through to the rest of her apartment. She saw his eyes look around, “I know it’s not much, but it works for me.”

Killian arched his eyebrow at her, “Was just trying to get to know you by seeing your place, love. It fits you. Besides I lived in much smaller at one point when I lived in London.”

She got the flowers into a large mason jar. She might need to buy a vase if he ever brings them again. And from Emma’s experience she had barely ever received flowers, so doubted it would happen again.

He straightened back up as she walked past him and grabbed her purse and her thick winter coat. “Ready?” he asked and stuck out his arm.

“Absolutely.” She took his arm and then headed out of the door. She locked it behind them, and then
made their way to his car. A nice black Camaro. A beep sounded, and he opened the door for her. She slid into the leather seat, and smiled at the warm seat under her. Her eyes flashed to the dash, yep, seat warmers were already on for her. A few seconds later his door was opening and he was sliding in. “So… is this the car that got you community service?”

Killian pulled away from the curb and started to drive into town. “Well, it was the car I was driving. I was responsible for that though…” He took a second to look at her and then back at the road. “I don’t know how sorry I really am about it now.”

Emma could feel the small blush creeping up her cheeks, but she couldn’t stop what came out of her mouth, “So am I… but don’t tell my brother that.”

“What?”

She gave a soft laugh, “My brother is the sheriff that pulled you over.”

He gave a confused look to her and then back to the road again, “Sheriff David Nolan is your brother?”

That’s the moment Emma knew she made a mistake, “Oh… uh… this is usually like a 4th date conversation.”

He left one hand on the wheel and took hers in his other, “You can tell me anything love, but if you want, we can wait.”

Deep down she knew she could trust him. Why she felt like that she wasn’t sure, but she did. “David’s parents, well, I guess my parents… well… they had me as a foster kid when I was thirteen, and then adopted me a little after I turned fifteen. It’s just David and me now…” She could feel Killian’s eyes on her, and she swallowed to look at him. As he looked back and forth to her and the road, and squeezed her hand tighter.

“Thank you for telling me.” He brought her hand up to his lips, and placed a soft kiss, and then back down to the console between them. He knew he needed to tell her something, to get them back on even footing. To make her comfortable. “My father left my mother, my brother and me when I was very little. I barely remember him.” She squeezed his hand back, “Then when I was twelve my mother got really sick and we lost her. Then it was just myself and my brother Liam.”

“I’m so sorry.” She was glad he told her, even though she had known part of it, she now had more information and confirmation of what she thought.

He pulled into a parking space and turned off the car. “I guess we are just both a couple of lost boys and girls that found each other.” He said with a small smile.

Emma blinked a couple time, “What was that?”

“What? Oh, uhhh… one thing you will get to know about me love, I’m a little obsessed with Peter Pan and Captain Hook, the original novel much more than the movies.” She tried to keep the laugh in and pressed her smiling lips together. “Just a reference, you know, the Lost Boys on the island?”

She swallowed and then nodded quickly, “Yeah of course.” Her brain reeling as it was putting the pieces together.

He let go of her hand and got out of his side. Her brain was still spinning. Oh my god, he was the donor. He was the fucking donor! But why keep it anonymous? She was brought out of her thinking by her door being opened. She looked up at him and took his hand as he helped her out of the car.
“Right this way,” he led her to the restaurant.

Emma laughed as they got to the restaurant, “Granny’s Diner?”

“What’s wrong with that? Fantastic lasagna. Wonderful pie. And a very casual atmosphere.”

She felt even more at ease, “They do have wonderful pie, but I like the grilled cheese and onion rings way better than the lasagna.”

He opened the door for her, and with a chime of the bell she walked in and he smiled at her. “That is the beauty of a restaurant love, we can order whatever we each want.”

The waitress ushered them over to a booth towards the back and they slipped in across from each other. “So… not that I’m complaining…”

“Well that does not bode well for the rest of that sentence or me.”

Emma laughed and was about to go on just as the waitress came to get their drink orders. They both knew what they wanted to so they ordered everything and once she left Emma continued. “I mean… I like the casual aspect of tonight. It’s just not…”

“What you expected? Or what other men do with you? Or?”

“Uhhh… any, all… though I don’t have a ton of experiences with first dates…”

He gave her a questioning look, because he didn’t understand how she couldn’t have experience with first dates. “Not a first date type of conversation?”

She grinned, “You could say that. But seriously, why?”

“Well, couple reasons. One, we were both at a fancy party last night, and I had a feeling you might not want to be in a dress and heels again tonight.” She smiled, because he was right. “And second, what I have planned after dinner will be better as we are dressed.”

“After dinner? Just so you know, I don’t pillage and plunder on the first date.”

Killian laughed, “Pillage and plunder?”

“You’re the Peter Pan, Captain Hook, Neverland pirates fan.” She saw him laugh again, and then his hand reached out for hers. She didn’t even think and put hers in his. The waitress came back with their sodas and then returned to the bar. “So what are we doing after dinner?”

“Well since you don’t do ‘that’ on a first date, I guess I better change plans.” He watched her eyes widen and he laughed, “Joking, love. The plans still stand, but they are secret. However, afterwards…” He laughed again at her eyes and this time her mouth hanging open. “I’m taking ‘that’ off the table.”

“What?”

He arched an eyebrow at her, “Disappointed?” She bit her lip, just as her leg touched his. “I think you are.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” she said with a smile as she brought her straw to her lips and sucked down her soda.

Both his eyebrows raised and his tongue swiped across his bottom lip. His brain trying to imagine
what she might be wearing under her clothes. If she would have worn something thinking he might see it. He felt her leg nudge his, and his focus returned to her all telling eyes. Well damn, maybe he shouldn’t have taken it off the table. But no, no he wanted to do this right.

Just then the food came, which cut off the thoughts both were having. That was a good thing. They made small talk over dinner. She found out that his brother and his wife Elsa along with their two boys were coming in tomorrow and staying with him till just after Christmas. He found out that she was heading to her brother’s and sister-in-law’s for Christmas day.

When they were done eating he signaled for the waitress, “Can I get the check, but can you also add two hot chocolate’s to go?”

Emma gave him a questioning look but went with it, “Can one of those have cinnimon please?” The girl nodded and left the table.

“I should have known.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

He scratched behind his ear, “I may have received a tiny bit of intel from Ms. Lucas.”

“Oh really? What all did she tell you?”

“I said tiny bit. She only told me that you had a bit of a sweet tooth, and that snickerdoodles were your favorite.” At that the waitress came back over with the two hot chocolates one with a ‘C’ marked on the lid. Killian laid down more than enough cash for the bill and the tip and stood. He took her hand, helping her out of the booth, and then each took their cup and walked out of the restaurant.

As they got to the sidewalk, Emma started to turn to the car, but his arm came around her, “This way..” He pointed in the other direction. She gave him a look, and he smiled. Neither said anything as his arm stayed around her and rested at her hip as they continued to walk. He directed her to another turn and she knew they were coming up to a city park.

“A walk in the park?”

“Not exactly.”

As they got closer, she saw what she thought they were walking up to. It was a horse drawn carriage. When they got up to it, the man sitting at the front got down, and gave a regal bow, “Mr. Jones.”

Emma looked to Killian, “Are you kidding me?”

He laughed, “Hence the reason I thought more comfortable, not to mention warm clothes would be better.” The driver helped them both into the carriage and he pulled the plush blanket up over the lap, as they sat on the soft bench seat. He took a look at her next to him, it looked like she was about to laugh. “Something wrong?”

She giggled slightly, “No, no. Just…” She motioned with her hands, “I… I… don’t know what to say.”

He loved to hear her laugh, see the joy in her eyes. “You don’t have to say anything. I just hope you like it.” He took her hand and held it in his, their others holding their hot chocolate. “So the park and the group of historical homes in the area are all supposed to be decorated in a huge array of
Christmas lights. And this young man,” he motioned to the driver who was getting into his seat. “Will be taking us around to see them all.”

The driver touched a couple buttons and the soft sounds of Christmas music started to play, and then the horse started to move and they were off starting with the park. It was absolutely beautiful, the trees all in white lights. The only thing that would have been more perfect is if there was snow, but it was North Carolina after all.

They listened to the music, sat with their sides pressed together for warmth, and pointed to various light displays as they made their way through the park and then on to the historical homes. As they moved further, Emma found her head resting on his shoulder, and once she noticed, she decided it could stay right there. He didn’t seem to try and stop her, and in fact he didn’t want to.

He leaned his head against her’s and dropped a soft kiss to the top of head. He could smell her perfume, and something so uniquely her. His side pressed next to her so warm, warming his heart, his soul. The other side without her was cold, and he wanted to smile at the philosophical side of that thought. But he knew it was right. He didn’t know why she was the one that his heart wanted to finally be willing to open itself back up to, but it did. And he wasn’t going to argue with it.

When the ride came to an end, it was almost like waking from a dream. They got out of the carriage and Killian paid the man and then they headed back to his car. He clicked his key to start the car as far away from it as he could. He helped her back into the partially heated car, then got in himself and started on his way back to her apartment. They held hands in the car in the comfortable silence and it wasn’t long before he was pulling up to the curb in front of her complex.

He started to open his door, and she tugged his hand, “You don’t have to get out in the cold.”

“I want to walk you to your door love.” With that he got out of the car, and got her door. Soon they were both walking inside and up to her apartment.

Once they got to her door, she unlocked it and then turned back to him, and bit her lip, “Do you want to come in for some coffee?”

He smiled with her and clenched his jaw and shut his eyes briefly, “I would love to, but I shouldn’t.”

Both of her hands reached for each one of his on either side of him, and intertwined their fingers, “Well, I must say. I had a very good time.”

“So does that mean you will go out with me again?” He knew he should probably wait, not look so eager. But he couldn’t do that with her. He didn’t want to leave now.

Emma knew what her answer was, but as she looked into his blue eyes, she could only do one thing. She pulled him closer by their intertwined hands and then her lips were on his. She released his hands and one of hers went around his and the other to the back of his head. His arms were instantly around her, and her body was pushed back against the door as he angled his head to kiss her deeper.

Both mouths opened to each other, and tongues already moving against one another. His one hand moved to her lower back to press her closer to him. It took all her willpower to pull back and look into his eyes. Both out of breath, and neither wanting to part but knew they should. They both wanted more than one night, and they wanted to do this thing between them right.

Killian closed his eyes and took one step back. “I take that as a yes?”

She smiled and nodded.
He licked his lips and took another small step back, it almost physically hurt to leave her. “I’ll see you on Monday.” She nodded again at him. “Goodnight Emma.”

“Goodnight Killian.” Right when he was about to turn to leave, and she opened her door, “Oh and Killian?” He turned to look back into her eyes. “What you were wondering before at the diner… the answer was red lace.” And with that she walked into her apartment and shut the door.

He stood with his mouth open, the vision of her in those lace undergarments and nothing else. It wasn’t going to be easy to get that thought out of his head. It was going to be a long shower tonight, he thought as turned to leave. “Bloody hell.”
Chapter 5

The hot water cascaded over his head, drenching his hair, dripping over his long eyelashes, and pouring off his chin. Water ran over his shoulders and down his chest, soaking the dark chest hair, and traveling down further to where his hand was fisted over his hard length. His other arm braced against the tiled wall of the shower as he grunted in pleasure.

Killian’s fist moved with the help of the water over his straining cock, up and over the head, then back down to the base, eliciting another grunt from his mouth. His brain imagining that it was Emma’s own hand on him instead of his. Her delicate fingers grasping tightly, moving over him, her body pressed against his front. Her hardened nipples pressing against his chest, her mouth moving over his.

He had another flash of her laying on his large bed in nothing but a pair of red lace bra and panties. His fingers itched to pull them off her, to see her naked before him. The real her, not the imaginary her that was torturing him. He groaned again as he grasped himself harder. She had surprised him by telling him what she was wearing under her outfit. Making him harden instantly, and realize she had contemplated sleeping with him. But the fact that she deliberately wanted him to know… that little minx. He moaned again as his hand kept pumping over his length.

Part of him wanted to feel guilty for thinking of her like this. But a much larger part of him, and also the part of him throbbing in his hand, considered that her telling him about her red lace underwear was more than permission to think of her like this. She wanted him to know for a reason.

His brain thought about taking off her bra, allowing his hands to hold and squeeze her perfect breasts, to suck and nibble at her nipples. He groaned as his hand continued to move, his thumb swiping over the head of his cock, making his eyes clamp shut. He thought of his hands moving down her body, his lips following, and removing that last scrap of lace from her. God he wanted to taste her, to make her wither under him with his mouth, make her scream his name. Feel how wet, hot, and tight she was around his fingers and tongue.

He moaned and his breath hitched, he was so close, his hips started to thrust into his own hand. There was only one thing he wanted more, his mind fast forwarded to her legs around his hips. Feeling her wetness at the tip of his cock as he dragged it through her folds. How he’d push his hips forward and feel her tight sheath around him. His brain battled between wanting to push into her slow and taking his time, or taking her hard and fast, claiming her.

The feel of his impending orgasm approaching made the decision easy, as his brain thought of moving her knees over his shoulders and taking her deep, hips grinding into her. He could almost see her eyes dark in passion, lips parting in pleasure, her warm skin pressed to his. He trusted his hips into his tight fist as he thought of driving his cock into her. He grasped his fingers tighter around the head and imagined her inner walls tightening, thought of what her voice would sound like as she screamed out his name in pleasure. And with that thought he was lost. His hips stuttering as his climax overtook him, streams of his cum hitting the shower wall as his hand continued to move to keep the pleasure going as long as possible.

He leaned harder on his arm against the shower wall, as he tried to catch his breath, to get his legs steady again once under him. If just imagining what it would be like between them did that to him, what would it be like if he was lucky enough for it to actually be real. “Bloody hell.”

Killian walked back and forth between the baggage claims near the exit gates. The plane had just
landed and he was getting impatient. While he had seen his brother, Elsa, and the boys over Skype, he hadn’t physically seen them in a year. He walked back to the doors, or at least as far as security would allow him to go. He was leaning back and forth on each foot. With certain things patience was not his virtue. This was one of them.

The doors opened up, and out walked a younger couple, than a few business travelers. He sighed. Trying to remind himself it could take a little bit to get all four of them off the plane and through the airport. Especially with two young boys in tow. The door opened again, only to see an elderly couple and what looked followed by their family.

He looked down at his phone checking the time, and seeing if he got a text message. Nothing yet. He drummed his fingers on his legs, his feet going over the red line on the floor. He got a glare from the security officer and he moved his toes back over the line. He fidgeted some more, looking back at his phone, biting his lip.

He caught the door open again, and then he saw a flash of icy blonde hair in a long braid, then the image of his brother towering over her, while she was trying to wrangle the boys. The moment their blue eyes caught the sight of him, they screamed “Uncle Killian!” and ran in his direction. They collided with him a moment later.

“Woah boys!” He said laughing as he grabbed each one under their arms and swinging them around. “God you have both grown!” He looked up to his brother and sister-in-law, “What do you feed these two?”

Liam and Elsa smiled, and she answered, “They missed their favorite Uncle.”

Killian smirked, “Should I tell Kristoff you said that?” At Elsa’s expression he laughed, “No worries.”

“Patrick, Thomas, settle down and go find our luggage.” Liam said. The boys groaned and Killian sat them on the floor. They all walked over to the baggage claim. His brother draped his arm over him, “So little brother, how are you doing?”

Elsa rolled her eyes and followed the boys to the baggage claim. Killian groaned, “Is that the first thing you have to say to me?”

“What, I’m not supposed to ask how you are?”

Killian shook his head and looked over at Liam smiling back at him and sighed. “I’m doing pretty good.”

His brother saw the genuine smile on his face, “You really are.” He removed his arm and clapped his brother on the shoulder as they came up behind Elsa and the boys. “So… does it have something to do with the woman you were telling us about?”

Elsa turned around at that with a smile and a little clapping of her hands, “Oh, tell. Tell!”

Killian laughed, “Maybe.” They both looked at him expectantly, but then the boys screamed spotting their luggage.

“You can avoid it a little longer, but they will be asleep sooner or later.”

He shook his head at his brother and helped him get the bags from the conveyor belt as Elsa grabbed
a cart. The guys piled the cart high and the boys latched onto him again as they walked to the parking lot with Liam pushing the bags.

Killian barely got the the keys out of his pocket to open the Tahoe with the boys hanging from his arms. Once unlocked the boys ran to the vehicle and then into the backseat. He clicked another button and the back hatch opened. He and Liam started to load the bags as Elsa got into the middle seats, trying to get the boys seat belts fastened.

Once done, Killian got into the driver’s side, and Liam into the passenger seat. He looked out the back windows and seeing the coast was clear he backed out. Soon he was pulling out of the parking garage, out of the airport and onto the freeway.

“Dear God, I’m never gonna get used to that.”

Killian looked over at his brother, “Used to what?”

“Their driving on the wrong side of the road!”

He looked back out the window and laughed as he continued to drive. “They would say it is the right side of the road. And directionally speaking it is on the ‘right’ side of the world.”

Elsa laughed, “Don’t worry Killian, when we go back home to visit Anna and Kristoff he says the same thing.”

“It’s just wrong!” Liam insisted.

“Over 65% of the world drives on the right side of the world sweetheart.”

Killian tried to keep his lips from twitching at Elsa sticking up for him. She was really good at that. He looked over his shoulder at Elsa. “Tell me again why you married my brother and not me?”

“Oi!”

Elsa laughed, “Well, as you know I like to be right. And with your brother I usually am.”

“Hey!”

“He is wrong a lot,” Killian agreed.

“Did I come all this way to get verbally abused by my wife and brother?”

“Yes.” They both said in unison and Elsa winked at Killian in the rearview mirror.

“Okay, enough about me, little brother.” The younger brother groaned as he continued. “So, tell me about this lass that has a smile on your face and what changed since the last time we talked?”

“It’s the same girl isn’t it?” Elsa squealed.

Killian looked in the mirror and Elsa was just smiling, his eyes traveled to the boys in the back who were sound asleep. “They are out quick.”

She waved the thought away, “Time change, plane trip, soothing driving, young boys, not shocking. Now stop changing the subject.”

“Yes, same girl. I told you both, her name is Emma.”
Elsa gave another small squeal. “And…”

“She apologized for what she said, we were on speaking terms last week.”

Liam motioned with his hands for his brother to keep going.

“On Friday there was a fundraiser. I bought her a glass of wine.”

“Please don’t tell me you got her drunk.”

“Liam!” Elsa scolded, “You know your brother wouldn’t do that.”

He sighed, “She’s right. Sorry Killian. Continue.”

“Thank you Elsa.” She nodded at him, and he kept going. “I saw this one brute was not leaving her alone so I stepped in pretending she was my date.”

She bounced in her seat, and Liam laughed, “You better continued or she’s going to explode back there.”

“I led her away from him out onto the dance floor. We danced for I think it was three songs.”

“You think?”

Elsa hit the back of her husband’s head, “He wasn’t listening to the music.” Her attention shifted back to the driver, “Right?”

“You could say that.” He took the loop onto the next freeway.

“Do we have to keep dragging it out of you?” the older brother smiled at the younger one.

“Fine. We went into the hallway. We kissed. She pulled away thinking I was only staying in town till my hours were over. I told her I lived there, and that I wanted to date her. She said yes. We had our first date last night. Satisfied?”

“Oh my God!” Elsa bounced, “That’s fantastic.”

“Wow, Killian.” Liam shook his head. “I’m really happy for you.”

He flicked on his turn single and got over to take the exit ramp. “Please, both of you, try not to make this a big deal…”

“It is a big deal,” she responded.

“No, you can’t make this a big deal. Especially around her.”

His brother smiled, “You are going to let us meet her?”

“This is big.”

“I was hoping to have her over for Christmas Eve if she doesn’t have plans.” He turned onto the main road and then looked back at each one of them. “So I need the both of you to try and not make it a big deal. At the very least, not in front of Emma.”

“We with both be on our best behavior.” Elsa said for the both of them.
As Killian turned onto a side road, he looked at his brother. Liam nodded, “There is no way I will mess up this chance for you. I’m too relieved to see you happy again.”

It wasn’t long and Killian was pulling into his driveway. His brother laughed at the house, the very large house, “Well, looks like you are doing extremely well for yourself.”

He pulled into one stall of the five car garage and let the door close behind them. The grownups got out of the car, the boys were still asleep. “I’ll get the luggage, can you two manage them?” Liam asked.

They both nodded. Elsa grabbed the younger one, Thomas. While Killian took Patrick. Both boys remained asleep as they they walked inside. She followed him down the small hallway, he then pointed at one door. “You can put him in there, and I’ll put Patrick in here.”

Killian walked into the one bedroom, peeled back the blankets and laid the boy out on the queen bed. He slipped off the boys shoes, setting them on the floor and then pulled the blankets back over him. He then walked out of the room, leaving the door open a crack. He walked into the the hallway and looked into the other bedroom. Elsa was doing the same with Thomas.

With a commotion at the door Killian helped his brother bring the bags in. Killian pointed to the room next to Thomas’s. “This is your room.” He rolled the bags in, and Liam sat down a few more.

“How big is this place?” Elsa asked as she looked around her room. It had it’s own bathroom and walkin closet, just like the boys rooms had.

He winked at her, “I told you I had plenty of room.” He then headed out of the bedroom, “Follow me.” He then showed them around his place.

===∞∞∞∞∞===

Killian walked into the shelter early Monday morning. He had left his brother, Elsa and the boys still asleep when he headed out. But he made sure to stop and get the usual cup of coffee for both of them. He headed directly to the office and smiled to see she was already there. He took a moment to watch her drop her stuff off. She was in a red skirt and black sweater today, and her golden hair flowing. He knocked lightly on the door to get her attention. She turned and the moment she saw it was him a smile bloomed on her face. “Morning, love.”

She walked over to him and he took a few steps in the room, and shut the door behind him. He gave her the cup of coffee, which she took. But then her other hand reached up and slid it behind his neck and pulled him closer and down to her lips. His now free hand went to her hip and pulled her closer to him, as he deepened the kiss. With a sigh she pulled away, “Morning.”

He leaned in and rested his forehead against hers, not wanting to let go of her just yet. After a few moments he started in, “So…” he wasn’t sure how to say this. He straightened up and she looked up at him. “This may be too soon and if it is, or you have plans…”

Emma smiled at him and could tell that if it wasn’t for the one hand on her and the other holding his coffee he would be scratching behind his ear. “Just ask me.”

He nodded, “I was wondering if you would go out with me tonight or tomorrow…”

“I already agreed to go on another date with you.”

“And, I know you have plans with your brother for Christmas, but if you are free Christmas Eve, I’d like you to come over and meet my family.” Her eyes widened a little and he continued quickly. “I don’t see them that often. They live in London, and with me here, I’m not sure when they might be
back, and... But if you have plans, love. Or if you are uncomfortable...”

She smiled and could see how much he wanted this, but was thankful he was trying to not make it a big deal. “Well, I don’t have plans...” She watched his joy move through his eyes. “So I think I can make Christmas Eve. I also know your family got in yesterday, so they will want to see you tonight. So, if you want, tomorrow we could do something?”

“Okay, tomorrow and since it’s a school night.” They both laughed and he moved his hand from her hip to cup the side of her face. “How about an early movie and then dinner? We could leave right after you are done with work.”

She moved to her tiptoes and gave him a quick kiss, “Sounds perfect.”

He slowly took a step back, and opened her office door. “I’ll see you later, love.”

She nodded with a smile and headed over to her desk taking a drink of the coffee he always seemed to get just right.

He parked the Camaro in the garage, headed inside, and immediately he heard the racket coming from the back of the house. He started walking in that direction and then his ears picked up the noise that made him want to turn to the right and head to his bedroom and put a couple pillows over his ears. However his feet continued to drag him forward, and the caterwauling got louder and louder, and then he had to grin. His brother was belting out the lyrics to Whitesnake’s ‘Here I Go Again,’ as the boys played guitar and Elsa was on drums.

He leaned in the archway and couldn’t help the laughter that escaped him. As soon as the song was done Elsa turned and smiled at him. The boys followed suit, and then screamed, dropping the guitars to the ground and ran screaming, “Uncle Killian!”

He barely had time to grab them as they leaped for him. “So I see you found the X-box.” He turned to look at his brother as he swung the boys around. “I should have hid the microphone from you brother.”

Elsa laughed and Liam gave him a dirty look, “I am a wonderful singer. As you know it runs in the family.”

She got up from the couch and patted her husband on the back, “Hate to tell you sweetie, but I think Killian got that gene not you.” She then headed into the kitchen from the family room.

Liam turned to his wife standing at the white granite covered kitchen island who was now pouring the boiling water into the sink and out of the pot with the now cooked spaghetti pasta. “Oh I see how it is. He get’s home and it’s pick on Liam again.” But his smile never left his face.

Killian sat down Patrick who ran over to his mother asking for something to drink. He then moved the other boy in his arms over his head and whisked him around the room as Thomas held out his arms and made airplane noises. He looked to his older brother, “It’s so easy, and so much fun old man.”

“Old man? I’m only six years older than you.” He started to walk to the kitchen, and Killian followed moving his nephew to sit on his shoulders. Liam then looked over his shoulder at his younger brother, “But I am taller.”
Killian rolled his eyes, “Like two inches, that is barely anything.”

“Is that what you tell the ladies too?”

Both Killian’s and Elsa’s eyes widened, and she turned and slapped her husband’s shoulders. “Liam!”

He sat Thomas back on the floor and the boys ran into the family room chasing each other. Killian turned back to the other adults and shook his head, “You know I have no problem in that department ‘bigger’ brother,” he used quotation marks. Then laughed, “Maybe I actually should call you “little” brother.”

“Killian!” Elsa reprimanded.

He smirked back at her, “Totally married the wrong brother.”

She tried not to laugh, “If you are the so called ‘bigger’ brother.” She returned the pasta to the stove. “Then I totally picked the right one.” She then looked at Liam, “Because I don’t think I could handle anymore.” She winked at her husband and then turned back to a smirking and laughing Killian.

He raised his hands, “More than I ever wanted to know.” He moved over to the stove, and saw the pasta sauce and decided to change the topic. “You guys didn’t need to cook. I could have made something, or we could have ordered in, or…”

“That’s ridiculous ‘little brother’,,” he said with emphasis. “We are going to be here for a week.”

Elsa patted his shoulder, “It was the least we could do. Really.” She walked over and opened the door to one of the ovens in the wall and took out the garlic bread. “So…” She grabbed a pot holder and sat the pan on the island. “What did Emma say?”

“We are seeing each other tomorrow night, so you will be on your own.” He moved his pointer finger back and forth between them, “You will need to behave.” He looked over his shoulder at the brothers playing. “Maybe I should leave them in charge.”

His older brother shook his head. “We will try,” Liam said and kiss the side of his wife’s cheek.

Elsa pointed at him, “That isn’t what I meant, what about Christmas Eve?”

He grinned, “She said she would come over.”

She squealed and clapped her hands together. “Perfect! What did you get her?”

“What do you mean?”

“Killian! What did you get Emma for Christmas?”

He leaned on the counter and put his head into his hands, he hadn’t even thought of that. “Bloody hell!”
Chapter 6

The next morning Killian was back at the shelter, having dropped off Emma’s coffee, getting another head-spinning kiss, and confirming she still could go out after work. He then headed to work on what Archie needed him to do next. However, the entire time he kept thinking about what Elsa asked him. What the hell was he going to get her for Christmas? And should he?

If he got her something and she thought it was too soon, or she didn’t get him something…he sighed. He didn’t want to make her feel bad. He honestly didn’t care if she got him anything. He cared more about what she would think. But then what if he didn’t get her something, and she did get him something? He ran his hand through his hair.

Of course the obvious thing would just be to ask her if they should exchange gifts. But he didn’t want to sway her. He let out another sigh, his fingers running over his forehead. So he decided he would get her something, have it ready, and see how the night went. Maybe he would be able to sense if it was okay to give it to her or not, or maybe she would give him one and then he could give her his.

Now that his course of action in place he only had one hurdle left. What the bloody hell was he going to get her in two days?

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She could feel the gaze of her friend looking at her—more like willing her to spill the gossip. But Emma just kept eating her lunch and ignored the look. She knew it wasn’t going to take much more before the look turned into a… just then her friend spoke up and Emma had to try not to laugh.

“Ugh… tell me!” Tink pleaded.

Emma looked up from her salad, while sitting at her desk. “Tell you what?” she replied with a smile.

Her friend pointed her fork at her, “You KNOW exactly what. I saw the two of you dancing. I also saw him leave your office this morning after opening the door.” She winked at her, “So spill.”

“We, uhh…we had a date on Saturday.”

“What???” Tink asked in shock her eyes wide and almost spilling her own lunch. “How am I just hearing about this?”

She shrugged, “Wasn’t sure what to say.”

“Well, since I saw him leave your office this morning with a large smile on his face…” she watched her friend smile and blush at what she revealed, “I would say it went well, right?”

Emma nodded. “It went very well.”

“Oh really… just how well?” Tink asked with a wink.

“No! No, no, no! That didn’t happen.” Her friend raised her eyebrows in question. “We kissed, as we did yesterday and this morning.”

“Are you going out again?” She nodded in the affirmative and she continued, “When, where, do I have to drag it all out of you?”
Emma took a drink of her water and shook her head. “We have a date tonight, and…” She took a breath and Tink motioned for her to continue. “And I am going over to his place on Christmas Eve to meet his brother, sister-in-law, and their kids.”

Her friend’s mouth fell open, “Wow.”

Emma raised her hand, “Don’t make this a big deal! I’m already trying not to freak out about it.” She took a breath, “He doesn’t see them often and they are in town, and I’m just trying to think of it being just because they are here. I can’t think of it meaning anything else right now.” She took another breath and then another drink of water trying to calm her nerves.

“I think you are right.”

“Really?” She asked. “You really think that?”

Tink nodded, “Absolutely. Why else would any man want you to meet their family on the THIRD date.” She raised her eyebrows and emphasized the word ‘third’ with a wink. Emma threw her napkin at the other woman and she just threw it back with a laugh. “So… you are going over for Christmas eve…”

“Like I said.” She took another bite of her salad.

“Did you find a gift?”

She looked up, “A gift?”

“It’s Christmas Emma…you know…a time to give gifts.” When the fear came over Emma’s face, she continued quickly. “I mean if you have discussed not getting anything…” With a shake of Emma’s head and the fear still evident, Tink kept going. “I mean, I don’t mean for his family. Obviously, you all don’t know each other. But…”

Emma swallowed and her panic was starting to rise. What the heck was she doing? Why was she dating again? Why did she agree to this? She should have stuck to her guns and not done this. What was she supposed to do?

“Emma, calm down. Why don’t you tell him no presents. You just started dating. I’m sure he will be fine with it.”

“Unless he already…” Her heart was racing and her anxiety level right with it. She wasn’t sure if she should be dating at all, but at the same time she just refused to disappoint him.

“Emma, you need to relax.” Tink stood from her seat and put her trash it the waste can. “You still have time.”

She looked up into her friend’s eyes, “But what am I supposed to get him?” What was she to get a man that could just plop down a million dollars to charity without anyone knowing. Well, without anyone supposed to know. She only had one date with the man. She barely knew him. No; that wasn’t fair—she was getting to know him. She learned things while he was here, and at the party, and on their date.

“It doesn’t have to be anything big. Just something that you know he might like.” Tink walked to the door. “Relax. Something will come to you; you have time.” She gave her friend a soft smile, “And if that smile this morning I saw on his face is any indication. I don’t think ‘what’ it is will matter.”

She nodded at her friend and saw her open the door, but at the last second she ducked her head back
“Actually, the smile did give me an idea.”

“And what is that?” Emma asked.

“Maybe something with lace and a garter belt.”

With that, Emma’s mouth dropped open, and she threw her napkin across the room. It hit the floor as Tink ducked out of the room with a laugh.

It was almost the end of the work day and he was headed towards the offices. He had spent every free moment on his phone trying to figure out something to get Emma for Christmas. Something that he could pick up locally since there was no time to get it online anymore. He sighed and had to admit that he was no closer to having figured it out now than he was earlier.

Killian got to her door and saw her still hard at work. He knocked softly, this time she didn’t lift her head, she just waved him in. “Almost done, I swear.”

He smiled and then walked in and sat in the chair in front of her desk. “No problem. Take your time love.” He took the extra time while she was typing to look around her office. He was hoping to get an idea. There were motivational posters, and flyers about the shelter. There was a picture of the sheriff on her desk, along with whom he assumed was her sister-in-law. There was a plant on a side table that looked like it was really thirsty for some water. The office was well used, boxes, books, and files stacked all over. But besides the one picture on her desk, nothing else was her. Nothing else was her personal belongings.

It didn’t help him think of what he could get her, but it did give him a little more insight into her. He was pulled out of his thoughts when she hit one key rather loudly, “And done!”

“Perfect,” he said as he stood and so did she and then gathered her things. They then walked out of the office and the shelter with his hand to her back guiding her to his car.

“Actually, do you mind if you follow me home, and I drop my car there?”

“Not at all. I’ll see you there.”

In less than fifteen minutes, she was parking in her garage and walking outside and he was there with his car door open. She smiled and got inside as he closed the door. He walked around and then got inside as well, and pulled away from the curb.

It wasn’t long and they were walking up to the theater and looking at the offerings. “Completely up to you, Swan.”

She looked up at him with an amused smile, “No matter what I pick?”

“Whatever you want.”

“I could pick the foreign film without subtitles.”

“You could, but I think you would suffer more than I would. I know a tad bit of French.”

“You know French?”

“London isn’t far from France, love. Also, when I raced in Formula One, we all got pretty familiar in
swearing in multiple languages.”

She laughed. “Okay, you are right. I hate foreign films, even with subtitles.” Emma continued to look at the movies, “Ohh, the new Nicholas Sparks movie is on.” She turned to watch his reaction, waiting for the cringe. But she didn’t see one.

He took her hand, “Sure, it starts in twenty minutes.” He started to walk to the ticket booth and she stopped him.

“You wouldn’t mind?”

“Why would I mind watching a romantic movie with you Emma?” He pulled her closer and kissed her forehead.

She rested her hands on his chest, her fingers feeling the hard muscles under her fingertips and looked up into his eyes. “Honestly, I’m just testing you. Sorry.” He laughed and gave her another grin and then a soft kiss. She bit her lip, “Actually. I was busy with the fundraiser and then the date Saturday and Sunday doing work at home, I never got a chance to watch it sooner…” He waited for her to continue, “Unless you have already seen it…”

“Emma, come on love, what movie?”

“Star Wars?” His eyes blinked a few times, trying to make sure he heard her. She sighed, “I know, I know. It’s okay, I can pick something…”

“Wait. Wait. You really want to see it?” She nodded to his question. His smile got bigger. “Can I ask you why?”

“Don’t worry we can…”

“Emma, I am just trying to get to know you better. I haven’t had a chance to see it myself, and I have been meaning to.”

“You like Star Wars?”

He nodded, and pulled her to the ticket booth, “And Star Trek, and Doctor Who, and Battlestar…” He was cut off by her laughing. “Oh, now you laugh at me?”

“Just trying to wrap my head around you being a nerd… a hot nerd.”

“Well Swan, did you just call me hot?” he asked with an arched eyebrow.

“I also called you a nerd.”

“Just remember, you picked the movie.” He bought two tickets and they walked inside. “Would you like any popcorn or something to drink?”

She tilted her head back and forth trying to decide, “We are having dinner afterwards right?”

“That is the plan, unless you are planning to bail on me with my nerdiness.”

She smiled back at him, her hands moving to the lapels of his shirt, pretending to straighten them. “You are in luck—I like your inner nerd showing. It’s rather endearing actually. Not to mention you will get along with my brother perfectly.”

“Good to know, love.”
They continued to walk inside, and decided to get a small popcorn to share and some drinks. Then they headed into the theater, finding some seats near the back of the room. Luckily they were at an earlier showing, since the one later would be a lot more crowded.

They shared the popcorn as they waited for the movie to start. He rested his arm behind her, and she smiled and leaned her head on his shoulder. His arm then wrapped around her shoulder, and she giggled. “I feel like a teenager.” He laughed as well. “Feels pretty good.” She admitted.

“It really does.” His fingers played with a strand of her hair. “So, how did you come to like Star Wars?”

“David, my brother, he was into all the sci-fi and fantasy shows, and when I came to live with the Nolans, he took it upon himself to introduce me to all the things that I had ‘missed’.” She said her fingers making quote marks. “We bonded over Star Wars, and Harry Potter, and all kinds of shows and movies.” She sighed with a happy sound.

“So what’s your favorite?”

Her hand reached for some more popcorn, “Favorite what?”

“Movie, show, or fandom.”

“Harry Potter. I guess. I just liked the idea that an orphan could have magic and be important, and have a destiny. Make a new family and friends.” She then shoved the popcorn in her mouth to stop talking.

He rubbed her shoulder, “Yeah, I guess that’s why I like Peter Pan, with Neverland and the Lost Boys. Though I now like Captain Hook most, I guess because I grew up, and the moniker works really well with my racing nickname.”

She laughed, and took some more popcorn as the lights started to dim. They watched the movie, both engrossed with the film. Towards the end, both sat in shock, tears traveling down Emma’s face. He saw them and pulled her close, and once again her head was on his shoulder, and he was rubbing her back as they continued to watch.

Soon the movie was over and they were making their way out of the theater. She stopped him, and looked up at him, “How bad is my make up?”

He smiled and looked down at her. His thumbs came up and lightly rubbed the smudged makeup from under her eyes. “There; perfect.” He helped her back into the car and then he drove over to the restaurant.

“I still can’t believe they did that,” she said in slight shock.

He smiled, “Yeah, that part of the movie was definitely unexpected.” In a few minutes he was pulling up to the restaurant and two valets were opening both doors. He got the ticket from the man and quickly made his way to Emma and with an arm wrapped around her they walked into the restaurant.

Dinner was wonderful, his pasta was fantastic, the wine was great, but the company was even better. They had talked about all kinds of things. He may have led a few questions in a manner that would give him ideas for a gift. But so what? It got them to know each other better, right? But from all their conversations about books, movies, tv, and music, which they shared a lot of the same likes and dislikes, he was no closer to figuring it out.
She finished her ravioli and picked up her wine glass as he told her about his nephews. She couldn’t help but smile because he was so happy when he talked about them. He finished the story and she sat her empty glass down, “You miss them a lot when they aren’t here, don’t you?”

Killian looked down for a second and then nodded. “I only get to see them maybe once a year.” He looked back up, “I see them on Skype, but…” He sighed, “It’s not the same.”

That’s when she realized: he missed them so much, but he was out with her tonight. And even though she didn’t want to, she had to ask. “Then why are you out with me tonight, instead of spending time with them?”

He blinked a couple times taking in her question, his brain trying to come up with reasons. Reasons that wouldn’t scare her away. But in the end, he knew he just had to be completely truthful with her. “Because I didn’t plan on meeting you. I didn’t plan on wanting to date you, or anyone really. But I did meet you, and everything I thought I wanted flipped on its head.”

He took a minute to look at her, trying to gauge how she was taking it. “And I couldn’t bear holding off dating you, and putting what we are or could be on hold.” He watched her take a breath, her eyes not leaving his. He could see a bunch of conflicting emotions run through the green depths. “Besides, I didn’t want to subject you to my idiot brother on just our second date.”

That got the desired effect; she laughed and he continued. “I need to make sure you see all my good qualities, so when you meet my crazy family you know it’s not genetic.” He winked at her and she laughed some more and shook her head.

The waiter then came over with the dessert menu, and asked if they would want anything. Emma waved her hands, “I can’t, I already ate too much.”

Killian smiled, “Same here.” He looked back at the waiter, “I guess it’s time for the check.”

“I should get home anyways. It is a school night.” She said with a wink, using his own words back at him.

The waiter was back with the check much too soon for his liking. She started to reach for the bill, but he reached it first. “Hey, you can’t pay every time.”

He smiled, “I insist.” He could see she was about to object, and he superseded her, “Swan, let me do this. At least the first couple of dates, after that you can pay every so often.” He laid down enough money to cover the bill and a tip, then stood and offered his arm.

She stood and slid her arm through his. As they walked out she commented on what he had said, “Pretty sure that we will date for a while, huh?”

He wanted to comment that he wanted much longer than ‘a while’. But he knew he couldn’t do that, so instead he commented, “A man unwilling to fight for what he wants, deserves what he gets.”

She snorted and laid her head on his shoulder, “Do you use that line on all the girls?”

He handed the ticket to the valet and the man ran to get the car. He leaned his head on her hers, “Honestly? I have never used that line before… at least in reference to a woman.”

She pulled back and looked into his eyes, “Really?”

“Really.” He leaned in and gave her a kiss, he was about to deepen it when the car pulled up. He helped her into the car, and then went around to pay the valet and get in the car. They held hands as
he drove her back to her apartment. This time she didn’t say anything to stop him from walking her to her door.

Once they got to her front door, he didn’t even wait and pulled her towards him, his hand already in her hair, his lips instantly on hers. Her arms were around him in a second, her mouth opening and teeth nipping at his lips. He groaned and when his mouth opened her tongue found his, and she moaned. His other hand pressed her lower back closer to him.

He was swimming in the feel and the taste of her, the small sounds she was making. He gripped his hand at her back into a fist and slowly pulled away. He leaned his forehead against hers, “Emma?”

“Yeah?” She asked slowly.

“I should go.” He could see a flash of rejection cross her features before a masked smile found its place. He pulled away and tilted her chin to look up at him. “I don’t want to rush this.”

She nodded lightly, “Neither do I.”

He needed to remove the doubt. “But just so you know, Emma.” He kissed her softly, and then leaned in and whispered into her ear, “I want you, Emma. All of you.” He felt the small shudder in her frame, “And I will fight for it; for you.”

Her hands came up and grabbed the collar of his shirt and pulled his head towards her, her lips pressed furiously against his. With a light nip at his bottom lip she pulled away. “I look forward to it.”

With that she opened her door and retreated with a quick goodnight and a soft close of her door.

He was left standing in the hallway once again. He tried to catch his breath, his fingers on his lips, and with a loud exhale, he turned and headed for the elevators.

The next day started like the rest: morning coffee drop-off followed by a sweet kiss. She started case files and he wrapped last-minute donations.

At lunch, he got out a tad early and headed to the mall. He needed to figure out something to get her. He first took one lap around just getting a feel for the stores and possible ideas. Gift baskets were a decided no, even if they held enticing fragranced lotions and body mists. She had her own unique scent that he already found himself craving. No way was he going to change it, and it was much too impersonal.

He looked at the high-tech store and almost got a coffee mug that would keep her coffee hot. He figured between their morning ritual and a well-placed innuendo, it would work. But looking at the reviews on his phone, and one specifically about the batteries overheating and burning them, he was back to square one.

His eyes wandered to the jewelry store next door. Was it too early for jewelry? Was it a cop out? She didn't wear much. She usually wore simple, small, hoop silver earrings and a small understated silver circle necklace. Which told him something small, delicate, and silver or preferably white gold. Now, he just had to find something that reminded him of her. If he didn't… he would be back to square one again.

At close to fifteen minutes after he should have been back from lunch, he found the perfect thing. He now had a smile on his face, holding a small metallic bag with a flat, square velvet box inside as he walked out of the North entrance of the mall.
At almost the same moment Emma walked inside the East entrance of the same mall on her late lunch break. She walked over to the map of the mall and stood there for a few moments to get her bearings and plan her attack.

With plan in place, she decided to start with that high-tech place—she knew it had all kinds of things, and maybe something would call out to her. She walked through the aisles and repeatedly brushed off the sales clerks. As she walked, she was getting frustrated, and beginning to wonder if she knew Killian at all. She had to keep reminding herself they were just starting. And the biggest thing she didn't know was if he already had some of this stuff. She hadn't been to his place; she had no idea what to expect.

Instead of getting more frustrated, she decided to leave the store and move down to the sporting goods place. But soon she discovered the same problem. She knew he was in NASCAR but it wasn't like he was a fan—he was IN it. It wasn’t like she could get him something for it he didn't already have.

She exited quickly and went to her last store on her attack plan, Spencer’s gifts. She sighed; this was seriously a last resort, but they had all kinds of stuff. Maybe she could find something funny about something he mentioned he liked and it would work out. She sighed again and walked into the crowded store filled with teenagers.

She went through the whole store. She debated some superhero T-shirt but decided against them. She found a pair of TARDIS socks, but just couldn't give socks for Christmas. It brought up too many of her own past Christmases in foster care she would rather forget. Nothing seemed right, and with the store being so crowded, she decided to get out before she completely lost it.

She stood in the center of the mall, and looked at her watch; she should be back to work in five minutes. She knew Archie would never say anything, but she would know she was late. With a sigh of defeat, she started to walk back towards the entrance her car was at. She was almost there when she her eyes darted up at the name of the next store she was going to walk by. With a large smile and an idea, she walked into the Disney store.

When Emma got back to her office, she had a smile on her face, her mission accomplished and gift hiding in her trunk. She sat her purse down and turned to her desk, and saw a chocolate chip cookie on her desk, sitting on a napkin with a note. She picked up both and took a bite of the cookie while reading the note.

’Swan,
I missed you for our sweet afternoon rendezvous. So I pilfered one for you. If you are gone for the day, adieu, and I will see you tomorrow morning.
- K’

She smiled and headed back towards the warehouse he was working in. She saw him taping some wrapping on a box and smiled. “Hey.” She laughed at his startled jump.

His eyes saw her and a large smile graced his face, “Swan, I thought you had left for the day.”

She walked over to him and the large pile of wrapped gifts behind him. “Nope; just some errands I needed to get done. Sorry I missed our afternoon snack time. But thank you for leaving me one.”

He smiled and his arms came out to pull her into a hug. Their arms wrapped around each other, and he laid his cheek against her head. “Not a problem.” He looked at the pile of gifts. “With these I wrapped today and those I have wrapped since I got here, it should be a really good Christmas for
the kids here.”

She looked at them, “They aren't all for the shelter. Yes, some of them are. Some go to the foster homes in the area for the kids placed there, and the rest go to underprivileged families in town.” She snuggled a little closer to him and he held her a little tighter. “Each kid will get 1 to 2 toys depending on what it is.”

Killian thought about all the gifts he had wrapped, and even if all the kids got two, that still meant a lot of kids. “I didn't realize there were so many children and families in the area needing help.”

Emma sighed against his chest and then slowly pulled back. “Yeah.” She looked to the presents and then back to him, “But these will help. Between these and the stockings you stuffed,” she gave him a smile and a soft elbow to his side, “It should put a smile on their faces.” It was certainly more than she got a lot of Christmases, but she wasn’t going to say that; but from the look on his face, she thought he might already know. Heck, he probably had some that were similar. “I better get back to work. Besides, the rest of these need to be wrapped.”

He nodded, “They will all be done before I leave tonight.”

“Good, because they all get delivered and sorted tomorrow. A task that I even have to help with.”

“You, get your pretty little hands dirty?” he joked and she gave him an evil stare that just made him laugh. “I look forward to it, love.”

“Me too.” And with that she was walking out of the warehouse and back to her desk. The day continued on, and soon he was walking her to her car, a soft kiss to her lips, and each driving back to their respective homes. Christmas Eve was looking to be a very busy day and night, and they were both looking forward to it.
Chapter 7

Killian walked into the shelter with a smile on his face and two cups of coffee. He wasn’t sure if he was ever looking forward to Christmas Eve as much as he was today. As soon as he was inside, he was surprised by the swarm of people and what could only be generously called organized chaos. He was trying to move back toward the offices when he was stopped by a hand on his shoulder.

“Glad you are here. Everyone is working on distributing the gifts. Emma is in the warehouse with a clipboard.” Archie told him pointing in the direction.

“On it boss.” He said with a smile and headed in that direction. Once he got to the back, he saw her hair before he saw her. It was in braid; obviously she had planned to try to keep it out of her way. He could see that she was in a green sweater and dark blue jeans. She looked as beautiful as ever. He walked up behind her and snaked an arm around her with her coffee. “Morning, love.” He whispered in her ear.

She made a small shudder, but then leaned back against him. “Morning.” She took the coffee and took a large drink of the caffeinated beverage. “Thank God! I needed that.”

He chuckled and spoke into her ear again, “While I love the praise, you can call me Killian, love.” She could almost hear the smirk on his lips, and then the soft press of his lips to the back of her neck was almost too much. She barely suppressed a moan from her lips, but in doing so straightened her back, sending the wrong impression. His spine stiffened, and the apology immediately on his lips. “Sorry, Emma. I don’t know what came over…”

She cut him off as she spun around towards him, “No. Don’t apologize.” Her free hand took his. “I just didn’t expect it.”

The unsure look in his eyes faded and the smirk came back, “So…” he shifted a little closer into her space. “You don’t mind my lips on your body, Swan?”

Emma leaned in closer, “I mind them as much as you mind mine on yours.” She watched the blue of his eyes darken, thinking she may have won this round. She was wrong.

“Well, then, love, that tells me that you want my lips all over your body.”

She knew her mouth was parted, her heart beating fast, her breathing quickening, until someone walked by and broke the moment. She shook her head, “We need to get to work, Jones.”

Killian nodded, trying to clear his head as well. “Absolutely, love. Where do you want me?” At the look on her face, he then understood his unintended innuendo and let out a short chuckle. He continued with a wink, “We can discuss that thought later, but in the meantime. What do you need me to do here?”

She tried to contain her smile. “So as you know, each of the gifts has a number on it in black Sharpie. That number corresponds to the list you made with what the toy was. Each child was assigned a toy or two based on age, likes, etc.” She pointed to a stack of various colored sheets of papers in her arms. “Each one of these is a drop off location, with a list of the kids and the present number next to their names. The color of the paper indicates which of the vans out back they go into for delivery.”

He nodded, “Very well organized.”
She smiled, “It isn’t our first rodeo.” She took a sheet of paper and handed it to him, “Take this, then
tape to one of the boxes. Get the gifts that go inside, and then grab one stocking for each child as
well and place it in the box.” She turned towards the back warehouse garage door. “Then the boxes
go with the others boxes with the same color paper.”

“I think I can handle this, but one more question.” Emma took a drink of her coffee and motioned for
him to continue. “I haven’t seen any of the kids today. Where are they?”

“Well, we couldn’t have them see everyone in here and moving presents around. So Tink and
Granny have them on a field trip today, and they are going to see Santa. Or technically my brother.”

Killian grinned, “So the Sheriff is playing Santa for the kids. Did you rope him into that?”

“Honestly, I just mentioned it to Mary Margaret, his wife. And he was done for.”

He shuffled the paper into his hand with his coffee, and his then free hand came up and placed an
erant piece of hair fallen from her braid and put it behind her ear. “If she’s anything like you love, he
didn’t stand a chance.” He took the paper back and looked at it, then back to her. “I better get to
work.”

She nodded, “You better, I hear the organizer is pretty bossy. You don’t want to get on her bad
side.”

“Well if I do, then I guess I will just have to find a way to make it up to her.” With that he gave her a
wink and then turned to get to work.

He kept loading boxes with the others while Emma worked on directing people and checking off the
progress. The helpers continued until all the boxes were filled, and the first round of vans were
loaded and left to start their deliveries.

Everyone left headed to the lunchroom, where Granny had prepared bag lunches for everyone.
They both took a lunch and sat down next to each other.

Killian smiled at Emma. “I’m actually a little shocked you are eating lunch outside of your office.”

She laughed, “Yeah I know. I eat in there a lot. Usually Tink is with me. She forces me to eat and
stop working for a few minutes.”

“It’s good that you have a friend that makes you take a mental break.” He took a bite of his sandwich
and then opened his bottle of water.

“Yeah, I know. It’s just that I’ve been so busy.”

“Hopefully you will be able to hire that new counselor and be able to take a break.”

She knew that with the donations they got, especially his donation, that wouldn’t be a problem.
“Archie tells me they are currently looking at candidates and hoping to have someone start in early
January.” She took a drink of her own water and then started on an apple slice.

He swallowed another bite of his food. “Maybe you can take some time off than.” He already had
ideas, but knew it was much too soon to express them.

“Maybe. But it will be awhile. Once someone is hired, it's going to take at least a few weeks for them
to get a hang of how everything works before I would feel comfortable about leaving them alone for
a few days, let alone any longer.”
He nodded, “I fully understand. But when that happens, any idea of where you would want to go, or what to do?”

Emma took a bite of her own sandwich and looked up, tilting her head from side to side as she chewed, thinking of an answer. She swallowed and took a drink of water. “Honestly, I have no idea. It's been a long time. Maybe somewhere warm?” She laughed, “Not that in a couple of months it won't be warm here. But right now, some sun sounds really nice.”

He grinned, “It sure does. It will take a few more months until it gets really warm here, so I'm sure you have time to get someone trained and take the time.”

She finished her sandwich and went back for another slice of apple. “So, where do you like to go on your time off?”

Killian finished his sandwich as well, crunched the wrapping and put it in the bag. “Little different for me I guess. I travel all over the county for work. I do get to see things where I go, just not full days of touring. But each time I go back, I get to see a little more. So, really time off is my winter break. Or the one weekend we get off towards the middle of the year.”

“And this winter you don't really get to go anywhere.” She said. It wasn't a question, she knew the answer. His community service prevented him from going anywhere.

“I don't mind at all this year.” He took her hand under the table. “I believe it was definitely for the best.” He wanted to lean in and kiss her, but knew in front of everyone he shouldn't. Their behavior earlier was borderline and only because there were so many people moving around, doing their own thing. No one noticed them, no one saw them. But in the lunchroom was another story. He could tell from the look on her face, her eyes dropping to his lips and then back, she was thinking the same thing. Her hand squeezed his back instead.

He was leaving it in her court as to what she wanted to tell her work colleges, and until then he would follow her lead. However, he was pretty sure that Archie, Granny, and Tink all knew. Heck, Granny and Archie had to, with their knowing glances and words, not to mention having two cookies ready for him or Emma to pick up. But he would move at her pace.

She dragged him out of his thoughts. “So if you were able, where would you go?”

“Typically for winter I head back to London to see my family. Luckily this year we had already planned on them visiting me.” She gave his hand another squeeze remembering his confession on their date. “Either before or after that I try to travel, usually the southern hemisphere or around the equator for the warmth. Australia is really nice this time of year.”

“Sounds nice. I haven't been out of the US honestly.” When his eyes widened in surprise, she continued. “I know, I know. It's just when I was growing up I was shipped around the states a few times. Then when I was placed with the Nolans, they didn't have a ton of money, but they made up for it in love.”

“And which is significantly better.”

Emma nodded, “Very much so. Then I was in college, and as soon as I graduated I started working here. Until a few years ago, all my spare change went to paying off my school loans. And after that I have been so busy. I did go to Vegas for Mary Margaret’s bachelorette party though.”

He grinned, “Vegas is fun. Not much culture or beauty, but fun.”

She laughed “Yeah, and for sure not beautiful in the morning.”
“Well, I think it would be quite beautiful in the mornings with you there.” Her cheeks flushed in embarrassment at his comment and she looked down at the table starting to clean it up. “Emma… I'm sorry if I made you uncomfortable. I don't know what's come over me…” That wasn't exactly true, he did know. She was the reason.

She gave a soft smile, her fingers squeezing his hand again. “No, it's okay.”

“No, it is not, I made you uncomfortable. I'm sorry Emma. I will endeavor to stop those types of comments.”

She turned to him on that. Her other hand almost coming to cup his cheek and stopped short and then went to her lap. “No, don't stop.” He looked at her questioning and before he could comment she answered. “I'm just not used to it. I'm not used to the compliments.”

“That is not possible. How could a beautiful, gorgeous woman such as yourself, not be used to receiving compliments from male suitors?”

The blush returned again, “I don't meet many men, haven't wanted to. And the ones I do meet, when Tink drags me out…well, those comments are of a much more vulgar sort. They aren't interested in knowing me, or caring about me. They are more for what they can get out of me, especially for the night.” She gave a short unhumorous snort, “And to say my last relationship was…well, let's just say, he wasn't a good guy for me. None of them were.” She looked back to the table and let go of his hand, concentrating on crumpling up her trash bag. She was clearly uncomfortable with revealing so much about herself.

He reached up and took her hand again, his thumb caressing the back of it. “Then they were all idiots. They didn't know what a treasure they had in their presence.” She looked down again, and his heart broke just a little. He vowed to himself that he would change this view she had; that she would stop shying away from his so very truthful comments. He would make her see what he did.

She closed her eyes and took a breath. “We better get back to the warehouse and get the vans loaded for the next trips. We need to be done before the children get back.” He knew she was trying to change the subject, and he would let her, for now.

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It didn't take long and all the vans were dispersed. The remainder of the gifts were given gift tags with the children’s name from the shelter who was getting the gift. Then they were set out for the resident staff to get and set under the tree later that night.

It was close to four o’clock when they were done, and Archie walked in. “Great job everyone. Now go home, be with your friends or family, or whatever. But work is done until Monday.” He then looked at Emma, “That especially goes for you.”

She was about to object when Killian came up behind her, “I’ll make sure she follows your orders.”

Emma looked between the two men and threw up her hands. “Fine, fine. Then let's get out of here.” She gave Archie a hug, and Killian gave him a handshake and pat on the back, both saying happy holidays. He then followed her back to her office.

She went into her office and he leaned against the door frame. “You going to watch me?”

“I know how stubborn and dedicated you are.”

She hadn't even turned on her computer that day, it was so busy. She put on her coat, grabbed her purse and keys, then joined him in the hall. He waited for her to lock the door, and with a hand on
her lower back, they headed for the parking lot.

“So, you want to follow me? Drive over later? Drop off your car, and I drive?”

“If you drive me then you have to leave to drop me off when I come home.” She saw the small disappointment flash but was gone just as quickly. She smiled and added, “Whatever time that may be.” She looked around and since they were alone she went onto her toes and gave him a quick peck on the lips. “Do you mind if I go home, freshen up a little bit, and then drive over?”

“Not at all. Here…” he took out his phone and quickly typed his address and texted her. “If you need directions or anything, just call. But Google maps and GPS does well.” He leaned in and gave her a small kiss to her forehead. “When you get to the gate, just press the button and I will buzz you in.”

She raised her eyebrows at that, but the shock quickly wore off. Sometimes she forgot that he was a celebrity. Security was probably needed. At least he wasn't like a movie star; that could be really difficult. She smiled up at him, “So don't drive through closed gates, got it.”

He laughed, “Yeah, that would not be good for your car… or the gates.”

“Okay. I'll see you soon.” They both got into their cars and exited the parking lot going their own direction.

He was headed back to his house to make sure it was still in one piece from his family, though he knew Elsa would make sure it was. She had also told him she was making dinner, but he was going to try and help her. He was very thankful that his brother had her; she was good for him. Heck, she was good for himself—the sister her never had. He was also glad he had a little time to get home and freshen up himself. After the manual labor today, a shower and some new clothes would do some good.

It didn't take long before he was home, and almost immediately he smelled the delicious aroma of food cooking. He quickly headed for the kitchen and saw Elsa moving around the room. “Smells good.”

“Oh good. You're home!”

Killian looked around, “Where are my brother and the boys?”

She laughed, “I kicked them out. They were hovering. So I sent them to the movies.” She looked at the clock, “They should be back in about a half hour or so.” She smiled up at him, “Where is Emma?”

“She went home to change; should be here within the hour.”

“Well I hope she likes what I made. You never told me if she had any special food requirements.”

He shook his head, “I don’t believe so. She eats meat, and gluten and peanuts…” He said remembering their dates and cookies. “Can I help you with all this, or will you send me out of my own house?” He asked with a wink.

“The hard part is done. Besides, I like being able to make a big dinner on Christmas Eve. We celebrate Christmas in Norway on Christmas Eve. So I have created a bit of that Christmas dinner tonight. I had to adapt a little, due to not having the same things here, but close.”

He smiled, “Sounds great, and smells even better.” He looked around again, “You sure you are okay?”
“Absolutely. Now, go get ready.”

“In case she comes early…”

Elsa grinned, “I know how to ring her in, don’t worry.”

He nodded and started to walk out of the room, then turned back to her, “Elsa, thank you.”

Her smile brightened even more, “You are more than welcome, Killian.” She waved him away, “Now go get ready.”

He walked to his bedroom with a smile. Soon she was going to be here, in his home, meeting his family. He was both elated and worried. He shed his clothes into the hamper in his closet, then turned back and walked naked back to the master bathroom. He opened the glass door to the large shower, and turned on the water. He looked at the time on his watch, and was glad that he had enough time for a quick shower and change of clothes. He then took off the watch and set it on the counter. He just didn't want to leave him too much time afterwards, otherwise he knew he would start pacing. He took a deep breath and stepped into to stream of hot water.

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Emma was following the directions that her phone was giving in her little yellow bug. She had showered, dried, and styled her hair, applied some fresh makeup and put on some new clothes. A new pair of jeans and a red silk blouse. If she had also shaved her legs and touched up a few others areas, and put on a pair of matching sexy underwear, well…so what. She really didn’t know what to expect of tonight, so she was wanting to be ready for anything.

She had changed out her purse for a larger one. It had his gift inside, and maybe a change of clothes. She shook her head at herself. Get a grip, Emma. But she couldn’t help it, she wanted him. She could admit that. She had wanted him for awhile. Okay, probably ever since she met him. But with his teasing this morning, maybe, just maybe she would get her chance. However, she knew not to expect it—his family was visiting, so that may put a large damper on things.

Her phone told her to turn right off the main road, and she did. She already knew she was in an upper-scale neighborhood. She knew he lived on the lake, which meant an expensive house. But after a few more turns and as she got closer and closer, the only thing she could see from the road were several gates.

He heart rate increased and she took a few deep breaths. *Come on Emma, you already knew this. Don’t freak out. Don’t freak out. Killian has been to your place, and had no issues with it. You already know he has money, what else did you expect. This is Killian, it’s okay.* She kept telling herself, over and over. Until her phone brought her out of her thoughts and told her that her destination was on the right. She pulled into the drive and up to the black, wrought iron gate. She rolled down her window and clicked the bottom for the intercom.

“Hello?” Came a female voice.

It shocked Emma for a second and then she realized it was his sister-in-law. Her mind tried to bring up the name; right, Elsa. “Hello, it’s Emma.”

“Welcome, come on in.” And with that there was a beep and the gate started to open. She waited until the opening was wide enough and she drove through. As she got closer her mouth gaped open. The house was huge, and beautiful. She parked to the side of driveway not wanting to block the garage. She straightened her shoulders, took a deep breath and then opened the door. She grabbed her purse and the bottle of chilled wine, locked her door behind her and went up to the door.
She didn’t have to knock the door was opened and a petite blonde was standing there. “Hello.” She said and Emma quickened her pace and came inside into the large foyer. “Killian will be out in a few minutes.” The woman shut the door and turned back to her, “Hi, I’m Elsa.”

Emma took the offered hand and shook it. “I’m Emma.”

Elsa grinned, “Oh, I know.” She winked at her and then saw the bottle of wine. “Oh, let’s go into the kitchen and open that while we wait for the guys.”

“I like your style.” Emma nodded and followed her through the living room. A large Christmas tree all in white lights stood. She then passed through a small alcove and into the large kitchen that expanded into what looked like a family room. That room looked much more lived-in. Large TV, another Christmas tree that was in multicolored lights, and stockings hung over the fireplace.

Elsa motioned to a counter near the family room. “You can set your purse down if you like, your coat anywhere.” Emma put down her purse and placed her coat on the back of a bar stool. “And if you want to take off your shoes, there is a pile over by the doors.”

She turned to look at the double doors, and right beside them there was as she said a pile of shoes. Big, little, all kinds. She gave a soft laugh and went over to the door, and pulled off her boots, leaving her in a pair of red fluffy socks. She looked out the windowed doors, and noticed an inground pool and attached hot tub. Her eyes lifted and from there she could see they weren’t even 200 ft, probably much less, from the water. It was a spectacular view.

She felt the other woman approach before she heard her. She turned to a smile and a glass of white wine was handed to her, another one for herself. “It is a beautiful view, isn’t it?”

“Well I sent my husband and the boys out for a movie. They were driving me crazy while I made dinner.”

“Oh, you didn’t need to go to all that trouble.”

“It was no trouble. I actually was very happy to do so. Hopefully you don’t mind it. I made a slight variation of a traditional Norwegian Christmas dinner.”

Emma could tell she wasn’t American, or British, but her statement had answered her question. “Well it smells fantastic.” She took a sip of her wine and she followed the other woman back to the kitchen and sat on a bar stool next to her.

“There you are, love,” Killian said as he entered the room and came up behind her. She didn’t get a chance to turn around as his arms wrapped around her from behind, and he gave her a kiss on the side of her cheek. “Sorry I wasn’t ready when you got here.”

She turned on the bar stool to face him, his arms returning to his side. “It’s okay. I got to meet Elsa.”

“And we got started on the wine she brought,” Elsa smiled. She then hopped of her own stool and walked back to the oven, “I gotta check on the meat.”

“Did she give you the tour? So you know your way around?”
“No, I haven’t been here too long. Just as long as I know where the bathroom is, I’m fine.”

He tilted his head and gave her a look, studying her. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” She took a sip of her wine.

He bit his lip still studying her. “Nope, up with you.” She sighed but hopped down. His eyes went to her feet, and his own socked feet, blue socks no less, he pointed at her feet. “Cute.” Her eyes moved over his jeans and to his light blue sweater, that really brought out his eyes. Her eyes then met his and he smiled, “Okay, come with me.” He angled his elbow out to her and she took it with a sigh. He had a feeling what this was about. She had already expressed to him about how small her apartment was when he had visited.

“So you have already seen the kitchen and the family room. One of my favorite places in the house.” He admitted and brought her towards the doors she had already looked out, but past them. Inside was a bedroom and a bathroom. “Guest bedroom, but really I only use the bathroom in the summer time for pool parties and such, so that water isn’t tracked all over the house.” She nodded and then he walked back by the kitchen and a small breakfast nook. She could tell it was a place that was used often.

They headed past and then he motioned to the right, “Dining room. Where we will eat tonight, however honestly, I rarely use it.”

“Why?” she asked curious.

“Rather watch television while I eat dinner by myself.” He walked them further down the hall and motioned to the side, “Powder room my lady.” She laughed and lightly smacked his chest. He continued down the hall to an area with three doors. “Bedrooms, where Liam, Elsa and the boys are currently staying.” He smiled down at her, “Thomas, the younger one, was just born when I started looking to build this home. I wanted to make sure they had a place to come stay when they visited. It’s the first time they have been here.”

Emma nodded and smiled already feeling more at ease. “They get their own rooms? You could have just had bunk beds or twins.”

He nodded, “I could have. But I also built this home for my future as well, and so someday the boys may need to share, one of them, or they may have to share that other guest room.”

Emma’s eyes widened, and she looked away from him, but she couldn’t keep the smile off her face. Well that answered one question, she didn’t even know she wanted the answer to.

She caught the motion of his hand out of the corner of her eyes and watched as he pointed to a door at the end of the hall, “That is the garage. In case I ever get to drive you back to my place.” He said with a wink as she looked up at him, and she returned it with a smile.

They walked back up the short hallway and then he turned right, “You already saw this on your way in, but this is the living room. He continued to walk past the foyer and waved at a door, “I think the plans called this a study, or an office.” He opened the doors, and she saw an empty room. There was not a piece of furniture in it. “Honestly, I have no idea what to do with it. Maybe someday I will think of something, or someone else will.”

He didn’t elaborate further and they walked back out of the room, and he turned towards a pair of double doors. He opened one of them and strode inside. “The master bedroom. Another favorite part of the house.” He turned right and into the master bath. Her eyes drifted over the same light granite
and dark wood of the kitchen, the his and her sinks. The her sink next to a vanity. There wasn’t anything on that part of the counter. On the ‘his’ sink, she saw the standard things. Hair brush, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc. There was a large jetted tub, that could easily fit four people, a large glass-enclosed shower with two rain shower heads, and a tiled bench. She looked around, her head going back and forth and he gave a laugh. He opened a door and there was the toilet. “I hid it.”

She laughed, “I guess you did.”

He led her out of the bathroom and down the hall, another door to the right was open and he flicked on the light. Inside was a treadmill, elliptical, weight machine, free weights, and various other pieces of exercise equipment.

She tried not to laugh, and ran a hand down his chest, “So this isn’t all just genetic?”

His grin widened, his other hand coming up to press hers flat against his abs. She swallowed slightly from the feel of his hard muscles under her fingers. Her eyes darkened a little looking up at him. “I like to keep in peak physical condition. Racing for hours on end can be physically exhausting, so I work out to keep up my stamina.”

She swallowed, “So are you saying, you have a high stamina during physical activity?”

He leaned in towards her ear, “I’ll let you be the judge of that.” He quickly took a step back and bit his own lip from the look in her eyes. He cleared his throat, and motioned to both of the doorways on either side, the one open. She looked in and noticed the closest was his. Full of clothes, shoes, hats, and the like. It was organized and sorted. He opened the other door and she moved to look, and it was another closet. Even larger than the other but it was empty, she looked at him in question. “The house plan said ‘hers’. Didn’t feel right putting my clothes in there, and besides I don’t need that much space.”

She nodded and he closed his door and then pulled her into the last area, the actual bedroom. There was a large four poster king sized bed on the one wall. Dark wood furniture around the room. A full length mirror in the corner, and a large TV on a dresser across from the foot of the bed. Off to the side was a sitting area with two comfortable looking chairs with large windows looking out towards the lake. Her fingers trailed over the wood of one of the posts of the bed and then she walked towards the windows, the view was even more spectacular here than from the family room.

“So beautiful,” he said from behind her and wrapped his arms around her.

She leaned back against him, much more relaxed. The house was huge, but after his tour, after the empty spots that were not yet filled, after him trying to get her to relax, to feel comfortable here, she was starting to. “Yes, the view is amazing.”

He leaned down and placed a soft kiss behind her ear, making her sigh. He did it again, and then whispered, “I wasn’t talking about the view love.” He placed another kiss, and her hand came up to the side of his face, her fingers then moving into his hair, keeping him there, as she leaned her neck to the side giving him more access.

His arms wrapped more firmly around her and pulled her back against him, as he kissed down her neck. A small moan issued from her lips, and he moved kisses back up and nosed behind her ear.

They broke apart quickly at the sounds of two young screams and stomping feet. He laughed and shook his head. She smiled turning towards him, “Let me guess, the boys are back.”

He nodded, grasped her hands and pulled her back towards him, he leaned down and then kissed her
firmly. He wanted to continue, but he knew they couldn’t. He pulled away, and let go of one of her hands and clasped her cheek. “We better get out there, before they try to find us.”

She closed her eyes and tried to get herself under control, “Then we better go.” With a tug on her hand she followed him back to the family room. A man was giving Elsa a hug and a kiss on the cheek while two young boys ran around the kitchen island.

Killian cleared his throat, and the adults turned towards them, the boys kept chasing each other. The man turned towards them, “Well, look who we have here.” The smile on his face grew. He then leaned over and grabbed both boys by the waist, they each laughed as he lifted them both up, and propped them on each side of his chest. “Boys, we have a guest. Best behavior and all that.”

Two light blonde heads immediately turned towards them. Their bright blue eyes light up at seeing their uncle and then they noticed her. “Hi” they said almost in unison.

“Hi,” she said softly.

“I hear you already met Elsa.” He walked with the boys over to them, “I am Liam. I’ll have to shake your hand later.”

“Here,” Killian said and took Thomas from his brother.

“Perfect,” his brother said and held out his hand. Emma sat her glass on the counter and then she took his hand to shake it and immediately found herself pulled into a hug with a hearty laugh.

She gave a hug back and then she was released to only hear Killian groan, “Brother!”

Then two little arms were reaching for her, and she smiled and gave the little one in Liam’s arms also a hug. “I’m Patrick.”

“Hello Patrick, I’m Emma.”

“I’m Thomas,” came a response from behind her. She turned to see another set of slightly smaller arms reach out to her being held in his Uncle’s. She gave him a small hug as well.

“Dinner is ready,” Elsa called from behind them. “Can I get some grownup hands helping put the food in the dining room?”

The men put the boys down and went to help her, while the boys took each of one of her hands and pulled her towards the dining room. “I need to help…”

“Follow them love, no worries; we are right behind you.” Killian’s voice echoed after her.

The boys got her into the room, and had her sit down, and then argued over who would get to sit next to her. As the other grownups entered the room, Killian laughed. “Sorry, boys, but Emma sits next to me.”

They both pouted but went to sit on the other side of the table. Killian and the others put down the food, and then sat down. Elsa sat on Emma’s left side at the end of the table. Liam sat at the other end to Killian’s right. Emma looked at the food on the table; she recognized most of it.

Elsa caught her look, “So that is Pinnekjott or a type of rack of lamb.” She moved to point to the next two dishes, “Carrots, and then boiled potatoes. That one there is a brown gravy that can go with potatoes and/or the lamb, but usually not needed.”

Emma smiled at her, “It looks and smells wonderful.”
“I am a lucky man,” Liam said as he opened a bottle of wine. His wife gave a smile and poured water for the boys. He than got up and filled the grownups glasses. He kissed his wife’s forehead prior returning to sit down. “So Emma, would you rather tell us about yourself, or would you rather hear embarrassing stories about this one?” He said thumbing at his brother.

“Oh, come on, brother.” Killian whined and shook his head.

Liam laughed and Emma smiled, “Wow. What a difficult choice I have to make.” She winked at his older brother. “Hmmmm, I think I would love to hear these stories, why don’t you start with the most embarrassing one you have.”

“I like her, little brother,” he said with a laugh.

Killian sighed, “Younger brother; we have been over this.”

Emma tried to contain her laughter by taking a drink of wine. Her eyes met Elsa’s and the look she received confirmed this was a regular occurrence.

Elsa had the boy’s hand her their plates and she stood to get their food on them. The dishes were passed around the table as Liam started up a story about Killian when he was six.

Emma wasn't sure when the last time it was that she had laughed so hard. Between the stories, the good food, the third glass of wine, and all the laughter, she was fully relaxed and Killian's family was starting to hold a special place in her heart. The brotherly jabs were quite adorable. The stories of young Killian all done up in his mother's makeup which he insists was his brothers doing. Emma is pretty sure he's right, but she wasn't about to agree with him. The soap box derby car they had built and almost won until the wheels fell off. The story of him trying to kiss a girl he liked on the playground only to come home with a bloody nose because she had punched him.

Each story, each laugh, each blush of embarrassment and scratch behind his ear, endeared them to her more. Soon dinner was done and Liam was getting up to take away the plates. Emma jumped up, “I'll help you.”

Killian reached for her arm, “Emma, stay, let me.”

She shook head, “Stay with your nephews.”

Elsa called after her husband, “Bring back the dessert.”

Emma grabbed the rest of the dirty plates and silverware that Liam didn't and headed into the kitchen, while Killian refilled both their wine glasses.

She brought the plates to the sink, and placed them with the others.

“I'm really glad he met you lass.”

Emma quickly turned to the man and gave him a small smile. The teasing completely out of his eyes, and a genuine smile left. “So am I.”

“He is a really good man. Just so you know. I won't go into everything, but he's had his heartbreak.” He lowered his eyes for a second, and Emma swallowed already knowing. “I was beginning to wonder if he would ever…” He shook his head as if deciding not to go down that route and looked back up. “He has a really big heart, and I just want to see my brother happy.”

“I want to see him happy too,” she agreed. She really did, and a growing part of her was hoping that
his happiness would be with her.

“Then we have an accord,” he said with a wink and a large smile. He grabbed the dessert, and ushered her back to the dining room.

She came back in and immediately started laughing at the scene in front of her. The boys, Killian and even Elsa were holding out their hands, and had a spoon hanging from their noses. The boys started laughing too, and the spoons fell to the table. Killian winked at Elsa, that had her crack up, and her spoon fell as well. Liam shook his head and elbowed Emma lightly. She shook her head and then returned to her seat.

“Still the undefeated champ,” Killian said with a smug grin.

“Oh, really?” Emma replied, “That’s ‘cause you haven’t played against me yet.” She held up her own spoon and gave him a challenging eye.

He grinned and held up his own spoon, “We shall see about that Swan.”

Elsa couldn’t stop from laughing, the boys were sitting on their knees with their elbows on the table. Liam shook his head, “Okay, on the count of three.” Killian raised his eyebrow as he huffed hot air onto the spoon. She gave her own sultry look and did the same thing and Liam started the countdown. “One… Two… Three.” They both put the spoon on their nose and moved their hands out to prove they weren’t touching.

The boys were cheering for their uncle, Liam was rooting for her to beat his brother. Elsa just kept laughing at how hilarious they looked. Killian kept making faces with his eyes and eyebrows at her, trying to make her laugh and drop the spoon. She just stared into his eyes, trying to keep the smile off her face. She bit her lip, and batted her eyelashes at him. She let her knee brush his under the table cloth, and then raised her leg just enough to brush closer along the inside of his thigh. The shock of the movement and the feel was enough to get him to jerk slightly forwards, the movement enough to make his spoon fall.

The boys gave a boo, but Elsa and Liam cheered. She grabbed the spoon from her nose and winked, “I win.”

He shook his head at her and leaned towards her, his words only for her ears, “You cheated.”

She blinked her pretty little lashes at him, “Who, me?”

“You will pay for that.” He breathed. Elsa started serving dessert to distract the boys, while giving a knowing smile to her husband.

She turned to face him, her tongue moving to give a quick lick to her lips, “Is that a promise?”

“You can count on it. Just wait till I get you alone.”

Her hand reached out and squeezed his knee and gave a wink, “Can't wait.”

Killian straightened in his chair, his pants now much tighter from her teasing. He wasn’t sure how much longer he could wait to get her alone. But from the cheer that went up from the boys when their dessert was placed in front of them, he knew he had to keep it PG; at least till they went to bed. Thank goodness they had an early bedtime, and with the thoughts of Christmas and Santa, they might convince them to head to bed early.

Elsa passed dishes around the table for the grownups. “This is sort of like Multekrem, but since I
couldn’t get the Multe berries here, I used raspberries and blackberries instead. A sugared biscuit, with the fruit and whipped cream on top.”

“Very similar to Strawberry Shortcake,” Emma said as she picked up her spoon. The boys were already a few bites in. Liam and his wife started on their own.

Killian nodded, “Actually very close.” He smiled at her before he took his own bite.

Obviously he was used to Elsa’s cooking. Then again, until he moved to the states just over four years ago, he probably saw them a lot more often. She dug into her own bowl, and it was delicious. “This is really good.” the others echoed her sentiments.

“Thank you,” Elsa said with a grin. “Honestly, this was the easy part.”

Emma smiled, “Well it's more than I could do. Unless it involves a microwave.”

“You don't cook?” The other woman asked with interest.

Emma could tell she didn't mean anything negative by it. Was just shocked. “I know how to boil water for pasta, and make toast or a salad. But, most of the time it's either frozen dinners or take out.” She looked back at her dish, “Guess I just never learned.”

Killian and Liam picked up on the look and tone in her voice. Two pairs of blue eyes shared a knowing look. Killian placed his hand on her knee under the table giving a soft squeeze as Liam spoke up. “Well cooking can always be learned, right brother?”

Emma got the meaning and turned to the man beside her. “You cook?”

His hand came off her knee and scratched behind his ear. “I'm okay. Nothing close to Elsa.”

“Oh, please!” The woman shot back and she turned to blonde next to her. “Don't let him fool you. He is amazing.” She turned to her brother-in-law and pointed at him. “You are going to have to cook for her soon.”

She could see him focus on his dessert. And only gave a soft nod in agreement. She looked to Liam for an explanation. The boys finished their dessert and begged to leave to go play video games. Liam told them they could, but to take turns.

The boys ran out of the room as Liam finished his dessert and put the spoon in the bowl. “I assume you know that when Killian was twelve, and I had luckily turned eighteen, our mother passed away.” Emma nodded and gave a sympathetic look, her hand now on Killian's knee giving him a soft squeeze. “Well I spent all of my time working to put a roof over our head, or taking a few classes to further my education hoping to get a better job. That left Killian at home.” He looked to his brother with a smile. “He would go to school, do his homework, do all the chores, including shopping, packing lunches, and making dinner.”

She looked back and forth between the two men. The pride in both of their eyes towards each other almost knocked her off her feet. She turned to Elsa, and could tell she knew all this, but couldn't keep the emotion out of her eyes either.

“I must say those first few months were difficult.” Both men laughed. “Partially done pasta, burnt meat, you name it.” He shook his head, “You see Killian would also head to the library, he would bring back all kinds of books that sparked his interest.”

“They were free.” He interjected for himself.
“Yes, that was important. But I remember coming home and seeing his head in a cookbook. It was for beginners. But soon the pasta was cooked right, and the meat was easy to cut.”

Emma finished her dessert and picked up her wine glass taking another drink as the older brother continued. “Him learning to cook actually meant more money saved. After a few years, I was able to get a better job, and he would occasionally purchase a different spice, oil, or something else. The cookbooks being read changed to Italian, Chinese, and others.”

Killian shrugged. “I was bored, and until I could do more than a paper route it helped out.”

“Only problem was when he left and got famous, I didn't know how to cook!”

Everyone laughed, as Killian smiled and looked to his sister-in-law, “Thank God you met Elsa soon after.”

Liam patted his stomach, “Yes, thank God. But…” he turned back to his brother, “But, you need to show this lass how to cook.” He gave her a smile, “Not so she knows how for when you leave. Because I’m pretty sure that won't happen.”

“Liam…” Killian warned. Not because he thought he would leave. At this point he wasn't sure if he could be dragged away. But he knew she was still skittish, and he didn't want her to push him away.

His brother waved away his warning. “But if what I have come to learn about the lass is right. She doesn't want to have to rely on someone, and she might just like to occasionally cook for you too.” He gave his brother a wink and Killian shook his head.

Emma just smiled, “I always wanted to take a class but just never had time.”

Liam's smile got bigger and gloatingly, “Told you.”

Elsa stood from the table, “I'm going to check on the boys, it is almost TOO quiet.”

She headed out of the room and Emma stood as well, “Actually, excuse me. I'm going to head to that powder room you showed me.” She said with a wink and headed off.

The two men stood up and grabbed the empty bowls and spoons. Killian used one hand to grab his and Emma’s wine glasses and then they made their way to the kitchen.

“I like her.” Liam said after placing the dishes in the sink.

Killian smiled, “So do I.”

His brother smiled back with a small shake of his head, “I think ‘like’ is a far understatement on your part brother.”

He was about to ask if he was that obvious when the person in discussion came into the room. He handed her the partially full glass, and she accepted with a smile. Liam looked at the clock, and it was almost nine. “Okay boys, finish the level and it's time for bed.” He got back a chorus of groans. “Remember Santa comes tonight, you want to stay good.” The boys were fast to agree.

Elsa stood from the couch, “Besides the sooner you head to bed, the sooner you can open presents!” The boys cheered and a few minutes later they were running off to their rooms. She turned to Emma, “It was so nice to meet you.” she leaned in and pulled the other blonde into a hug.

Emma willingly took it and squeezed back. “You too,” she said as she was then handed off to a bear
hug from Liam.

“I’m looking to you to keep this one in line,” he winked at her and pointed over at his shoulder at his brother. Killian gave a huff, and she laughed.

“I will try, but no promises.”

He nodded. “We are going to wrestle the boys into a bath. Then story time, and by the time we are done, we will probably be asleep like babies.” He gave them a smile, then turned back to Emma. “Good night lass, and Happy Christmas.”

She smiled and responded back the same way, “Happy Christmas.” It was strange to her American ears but she was beginning to understand some of the cultural differences.

“Finally,” he voiced and wrapped his arms around her from behind, “Alone, at last.”

She leaned back against him, “Now what?”

He chuckled softly, his nose nuzzling against her neck as he placed a gentle kiss there. “How about I make a nice fire in the living room, and turn on some soft music…”

She didn't allow him to continue, “Sold.”

He lightly grabbed her arm, picked up his own partially filled glass of wine, and pulled her behind him into the other room. He placed his glass on the coffee table, and went over to the fireplace. She settled into the corner of the L-shaped leather sofa and took a sip of her wine. He started up the gas fire, picked up the remote to the stereo system and soon, some soft music was floating through the room.

He walked back, picked up his glass, and sat down next to her, his arm over the back of the sofa behind her. It took her less than a second to snuggle up to his side. Her feet curled up next to her. His arm moved around her, pulling her a even touch closer, his feet went up on the coffee table.

“You have a really great family,” Emma said looking up at him.

He nodded and smiled, “I certainly do. Just hope they didn’t say anything that made you uncomfortable.”

“Not at all. I loved the stories of you when you were younger.”

He laughed and then so did she. She sat up and sat her now empty glass down and turned towards him, “At some point you will have to show me pictures.”

He laughed again and then took a drink, “You would have to ask Elsa for them. Any that are left are in London with them.” He finished his own wine, sat up as well and placed it on the table next to hers.

He saw the smile before she spoke, “I guess I will have to then.”

Killian moved a strand of her hair behind her ear, his fingers lingered on her cheek, and then moved into her hair at the back of her head. He saw her eyes darken, the firelight playing over them as they glanced down at his lips and then back up to his eyes. A second later he was pulling her close as he leaned in, their lips meeting halfway.

As soon as her lips touched his, her hands moved around him. One hand in his hair, the other around
his back. His other arm wrapped around her waist, pulling her closer. She didn't even hesitate and without breaking the kiss, her body moved over him. Her legs straddling him. He groaned into the kiss as she settled into his lap, pressing against his hardening length. She moaned at the feel, her hips instinctively rocking against him. He took advantage of her moan, and his tongue darted into her mouth, tasting her. His tongue stroking against hers, her hips still moving against him.

His hand moved from her back down to her hip. Pressing her closer, but stopping her rocking. He didn't want this to end too soon, but he also couldn't stand not having her against him. He broke the kiss to breathe, and moved to trail his lips down her neck. Licking and nipping at the flesh, her sounds encouraging him, her head tilting to the side giving him access. Her hands refused to stay idle, as they both slid down his back. Her fingers sneaking their way under his sweater and shirt underneath. She was seeking the contact with his skin, and she found it as her hands moved up his lower back. Her nails lightly traveled over the skin with her fingertips.

He let out a small growl, and bit a little harder at the tender flesh between her neck and shoulder. Her loud moan, and her hips trying to move again voiced her approval. His tongue moved to soothe the mark, making her squirm more against him. He needed to touch her, and he started to move his hand out of her hair. This thumb brushed across her earring, and then his mind remembered.

His gift. He got her a gift. He didn't want to move away from her, he didn't want to stop. All his worries about what she would think, and if she would feel bad if she didn't get him anything filled his brain. He tried to push the thoughts out his head, but she must have sense the change in him.

Her hands moved from his back to cup the sides of his face. “Are you okay?”

He pushed the thoughts away, “Oh, I am more than okay love.” He said and rocked her against him. He saw her eyes close in pleasure at the movement.

But then her eyes opened again and the look on her face changed to one that said he wasn't fooling anyone. He sighed, “Bloody inopportune brief thought is all. Nothing to worry about.” He leaned in to kiss her again.

She leaned out of the kiss, “What is it?” Her one hand moved to his chest. “If you don't tell me, we are just both going to think about it.”

He sighed, his stupid brain. Why couldn't the ‘other’ have been doing all the thinking for him at that moment. His hands slid her legs back a little bit and he took a breath. “I know we haven't been dating long…” the questioning look on her face had him speed up his answer. “I got you a present. But…” his came up stop her from saying anything, to stop her thoughts. “It's not a problem if you didn't, I wasn't expecting anything. If you would rather not, then no worries Emma.”

She gave him a soft smile, and let out a laugh. “Thank God you said something first. I've been agonizing all night if I should give you yours.”

His face lit up. “You got me something?”

She smiled, “It’s nothing big. Not sure you will even like it.” She was trying to lower his expectations; she was nervous about what she got him.

“Emma, you got me something. You didn't have to. Besides, to be honest, I'm hoping that mine won't be…I don't know.”

She laughed, “We make quite the pair, huh?”

He grinned, “I think so.”
She briefly looked down gathering her courage and then back up into his blue eyes. “Me too.” She swallowed hard as they stared at each other.

He leaned forward and gave her a soft kiss. “Okay, how about we both go get them and meet back here?”

She nodded and with reluctance she moved to get off his lap and stumbled a little. His hand instantly reached out to grab her and stop her from falling.

“Just how much have you had to drink tonight, Swan?” He joked as he stood up with her.

She just left and headed to the kitchen. He went into his bedroom, adjusting himself in his pants as he went. But his question was still rattling away in his brain. He opened the drawer and took out the present wrapped in metallic green with a red ribbon. He was back first in the living room. A few moments later she was back with his gift; little Christmas trees were all over the white wrapping paper.

“What took so long?” He teased.

She bit her lip and sat down next to him. “Got a bit lost and turned around.” She joked back.

That caught his attention; she had gone into the kitchen, which was just a short hallway away. He didn’t say anything. “Okay, ladies choice. Do you want to open yours first or me?”

She handed him her gift to him, “You first.” She didn’t want to chicken out.

He smiled and took the box. He started to untape the end, and he could feel her watching him, as he took the paper off gently. “So you are one of THOSE people,” she said with a laugh.

He raised an eyebrow at her, “What is that supposed to mean?”

“Why don't you just rip the paper off and get to the gift?”

“Some things, love, are meant to be dragged out, to take your time with, to savor.” He let his tongue reach out lick at his lower lip just slightly and he got the desired effect as her eyes darkened and her breath hitched.

He then turned back to the present in front of him. He got all the wrapping off, the box not revealing the contents. So he opened the box and reached inside pulling out the item. A large smile came over his face along with a small laugh. It was a travel coffee mug, but it had the character of Captain Hook on the side. He laughed again at remembering what he had almost got her.

She was quick to chime in. “I know it’s not much, and probably…”

He cut her off, and his hand came to claim hers. “I love it, Emma. And I’m laughing because I almost got you a travel mug.”

“What?” She said with her own laugh and disbelief.

“I saw this coffee mug that kept coffee hot, and almost got it for you. But the reviews were horrible.”

Her eyes softened and her heart swelled. He cared enough to read the reviews about what he was getting her for Christmas.

“Your turn,” he said, handing her his gift for her. He scratched behind his ear, his nervousness over the gift showing.
Her other hand pulled his down from his head and squeezed. “No worries.” He nodded at her and she ripped off the paper and gave him a wink. He laughed.

She paused at the blue velvet box, knowing inside was jewelry. She knew he had good taste based on his clothes and house. But just how expensive… she forced the thought down. Everything is relative, she tried to tell herself. But with shaky hands she couldn't help, she popped open the lid.

She sucked in a breath as she saw it. Her other hand moved to pull out the slim, delicate white gold bracelet. A word in cursive made from a single stand of the same color gold was held on each side by the chain. A small heart hung from the curved and looped letters. The word ‘Alohomora’ made her lips turn into a smile. She looked up at him, it was hard to find words. “It's beautiful,” she finally got out of her mouth.

He let out the breathe he had been holding, a genuine smile forming at the look on her face. She held out her left wrist. “Can you help me?” He nodded and his hands moved to take the bracelet, and he then fastened it around her wrist. It looked perfect on her.

Her fingers moved over the word, the meaning behind the word echoed from her lips, “It’s an unlocking spell from Harry Potter.”

He grinned and nodded and then looked into her eyes, as his hand took hers. “I put walls and locked doors around my heart years ago. But somehow you have already seemed to find your way around them, like magic.”

She grinned and gave a soft laugh at the line. But knew from the look on his face he was being one hundred percent truthful.

“Hopefully someday you will allow me to do the same with yours.”

She didn't respond with words. The truth was that he was already well on his way. So she responded by leaning in and kissing him.

He kissed her back. He wanted to pull her to him, to pick her up and take her to bed with him. But he knew if he did, they would be broken apart early in the morning. She would need to head out to go to her brothers. He would be woken by the boys for presents. Also, even if she didn't want to admit it, she had drank too much tonight. Maybe not enough to stop her decision making, but enough to lower her walls completely, enough that she shouldn't drive. He groaned and pulled back, his hand moving to cup her cheek. “We can't do this.” He swallowed and continued, “I don't want to stop; God, do I want you.”

She was confused, “Then why?”

“Because of too many reasons.” He leaned his forehead against hers, “You have to go to your brothers tomorrow, and the boys will be up early.”

“Tomorrow, not tonight.”

His other hand moved to her hip and squeezed. “Once I have you love, I'm not going to able to let you go.”

Her heart squeezed at his words, and she knew with certainty that she was going to feel the same. It would be extremely difficult to leave his arms. But she wanted him. “It's not that we won't see each other again.”

He smiled. “You’ve also had a lot to drink love, I don't want to take advantage…”
She snorted at that, “Oh, please. I have been way more drunk than this with a guy…” she immediately stopped talking. “That sounds…”

He lifted her chin, “No judgement from me, Emma. I get it.” His hand slid across to her cheek. “But I also don’t want to be like them. I don’t want you to regret this. I want to be a clear conscious decision.”

She reached for and squeezed his other hand. “You already are. You should see what I have on under here,” she said with a wink.

He groaned at the thought, and he clenched his jaw. He took a breath, “And I want to take my time with you, savor every moment.”

She swallowed. “Like you did with your present.”

Killian nodded, “Yes. But you are so much more important than that. I don't want to rush this.” He wanted her; God, did he want her. But he wanted it to be special. He didn't want a quick roll into bed and them both sprinting up in the morning racing apart. Also, even if she said she was fine, even if she acted like she was fine, he still wanted her to really be ready for this, not have the wine talking for her.

She took a deep breath, and tried to steady herself. If it wasn't for the war with himself that was on clear display on his face, she might have felt rejected. But she also felt elated that he cared that much. “Well, just like you want to make sure I am ready, that I have no doubts. I want the same for you.” She squeezed his hand again. “And I can tell this decision is weighing on you, and I don't want to cause that turmoil either. So we wait.”

He felt slight relief at her statement, even though his own body wanted to kill him. His thumb stroked her cheek. “I want you so bloody much.”

She leaned into his touch, “Same here.” They smiled at each other. “I should probably head home then so we aren't tempted.”

“Oh, no you aren't.”

She was confused, “I thought…”

“Emma, pretty sure you have close to a bottle of wine in your system, you are not driving anywhere tonight.”

She was about to object, but she couldn't. He was right, probably not the best idea. “Okay, you win.” She stood from the couch and almost lost her balance again, he was up in an instant his arms wrapping around her. “Guess that just cements your case, doesn't it.”

He leaned down and kissed her forehead. “Just a little bit love. Here…” he leaned down and brought his arm under her knee and lifted her.

She let out a little squeal of surprise, “What are you doing?”

“Carrying you.” He turned and made his way to his bedroom and to his bed and laid her down, and then kissed her forehead.

“I need to get my purse, and all my stuff.” She moved to get up and he put a hand to her shoulder.

“I'll go get it. Be right back.” He headed out the door.
She laid on the bed, and turned her head against the pillow. God it smelled like him. It was a matter of moments, and he was back in the room. He put her purse on the nightstand, her coat draped over it. He sat her shoes next to the bed. And placed the velvet box for the bracelet next to her purse.

“Okay, I'm going to grab my night clothes, and I'll actually get to use that guestroom for a change.” He smiled and leaned down to kiss her forehead.

Her eyes snapped open and her hand grabbed his wrist. “You don't need to leave.”

He looked at her, in his bed, he had been trying not to think about her there. But now she didn't want him to leave. He was trying desperately to be a gentleman. He swallowed, “Are you sure?”

“Yes.” Was her simple reply. Maybe they wouldn't have sex tonight, but damn it if she wasn't going to sleep with him.

He nodded, “As you wish.” He saw her smile and release his wrist. “Let me go change and I'll be back. Do you need anything?”

She pointed at her purse, “Nope, I have it all in here.” She said with a sly smile.

It took a second and then he understood. She had actually packed an overnight bag. He let out a long breath, and then leaned down and kissed her hard. He pulled back before she could pull him down to her. “Next time…” he said and then retreated out of the room.

She shook her head to clear it and then opened her purse. She pulled out the T-shirt she had planned to wear tomorrow. She undid her jeans sliding them off, and put them into her bag. She took off her shirt and bra. It might be sexy, but she had not been expecting to have it on all night. She then slipped on the t-shirt and slid under the covers. She put her shirt and bra in the bag and sat it back down. She turned to her back and pulled the covers up.

He came back into the room a few minutes later. He was in a T-shirt and flannel pajama pants, he flicked off lights as he went. She turned on the lamp next to her. “Thank you,” he said as he flicked off the last light and went to the other side of the bed.

“If I'm on your normal side of the bed, I can move.”

“No worries, love; I usually sleep closer to the window. Are you okay?” He asked as he slipped under the covers.

“I'm good on either side.” She turned off the light, and then turned on her side to face him and he did likewise. The soft light from the moon softly illuminated the room. They gave each other small smiles. Emma laughed, “With the way we were on the couch, we shouldn't be this awkward.”

He smiled and nodded. “Too right. So how do you want me love?” he asked with a raised eyebrow.

She bit her lip stopping her comment. She moved closer to the center of the bed, and turned over. Her hand reached behind her and pulled his arm over her. He got the hint instantly, and moved next to her. His one arm went under her pillow, the other curled over her stomach over the blankets. His nose pressed into the back of her neck, leaving a small kiss there.

She clasped his hand with hers and then pulled them up together to put them under the blanket, settling their hands at her hip. His hand instantly flexed and squeezed, and his fingertips found the bare skin of her leg at the seam of her t-shirt. He moaned against her neck, “Trying to tempt me, Emma?” She giggled lightly, not saying anything. His mind warred with him, if he should move his hand under and see if she was wearing anything underneath. However, if she wasn’t, he didn’t know
what he would do with the knowledge.

She smiled to herself. “Okay, then, is this better?” she asked as she clasped his hand again and pulled his arm closer to her, hugging it to her heart.

He groaned at the feel of her unbound breasts under her shirt against his arm. The need to take one in hand was overwhelming. He knew she was tormenting him on purpose, so he moved closer to her, pressing the problem she was creating against her backside.

She moaned at the feel of him hard behind her, and she rubbed her legs together trying to get a little relief from all the foreplay of the day. She knew it wouldn’t work, so she pressed back against him, only for him to gasp, “Emma…” It was a moan and a warning all in one. He pulled her closer and kissed the side of her cheek. “Stop teasing. We should sleep.”

She finally relented. “Goodnight, Killian.”

He pulled her closer in his arms, “Goodnight, Emma.” It didn’t take long in each other's arms for sleep to claim them both.
Chapter 8

Emma was starting to wake, and the first thing she became aware of was the light streaming into the bedroom. Her eyelids did not want to open to the brightness. It was strange because she didn't recall opening her curtains, and the blackout curtains did not let light into her room.

The second thing she became aware of was the solid, very warm body wrapped around her. The protective arm over her, his hand holding hers against her chest. The memories all started to return as her cloudy brain started to wake. Had they not moved all night?

She felt his warm breath on the back of her neck. The slow rhythm of his chest moving behind her, signifying that he was still asleep. She opened one eye and could tell it was still early, the sun not even up yet, only the twilight of morning light waking her. She wasn't used to it, and that was what must have woken her. Her eyes traveled to the alarm clock; it wasn't even six in the morning.

Part of her just wanted to try to fall back to sleep, as she was much too comfortable in his arms. Another part of her knew it was Christmas morning, and more than likely the boys would be up soon demanding to open presents. But the more persistent side one out. She moved slightly trying to adjust her face further into the pillow to block the light. As her body shifted against him, she almost let out a moan from the feel of his hard length against her behind.

His arm pulled her tighter against him in his sleep, and his lips and breath sighed against her neck. And that was all it took to set her body into full alert and a wanting, achy need. The level of pure lust she had for this man was not healthy—it just couldn't be. It wasn't fair, though—if she had her way last night, they would have been sated and spent right now. She shifted her legs together; the need she felt should have been replaced with a pleasant soreness instead.

With a small smile, she figured a little payback was in order. If she had to feel like this, than he had to as well. And from how hard he was, there wasn't much she would have to do.

She shifted her hips back against him, his length barely shielded from her by his flannel pjs and her skimpy underwear. She moaned slightly as the prominent bulge rubbed against the cleft of her ass. Maybe she hadn't thought this through. Her teasing him was working her up as well. She did it again biting her lip, and this time the gasp came from him, followed by his arm under her coming up to pull her even closer. She moved again, and this time he was obviously awake because in response, he moaned and lightly bit at her neck.

His words came out in a hot breath, and his voice was rugged from sleep. “Minx…” But this time, he shifted his hips towards her, making her gasp, her eyes rolling back in her head. “Was that what you were looking for love?” He rolled his hips against her again, eliciting another moan. “Or were you just trying to tease me?”

She turned over in his arms, hers wrapping around him, her leg moving over his hip, pulling him closer. She bit her lip to stop the sound and smiled seeing his eyes close tightly, mouth open on a moan. “Figured payback for yesterday was needed.”

Killian gave a soft growl as she rocked her hips again, and his hands moved down her back and came under her T-shirt, his fingertips splaying over the hot flesh of her back. His mouth came down to hers fierce and passionate. He didn't even have to press for entrance; her mouth was already open, tongue ready to move against him.

His brain knew they should stop. There was more of a reason to do so this morning than there was
last night. But she was so warm and soft against him, her smell and taste permeating his brain, the want for her rushing his blood south, where most of it was already residing.

He pulled away from her mouth to look at her. Her lips were parted, eyes dilated, hair tangled from sleep, makeup smudged. She was absolutely gorgeous. Her hands found their way under the back of his shirt, and he leaned back in to kiss her, and against his better judgement he rolled to his back, pulling her over him.

Her legs went to straddle his hips, moving against him, the friction increasing, both moaning from the contact. He needed to stop her, because if she didn't, he might lose it in his pajama bottoms, or he might roll them back over and tear her underwear right off and plunge inside her. The second option was seriously on his mind, and he doubted she would object, when high-pitched scream reached his ears, making them both instantly stop and stare at each other.

Elsa ran after the two boys and was able grab an arm each before they got their uncle’s bedroom door open. She wasn't sure what they would find if they did, but she wasn't going to chance it.

Her husband walked into the living room with a yawn and looked at her and then the boys. “Come on, time for breakfast. And after you eat, then you can open presents.”

Both boys whined but they followed their father into the kitchen. Elsa went to the foyer and looked out the window beside the door and smiled at seeing the yellow bug still parked there. She was now very glad she reached the boys in time.

She walked back to the double doors of the master bedroom and knocked loudly. “Killian!” She yelled, “The boys will be eating breakfast, so we will all be in the kitchen! You have a half hour before they will be looking for you so they can open presents!”

She knew he would understand her warning, and what he did with that was up to the two of them. She smiled to herself and walked into the kitchen.

Killian did know exactly what she meant—it meant they had less than a half hour to get control of themselves. Emma must have understood, too, because her head dropped to his chest and gave a defeated sigh. He soothingly rubbed her back, and tried to calm himself. But with her still lying on top of him, it was not working. His one hand came up under her chin, and gently urged her to look up at him. “So, we can either make ourselves presentable and both go out there together and have breakfast and watch the boys tear through presents. Or we can both get dressed and I can see you out before they find you still here. I am completely okay either way.”

She gave him a smile, knowing he was absolutely telling the truth. He was comfortable her staying for Christmas morning, or allowing her to duck out early if it was too much for her. She thought about it for a few minutes, and sighed again. “I really should get out of here. I am supposed to help Mary Margarette with the cooking.”

He laughed, “I thought you couldn’t cook.”

“I can’t, and she knows this. But she always wants me over anyway. She makes me peel the potatoes, and chop the vegetables. And she hovers.” She sighed once more and put her head back into his chest, slightly muffling her next words. “I think she really just wants me over so I’m not alone on Christmas morning.”

He leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the top of her head, “Well, then we better get you out of
here love.”

She nodded and sat up, and then with a smirk she rocked her hips one more time, and with a moan from him she was up and off the bed giggling.

“Oi, not fair!” he shouted and sprung out of bed himself, right behind her. He caught her around the waist and turned her in his arms, then brought her in for a kiss. He wanted to linger, but knew there wasn’t time.

She looked up at him. “I better get dressed,” she said, but didn’t really want too. He let her go and she took out her jeans and slipped them on. She slipped on her shoes as he leaned against the wall. She didn’t bother with a bra and put on her coat. She needed to head home first, anyways. She put the empty jewelry box into her purse, and took out her car keys. “Well, I guess I’m ready.”

He nodded, and they headed to the door of his bedroom, he opened the door and looked out, and confirming there was no one there, then he lead her to the door. “I am really glad you came over.”

“Me too,” she grinned up at him.

“Is it okay, if I call you later?”

She nodded, “Yeah, I should be home by seven or so.” She leaned up on her tiptoes and gave him a soft kiss. “I should go, I really need a date with my shower.”

He laughed, “Yeah, I need to head for a quick cold shower as well.”

“Oh, I wasn’t talking a cold shower. I mean a date with my detachable shower head.”

He closed his eyes and bit his lip. “Not fair, Swan! Not fair.”

She giggled and kissed him again. “All’s fair, Killian.” Her eyes sparkled, and he couldn’t help the grin.

He placed a soft kiss on her lips. “Merry Christmas, love.”

“Merry Christmas, Killian.” With that, he opened the door for her and she headed out to her car. He closed the door, but watched as she pulled away and waved as she left. He took a deep breath, and then headed back to his room. He did jump in the shower; however, he decided not to go the cold shower route. With the visualization of her taking one and their actions earlier, he was a goner in no time.

Once Killian was done with his shower, and changed he headed into the kitchen. Elsa saw him first and tried to look behind him as well. From that little move he knew that she knew Emma stayed over. He headed over to her, and on his way noticed his brother and the boys eating breakfast at the table in the nook.

“There are still pancakes and bacon if you want some.” She said as he pulled out a mug and poured some coffee.

He took a drink and moved closer. “Looks good. And more than enough for me.”

She turned to him and gave him a knowing eye. “Well, wasn't sure if anyone else would be joining us,” she said quietly.
He took another sip of his coffee and looked at the others still eating. “Do they know?” He asked softly.

Elsa shook her head no. “Wasn't sure what you both would do.”

He smiled. “She had to head home, change, and get over to her brothers.” She nodded in acknowledgement and he took another drink. “Are you going to tell him?”

“Not unless you want me too.”

“For Emma’s sake, how about we leave it between us.”

She smiled. “Oh yeah, just for Emma. Not that you want to avoid the questions and teasing.”

He let out a soft chuckle. “Who, me?”

They watched the others for a minute and Elsa made another cup of coffee for herself and spoke while pouring. “So…” Killian looked over at her in question. “How was it?”

He choked on the coffee. Elsa patted him on the back and Liam looked up from the table. “Fine… I'm fine.” He sputtered out and waved them away. Once Liam turned back to the boys, Killian turned back to Elsa. “Nothing happened.” She arches her own brow in disbelief. “Seriously.”

She didn't buy it. “I could tell your brother, and he will get it out of you.”

He rolled his eyes and sighed in defeat. “We exchanged gifts. She had too much to drink to drive. We slept, clothed. Seriously.”

She looked into his eyes for a minute, reading him, then nodded. “Good.”

“Good?”

“You've just started dating, we are here, you both are busy today, and you both had a bit to drink last night. So it is good you waited.” She patted his shoulder and headed to the table. “Okay, who’s ready to open presents?” The boys cheered and ran to the living room. Killian smiled and followed his brother and Elsa into the other room.

Emma headed up the steps to her brother’s loft and knocked on the door. She was only a couple minutes late, so she was doing well. She had time for her shower, relieved some tension, and had on new clothes. She also managed to get some coffee and grab their presents as she was on her way out the door.

A moment later, the door was open and a loud-pitched squeal came out of the petite brunette that was behind it. She found herself immediately in the woman's arms in a hug and then ushered inside. “Have you ate breakfast?”

Emma lifted her coffee cup in her hand and Mary Margaret rolled her eyes and moved her to the counter in the kitchen. In seconds, the gifts were out of her arms, her coat was off, and she was seated at the counter with a plate of food being placed in front of her by her brother. He then came around the counter and leaned down to hug her. “Morning.”

She hugged back and then laughed at seeing the yawn on her brother’s face. They may not be related by blood, but they were most definitely not morning people. Much unlike her sister-in-law. That woman seemed to wake with the birds, and was just as energetic. She drank the last sip of her coffee
and looked at David with a plea, holding out the cup. “Coffee?”

“Yep,” he said continuing their one-word-at-a-time conversation. He made some coffee for her and then gave it to her.

Mary Margaret took a seat on the stool next to her with her cup of tea. “So?” Emma looked over at the brunette, with a questioning look. “How was last night?” Emma almost choked on her coffee as the woman continued. “Tell us everything.”

“Just for the record, some of us don't want to hear everything.” Her brother chimed in.

“How was his family? Did you exchange gifts? Did you stay the night?”

“That, for instance, is one of the things I don't want to know about.”

Emma sighed, “I don't have enough coffee in my system for this yet,” she said and rested her head on her arms.

It moved her sleeves up a little, and Mary Margaret saw the new bracelet. “Oh, is that new?” She leaned closer and squealed even louder than when she answered the door. “Oh my God, did he get that for you?” She was bouncing in her seat, “He had to, I know what that means.” She said in a singsong voice.

Emma sighed, of course her sister-in-law knew. How many Harry Potter marathons had they had? They went to a couple premieres dressed as the characters for crying out loud. David looked at her wrist, and once his morning fogged brain caught on, his eyes widened as well. “So, just how serious is this?”

She tilted her head up and looked back and forth at the two of them and then sat up. Her eyes moved back to look at her coffee cup and bit her lip. “I really…reallllllyyy like him,” She quickly turned to Mary Margaret and pointed her finger at her. “Do not squeal,” she warned quickly and barely in time for the woman to hold it in.

Emma shook her head, trying to clear it, and trying to figure out what to say. She closed her eyes because they were both just staring at her. “Yes, he got me the bracelet. Yes, his family is amazing. And…” Her brother put his fingers in his ears acting as if he wasn’t listening. Emma laughed and threw her napkin at him. He took his fingers out and sipped his own coffee. “Nothing happened. He was…” she shook her head, still not believing they had ended the night only cuddling. “A perfect gentleman.”

David actually smiled at that, “Finally.” He said softly, then continued “And to think I’m the one that started all this.” He gave her a wink. “You owe me for pulling him over, you know.”

Emma just laughed, as she started to eat her breakfast. But he was right: if her brother hadn’t pulled him over for speeding, and if he hadn’t had community service, she doubted they would have ever met.

Emma gave another evil look to brunette; she was hovering, as predicted. She continued to try to peel the potato as the other woman kept looking over at her. “What?”

The woman looked over her shoulder to see her husband occupied with the ham. She leaned closer, “So I googled your guy.”

“You what?”
Mary Margaret blushed, “I looked him up. He’s hot.”

Emma smacked her lightly on the hand with her dish rag, which got the woman to giggle and a look at the both of them from her brother.

She continued, “So, when are you going to see each other again?”

“Not sure; he asked if he could call me later, this morning before…” she immediately stopped talking realizing what she said.

The brunette picked up on the slip immediately and leaned in. “You spent the night? You told us…”

“Shhh…” she tapped the other woman's elbow and looked to make sure David wasn't listening. “Nothing happened.” The look she got back told her she didn't buy that one bit. “We slept together…clothed.” Emma sighed at the disbelieving look. “Okay, there may have been some making out, but nothing else.”

“Why?”

That was not what Emma expected from the her sister-in-law. But then again, this was the same woman who introduced her to Outlander and Black Sails, so maybe she should have expected it. “Trust me, it wasn't me who stopped it.”

“He did?” Emma nodded in confirmation. “Interesting. He is called the bad boy of racing.” She leaned closer. “His main sponsor is Magnum condoms.” She gave Emma a wink.

The blonde gasped. “Mary Margaret!” It was a little too loud of an admonishment, because her brother turned around, and his wife just started laughing, but kept giving Emma that all knowing eye.

They went back to preparing the vegetables and as soon as David wasn't paying attention anymore, her sister-in-law leaned over. “You’ll have to let me know if the sponsor picked the right spokesman.” She then picked up the cutting board and headed to the stove.

Emma’s mouth just fell open in amazement at her quiet, little school teacher of a friend.

She placed the Tupperware filled with leftovers in her fridge, and then made her way into the bedroom. She changed into a long-sleeved soft cotton shirt and yoga pants and then went back out to plop down in front of her TV and veg out to Netflix.

She was exhausted and full. She loved her little family, but they were also a little tiring. Especially when it came to wanting to know what was happening in her relationship. Heck, was it a relationship? Was it time to call it that? They hadn't defined anything yet. Should she ask if they were mutually exclusive? She felt like they were, and he made her feel like he thought of it that way. But was that just herself thinking that, or was it true?

How was she supposed to answer those questions to others when she didn't know herself? She turned on a movie, and tried to quiet her mind. But almost halfway through the movie it was still on her mind, even when her phone rang.

She reached out to the coffee table, smiled at the name on the phone, then answered it. “Hello.”

“Hello, love.” She missed that voice today. “How was your holiday?”

“It was good. Really good. Yours?”
“I’m glad yours was good. Same. The boys went nuts, as was expected.”

“So, are you out with the family? If so, say hi from me.”

There was a small laugh, “Was that a way to ask if they could hear this conversation, Swan?”

She bit her lip; he had caught her. “Maybe?”

He laughed again. “They are watching a movie. I’m in my bedroom. I am all alone, love. So what do you not want them to hear?” She thought about what she wanted to ask. The thoughts still with her from before. But she wasn’t sure she should ask. She must have been quiet too long. “Emma? Are you still there?”

“Yeah…sorry.”

“Is something wrong?”

She could hear the concern, and she knew she had to ask. “Ummm…not sure how to ask this.”

“Emma, you can ask me anything.”

“You know what, it’s nothing. So…what are you wearing?” she asked, trying to change the topic.

But he knew. “Is something wrong?”

“No. No, nothing is wrong. At all.”

“You aren’t being that convincing Emma.”

“Are we…uh…are we mutually exclusive?” She let out a breath, her heart racing, and she was met with silence. Was it just a second or was it a long time, because her brain was racing. She continued. “I mean, not that it matters, or anything. It’s fine. Mary Margaret just asked and I wasn’t sure how to answer…and…”

“Emma…” She kept trying to go on and on. “Emma…” She didn’t hear him. “Emma!”

“Yeah?”

“I’m a mutually exclusive kind of guy. If that’s not what you want, then I…” he swallowed. “If that isn’t what you want, then…” He didn’t seem to be able to finish the sentence.

She smiled, relief rushing through her system. “No, that’s perfectly fine. As long as that is what you want.” She heard the exhale on the other side of the phone.

“Good.” They both laughed. “So, when can I see you again, love?”

“Besides Monday?”

“I was thinking before then.”

She bit her lip again, “Killian. Spend the weekend with your family before they leave on Sunday. You only have two days left with them.”

“You don’t mind? Or are you trying to get rid of me?”

“I think we just established we are mutually exclusive, so I don’t think I’m trying to get rid of you.
And while I will miss you, I think you need the time with them. Besides, I’m not sure if we can be around each other and not uh…”

“Are you saying you find me irresistible?”

“Maybe?”

“I have an idea. I may be able to make it up to you for Christmas.”

“I’m listening.”

“Go out with me for New Years.”

“What?” she asked. “That wasn’t exactly what I was expecting.” She heard a soft laugh. “That is almost a week from now.”

“I was thinking we could go out to dinner. You could bring an overnight bag… maybe… stay the weekend?” She pulled the phone away from her ear, making sure she was still talking to the same person. “Emma? Was that too much?”

“I’m here, and maybe just right?” She bit her lip.

“Perfect. Maybe I can also get you to have lunch out this week.”

“You may have to do some convincing.”

“I love a challenge.” She giggled at that, and they continued in their conversation for awhile before finally saying goodnight.

===∞∞∞∞∞===

Monday morning came quick for Killian. He had spent quality time with his family, and it was extremely difficult to drive them to the airport and wave goodbye. Both Liam and Elsa requested he stay in touch and keep them up to date on him and Emma. His brother told him not to ‘bloody fuck it up’. The boys were luckily not around to hear that from their father.

After getting back home after dropping them off, the house felt much too empty, cold, and quiet for his liking. He had gotten used to the noise and laughter while they had been there. He tried to push the thought away and concentrate on seeing Emma the next day.

Now he was headed inside with a red cup of coffee for her, and his in the Captain Hook travel mug she had got him for Christmas. He smiled every time he looked at it.

Her door was open when he got there and she was already seated at her desk. He walked in, and she turned to smile as he closed the door behind him. She stood and met him halfway, taking the coffee from him. But before he could get a word out she was leaning in for a kiss, and he wasn't about to stop her. His free arm wrapped around her and brought her closer.

She pulled back slightly and looked up at him. “Morning.”

“Morning, love.” He leaned back in for another short kiss and then looked down at her again. “Missed you.”

“Good,” she said with a smile and a twinkle in her eyes. Then a thoughts flashed across her mind. “Oh, can you give me details of where we are going for New Years? I need to know what to wear or if I need to go shopping, or…”
He reached out and took her hand, “It will be a nice, formal date. Since we haven't had one yet, and it is New Years. But you can wear that black dress you wore to the fundraiser; you don't have to get anything new.”

She smiled, “Okay. Now…what do I need to bring for the weekend?” She asked with a wink. “Should I bring, any, uh, supplies?”

He laughed. “No need. My sponsor keeps me well in stock. Various kinds, actually; you can have your pick.” He gave her his own wink.

Her eyes widened. “Should I even ask how many woman have had their choice?” She backtracked quickly. “Wait. That isn't my business. I'm sorry.”

He moved his hand from hers to her chin and tilted it up. “Emma, we should talk about these thing. It's okay.” His hand moved up to caress her cheek. “I will admit, I have been with more than a few women. Until now, though, it has been awhile since I was in a real relationship. A long while.” He looked away for a second and she knew his thoughts had gone to Milah. But he seemed to shake it off and turned back to her. “But, I only dated one at a time. I refused to lead them on. And I always used protection with them. I have too much to lose not to.” She nodded and his hand went back to hers. “If you want doctors records, I can show them to provide a clean bill of health.”

She knew he was trying to make her completely comfortable and she laughed at that. “Yeah, so do I. I got all that done as soon as I found out my last boyfriend…” she stopped. Her lips thinned to a tight line. “Doesn't matter. Doctor gave me an a okay, if you need to know.”

Killian caught the words, and from her reaction he had a pretty good idea what she was going to say. He squeezed her hand tighter, and vowed to punch the guy if he ever met him. “Well, at least we know that they only need to prevent my little guys from getting through.” He winked and tried to joke with her.

“Wouldn't matter if they did or not. Already have that taken care of.” She said and took a drink of her coffee. He raised his eyebrow in question. “I am not ready for a kid yet. Someday, sure. Now. No way. So I take hold of my own destiny.” She had learned her lesson from her first boyfriend. A pregnancy scare had chased him away, only to find out she wasn't actually pregnant. From that point forward, she knew it was up to her. “I’m on the pill.”

He smiled at her; he liked her take-charge-of-my-own-life attitude. And unlike other women he had dated, he trusted Emma. The others would more likely try to get pregnant on purpose. But Emma wasn’t with him for his fame or fortune. And that thought brought out a whole new thought into his head. “So… hmmm.”

She could see the wheels turning, his hand moving from hers to scratch behind his ear, a faint flush moving over his cheeks. She knew he had to be thinking something about this weekend but wasn't sure how to ask. His embarrassment making her smile. “Just ask me.”

“My sponsor wouldn’t like this question, but they don't need to know.” She could tell he was trying to lighten the air again. “If we both have a clean bill of health, and we are only seeing each other, and you have the other covered…” She knew immediately what he was thinking, heck now that he brought it up she was too. God she missed those days. It brought a lot of freedom and spontaneity into a sex life. He then waved it away, “Forget it. That can be a question for another time.”

Emma reached up and pulled his hand away from the back of his head. “You have a very good point.” He swallowed hard and waited for her to continue. “I trust you, Killian.”
He leaned in and kissed her hard. Not because she had agreed to his idea, but because she trusted him. “And I trust you, Emma.”

Her own smile grew even larger, her heart swelling. She raised up on her toes and kissed him as well. She then pulled back to look at him. “It’s a shame though.”

“What is?” He asked thoroughly confused.

“I was looking forward to seeing all the various collections of condoms Magnum gave you.” He let out a rumbling laugh at that, and she giggled with him.

“No worries, Swan. A viewing…or a demonstration can be arranged.” He winked at her and she swatted his shoulder.

“Out…I need to work.” He leaned in again and gave her a soft kiss before he said goodbye and exited her office.

She sat down at her computer and realized just how long this week was going to be until their date.
Chapter 9

After exiting Emma’s office, Killian went over to see Archie. The door was open and he poked his head in. “Hey, boss.”

The man lifted his head and smiled. “Not for much longer.”

“Actually, that is what I wanted to talk to you about.”

“Are they missing some of your hours? I can send the forms over again.”

“Oh, no. All of that is just fine. I know my hours end today.” The man nodded. “But, do you need any more help?”

An even larger grin came over Archie’s face. “We could always use the help.”

“Good. I have some free time until practice and car tests come back up. So I might as well put them to good use.”

“And I’m sure Miss Swan has nothing to do with that.” The man said with an all-knowing smile.

Killian knew it was pointless to hide it. “Maybe just a smidge?”

“We are happy to have you anytime. Just come in. Today, you are with Granny.” That was a new one; his furrow of his brow showed his confusion. “Now that Christmas is over, it is everyday work we need help with.”

“Not a problem; see you later.” With that he ducked out of the office and headed for the kitchen. Ms. Lucas was in there working on kneading some bread. “Morning.”

She turned to look at him, a grin coming over her face. “I hear you’re mine today.” The way she said it brought an arched eyebrow as an answer. She laughed and waved him off, “No worries, I know you belong to someone else now. But this old woman can still dream.” He let out a chuckle, and she looked over to the metal work table. On it was a cutting board and a knife. “Do you know how to peel potatoes? Or do I need to show you?”

“Not a problem.”

“Good. Then go grab one of the twenty-pound bags—you know where they are—and get started.”

With that, she turned back to her bread. He nodded, gave a mock salute, and followed her orders.

The week continued the same as the week prior, their normal daily routine still in place. Emma declined lunch on Monday due to having so much to catch up on because of the long weekend. However, he did get her to go out with him with Tink’s help on Tuesday. Tink told him about a small sandwich shop a few blocks away that served grilled cheese sandwiches that Emma couldn’t say no to. And when he mentioned it to Emma, the twinkle in her eye told him she couldn’t refuse.

Their lunch date was like any time they were together. They talked, learned more about each other, laughed, and shared heated looks. The hour was over much too soon, but knowing a long weekend together was approaching made it bearable.

The week seemed to take forever, except for when she was in his presence. The morning exchanges
of coffee and a kiss, the brief afternoon cookie interludes, and the short and sweet walks to her car on
the way home. Those small moments together seemed far too brief and happened much too fast.

The time luckily did finally move, and it was now Thursday evening and he was on his way over to
Emma’s to pick her up. He wasn’t sure if it was nerves or anticipation that he was feeling, though it
was probably a bit of both. They both knew where this night was going to lead, but he was
desperately trying not to get ahead of himself. They were going to have a very nice date first. Truth
be told, he was highly looking forward to their evening out. He couldn’t wait to see her in that dress
again; then again, he couldn’t wait to see her out of that dress, either.

He pulled up to the curb and tried to clear the thought. This was New Year's Eve, and the most
important part was just spending it with her. He took a deep breath, grabbed the flowers next to him,
and exited the car to head to her door.

Once at her door, he quickly smoothed out his black tie and suit, then knocked. He heard her moving
around, and then the door opened and he was speechless. He was expecting her to be beautiful—he
remembered how she looked in the black dress—but this...he couldn't form words. His eyes moved
down her body, then back up, and down once again. His mouth was still slightly agape as his line of
sight reached her eyes, and they sparkled in amusement at him.

“Since you can't seem to form words, I will take that as a compliment.”

“Emma...You look,” his hand moved up and down motioning at her in the long, body-hugging red
dress. “There aren't words for how stunning you look.” He moved his hand from behind his back
and presented her with the bouquet of flowers.

She blushed and took the flowers, saying thank you for both them and the compliment. She waved
him inside, and he followed. She grinned because this time she had a vase to put them in. An offhand
comment to Mary Margaret about the flowers he got her on their first date had resulted in a nice vase
as one of her gifts for Christmas. Once they were placed inside with some water, she had to admit
they looked perfect.

She turned around to catch him watching her. She walked over and moved up on her toes, even in
her heels, and wrapped her arms around his neck. His hands were immediately on her hips. “You
didn't have to get something new to wear love.”

“I know, but I wanted to. And from your reaction, is was sooooo worth it.” She gave him a wink and
leaned in for a quick kiss.

He chased her lips as she pulls away, causing a giggle. “We better go.”

He agreed and she went to grab her coat, which he took from her and helped put on. She then took
her purse and reached for her overnight bag. “Let me,” he said and picked it up for her, following her
out the door.

Soon they were out the building, and he was helping her into the car. As soon as her door was
closed, he placed her bag in the trunk and then slid into the driver’s seat. He started the car, pulled
away from the curb, and then took hold of her hand, intertwining their fingers.

Tonight they would be heading into the city and not dining in Storybrooke. There was more traffic
that night than for a normal Thursday, but it was to be expected. They arrived at their destination
with time to spare, and the two valet drivers opened both doors. Killian took the ticket and quickly
made his way to Emma, and then guided her into the restaurant. They walked up to the host and he
gave the man a smile. “Reservation under Jones.”
The man looked at the reservation, and then back to the couple. With a quick smile he responded, “Ma’am may I take you coat?” Emma nodded and the man helped her take off the coat and gave it to the coat check. “Okay, right his way, Mr. Jones.” He led them both towards a secluded spot near the back of the restaurant. The host brought them to a small, rounded booth that was definitely meant for two. They both slid into the booth as the host said his goodbye. “Your server will be right with you.” And with that, they were momentarily alone.

Emma looked around and noticed that the high walls of the booths, and all the large hanging plants made it so she couldn't hear or see anyone else. She turned back to her date to tease him about her observation. “Well, this is nice and private.”

He smirked back at her, “Well, that was part of the charm.” He reached out and moved some of her curled hair behind her ear. His fingers lingering on the side of her face, his eyes staring into her jade depths. “You look so beautiful.” A faint flush crept over her cheeks and he started to lean in for a kiss.

But a small cough stopped him. “Good evening. My name is Lumiere, and I will be your waiter this evening.” He poured water into their glasses and then motioned at the tall menu on the table. “Be our guest to peruse the wine menu at your leisure. I will be happy to answer any questions you have Monsieur.” He said with a slight bow and turned to Emma, “Mademoiselle. “ With another quick bow, he stood back straight. “Is there anything I can get for you, or shall I give you some time to decide?”

“A few moments would be helpful, thank you.” Killian replied and the man nodded and left. He turned back to Emma, “What would you like to drink?”

“It depends...If I drink any alcohol are you going to tell me I drank too much, and we should wait...again?”

He grinned. “You are never going to let that go are you?”

“Not for a very long time.” She replied and leaned in for a soft kiss.

He pulled back after the kiss slowly, “We could share a bottle, that shouldn't be too much.” He gave her a wink.

“How about just a glass each to be sure?”

He scooted closer to her, his arm on the back of the chousin behind her. “I take it you have your heart set on a certain course of action for the evening then, love.”

She leaned in closer, and nuzzled into his neck. “Mmmmhmmmmm,” she murmured and left a kiss to the skin there only to pull back and look up at him with mischief in her eyes.

“Be careful, or I may drag you out of here right now.” His arm pulled her closer, his fingers caressing the bare skin of her shoulder. He could tell by the look on her face she might not actually mind that idea. He took a deep breath and tried to turn his attention to the wine list.

Emma attempted to rein in her own libido, but it wasn't her fault really. The sexual tension between them was so tense a small feather could snap that string in two. She started to read the menu, and then finally figured out where he had taken her. She knew it was French, but then realized it was a fondue restaurant. She had never been to one, but had the chocolate fondue at friends’ parties before. “So...ummm...how do you order?”

“Do you trust me, Emma?” He said with a raised eyebrow.
The answer was without a doubt yes, but she smiled and replied, “I’m not sure I should.”

His fingertips glided over her arm with a tickle-light touch. “I guarantee you will like it.”

She bit her lip, “Well, if you guarantee it, how can I say no?”

She barely had the words out of her mouth, and the waiter was back. “Do you need a few more minutes?”

“We are ready,” Killian said for both of them. “We will each take a glass,” he looked at Emma to confirm she really meant only a glass and she nodded with a smile. “of the Weinbach ’08 Pinot Gris.” The waiter nodded, and Killian went on. “We will take the three course fondue for the night. To start with the traditional cheese, then the coq au vin with the mixture of land and sea options, followed by the classic chocolate.”

“A perfect choice sir. I will be back quickly with your wine and the first course.”

Emma smiled at Killian as the waiter walked away, “From the sound of it, you are going to have to roll me out of here.”

“No worries love, it is a slow, graze of a meal. Besides, you will need all the energy you can get.”

“Oh, really? Are you planning to have us both work off those calories later?”

He leaned in and kissed the side of her neck. “You will definitely break a sweat, love.”

The words breathed into her skin had her toes curl. As he pulled back, she could see the look in his eyes telling her that he knew exactly what he was doing to her. Her hand moved down between them and settled on his thigh and she watched his Adam's apple bob as he swallowed. “What?” She asked with innocence.

His fingers traveled down her arm and ribs, giving a feather light touch to the side of her breast, making her suck in a breath of air. “You know exactly what you are doing.”

“So do you,” she replied and all she got in return was a smirking smile. She was about to continue when the waiter returned with their wine.

He sat both glasses in front of them, and then made a few adjustments to the table, showing the hidden burner for the fondue pot. He placed the pot filled with already melted cheese on the burner, and then placed a large plate of various things on the table. “Let me know when you are ready for the next course.” Emma wondered if he could tell they wanted to be alone with how quickly he left. Though they were probably also very busy at the restaurant tonight. She then turned to the plate, biting her lip, she had the vague sense of what to do, but some of the choices seemed a little strange.

He unfolded his napkin revealing two fondue forks, he set them on his plate and put the napkin in his lap. He smiled as he saw her do the same out of the corner of his eye. He picked up one of the forks, and so did she. He pointed at the cheese, “It is made with gruyère, raclette, and fontina cheese, along with white wine, garlic, and even a dash of nutmeg.”

Her eyebrows raised at the wine. “Guess I’m glad we are sticking with one glass of wine.”

Killian laughed at her teasing, “The cooking takes out most if not all of the alcohol, love.” She smiled even more, and tried to bite her lip to keep it in. From that he knew she was just teasing him and had already knew that. “Right,” he then pointed at the offerings. “Obviously, the french bread is great for dipping. But the carrots, cauliflower, celery, broccoli, and grapes are good as well. The
apples are actually a favorite of mine.” With that he made the point by spearing one of them and dragged it through the melted cheese. He brought it over his plate and blew on it a little, and then brought it to his lips, his tongue moving out to catch the cheese and then his mouth opening over the bit of apple and sliding it off the fork with his lips.

She licked her lips, and had to shake her head to clear the image. The knowing smirk on his face, knew she was caught, and also that he did it deliberately. She decided to be brave and go for an apple herself, and mimicked what he did, along with the whole tongue action as well. Well, she might have done a little more teasing than he had done, and when her eyes met his, she immediately knew her intention worked just as well as his did. Then she actually tasted it. The tart green apple and the cheese together was wonderful, her eyes lit up and she looked to him.

“Am I right?”

She nodded. “That is delicious.” She knew she wanted to go back to that, but decided she wanted to try each option first, she started with the bread. He followed suit as well. As they went on she got more and more used to how to stab the food, and get the most amount of cheese onto it. Both laughing and grinning as they basically started to compete to see who could get more cheese on their bites than the other. Soon the cheese was gone, and there were only a couple pieces of bread and some vegetables left. She leaned back, and picked up her wine glass to take a sip.

Killian also leaned back and took a drink of his own, “Well, what do you think?”

“I think this was a great choice. I could probably eat just that all night.”

The waiter had come by a little earlier when they were almost done, and noted to get the next course ready. He made his way back over to them now, and picked up the empty fondue pot, the basically empty plate, and their used forks. He then sat down a new metal pot, this time a dark but clear liquid inside. He than sat down three various sized plates this time, which had Emma give Killian another questioning look. He gave her a soft smile. She looked at the divided plate and saw various pieces of uncooked meat. Each type in it’s own section. The second plate made much more sense, it was various vegetables again. Carrots, mushrooms, chunks of potato. The last one, was actually a small divided sauce tray with three different sauces. The waiter then gave them two more fondue forks each, made a slight bow, and left them in peace again.

“Oh, you cook the meet in the fondue pot. This time the pot contains the coq au vin, which is a combination of burgundy wine,” he gave her a wink and she just shook her head and rolled her eyes, while he continued, “which is cooked with various seasonings and mushrooms. The waiter set the temperature higher so it will stay at a good simmer so that it cooks the meat.” She nodded at him, now with a little more understanding. “The meat takes various time to cook. The beef is a range of about 30 to 60 seconds. It’s best to leave the chicken in for a minimum of two minutes. The shrimp can range from two to three minutes, sometimes less—you can mainly tell by the color change.” He saw her bite her lip. “Don’t worry about it, just leave the chicken in for awhile.”

“Right, neither of us wants to get food poisoning.” She pointed at the sauces. “Those?”

“These are to dip the meat and veggies in, if you want.” He pointed to each as he went, “Usually for beef. This one for chicken, and that one for the shrimp. However, don’t stand on ceremony. I like to mix them up myself, I know some that only like one of them for everything.” He took her hand and squeezed. “Just try it and have fun, love. You can’t do it wrong...except for the chicken.”

She giggled, and picked up a new fondue fork, and decided to spear a piece of chicken, and she put it in the pot to cook, holding it as she waited. She watched him do the same, but he nodded at her and had her see that he laid the handle against the side, and then picked up a second fork to spear a
mushroom. She did the same but with a piece of beef, and this time held it, since it didn’t take as long to cook. “What can I say, I like meat.”

He groaned at her statement that also came with a bite of her lip and the twinkle in her eye. He then watched her pull out the cooked piece of beef and lightly blow on it, though she kept her eyes on him, teasing him. He shook his head and his hand went to slide onto her thigh. She put the bite into her mouth and slowly pulled it off the fork with her teeth, “Mmmmmmm.” She said, making it sound much more seductive than he was sure it tasted.

His fingers trailed slowly towards the inside of her leg and she lightly swatted his hand away. They both laughed and started to eat the rest of the main course. While the teasing had lightened, it was still there, their sides pressed next to each other in the booth.

When they were close to finishing, the waiter came back, and they both ordered a cappuccino to go along with dessert. The caffeine seemed to be a good idea, since neither of them planned on going to sleep any time soon. She sat down her fork, and then finished her glass of wine.

“How are you feeling? Too much food?”

She smiled. “Actually, since it is spaced out, it doesn’t seem nearly as bad. But this is…really, really good.”

He reached for her hand again. “I’m glad you are enjoying it, Emma.”

The waiter came back again and cleaned up all the plates, the old fondue pot, and used forks. He then turned down the burner, gave them new forks, and sat down the new pot with melted chocolate. Then he sat down another plate with various fruits and cubed desserts. Finally he each gave them their cups of cappuccino and took his leave.

“Now this one, I know,” she said and looked over at him. “Or do you want an explanation?”

He laughed, “It’s up to you, love.”

“Nah, I think we can figure it out.” She picked up the clean fork and went directly for a chunk of pineapple and brought it to the chocolate.”

“You really like pineapple, huh?” he said with a small smirk trying to bite his tongue.

“I do,” she said with a sparkle in her eyes, “I do eat it quite often. Well as often as I can get it.” She took a bite of the chocolate covered fruit and gave a soft moan. “That is so good.” She watched him swallow hard once again. “You know what they say about pineapple don’t you?”

He took a deep breath, he did in fact know. He leaned in close to her ear. “I do, Swan, and trust me. I plan to find out if it’s true later.”

She gave a small shudder at the implication, and watched him pull back and flick his tongue against his lower lip. His blue eyes were dark and filled with promise, making her press her legs tighter together. She cleared her throat and shook her head. She heard a small laugh, as they then both went to spear the various pieces of food into the chocolate. Some more apples, along with grapes and ripe strawberries. Small chunks of brownies and pound cake, as well as marshmallows also accompanied them.

At one point, he offered a chocolate covered strawberry to her speared on one of his forks. She nodded in acceptance, and he held it out to her. She let her tongue lap at the chocolate first, and then took a bite off the end of the berry. He finished off the rest of it. From there on out, they kept feeding each other for the rest of the meal. More than once they would both lean in and kiss each other,
tasting the chocolate on each other’s lips.

The next time Killian saw the waiter he signaled for the check. They finished drinking their coffee when the waiter came back with the bill. He quickly laid down the money for the meal and a nice sized tip, and then helped Emma out of the booth. With his arm around her they walked to the desk, and retrieved her coat. He helped her get it on, and they went outside to the valet. The streets were busy, but luckily it didn’t take long and his car was pulled up to them.

When Killian got into the driver’s seat he turned to Emma, “I just need to ask, are you sure you want to come back home with me?”

She smiled, somehow not shocked after everything that he still wanted to make sure she hadn’t changed her mind. She leaned in and gave him a soft kiss. “Absolutely.” She sat back in the seat and reached for his hand and he pulled away from the curb and started driving back to his place. His hand found hers almost instantly, as they both eagerly waited to get there.

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He pulled into the garage, popped the trunk, and got out of the car. He grabbed her bag, and shut the trunk on the way to her side. He helped her out of the car as the garage door was closing, and guided her into the house with a hand on her back. Once they were in the hallway and the door was closed, she turned around in an instant, and he was already dropping her bag to the floor. Their arms wrapped around each other and mouths immediately plastered together. The time for waiting was over.

He backed her against the wall, their tongues dueling, tasting, devouring one another. Her arms around his shoulders tried to pull him closer. His hands at her hips pulled her to him, and they both moaned into each others mouth at the contact. He was already hard, and aching to get inside of her. His mouth trailed from her mouth to her neck, licking, nipping, and kissing at the flesh making her tilt her head to give him more access and whimper. Her fingernails gripped into his back through his coat.

“Off,” she groaned as her hands tried to rid him of his coat. His hands left her long enough to shrug off his suit coat, and it hit the floor without a care. She kicked off her heels, as his hands moved along the sides of her body, brushing the curve of her breasts. His mouth moved from her neck to the plump flesh of the top of her breasts, licking over the skin. She gasped, one hand moving into his hair, pressing him closer, her hips bucking against him.

“Emma…” he let out in a groan. One hand moved to her back, the other moved to cup her breast, his thumb rubbing over the hardened nipple under the fabric.

Her hand that wasn’t fisted in his hair moved to his shirt, trying to remove the buttons. In her lust-filled state, she was having a hard time unbuttoning his shirt. Her brain just wanted him, wanted more, wanted it now. In frustration, she pulled his head back by his hair, making him growl a little at the pain and pleasure from the tug. With him more upright, she brought both hands to his shirt, and with a little too much force she tugged the shirt open, a couple buttons ricocheting across the hallway.

She was waiting for him to say something about her being so eager, but when her eyes met his, the desire-filled gaze had her breath shuddering, and she lunged for him, pressing him back against the other side of the hallway. His lips came back to hers—a hard kiss on her lips and nipping of her flesh by his teeth. Her hands found his chest, her fingers tangling in his chest hair, fingernails lightly scratching his skin.

He rolled his hips against hers, hands pressing her closer to him, seeking friction. His hands trailed
up her back, finding the zipper. He groaned when she broke the kiss to lick at his collar bone. He leaned his head back against the wall, letting the pleasure of what she was doing wash over him as his fingers pulled the zipper of her dress all the way down. He knew he needed to try to move them to the bedroom, but the need to have her was making it hard to think.

She felt the dress loosen from around her, and she took a step back from him, and with a sultry smirk on her lips let the dress fall to the floor, leaving her clad only in her black strapless lace bra and panties. She felt his eyes drink her in, and she was doing the same, finally getting a good look at him. His hair in disarray from her hands, his chest now bare showing off a whirl of chest hair that led to a nice slim trail down into his dress pants. Pants that were now very, very tight and showing off a very prominent bulge. His eyes were blown wide, so dark she could barely see any blue.

If he thought she had looked beautiful tonight, he was mistaken, because now she was an absolute goddess in front of him. Creamy smooth skin, rounded bosom barely contained in a tiny scrap of lace. Smooth, toned stomach down to the curve of hips, and what looked to be a tiny lace thong. He quickly stepped towards her, bent over slightly at the waist, reached around her and pulled her up his body. Her legs instinctively wrapped around him, as he quickly walked towards his bedroom.

Their mouths came back together as he walked, tongues sliding against one another between hot breaths. His hard length pressed against the lace of her underwear, making them both moan. The contact almost made him lose his balance, but somehow also increased his determination to get to his destination as quickly as possible.

Soon she was finding her back on the middle of his big bed, with him hovering over her. His mouth moved from hers, back down over her neck and chest leaving a trail of fire in his wake. He nipped at the flesh over the bra, his scruff burning deliciously against her. His mouth then settled over the lace, sucking at the hard nipple through the fabric. Her mouth gasped; her hips bucked. But while he was hovering over her on his knees between her spread legs, he tried to keep his hips away from her, though they were still close enough for her hands to move and grab at his belt. They worked as quickly as possible to get it undone, along with the button and the zipper of his pants.

Her fingers were starting to tease the waistband of his underwear when his hand stopped her, and he pulled away. He stood and looked at her, to see her blonde hair laid out in a halo on his bed, her legs open, and her hands reaching for him. How many times had he dreamt of this moment? But he needed to pull back; he wanted to make it last. He divested himself of his pants, leaving him in his black boxer briefs. “Just lay back, love; ladies first.” He gave her a smirk, and then moved back to hovering over her.

She wanted to tell him there was no need. She wanted to tell him that she just wanted him. It was the truth, after all. She knew it wasn’t going to take much more to set her off; she was already overly worked up. But she knew the look on his face and the determination in his eyes. When he kissed her again, his teeth lightly biting her bottom lip, only to trail back to her breasts, the thoughts of even trying to hurry this along faded from her mind. His hand moved under her to unclasp that bra and move it away from her.

He took a moment to look at her bare breasts; they were more perfect than he had imagined. The pert pink nipples already so hard and seeking attention, and he decided he was going to give them just that. His mouth sucked on one, and a hand came up to cup the other, his thumb strumming against it. His other hand held onto hers, pressing it to the bed, while her free hand moved into his hair and he groaned at the little tugs on it, her fingers bringing him closer. Her sounds encouraged his actions as he sucked lightly, and then hard at the peak, alternating that with a small nip and a soothing lick.

She was moaning and squirming beneath him, a begging sound when she said his name. God, he
could get used to that sound. His one hand abandoned her breast and his mouth switched to lavish the same attention to that hardened peak. His hand glided down her hip to press between her legs and he groaned against her. “You are soaked for me love.”

“Please…” was the only coherent word she could get out of her mouth. She was right on the edge, every touch was pleasurable torture. All she needed was just a small push.

His hand left hers as his lips trailed down her stomach. His fingers teased the skin at the band of her panties, as he leaned in letting his tongue lick at the drenched fabric. Her hips bucked towards his face, bringing about a devilish smile. God she tasted good; he needed to get more of her from the source. He quickly pulled off her underwear and dropped them on the floor, and was immediately back on her. One hand pressing against her stomach to keep her still, the other moving to spread her open. His tongue licking her from core to clit, eliciting a loud, “Fuck,” from her.

He growled against her bundle of nerves, making her shudder. “Soon, love,” was his only reply as he dived back in, tasting her sweet and tangy nectar. He could tell she was close from the shake of her legs. He gave another long lick, circled her clit, then started a rapid flick against it.

Her whole body tensed, and she screamed as she fell over the edge. His hand held her as still as possible as she shuddered against him, his tongue moving gently over her. He could feel her relax, the grip on his hair loosen as she came back to earth. But he refused to let up; no matter how much he wanted her, he wasn't done yet.

His tongue started to increase the pressure and the pace, and she gasped again. Her hands tried to pull him up. “Not yet,” he told her and dipped his tongue lower, pushing inside of her, thrusting in and out. His eyes moved over her body, watching her thrown-back head, her arched back. She was glorious in her pleasure. His thumb went to stroke her clit, and his tongue continued to thrust and curl inside of her.

She barely had time to come down from her first orgasm and he was already bringing her embarrassingly close to her second. No matter what else the night may bring, there was one truth she learned: this man was a god with his mouth, and knew exactly how to use it.

He groaned against her again, feeling her inner core muscles starting to flutter around his thrusting tongue. She was so tight, he knew he needed to loosen her up just a bit more. Regrettably, he moved his tongue out of her and trailed it back up to her clit. He heard her huff of annoyance and grinned against her.

He quickly thrust a finger into her, careful to not yet curl it into the spot he already found she loved. Her hips were already trying to move against his hand, trying to ride his finger. He slowly added another finger, and she moaned another “fuck.”

After a few more thrusts of the two digits, he decided he could try a third. She took it, her walls tightened around him, her head thrown back, her walls fluttering. “Oh...God…” she whimpered. His tongue kept up the pace and then her started to curl his fingers inside of her, hitting THAT spot.

She saw stars right before she screamed out her pleasure, his name on her lips. Her inner muscles contracting, her body spasming, as the waves of pleasure washed over her.

He held his fingers inside her, moving in slow thrusts, his tongue gently caressing her clit, trying to bring her down slowly, and prolong the pleasure. When her hands relaxed at the back of his head, he slowly withdrew his fingers and then sucked them into his mouth, his eyes catching her hooded green ones. He didn't think he would ever tire of her taste. He leaned back in to kiss her hip bones, then back up over her, allowing his wet stubble to tickle her skin and rub against her breasts,
enjoying the gasp from her. His tongue moved back over the peaks to soothe them. Finally he landed back at her mouth, kissing her deeply.

His slow caress back up her body had given her time to get her senses back, not to mention his ability to get her body all worked up again. And right now she needed to reciprocate. No, she WANTED to. Her hands came up to his shoulders as she attempted to roll him onto his back. “Your turn,” she said with a smile.

But her stopped her, with a shake of his head. His lust filled eyes boring into her, “Next time, love.” He kissed her again, then dragged his lips back to her neck, to her ear. “I need to be inside you, Emma. I need to feel you tight and wet around me.” He bit at her earlobe and she shuddered. “I need to hear you scream my name as you come around me.”

Her one hand moved to his head pulling him in for a kiss, as her other traveled south to cup him through his boxers. He bucked into her hand with a groan and she bit at his lower lip. He was so hard and thick. She let go long enough to get her hand under the elastic band, and then got her fingers around him.

He hissed and threw his head back from the pleasure of her small hand around him. He backed away from her long enough to pull off his boxer briefs and kick them to the floor. Then he came back to her, sitting on his haunches between her legs. His hand came down to grasp himself, moving in slow strokes up and down the hard shaft. He saw her eyes on him, watching the movements. Her tongue darting out to lick at her lips. Her hands reached for him and he didn't need any other invitation.

He moved back into her arms, letting her legs cradle his hips. He rested on his elbows, placing them on either side of her, and leaned in for another kiss as her arms and legs came around him, trying to drag him closer.

He shifted his hips and they both groaned as the tip of his cock brushed through her wet folds. He rocked against her a few more times, coating him in her essence, building a delicious friction, while dragging her hard nipples against his chest hair. “Killian…” she pleaded.

The need and want in her voice was enough to push him forward. He tilted his head back just enough to watch her eyes, see her mouth open in a gasp as he slowly pushed into her depths. God, she was so tight around him, so hot and wet, she felt like heaven. It took all his willpower not to snap his hips and claim her in one thrust.

Her nails gripped at his back as she tried to hold on, her legs tightening, trying to pull him deeper, needing all of him. She could feel his muscles tense as he was trying to hold back, trying to go slow. Part of her was glad he was, a brief flicker of her brain telling her his sponsor had definitely picked the right spokesperson, while the other part of her wanted him inside her NOW. She shifted her hips, and he slid in further. He groaned, his eyes shutting for a brief moment, the control on his face slipping slightly, and she vowed in that moment to (hopefully sooner rather than later) get him to lose that precious control and take her. His eyes snapped back to hers, as her legs squeezed around him, and he thrust the rest of the way inside, hitting her deep, stretching her exquisitely. She moaned and bit at his shoulder at the fullness.

“God, Emma,” he groaned as he stilled deep inside of her. He tried to give her a moment to adjust. Tried to give himself a moment to regain control. He leaned back in to kiss her, softly at first but quickly heating as their tongues moved together and she tried to shift her hips against him, signalling her readiness, her need for him to move.

He started slow. Gentle thrusts in and back out, while continuing their kiss. His hands at her sides moving under her to grasp her shoulders from underneath. He wanted to make this last, tried to read
her signs, her sounds, and her body for what she wanted, needed.

But Emma wanted more. It felt so good, but she didn't want slow. “Pleaseeeeee…” she whined breaking the kiss, her legs wrapping tighter around him trying indicate what she wanted.

He thrust his hips harder and she moaned, “Yes…faster…” He smirked; who was he to deny a woman what she wanted? He snapped his hips faster into her and her eyes rolled back, her mouth gasping another “yes.” Her hands grasped his shoulders tighter.

He removed his hands from her sides and push himself at a steeper angle, then brought her legs up higher as he thrust back inside. The drag of his cock along her walls, the angle making him brush against that glorious spot on every thrust. He moved faster, harder against her, inside of her. “Emma…God…” he moaned, she felt so good around him, her walls so tight, her sounds music to his ears.

He kept the pace hard and fast, as her hands gripped his back, trying to hang on for the ride. God she felt like she was on fire, and she never wanted it to end, but she knew it was going to. One of his hands unwrapping her leg from around him to place it over his shoulder shifting him even deeper inside if that was possible. “Yes…God, yes,” she moaned as he ploughed into her. “Fuck, yes…yes.”

He could feel her walls starting to quake, feel her body tensing, and along with her words and moans, it was making him lose control. “That’s it…love...let go. Let me feel you.” His hips bucked faster, his control slipping; he was so close—he just needed to feel her come around him, to drag him with her.

With another deep thrust of his hips she was flying, her body arched, her mouth screamed, “Killiannonnn…” Her world shattered around her.

Her walls gripped him tight, causing his hips to stutter, making him lose the rhythm as the pleasure started to course through his body. He was able to thrust a couple more times and then stilled inside her as he let himself go, pulsing hot and deep within her. His face contorted in immense pleasure, as he groaned out her name.

He shifted forward to rest on his arms, their foreheads touching, breath mingling as they tried to regain it. When his brain started working again, he wrapped his arm around her, and had enough energy left to roll them both over. He landed on his back with her over him, her legs settling on either side of him, the movement slipping him out of her. She gave a soft whimper at the loss and he smiled as his hand stroked at her back in soothing circles. Her face nuzzled into his chest, and he kissed the top of her head as their heart rates started to return to normal, their bodies cooling.

“I need to go get you a towel,” he said and started to shift her off him so he could.

She stopped him, by planting her knees into the bed on either side of him, “Don’t go.” She placed a kiss to his chest, and her hands moved to hold onto him. Besides, if she had her way she was just going to get dirty again, and hopefully very soon. She placed another kiss to his chest, and felt his hands lightly knead at her back. She smiled into the chest hair, and kept going. She kissed over his pec and then her tongue darted out over his nipple. He sucked in a breath. She did it again, and looked up at him with a smile.

“Emma…”

“My turn,” she said with a wink, and the pushed herself up to hover over him. She kissed him sweetly, then trailed her own lips down his neck. Her tongue trailing over the freckles there. Her mouth nipped at the cords of his neck and then moved down to lick his collar bone. He groaned and
shifted against her. She could tell what she was doing was affecting him as his cock was starting to twitch slightly under her.

Killian fisted his hands in the sheet at his sides, trying to control himself as her hands trailed over his chest and abs, her mouth blazing a trail over him. His hips pushed up against her on their own accord when she hit a spot particularly pleasurable. The fact that it was her, here, doing this to him and not his own daydream was intoxicating in and of itself. But she was also working methodically, working him up, and taking her time to do so tortuously slow.

She encountered another set of freckles at the top of his abs, and she tugged at the skin with her teeth. He groaned and his hips moved up against her again. She moved her hips just out of the way, only allowing a tiny bit of her to graze against him. Her tongue moved over the tense stomach muscles, following the trail of hair south. Her legs shifted down his body, and she let her breasts graze over his now almost fully hard length.

“Fuck…” he growled, his hands gripping the sheets harder. But when her lips kissed and then licked over his hip bone, over another small constellation of freckles pointing her south, one hand stilled her. “Emma… stop.” She looked up at him in question. “If you are determined, I should go clean myself up first.”

“Why? Cause I’ll taste myself on you?” Her fingers lightly trailed over his hard length and he bit his lip. “Already did when you kissed me.” She gave him a wink, and then grasped him harder. “And if I get to do what I am aiming for, I’d get to taste you anyways.” She took his hand from her shoulder and placed it at the back of her head and then she leaned down and ran her tongue along his cock, base to tip.

His fingers tightened in her hair and his hips bucked as his mouth let out a moan. His eyes came back open to watch her deep green ones staring back at him, a smile on her face as she did it again, then once at the tip opened her mouth and took him in deep. “Fuck.” He was trying not to pull at her hair, not to push her down more on him, tried to still his hips.

Emma could see him trying to keep control, and while she appreciated the effort, that wasn’t what she wanted. She pulled off him and looked him in the eye, “Killian, don’t hold back.”

He closed his eyes, and took a breath and gave a small shake no of his head. “Not going to hurt you, force you…”

“You won’t hurt me.” She assured him. “Besides,” she pulled his other hand from the sheet and leaned her cheek into his palm. “I want your hands in my hair. I want to know what you want, what you like.” She bit her lip, “I want you to lose control.” She kissed the palm of his hand, “And maybe I like it.”

He could see the lust in her eyes and the truth to her statement, so he decided to let go and trust her. He gave a small nod, and a smile lit up her face. Her hand pumped him a few times and then she opened her mouth and took most of him, hitting the back of her throat. He groaned at the contact, and his hips lifted as she backed off, sucking and running her tongue over him. She got to the tip, swirled her tongue around sucked again, and his fingers tightened in her hair. She stayed at the tip, teasing him, testing him. She moved her mouth down a little and then back off. After three times, he finally gave in and gave a light press to the back of her head and moved his hips up towards her mouth. She smiled around him and rewarded the action by taking him in again, to the back of her throat and then back up and back down again. Her hand gripping the base and following her mouth as she moved.

She moved back to the tip, sucking and licking and teasing him again. He groaned, recognizing her
game, and this time he pressed her down onto him a little firmer, his hips thrusting up into her mouth. She moaned around him, sending ripples of pleasure through his cock and out his body. “Fuck.” He pressed again, bucked up again and she moved faster, propelled by his actions. She sucked harder at the tip and then took him back in deep, “Yes...Fuck...just like that.” She moved faster, taking him a little deeper each time, starting to get used to his length. His hips rolled up into her, and he could feel himself close to the edge, and he gripped her hair stilling her and pulling her gently from him. Her eyes met his in question. “Get up here love, and straddle me.” She bit her lip. “Take me deep, let me come inside of you.”

Emma smiled, kissed the tip of him and then moved over him. Her knees planted at the side of his hips again. Her hand came between them to grip him and move herself over him, his hands on her hips guiding her down. Her head rolled back as she lowered herself slowly and then about halfway down, quickly shifted her hips and took the rest of him. They both cried out with pleasure-filled curses, his hands holding her tight to him, keeping him deep. She went to move off, but he held her still. Their eyes met again, and he shifted to sit up and his knees up behind her. “Keep me deep, and roll your hips, love.” He nipped at her neck as she started to rock her hips. He groaned feeling the movement against his cock deep inside of her, his mouth moving to suck one of her nipples.

Her hands moved back to card through his hair, pressing him closer to her breast as her head rolled back as she rocked against him. The fullness almost too much, the press of him against her walls, his body pressed tight against hers, pressing against her clit. She rocked faster as the pressure was building within her.

She felt so bloody good around him, his eyes slipped shut and he bit at the tender flesh in his mouth. His tongue moved then to soothe it as he could feel her body speed up and start to lose her rhythm. His one hand moved from her hip to between their bodies, and stroked her clit. She gasped and her back arched. He rubbed circles over the nub, and her body started to tense against him. He leaned back against the bed, keeping his fingers stroking her, as he started to thrust in and out of her. On his third thrust her muscles contracted, her head thrown back as she came hard around him. His fingers left her clit and moved back to her hip so he could hold her and guide her down onto him as his thrusts grew faster and harder up into her.

She was still floating from the first orgasm as she felt the second one approach. His thrusts powerful and hitting her in all the right spots, “Oh God, don’t stop...” She slumped forward, her hands pressed to his chest, gripping the hair there. Her hips moved against his chasing the oncoming storm.

He somehow pushed through the first onslaught of her contracting walls, willing himself to last until her next, which he could already feel was close. He planted his feet in the bed, his arms moving around her to press her chest down to his, keeping her hips still, as he bucked up into her changing the angle. She bit at his chest as he continued to plunge up into her. Her body started to shudder and she cried out into his chest as her muscles squeezed him tight. His arms held her close as his hips thrust again then stilled as he pulsed and came deep, a grunt of her name from his lips.

He let his legs collapse back to the bed and they laid like that for a few minutes, unable to move. When her heart rate returned to normal, and she came back to her senses she moved her head to look up at him, resting her chin on his chest. His bright blue eyes were already look at her, his mouth curled into a smile.

“That was...both were...” he tried to find the right words to end that statement.

“Amazing,” she said simply with a smile.

His hand moved from her back to play in her blonde tresses. “Aye.” He agreed. He caught sight of the time on the alarm clock, “Would you look at that, just over twenty minutes to midnight. We still
have time to celebrate.”

She dragged a finger over his chest, “I thought we were celebrating.”

He grinned, “Mmmm...very true love. But I meant celebrating the New Year, not finally getting time to have my wicked way with you.” He licked his lips and gave her a wink.

She giggled, “Okay, what did you have in mind for the New Year?”

“I have champagne.”

“I like champagne. Is that the only way you planned on celebrating the New Year?”

“I thought we could create our own fireworks.”

“You sure you have more ‘fireworks’ in you?” she teased.

His hands came down her back and grabbed her ass, pressing her against him, “Oh trust me, I have many more ‘fireworks’ in me for tonight.” She moaned and he leaned in to kiss her. “Okay, stay here. I’ll be back.” He rolled them onto their sides and they groaned as he slipped out of her. He kissed her again and then got out of bed.

She bit her lip as she watched his naked ass retreat down the hall. “I can feel you staring,” he called out over his shoulder.”

Emma laughed, “Why wouldn’t I?”

He came back in, this time displaying his naked front, he smirked at her as he watched her eyes move over him, “See something you like love?” he sat on the side of the bed with a wet towel.

“Mmmhmmm.”

He brought the towel to between her legs, cleaning her gently, biting his lip at the evidence of him leaking out of her. Her hand stilled his, and his eyes came back up to hers.

“I’m fine. We may just need a shower later.”

He leaned in and kisses her, “That can be arranged.” He stood back up, and quickly brought the towel to himself and then left it on the side of the night stand. He handed her the remote control to the television, “How about you find the New Year’s countdown? I will be right back.” She took the remote and nodded turning on the tv and flipping the stations. He took a moment to look at her, this beautiful goddess laying in his bed.

“What?”

He leaned back onto the bed to kiss her again, then stood back up shook his head and retreated out of the room.

She moved to the one side of the bed and leaned back against the pillows. She found the station and turned up the volume a little bit. She then got under the covers, now a little chilly without his body heat next to her.

A few moments later he was back in the bedroom with her overnight bag over his shoulder, her dress and his shirt and coat over his arm, an open bottle of champagne in one hand and two glasses in the other. He moved to his side of the bed and sat down the bottle and glasses onto it. He then spread out the clothes on one of the chairs. He held up her bag to her, “Do you need anything in here?”
“Not right now.”

He nodded and put the bag on the floor next to the clothes. He didn’t bother picking up the other ones thrown around the room, and came back to the bed, crawling under the sheets and blankets with her. He sat back against the pillows and headboard and then reached for a glass and the bottle. He filled one glass and handed it to her, then filled up the other one for himself. He then placed the bottle back on the night stand. He looked at the clock on the TV. “Less than ten minutes.”

She scooted over to him to press her side up against his. His free hand moved over to her front, his fingers running teasingly over the sheet. “Why are you hiding these magnificent breasts from my view?”

“I got cold with you not here.”

“Then allow me to warm you back up.” His hand snaked under the sheet, cupping her breast, his palm rubbing against the already slightly hardened nipple. Her eyes drifted shut at the contact and he leaned in to kiss her. She moved closer and he pulled back, “Careful.” He said tilting her glass back upright before it split.

Emma looked at the glass and then back to him, “You know they say, however you spend New Year’s Eve is the way you’re going to spend the rest of your year.”

Killian smiled, “Then I say were are off to a wonderful start love.” He leaned back in for another kiss, only pulling back when the tv started to chant the count down.

His free hand reached for hers and they started counting down together, “Three...Two...One...Happy New Year!” They yelled and then both leaned in for a kiss. He pulled back and she chased his lips getting another kiss out him before they smiled at each other.

“To a wonderful New Year,” he said holding up his glass.

“To a wonderful New Year,” she agreed, and they both drank from their glasses. She picked up the remote and changed it to a music station and then sat it over on the night stand. They both finished their glass of champagne. He then took hers and set them both down next to the bottle.

“So now what, my love?”

Emma’s ears picked up on the subtle change in endearment, but she didn’t say anything. She brought a finger to her lips and tapped it against them in thought, “Hmmmmm, let me think about that for a minute.” He laughed shaking his head. “Oh right: this…” She launched herself at him, pushing him back against the bed, her body tangling with his, their lips connecting in another passionate kiss.
Chapter 10

Killian slowly started to wake, and knew from the brightness of the light behind his closed eyelids it was well into late morning. He kept his eyes shut, and instead lightly pulled the warm body next to him closer. His nose softly pressed into the back of her neck, leaving a soft kiss. She was still sound asleep, which wasn't surprising based on last night's activities. They had 'rang' in the new year a couple more times with their own form of fireworks before they had fell asleep, sated, in each other's arms.

His hand was splayed between her breasts and stomach, holding her spooned against his chest. This time, unlike Christmas morning, there was nothing separating them, and no visitors to disturb them. He grinned, and started to leave soft kisses down her shoulder and bare back. Her body moved a little against him, signaling that she was starting to wake.

He pressed his growing erection against the soft curves of her behind, making himself moan against the skin of her shoulder. He couldn't decide if he wanted to move his hand up to her breast or down to her core. His arm trapped under him was wishing it could come in to help, but he would surely startle her awake if he tired. And he very much wished to wake her in a much more pleasurable way.

He kissed back up her neck, and his hand headed up as well. His thumb grazed over her nipple, each stroke making it grow harder at the touch. A small whimper escaped her mouth making him smirk into her skin. His hips rolled into her again looking for friction, eliciting another small sound from her.

Now happy that both breasts were at attention, his hand proceeded south to her tantalizing bare mound. His finger slid through her folds finding her already slick for him. He softly swirled his finger around her clit, feeling it start to come to life under the small pressure. She stirred in his arms, small gasps and moans coming from her mouth. He could tell she was still asleep, still dreaming. He wondered if he was the one in her sleep bringing her pleasure. He got his answer when a gasped, “Killian,” sprung from her lips.

He played more kisses along her neck and shoulder as his finger continued to softly stroke her bundle of nerves. She was slowly waking, in that in-between state, against him. He rolled his hips again and her hand moved down to grip at his wrist, signalling she had finally woken. Her fingers pressed his harder against her, her hips pressed towards his moving digit. “Yes...more…”

Now that she was awake he used the opportunity to rock her and move his other arm under her, allowing that hand to move up to her breasts. He kissed at her neck again and then whispered in her ear, “Tell me what you need, my love.”

She pressed her hips back against his hard length, and then forward seeking friction against his fingers. She whimpered, “I need you...inside of me.”

He growled low into her shoulder. “Fingers?” he asked dipping two into her core. Her hips shifted, riding them on a whimper. “Or cock?” He rolled himself against her ass again, eliciting a groan from her. He could tell her brain was indecisive, clouded with lust and sleep. Her body trying to seek out the pleasure she was craving, needing in one form or another. God he loved her like his, so wanton and needy all for him.

He pressed his fingers deeper as he pressed himself to her backside. She moaned loud from both sensations. Her one hand still gripped his wrist, the other now over her side and gripped his hip tight. “Pleaseeeeee...need you.”
He knew he could push for a clearer answer from her. He wanted to hear those dirty words, exactly how she wanted to come from those sinful lips. He found out during the night those ‘dirty’ words from him turned her on as well, especially when said with his hot breath into her ear. But he could tell she was too far gone, so he decided to press forward with her intent and get what he wanted as well.

He withdrew his finger and her hand gripped his wrist tighter. He was able to pull out of her grasp and his hand pressed her own fingers back to her center, pressing her against her own bundle of nerves. “Just for a minute, love.” He then reached for her hand on his hip and together lifted her leg up with knee bent to rest on his hip. “Hold it right here.” He then reached between them, taking himself in hand and lined him up with her slick opening. He slowly pressed forward into her welcoming heat, and clenched his jaw, trying not to slam himself inside of her.

They both moaned at the feel of him pushing into her, the drag of his cock along her sensitive walls from their prior night's activities making her feel even tighter. Once fully seated his hand traveled back around her, moved her fingers out of the way to take back up his own patterns on her clit. Her hand griped back at his wrist as her hips pressed back against him.

Killian started to gently thrust himself in and out of her, her gasps and nonsensical words pushing him a little faster. His fingers circled her clit in time with his hips. His other hand squeezed her breast, pressing her closer. His mouth lightly nipped and sucked a deeper mark into her neck.

Her inner walls were already starting to flutter, her leg on his hip trembling. He continued moving, just a little faster, both his hips and his fingers. She choked out a, “Yes…” then she was just a string of sounds that could of been his name over and over when he felt her walls contract, her body shudder, her sounds cut off in a silent gasp. He tried to hold on but her body was milking him for all it was worth, and he couldn't as the pressure in his spine built and built and on a final press of his hips seemed to explode through his body. His hips pressed himself deep as his body shuddered and released inside of her.

They both laid there trying to let their bodies calm, heart rate return to normal. Her leg moved from his hip and back down to her side. Moving both of them, shifting his softening length still inside of her, made them both moan at the sensation.

A few minutes later, their bodies close to normal, a small giggle burst out of her, followed by a happy and still breathless “Good morning.”

He smiled into her neck and leaned over as she turned her head to give her a soft kiss. “Good morning, my love. I hope you didn't mind me waking you.”

She turned to him over her shoulder with a grin, “You can wake me up like that any time.” He kissed her again and then tucked his head back into her shoulder. “In fact, I would love for that to be my own new personal alarm clock.”

They both started laughing and he then kissed her shoulder, “I might be able to arrange that when you stay over.” He knew what the statement implied, but he didn't expand on the thought. He knew he wanted her to stay with him as much as possible, or at least as much as she was willing. But knew that discussion would be later. Right now, he just wanted to focus on this weekend.

His hand moved up from between her legs to settle on her stomach. “How about some breakfast in bed?”

“Wow, you are really going all out.” Her hand sought out his and interlaced thier fingers. “You already got me, you know?”
His heart swelled at her statement. “But maybe I want to keep you.”

She smiled and then gave a loud and dramatic sigh. “But then you have to get out of bed.” She wiggled her hips a little, he shifted inside of her and he groaned. “and me.”

“Minx,” he growled and lightly bit at her earlobe. He regrettably pulled out of her and rolled to his back so he could sit up. She rolled to her side as he turned back to look at her. The light streamed from outside onto her creamy skin, her naked body laying out before him. He leaned back to her, placing a soft kiss on her lips, “You are so bloody beautiful.”

Her cheeks flushed a little at his compliment, and he quickly stood up and retreated from the bed before he let her tempt him back in it. “I’ll be right back. Find something on the TV, use the loo if you need. Shouldn’t be long.”

She nodded and he left to pull on a pair of gray sweatpants and then headed to the bathroom near the kitchen, before heading to get breakfast together.

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He came back into the bedroom with a tray of food maybe fifteen minutes later. She was sitting up in bed. Her hair brushed, face clean of makeup. She looked stunning. He was slightly disappointed to see her covered in a T-shirt until he recognized it as one of his own. The thought of her in his clothes sent a possessive rush of blood south to his groin. It was a soft white, the printed words almost completely faded. It was a shirt from one of his first track wins in the states. He blinked a few times trying to clear his mind and then placed the tray on the bed.

She scooted closer, “Wow, you do know how to cook.” The tray consisted of two omelets, fresh fruit, and blueberry scones, as well as two cups of coffee and two glasses of orange juice.

He sat down beside her. “In all fairness, I only made the omelets. A bakery in town made the scones.”

“Still, to me, omelets are impressive.”

He reached out and moved some hair behind her ear, “If you are still interested, I can show you how next time.”

She smiled shyly, and nodded as she picked up her coffee taking a drink. It was of course made just the way she liked it. She hadn’t doubted it would be for a second. They both then started to eat.

During the meal, he remembered his schedule for the coming week and was trying to figure out how to tell her. He was scratching behind his ear when she said, “Just tell me.” He dropped his hand, looked over at her in shock, and with the question of how did she know on his face. She laughed and reached out to lightly stroke her fingers behind his ear. “You have a tell.” She then quickly added, “But don’t you dare stop. It's adorable.”

“Adorable?” Bloody hell, he didn’t need to look adorable, but the look on her face instantly melted the thought.

“So...tell me,” she said, then took another bite of the scone.

He nibbled at his bottom lip, took a breath and then launched into the discussion. “I have a crew meeting on Tuesday and a car test on Friday.”

“I thought you couldn’t get back into the car until your hours were done.”
Hr smiled, bit his lip again, “My hours were up on Monday.” Her eyes widened at his statement. “But I had nothing else to do, and Archie said they could use the help.”

She nodded. “That’s very sweet of you.”

“Well, I may have had the ulterior motive of being close to you.” He wiggled his eyebrows at her and she laughed and gave a playful shove of his shoulder. But he could tell she loved his answer.

And she did, her heart beat a little quicker at realizing it was HER. He wanted to stay for her. “So you are saying you won’t be there, those two days.” He nodded and she reached out for his hand squeezing it. “I understand. I knew we seeing each other everyday wouldn't last.” She knew that, she did but it didn't make the separation easier. But she didn't want him to worry about that.

He knew it too, and like her, he was not looking forward to the time apart either. He wanted to get back on the track like crazy, but the thought of not seeing her every day wasn’t something he wanted either. But he decided to press on. “Actually I was hoping that maybe you could take Friday off and come to the track. Meet the crew. See me drive.”

She could hear the hopefulness in his voice and see it in his bright blue eyes. She swallowed; she wanted to go, she just wasn’t sure if she could. “I would love to.” She saw the smiling forming and rushed to complete the answer, “Let me just check my schedule and get Archie to okay the time off. Then I can say for sure…”

He cut her off with a kiss. He knew he couldn't interfere with her work—she loved her job. But the thought that she was going to try to work him in, that she looked liked she wanted to go, was enough for him. She then laughed against him and he pulled back to see he had spilled some of her orange juice onto her and his shirt she was wearing. “Looks like we need to clean you up.” He looked back at their plates that was almost empty. “Now that breakfast is in over can I interest you in a shower?”

“That sounds nice...on one condition.” He raised his eyebrow and she went on. “You join me.”

His smile turned into a smirk, “Well, if the lady insists…”

Emma reached down and pulled the shirt over her head tossing it to the floor. She watched his gaze rake over her naked form, his adam's apple bob. “She absolutely does.”

“Well in that case,” he was off the bed in an instant, his arms pulling her to him and then up over his shoulder in a fireman's hold. She giggled and smacked his ass as he headed for the bathroom. “Ohhh, you’ll pay for that.” He then gave a light smack to her own which brought a small moan from her lips. “Oh, you like that do you?” He said and then smacked her butt again as he stepped into the bathroom. She squeezed his ass with her hands having found their way under the sweats as he walked. He growled and pulled her back down and sat her on her feet in front of him. His arms pulled her naked form against his chest, “You are a naughty girl aren't you?” He looked down into her enlarged pupils, seeing only a slim line of green around them. Her teeth biting her lip as she nodded. He filed that piece of information away for later use. His hand snaked down and squeezed one of her ass cheeks, than gave another swat. She moaned and ground her hips into his already stiff erection.

She was already feeling needy. He just had a knack for finding all her weaknesses, but instead of teasing her about them, or telling her she was wrong to have them, he accepted them, and even gave her what she wanted, craved. Her hand snaked under the band of his sweats and gripped him firmly, watched his eyes roll back, his hips thrust into her hand as she stroked his hard pulsing flesh. “Shower…” he groaned and she pushed his pants down releasing him reluctantly.
He stepped out of his sweats and pulled away with a deep breath, and opened the shower door to turn on the water. She grabbed her bottles of shampoo and conditioner out of her overnight bag that she had brought into the bathroom while he was making breakfast. He then reached for her and pulled her in with him, the water already steaming up the glass. She placed the bottles on a shelf and he backed her to the wall under one of the shower heads next to the tiled bench. Her arms went around his neck, pulling his head down to hers, their lips meeting, tongues coming out to twirl along one another, tasting, dancing as he pressed himself against her, the water washing over them. His one hand traveled back down to her ass squeezing, as the other moved between them, fondling her breast. She gasped into his mouth and rolled her hips against his hard length nestled between them.

He pulled his head back and she smiled up at him. “So I guess it’s time to clean up?” she asked.

Killian could tell that’s not what she really wanted, and neither did he, “Yes, however I’m just going to get you all dirty again.” He watched her eyes close at the thought and it brought a deep chuckle from him. “I have plans for you sweetheart.” He requested for her to turn around. Then he leaned over and picked up the bottle of her shampoo. He poured some into his hand, put the bottle back, and then worked it into her hair, massaging her scalp. She leaned her head back letting her body relax to his fingers. He then used the leftover and ran it through is own hair quickly. He reached for the detachable showerhead and turned it on to a gentle setting and used it to wash through her hair as the main shower head washed over her front. She leaned back against him, and his hand ran through her hair as he rinsed out the shampoo. He then quickly rinsed out his own, and attached the shower head back to the holder leaving it on.

He leaned back over to get her bottle of conditioner and again worked it back into her hair. This time he left it in and picked up his bottle of body wash. He made a mental note to pick up something that would maybe suit her a little better for next time. He ran the soap over his chest, the hair getting a good lather, then pulled her back into him. As his soapy hands moved over her front, she started to giggle. “Are you using your chest like a loofa?”

He laughed. “More like a suds holder.” She lost it in a fit of giggles and he laughed harder as well. She kept laughing until his hands made their way to the apex of her thighs. His fingers now free of soap, teased her as they grazed over her mound. She moaned and leaned back into him, his hard length nestling into the cleft of her ass, the water washing over them, allowing him to glide back and forth. The feel of it making him bite her shoulder, a small groan coming out of him. Her legs widened their stance, and he smiled into her neck. “Is there something you want darling?”

“Yes...please.” She said, leaning her head back against his chest.

His fingers pressed through her folds, running with the water over the sensitive skin and the bundle of nerves. She whined against him, and pressed her hips back into cock, making him slip across her ass again. He pressed one finger into her core and she moaned, his other hand glided over her breasts and gave a soft pinch to a nipple. She keened against him, and he pressed another finger into her, scissoring them inside of her. Her one hand came up to his wrist, holding on as she bucked against his fingers, the other came up behind his neck pulling his head down so she could turn her head to the side and kiss him.

She felt the pleasure building inside of her; it wasn’t going to take too much more. His palm moved against her as his fingers sunk inside deeper, pressing against her clit. She pressed her hips more firmly against his hand, riding his fingers and gasping. He started curling his fingers inside of her and she was flying over the edge. Her body tensed, her walls clenched, and she was gasping out his name and shuddering against him. He wrapped his arm around her, holding her to him; if he hadn’t, she wouldn’t have been able to stay standing. He brought her back down slowly, and gently removed his fingers from her.
He had her lean back against him and picked up the shower head again. He washed out the conditioner from her hair, while he allowed her to catch her breath. When she regained enough of her senses, she was able to stand back on her own, and started to turn in his arms. “Oh, not yet love. I’m not done with you.”

She wiggled her ass against him, making him moan. “Are you sure I can’t help you with something?”

He moaned again and pressed a light nip at her neck, and then tugged at her earlobe. “Oh, trust me, you will.” Once he had the last remnants of the conditioner out of her hair he used the shower head to rinse himself of the last of the body wash.

He took his free hand patted her right leg. “Place your foot on the bench.” She did as instructed. He pressed his chest to her back. “Now lean against the wall, my love.” She did as he asked knowing that it put her on full display for him and gave him the perfect angle to slide right inside her, and god she couldn’t wait.

His eyes raked over her backside and licked his lips as his free hand glided over his hard shaft. He pumped himself a few times and then glided his hard flesh through her folds, rubbing against her clit as he moved back and forth. She moaned and pressed her hips back into him, looking for more friction, wanting more of him. He released himself and brought his arm up to her right, pulling it away from the wall, leaving her leaning on just her left. He then transferred the shower head to her, his fingers changing the setting to a hard pulse. He pulled her hand down, angling the water to flow over her parted folds, hitting her her swollen clit. She gasped and her body shuttered against his. “Keep it right there for me love.”

The water pulsed over her nerve endings, working her up to the edge fast, and then she felt him press into her. She gasped and her walls were already starting to flutter. “Pleaseeeeee.”

He could already feel her body tensing, and her begging cry had him surge forward taking her in one swift thrust, one arm around her middle and the other grabbing a breast, as she tumbled over the edge in his arms, muscles squeezing him tight. He clenched his jaw, trying to hold out while she came around him, bucking and crying out in his arms. He felt her angle the water away from herself, and he kissed her neck lightly.

He allowed her a moment, and then released his one arm from her, and held onto her hand pressing the spray back onto her. She gasped at the sensation returned to her clit, and that is when his hips started to move. Pulling out, and thrusting back in fast and hard. “Fuck...yes,” she screamed out, bracing herself against the wall. Her leg was already shaking from all the sensations. The feeling of him pistoning in and out of her in quick and hard strokes. The pulsing of the hot water over her exposed clit. His hands squeezing her breast. His mouth and teeth at the pulse point of her neck. The sounds of his grunts in her ear along with his dirty words.

“God, Emma...fuck...you feel so bloody good around me.” He kept thrusting, his cock pressing deep, stroking her again fluttering walls. “Come for me again, love. I need to feel you come around me.”

She groaned in his arms, her breath stuttering, the sensations becoming too much; she didn’t know if she could keep standing, the crescendo was coming, she was...coming. “Ahhhhhhhh...fuck...yes…” It was like a tidal wave rolling over her again and again, his hips continuing to thrust, the water still pulsing, continuing the wave after wave of pleasure. Her words became incoherent as her body pulsed and contracted around him.

He groaned and his hips stuttered at the feel of her gripping his length. The sounds of her coming in
his arms pulled him over the edge as he thrust once more, cumming deep within her. He leaned against her back, pressing them both against the wall. They both let the shower head fall to the floor. Her leg came down from the bench, and they stayed there, leaning against the wall, as they tried to regain their senses.

After a few minutes, he regained enough strength to stand up and pull her to him. He then had her sit down on the bench for a moment. He turned off the shower and went to grab a towel. She leaned her head against the wall, her eyes closed. Her legs still felt like jello, and her body was still humming. “Can you stand yet, love?” She shook her head no. He gave a soft smile, and quickly dried himself to get it done and out of the way. He then wrapped the towel around her, tucking in the end to hold it in place. He then lifted her into his arms and exited the shower.

“What are you doing?” she asked, her eyes quickly opening.

“Since you can’t walk, I’m carrying you back to bed.”

She smiled, shook her head, wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her face into his neck. She placed small kisses there and could feel the soft rumble of his moan. He then laid her down on the soft mattress and took the towel to dry her off. She then took the towel from him and wrapped it around her hair turban style. He plopped down in bed next to her, and she smiled over at him. “So, now what?”

He grinned back, “Well I doubt either of us are ready for round…” he thought about it, his head trying to count. She laughed and swatted his shoulder. “No clue what round we are on.”

“Movie?”

“Sounds perfect.” He leaned back against the pillows and she cuddled into his chest, bringing the blanket with her. He clicked on the TV and scrolled through the movies on demand. They choose one together and started watching it.

They spent the rest of the weekend mostly in the bedroom, but occasionally ventured to the living room, and the kitchen. Their bodies didn’t stay clothed for long when they even attempted to get partially dressed. They watched movies, played card and video games, talked, danced, and she watched him cook in between their other enjoyable activities.

She tried to leave on Sunday night, but with his puppy dog eyes and roaming hands, he convinced her to stay until morning and he could drive her into work. She had clothes that could pass for work-appropriate in her bag, so she decided to stay, and true to his word, he did make it worth her while.

The next morning he woke her early, and again in a way that was much better than any alarm clock. She was going to stuff her dress into her bag, but he just shook his head at her and told her to leave it there and she could grab it next time so it didn’t get wrinkled. She agreed, as it would also save on her dry cleaning bill. So as she finished her makeup, he went to go hang it up. Once they were ready to go, she grabbed her bag and purse, then followed him to the garage, this time on their way to the coffee shop together on their way into work. He backed out of the garage and shut the door while her red dress hung free of wrinkles in the empty ‘hers’ closet.
Monday night was difficult for both of them after their weekend together. Emma had thought it was best if they spent the night at their own residences. She had work; he had the crew meeting. They both knew they would miss each other, but neither were prepared for just how difficult it would be.

They both laid awake most of the night, feeling as if the other was missing. How could a weekend, even a long weekend, change so much? Tossing and turning, each had finally fallen asleep very early in the morning in their own too-empty bed.

The next morning came quick and early for Emma. She groaned and hit her alarm clock, then sat up in bed. How could she miss him laying next to her so much? She was not a cuddler. She wanted her space when sleeping. But with Killian, it was different. Each night they had been together, she had fallen asleep in his arms, and had slept peacefully through the night. And now she missed it. She shook her head and trudged to her bathroom, hoping a shower would help her wake up.

The thoughts continued in her shower. Part of her was scared how quickly he had seemed to fit into her life and how quickly her feelings for him were growing. The little lost girl in her was too scared to define exactly what those feeling were, or what it was leading to, because she knew it could all disappear, like it always had. He was too good to be true. She knew she should slow things down; that was part of the reason they had gone home separately the night before, even though she hadn’t wanted to.

Soon, she was turning off the shower and drying off. A few minutes later, she was drying her hair and looking at herself in the mirror. She saw the look on her face, felt it in her heart, and sighed, remembering that she wouldn’t see him today. “Damn it.” She squeezed her eyes shut realizing she was already too far in. She felt too much; slowing down and trying to distance herself wasn’t going to work anymore. She was already too deep.

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Killian walked into the workshop, sunglasses on, with a large cup of coffee. He yawned as he walked and waved to various members of his crew working around the shop as he headed back to the offices. He had relented to her request to stay at their own homes the night before. Pulling away from her apartment after dropping her off after work had been extremely difficult. Eating dinner and going to bed by himself was even more so.

He knew she needed to go slow. He could almost feel her tapping the brakes on their relationship. He knew it wasn’t personal; whatever had happened in her past was making her feel like she needed to. And he would let her—up to a point. He would just have to find a way to persuade her to progress their relationship at a faster rate. He knew what he wanted; he just needed to make her feel secure in that knowledge.

He smiled to himself as he took another sip of his drink and then knocked at the door frame to his crew chief’s office. The man’s head turned from the computer and a smile lit up his face. “Well, look who it is?” Killian walked inside and sat in the chair across from him, taking off his sunglasses and squinting at the bright light. “I honestly can’t believe you got all your hours completed already, mate.”

“Well, Robin, as we both know, Regina is a hard ass.” His friend nodded even though the look in his eyes conveyed something else. Killian looked at him for a minute. “What?”

Robin shook his head. “Nothing.” He shook his head and looked back to his driver and friend. “Just
getting back into the swing of things after the break. So, did you at least get to see your family? Or have any fun?”

“Yes, I got to see my brother, Elsa, and the boys.” He wasn’t sure if he should continue or not, but then again, Emma did get approval from Archie take the day off so she could go to the car test on Friday. “And… I met someone.”

Robin’s eyes widened in shock. “Met who, exactly?”

“Her name is Emma.” He almost laughed at the look on his friends face. “She is a counselor at the children’s shelter I volunteered at.” He shook his head in still slight disbelief. “She is... amazing.”

Robin laughed and reclined a little back in his chair. “Wow.” He sat with his mouth open for a while, trying to figure out the next question. “So, she’s not one of your one-night or weekend love’m and leave’m girls?”

“Hey, that’s not fair. They all knew. I was upfront.”

His friend waved him off. “I know. I’m just... is she long-term?”

Killian smiled, “I hope even longer than that, mate. She’s just…” The emotion caught in his chest, and he couldn’t express it, but Robin saw it and smiled. “She’s unlike all of them, any of the women in my past.”

“I’m really happy for you. You deserve it. It’s been such a long time.” He stopped, not wanting to bring up the past.

Killian cleared his throat, “Anyways... Emma will be coming to the car test on Friday.” He looked back out the windows to the shop. “Do you think we can get the boys to be on their best behavior?”

Robin chuckled. “Good luck, man. Especially with Leroy.” Killian laughed as well, as they both got up and left the office to go and have the crew meeting.

Emma was able to avoid Tink all morning, but when her friend knocked on her door at lunch and came in shutting the door after her, she knew the small blonde pixie just wouldn’t take no for an answer. She sighed and grabbed her lunch as Tink sat down across from her, not even bothering to open her lunch, just looking at her expectantly.

“Ugh…” Emma let her head hit the desk.

“Oh come on, it couldn’t have been that terrible.”

Emma’s head shot up. “What? No... of course not!”

Tink smiled wickedly. “Knew it!” With that, she started to open her own lunch. “Details!”

Emma put her head in her hands and sighed. “Well, I have to tell Mary Margaret that his main sponsor picked the right guy.”

Tink snorted. “Alright Emma! So proud.” Emma stuck her tongue out at her, and Tink stuck her own right back out at her. “Was he good with that as well?” Tink winked. Emma looked back at her with a shocked look, but the blush and smile gave the other woman all she needed to know. “Wow. Now he’s a catch; it’s usually only one or the other.”
Emma threw her napkin at her friend, and Tink just laughed. She then sighed. “It’s moving so fast.”

Her friend pointed at her, “Oh, no. Don’t you do this.”

“Don’t do what?”

“This is a good thing. He’s a great guy. He really likes you. Don’t start seeing the bad in this, and start worrying and push him away.”

“But, shouldn’t we take it slow?”

“Emma...you waited ‘til, what, your 5th or 6th date to finally have sex. I think that is slow enough.”

She rolled her eyes. “I’m not talking about sex.”

“Then what are you talking about?”

“The relationship, it just seems to be getting really...really...” she couldn’t describe it. Intense was almost the right word; emotional was another really good one. But that wasn’t it; it was more than that.

“Ahhh, I see.”

Emma raised her head to look back at her friend, and gave a questioning look. “See what?”

Tink took a drink of soda, and seemed to take a minute to gather her thoughts. “Let me first ask you a question. When was the last time you felt like this?”

Emma sat back in her chair and tried to think about it. She hadn’t felt this way with Neal. She had tons of feelings for Neal; heck, at one point, she loved him, or she thought she did. But this wasn’t the same. There were bits and pieces that felt similar, but not to the degree, not to the intensity. She thought about her relationship with Walsh and knew she didn’t feel like this either. This was different. It was new, it was terrifying. “I can’t think of one. I guess the closest feeling was when Neal and I first started dating. But this...this is...”

“More intense than a teenage crush?” Emma nodded and then Tink continued. “Is that what is scaring you?” She watched her friend bite her lip and smiled gently. “That it feels similar to that relationship, and you’re worried because how that one ended. Worried that this will go the same way?”

Emma swallowed hard and nodded. Her friend knew her too well. “How all my relationships end.”

Tink leaned forward and grabbed Emma’s hand. “There are at least two really big differences, Emma. One, you aren’t a teenager anymore. And two, Killian is a really good guy, unlike the others.”

Emma knew she was right, “You are way too good a this.”

“It’s what I do.”

“So, I should...what?”

Tink let go of her hand and sat back in her chair. “What does your heart tell you to do?”

Emma sat back in her chair and smiled; she knew exactly what it told her when her mind and her fear didn’t overshadow it.
Killian was just leaving the workshop when his phone buzzed. He fished it out of his pocket and saw a message from Emma. He unlocked his phone and got in his car as he read the message.

ES: Pizza and Netflix, tonight? My place?

A smile on his face bloomed as he started the car and looked at the time. It was just after five as he texted back.

KJ: Sounds wonderful, love. I can pick one up on my way over. Need anything else?

He backed out of his parking space and pulled out of the lot onto the road as he got a text back. His car read him the message.

ES: Just you.

ES: … and beer?

He laughed, and told the car his next message as he drove home. He needed to get an overnight bag himself, he was being extremely hopeful he would need it. He was sure he could find a way to convince her.

KJ: Will do, love. Be there in a half hour.

ES: Okay. See you soon.

He smiled and picked up the pace, but made sure to stay only a few miles over the speed limit.

Emma cleaned off her coffee table and then moved to the kitchen to get out plates. She had already changed into a tank top and yoga pants. If she had on a pair of skimpy silk panties underneath, so what? She was trying to take Tink’s advice and do what her heart told her. And her heart wanted to be with Killian. It also made her feel better that he was coming to her apartment. His house was amazing, but being at her place felt more real. Okay, if she was being totally honest, being at her place felt more safe. It was her turf.

The knock had her smiling in a second and she headed to the door. Once opened he was standing there, looking as handsome as ever with a pizza in one hand and six pack in the other. She stood to the side and he walked in and turned into her kitchen. He sat both items on the counter and then turned to her, and quickly pulled her in for a deep kiss.

Her arms were around his neck pressing him closer as their tongues came together. His hands ran down her back, and then squeezed her ass. Suddenly she was lifted and found herself sitting on the counter opposite the pizza. Her legs were parted with his hips between them, her chest pressed to his as their kiss continued. She wrapped her legs around him and moaned as she felt the growing bulge in his jeans hit her thin clothed core.

Killian groaned and pulled away from the kiss, resting his forehead against hers. His fingers flexed at her hip, and she smiled, knowing he was trying to get himself under control. She wanted him, she really did. But they should eat while the pizza was still hot, and he was giving her the option even though he was having a hard time voicing it. From the bulge in his pants, a VERY hard time.

She moved her hands to the side of his face and looked into the dark blue orbs. She swallowed at the passion swirling in them. She gave him a soft gentle kiss, “Trust me...we will be right back here
later.” She gave another kiss. “But we should eat.” His tongue licked at his lips, and she smiled. “Food.” He closes his eyes and took a deep breath, took a step back and then she found herself with her feet on the floor.

His fingers trailed over her cheek, feeling the soft skin. Looking into her jade green pools and smiled. “I missed you.”

That is when she realized they had a whole conversation without him talking until those three short words. She smiled up at him at the realization and in agreement. “I missed you, too.” With that, they each grabbed a couple slices of pizza and a beer and headed for her living room. They sat on the couch and he kicked off his shoes as she started up the TV and Netflix. Soon, they found a movie they agreed on and hit play as they ate.

After the pizza, she found herself in his arms, snuggled to his side. But after a few soft caresses to her side, and her fingers trailing over his thigh they found themselves making out on her couch. Neither of them watched the end of the movie with their clothes thrown around the living room, and them both crying out their pleasure as she rode him on her couch. They did manage to make it to her bedroom that night, where Emma found herself sound asleep in his arms once again.

The next two nights Killian stayed over at Emma’s apartment and in the morning they stopped for coffee before heading into the shelter and then came back to her place afterwards. But on Friday morning they took a longer drive over to the speedway where they would be doing the car test. She sat in his car fiddling with bottom of her sweater as he drove.

He looked over at her and smiled taking her hand. “Emma, relax.” She smiled back at him, but he could still see the uneasiness in her eyes. “They are going to like you. There is nothing for you to worry about. Now me, on the other hand.”

“What do you have to worry about?” A thousand thoughts ran through her head—was a car test dangerous?

“Calm down, love. I just meant I would probably be the one getting ribbed, or Robin telling you embarrassing stories.” His thumb rubbed the back of her hand and he could tell this smile was much more relaxed and real.

“Like Liam told me?”

He sighed. “Let’s hope it doesn’t get that bad.”

She giggled beside him and then took a drink of her coffee. It only took about a half hour and they were pulling up to the race track gates and being ushered inside by security. He drove up to the trucks of his crew. The team was already there, pulling out the car and getting everything ready. Killian parked and got out, and then was immediately helping Emma out of the car and guiding her over to everyone else.

He directed her over to a man with dark blonde hair, who once he saw the two gave them both a large smile. “So you must be Emma Swan.” She nodded and reached out to shake his hand.

“This is Robin Loxley, my crew chief,” Killian said as his hand moved from her back to her hip, holding her close.

“Nice to meet you.”

“The pleasure is all mine,” Robin said to her and then looked up at Killian. “How about I introduce
Killian nodded and turned to Emma. “Will you be okay for a few minutes?”

She nodded. “Yes. Besides, I’ll need to be for longer than that, unless you plan on having me ride along in the car with you.”

He laughed. “This is true.” He placed a soft kiss on her lips. “I’ll be right back.” He gave a soft squeeze to her hand, nodded at Robin and then headed off to the trailer to put on his firesuit.

Robin directed her over to the guys after they got the car situated. “Gentleman, I’d like to introduce you to Emma Swan.” They all gave a smile and wave while saying hello back. He pointed at each of the men, telling her each of their names. There was no way she was going to remember them all. A grumpy looking man named Leroy grunted a hello to her as she found out he was the crew’s gasman. Or was that fuel man? She was sure at some point she would get this straight. A very tall, heavy-set man named Anton gave a small smile and seemed really nice and she was told he was the jackman. When she gave a confused look, Robin just smiled and explained he was the guy that used the jack to lift the car so they could change the tires for pit stops. Emma’s face must have made a look that she now got it, because both men nodded and grinned.

She then met a shorter more rounded man, with a red hat, Killian’s pit crew coordinator, named William Smee. He told her just to call her Smee, that’s what everyone did. She found out that it began when Killian started calling him that. She immediately knew why—that man’s love for Peter Pan, or more accurately Captain Hook, knew no bounds.

She met the rest of the team in quick succession, the names were a blur. There was an extremely joyful and happy fellow that was Killian’s spotter. A shy man changed the front tires, and a man who must have been having a severe case of allergies changed the rear tires. A non-talkative man carried the rear tires and one who obviously got out of bed too early and was yawning carried the front tires. She wasn’t sure exactly why you needed so many men to do everything, but she was looking forward to finding out. They all seemed to get along well, and seemed to care about Killian, so that was a good thing in her book.

She was still talking to the crew, asking questions and apologizing for not knowing. The men were all very nice, patiently answering her questions, especially Robin. Though Leroy did seem to roll his eyes every so often. Robin was trying to explain something about the aerodynamics of the car and down force when she jumped as two strong arms wrapped around her.

“He nuzzled into her neck, and squeezed her tight. He had slowly walked over from the truck to see her intently listening to the crew and asking questions. He knew she didn’t know much at all about racing, but the fact that she was trying made his heart soar. He turned to Robin and the man smiled back at him.

“We are all ready for you, mate.”

Killian nodded at his crew chief and then turned Emma in his arms, “You are going to be okay, right?”

She turned towards him, and let out a soft gasp. She knew what a firesuit looked like, had seen commercials with racers in them, but seeing him in one was a different story. Well, she like most women did like their men in uniform and this one looked damn good. It was mainly a deep maroon, with large black side stripes. His main sponsor name across the front, then small patches of his other
sponsors. When her eyes made it back to his face he was smirking at her with a raised eyebrow.

“See something you like, love?” She nodded slightly and bit her lip. He pulled her closer and whispered into her ear, “Maybe you can help peel me out of it one of these times soon.”

She swallowed hard and he watched her pupils dilate looking up at him. He couldn't help it and leaned in and kissed her hard. She returned it, but he pulled away due to the sounds of his crew whooping and hollering. She turned away, looking at the ground and blushing, and he gave a look to his crew that had them immediately stop and turn back to their work.

Robin moved closer to Emma. “Hey, don’t worry about them. They just aren’t used to having Killian bringing a girl to things like this.” Her head shot up as he continued. “So this is all new to them, and we all have a teasing relationship among the crew.”

She nodded and gave him a smile. “You don’t look as surprised,” she said and leaned back into Killian’s arms, his wrapping back around her waist.

Robin smiled. “I was when he told me you were coming. He’s never brought a girl to tests or the races, even back in Formula One.” Killian tensed behind her.

Emma was shocked. “Oh, come on. I can’t be the first girl you have wanted to bring.” She said to the man behind her, with a soft elbow to his side.

Robin laughed. “I don’t think it was that he didn’t want her to, it was that she couldn’t…” The man cut off the rest of what he was going to say from the hard look on Killian’s face. He coughed and then looked at the crew and car then back to Killian. “So, we need to get this show on the road.”

Emma knew immediately what Robin was about to say. Milah wasn’t able to come to the races and tests because she was a married woman. So no matter how much Killian had wanted her there, she couldn’t be. She turned her head to look up and back at him, “So, let’s see what you do.”

He smiled at her and handed her a headset. “This will protect your ears, but you will also be able to hear me talk with the rest of the crew.” He gave her a quick kiss. “The car gets very loud, so leave these on, until Robin motions for you to take them off. Okay?” She nodded and then he placed the headset on her, and she couldn’t hear a thing. He brought her into a hug and looked over he shoulder to his crew chief. “Nothing further, about...all that. Aye?”

Robin nodded. “Aye. Sorry.” He looked to Emma and then back to his friend. “You need to tell her.”

Killian took a deep breath. “I will.” He then walked the two over to the monitors and got her to sit.

Robin put his own headset on then, speaking into the microphone. “Can you hear me?” He asked looking at Emma. She immediately smiled and nodded.

Killian walked over to the car, the same dark maroon and black as his firesuit with the number seventy one on the side, and slid through the window. He put on his helmet, got strapped in, and put up the window net. The crew all stood back, got on their helmets or headsets, and then he got the go ahead from Robin and started the car.

Emma was shocked she could actually hear the car even through the ear mufflers of the headset, or whatever they were called. She also swore she could feel the vibrations of the car, she quickly pushed aside the thoughts that her brain started thinking about...that, and tried to concentrate on Killian.
Soon, Killian was pulling out of the pit lane and onto the track. She stood up to watch him go around, his speed picking up faster and faster. He was moving over the track, trying to get a feel for the car. Then she heard him. “We are going to have adjust down the brightness on this new digital display when the sun is out like this. It is blinding the hell out of me.”

Robin answered, “Pull into pit, and we will make the adjustment.” On the next lap around the car came into pit lane and stopped perfectly into his stall. Smee rushed over and took down the net, leaned inside the car and made a couple adjustments. The window net went back up, Smee backed behind the wall and Killian took off again.

Emma watched the car and then looked down at the monitors, watching the car get faster and faster. He was quickly approaching 190 mph. She was amazed that he could be driving that fast and talking on the radio, telling his crew about the car. What he was saying didn’t make much sense, but the display was at least now at a comfortable light that wasn’t blinding him anymore.

Robin got the crew ready and they had Killian pit just prior to 50 laps. Then she got to see the crew go into action, and see what each of the crew actually did. She was extremely impressed. From the time Killian stopped till the crew was done and he was leaving the pit it was barely over eleven seconds. She now had a better sense of that they did and why they needed the number of crew.

Robin had him try the different lanes to see which had better grip or got more speed. He came in a few more times and they made some adjustments. Something about a wedge, and another about a trackbar. But after the adjustments, Killian was back out on the track and the car was then able to reach 192 mph. After one more pit stop and twenty or so laps, Robin radioed for him to come in and call it a day. The rest of the adjustments wouldn’t be able to be done on track.

A few minutes later, the car was parked, turned off, and Killian was climbing out and taking his helmet off. Robin motioned for her to take off her headset and she was glad, but knew her hair was probably a mess from them and the wind. Killian strode over to her and in an instant she was in his arms and he was kissing her. This time the crew just ducked their heads and worked on getting the car ready to move back to the shop.

She could feel his heart beating rapidly under her hand, felt his hands grip at her waist and could almost smell the testosterone pumping from him. She had a feeling that if the crew wasn’t here he would already be ploughing into her on the hood of the race car. And damn if she didn’t wish it was true; maybe he could have even left it running. Her imagination was getting out of control, and the small growl against her lips and hard bulge against her hip weren’t helping at all.

She pulled away panting and his mouth chased hers; a strong hand on his chest had him stopping. They both needed to bring this back down; they were, after all, not alone. Unfortunately. She nodded her head at his crew, and he huffed and then rested his forehead against hers.

She tilted her head back and brought her hand up to the side of his face, “How much longer before we can get outta here?”

His grin was predatory, and it made her body ache for him. He turned to look at Robin, “Anything else, mate? Or are we good here?”

Robin gave the two of them a quick once over, smiled, and shook his head. “Get out of here, you two.”

Killian wanted to pull her with him to the truck to change, but knew that wasn’t a good idea. “I’ll change and be right back, love.” He kissed her once more and than ran in the other direction to change and try to get some control over himself.
She stood there and tried to get her bearings back. He must have really changed in a hurry because he was already back in his normal clothes and running back to her in no time. He pulled her to the car. They quickly waved goodbye to everyone and in a whirlwind she was back in the car and he was driving away.

“Where to?” he asked.

“I need to grab something at my apartment at the very least. Also…” She looked at the time. “Not sure about you, but I’m a little hungry.”

“Oh trust me, I plan on eating.” He turned to look at her and licked his bottom lip.

She swatted his arm. “I mean real food.”

“Okay, we can stop at that sandwich shop and head back to your place.” He bit his lip looking over at her, and sighed internally. He knew he needed to tell her about what happened prior, the topic Robin had brought up. Maybe eating something and talking would be good. Even if he wanted to do much more pleasant things.

They both were able to calm their libido on the way back to town. Once at the sandwich shop, they grabbed grilled cheese and onion rings and then went back to Emma’s place. He sat the takeout containers on the coffee table and she grabbed two sodas and sat down next to him on the couch.

Killian steeled his courage by taking a deep breath and then decided he had to come clean. Hopefully she would understand. “I need to talk to you about what Robin was talking about earlier.”

Emma swallowed. “It’s okay, you don’t need to tell me—”

He cut her off. “No, I need to tell you.” He took another breath and started. “When I was back in Formula One, I was in a relationship. It was extremely serious.” He kept his eyes on her face, trying to gauge what she was thinking. “I didn’t know when I met her. I didn’t know who she was. It wasn’t until after I had fallen,” he looked down for a second, “really fallen for her that I found out.”

He looked back up into her eyes. “She was married.”

He was waiting for the shock, but he didn’t see anything. It was a little unsettling, but he continued when she reached for his hand and squeezed. “She told me she didn’t love her husband, that she was miserable, that she wanted out. I asked her to leave him, repeatedly. But she was afraid of him. He was...is...a powerful man and she wasn’t sure what he would do if she tried to leave.”

All of what Emma knew was being pieced together, and she was sad to know that she was right. She was glad he was willing to tell her, she just wished that there was a way for her to tell him it was okay besides squeezing his hand again.

“I should have got her out earlier. I should have confronted him myself. We thought it was all worked out. He was supposed to be at a race in Germany at the same time I was. She was supposed to move out and have her lawyer serve divorce papers.” His other hand clenched into a fist.

“Somehow he got word of it, or something...still not sure how.” She squeezed his hand again, the sympathy on her face didn’t make sense yet in the story. “He ‘found’ her dead in their bathroom.”

He swallowed. “She had supposedly overdosed on some prescription medication that she had never taken before, even though she had supposedly been on it for months.”

Emma’s mouth opened in shock. “So he did do it.”

Killian looked at her in shock. “What?”
She shook her head. “I mean…it sounds like he…I mean, that’s what you think, right? That’s why you tried to get back at him, wreck those…” She stopped immediately as her words caught up to her and the look on his face.

He dropped her hand and stood up, his world seemed to fall around him. “You knew?”

Emma looked around, “I...after we first met...after we had our fight...you told me I didn’t know anything about you. So I looked. Tried to figure out what you meant.”

“You KNEW? This whole time? Since we met? Before all of this?” He was angry, everything he knew about her falling into question. Was it all real? Why had she apologized to him? What was she after? Did Gold get to her?

Emma stood and walked towards him but he stepped away from her. “Killian, at first I just looked at your bio and stuff. Just tried to get to know you. It’s all online. It’s all public. I found out about your childhood, realized why the shelter was important to you.”

It wasn’t just Milah; it was also his childhood. “You knew? Before I told you, before Liam told you. You already knew. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I wanted you to tell me when you were ready.”

“No! No, you didn’t tell me because you knew what you did was wrong.” He looked up at her shocked. “If you hadn’t misspoken, would I have ever found out?” He saw her look away. “You know about my childhood. You found out about Milah. Why I left Formula One. Did you have your brother do a background check on me too? Find out my net worth. Find out everyone I’ve ever dated. Find out what I like so that you can worm your way in?”

She felt as if she had been backhanded by his accusations. “How dare you! I did no such thing. My brother would never do no such thing. I just pieced it together from public information online. I’m not an idiot. And you know damn well I don’t give a damn about your money! In fact, that was a reason I didn’t want to date you. That you could just give a load of cash to charity as if it was nothing scared the hell out of me that I wasn’t good enough for you!” His eyes widened at what she said and she cursed herself for letting that spill too.

“So you figured that out, too, huh? Bloody hell, another thing you didn’t tell me about. Another thing you found out before you agreed to even date me. And here I was thinking that I had to try to convince you to date me. When really you were just baiting me.”

“I was not! You aren’t even listening to me. And I didn’t find out about the donation until after our kiss and me agreeing to go out on a date. Archie told me about the donation from the Lost Boys and Girls. I only figured it out on our date.”

“But why didn’t you tell me? Why keep it from me?” Everything he thought, everything he wanted was evaporating in front of him. He should have realized he could never have this, it wasn’t real. “You are just like all the rest.”

Tears started streaming down her face. “Killian. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. Please...listen to me.”

He shook his head. “I can’t do this.” He backed towards her door. “I should have known better.”

She walked to him and tried to reach out for him, “Killian...please. Don’t go. We can talk about this. It’s not what you think, I swear.”

He backed away. “How can I believe that, Swan? How can I believe anything you’ve told me?” He
shook his head again, opened her door, and left.

She followed him, chasing him to the elevator screaming his name, but he let the elevator doors close and didn’t turn to look at her. She walked back to her apartment, shut her door behind her, and slid to the floor, tears streaming down her face, sobs wracking her body, knowing that she had just lost the best thing that had walked into her life.
Emma laid on her couch; the TV was playing, but she wasn’t paying attention. She kept an eye on her phone. She had called him numerous times, left numerous voicemails and text messages. He hadn’t returned one, so at this point she was betting that he was either deleting them or had blocked her number.

Her phone had rang very early Saturday morning. She had jerked awake, but by the time she got to the phone, it had gone to voicemail. Her heart had regained a small bit of hope, but it was soon dashed seeing that no one left a message, and the caller ID showed it was from a restricted number. It was just a wrong number.

It was now Sunday morning, and she was still wearing the same thing she had on when he left. The only difference was the empty wine bottles and tissues laying all over the place. She felt sluggish and...numb.

She couldn’t get the look of absolute betrayal on his face out of her brain. She knew she should have told him, but she just wanted him to tell her when he felt like he could. She hadn’t wanted to push him away, but she ended up doing that anyways.

A knock on her door startled her and she sprung to her feet. Maybe he...that thought immediately vanished at seeing Mary Margaret on the other side of the door.

Her sister-in-law immediately saw the look, and knew that the text Emma sent that she didn’t feel well enough to go to Sunday dinner was a lie. Well, a lie in that she wasn’t sick. The brunette quickly put the food she brought over on the kitchen counter and turned back to the blonde. “What happened?”

The tears started in again, and Mary Margaret just pulled Emma into a hug and led her to the couch, rubbing soothing circles into her back.

The whole argument just poured out of Emma as her friend hugged her, her tears soaking the other’s shirt. When the story was done, she pulled away and looked at the woman in front of her. “I’ve messed everything up. I’ve lost him.”

“No. I refuse to believe it.”

“He won’t answer me, or talk to me. I’ve tried calling him and texting him.”

“I can see why he is angry, but once he calms down, he’ll see that you weren’t trying to hurt him.”

“You didn’t see the look on his face.” Emma closed her eyes and she could see him standing there again. “I hurt him so bad. I should have trusted him when I met him, believed him. But I’m too screwed up to do that. I just had to go look it up on my own and then hide it from him.”

Mary Margaret squeezed Emma’s hands. “You have your own past, your own reasons for not trusting people. He knows about that, right?”

“Some of it. Not all of it.” She sighed, “Okay, barely any of it.” Emma could see her sister-in-law not like that answer. “We were really just starting to talk about the past. I’m not sure how much he gleaned about my past more than me being adopted.”

“Emma, it will work out. Just give him some time.”
“It’s been two days. The only way this is going to work out...is me alone. As per usual.” Mary Margaret pulled her into another hug.

Emma went into work Monday morning to find that he wasn’t there. She wasn’t shocked. Part of her hoped he had more car tests or crew meetings or something else that was preventing him from coming in, but she knew the answer. He was avoiding her.

Tink tried to get her to talk, but Emma kept her door closed all day, effectively keeping her friend out. She spent time training the new counselor, Ingrid, for the position they finally got filled. She tried not to think that the only reason the shelter could afford it was because of the money Killian had donated. But training the counselor meant that she still had to finish her work for the day as well. Part of her was glad that it allowed her to work well into the night, only to then drag herself home long enough to crawl into bed and sleep...try to sleep, that is.

She contemplated changing the linens on her bed, she really should, but she couldn’t bear to part with the smell of him on her sheets, on the pillows. She pulled one of the pillows to her, hugging it, pressing her face into the smell, finally falling into a fitful sleep.

Killian strode through the workshop, only this time, he didn’t wave or say hello to anyone as he made his way back to the office. His beard was unkempt, his hair in disarray, his sunglasses hiding the dark circles under his eyes and keeping the light out, to try to stem the pain of the hangover. He didn’t bother knocking and came into the office while Robin was on the phone and plopped into a chair, drinking from a Starbucks cup. He couldn’t bear to use the one she had got him for Christmas.

He leaned back against the chair, his head pointed at the ceiling his eyes closed. The weekend had been miserable. As soon as he left her apartment, he drove home and opened a bottle of rum and had stayed at the bottom of one—actually, several—most of the weekend. He had only been home maybe twenty minutes when a call from her had come in, but he was still too hurt and already halfway through the first bottle when he threw his phone. It had hit the wall, shattered, and was still sitting where it landed.

Unable to sleep, and much too drunk for his own good, he had attempted to call her from his house phone very, very late Friday...or was that really Saturday? But when his call went to her voicemail and he heard her chipper message, her voice...the pain had closed up his throat and he hung up.

His heart felt absolutely crushed, his hopes battered. How had he been so wrong about her? He had saw a future with her and she was being untruthful with him. Was it all just a ruse, a plan? Worming her way in for his money? Had anything she told him been real? He should have known better. No one would ever want him for him...at least, not ever again.

He wanted to shake those thoughts away. He didn’t want to believe them; his heart didn’t want to. But his past made it hard to believe. After his heartbreak from Milah, there had been plenty of women interested in him. But he found they were really just after him for his money, or for them to become famous, to use his celebrity status for their own benefit. None of them really cared about him. That’s when he decided the love’em and leave’em status was the best fit for him. He had hoped that all changed with Emma. He swallowed and tried to get the hurt to go away, but it wouldn’t.

Robin ended the phone call and stared at his friend. While he was on the phone, he saw the disarray his friend was in and could tell there was something very wrong. “What happened, mate?” Killian didn’t answer. “Is it Emma?” The ticking of the other’s jaw told him the answer. “Did she not take the news of what you were going to tell her well?”
Killian chuckled. “Oh, she took it just fine. Wasn’t shocked in the slightest.”

The hurt in his driver’s voice was palatable, but it didn’t make sense. “What?”

Killian sat up in his chair and ran his hand through his hair. “She already knew.” From Robin’s shocked expression, he went on. “Yep. She had found out about my tragic childhood, about Milah’s death, and the anonymous donation I made to the shelter. She knew all of that, and thought it was best if I didn’t know she already knew.”

Robin sat there dumbfounded. It didn’t make sense with what he had gathered when he met Emma, not to mention what the man before him had told him prior. None of it added up. “Did she say why?”

“What?”

“Did she say why she didn’t tell you? It just...she doesn’t seem...it doesn’t sound like the Emma I met on Friday.”

Killian laughed. “Then she conned all of us. She is good.” He shook his head, “She’s smart. Unlike the others.”

Robin had a hard time believing it. He could understand why his friend felt this way, but there just HAD to be more to it. “Killian, what did she say?”

“It doesn’t matter; she never had the intention of ever telling me the truth.”

“Oh, mate, calm down. Let’s think about this rationally.” Killian got out of his chair in a huff and Robin followed him, grabbing his arm. “Killian.” He could smell the rum still on him. “Dear God, do not tell me you drove over her drunk.”

Killian pulled away from him. “Of course not. I’m not an imbecile. I just haven’t showered...or changed clothes.”

“And you’re hungover.”

“Can we just get this meeting over with, so I can go back home?”

“So you can open another bottle of rum?”

“Why the hell not?” With that he walked out of the office with his crew chief right behind him. It’s not like he had anything else to look forward to. His family was a bloody continent away, and racing didn’t start up for another month. He had thought he had something else...but not anymore.

The week went by with no return of her calls or her texts. When Friday morning got there, she decided she had to stop. By now, he had to have blocked her anyways, so it didn’t do any good. She was exhausted, having barely slept all week. She stayed late every night, stopped eating lunch, but when noon got there, her closed door opened and Tink walked in. She stormed over and slammed a takeout box in front of her. Emma could smell the grilled cheese and onion rings and it brought tears to her eyes, remembering their take out left on her coffee table after he had left.

Tink sat down and pulled her chair close to the desk. “Emma, talk to me. What happened?”

“I ruined it.” She looked up at her friend with tears streaming already down her face. She couldn’t even open the box to look inside.
“What did you do?”

Emma looked down. “Remember when he first got here and was being all nice?” She saw her friend nod. “I was mean, and I told him I wasn’t interested and that he was only here because he had to be…Anyways he told me I was wrong and I didn’t know him.” She swallowed. “Well, being me, I didn’t just ask him or try to get to know him. I did what I do, and I researched him. Found out about his past, his past relationships, figured everything out.” She paused, “And I never told him.”

“Oh, Emma.”

“I wanted him to be ready to tell me, when he felt it was right. I didn’t want to push it. I know how I would feel if someone knew about my past without me being ready to tell them. I didn’t want it to end before it began. I was hoping that he would then tell me, and I wouldn’t need to worry…” She felt guilty, she knew that wasn’t a good answer. “But now I’ve lost him. He won’t talk to me. He won’t answer calls or texts, it’s been a week.”

Tink got out of her seat and came over to her friend and hugged her. “I’m sorry.” She looked at her friend and could see the circles under her eyes, her frame looking a little thin. “You haven’t been eating or sleeping well, have you?” Emma looked down. “Well, that answers that. After work, we are heading out to dinner, and then we will go out to the bar and try to have some fun.”

“Tink, I don’t feel up to it.”

“Emma, you need to have some fun. You need to relax. I’m not taking no for an answer.” She looked down at the phone that Emma kept looking at. “You can take the phone with you, just in case.”

They both smiled at each other, and Emma relented and agreed to go.

Killian sat in front of his computer, waiting for his brother to answer his Skype. A moment later, Liam, Elsa, and the boys’ smiling faces were all looking back at him and all saying hello at once. The boys were laughing and waving. But with one look at his face, Elsa gave a concerned looked to her husband and had the boys quickly follow her to get ready for bed.

“Oh, little brother, what is wrong?”

“Younger brother.”

“Killian…”

He knew that tone of his brother’s voice; it was a warning and he wasn’t going to let this go. “I don’t want to talk about it, Liam. Just tell me how the boys are. How Elsa and you are. Just, take my mind off of…everything.”

His brother took a hesitant look at him, and then sighed. He told Killian about Thomas’s new tooth, and the snowman family they built all together in the front lawn. Relayed how much the boys were growing and needing to get them new shoes and pants almost every few months. He let the stories go on for a little while, seeing a soft smile finally start to show up on his younger brother’s face. But the stories ran out, and Liam knew he needed to talk, whether he wanted to or not.

“Now, your turn.”

“I’ve had a couple crew meetings and car tests. My service hours are over.” He stopped before he said that he had his heart crushed, though he wasn’t hiding it too well.
“Well, since you didn’t mention Emma in that, I have an inclination as to what the problem is.”
Killian looked to the side, not saying anything. The ticking in his jaw was a dead giveaway. “What did you do?”

That got him angry, “Me? Oh no, this wasn’t me.”

“So are you going to tell me, or do I have to drag it out of you bit by bit?”

Killian ran his hands through his hair and then with a huff started to explain the story of what had happened. “And I couldn’t listen anymore to the excuses, and I left.”

Liam swallowed, he could see the hurt in his brother’s eyes, could see the betrayal. But he refused to believe the same Emma he had met at Christmas would do what his brother was thinking. There just had to be an explanation, but Killian was just too angry...really, just too hurt to see it. He knew all about his brother’s past, part of which he shared, the other part he had tried to be there for him. Killian wore his heart on his sleeve, and when he felt, he felt deeply. Unfortunately, it cut both ways. “I don’t think the reason Emma kept that knowledge from you is for the reason you think. I just don’t see her doing that.”

“She played us all really well.”

“Killian. No, I don’t believe for a second she was playing with you, with any of us.” Liam still remembered the conversation he had had with Emma, just the two of them in the kitchen back at Christmas. Her eyes, her expression was just too honest. “What reason did she give.”

“She said she wanted me to tell her my past when I was ready.” He shook his head no, “But really she was never going to tell me. She found out everything and wasn’t ever going to admit she already knew.”

“If she had come to you when you first met, or just after you started dating, and she told you. What would you have done?”

Killian ran a hand over his forehead, “I don’t know. I wasn’t ever given the option.” He saw his brother’s hard look. “I’d be angry she looked, angry that she felt that she had to go find it out without just asking. But...If she had told me when we first started dating...I don’t think it would...hurt like this.” His fingered rubbed his temples. “I mean, why did she have to hide it from me? Why couldn’t she tell me? If she really cared about me, why keep that a secret?”

“Maybe she was worried you would react exactly how you are now.”

“But we would have been building a life based on lies.”

“Omission.”

“Bloody hell, Liam, don’t bring in your love for legal dramas into this. And why the hell are you siding with her?”

“I’m not on anyone’s side but yours brother.”

“Doesn’t sound like it.”

“Being on the side of your best interest is being on your side, brother. But I do have a question for you.”

“What now?”
“Why are you so angry at Emma for keeping this secret from you, when you forgave Milah for keeping from you that she was married for months?”

“This is different,” he snapped.

“How exactly?”

“Because I wasn’t in love yet with Milah when she told me!” he yelled back and then immediately stopped talking and looked away from the screen.

Liam gave him a soft smile, but he wasn’t shocked; he wasn’t surprised at the admission at all. It was one more time that Killian had let himself open up to love and then lost it. Their father, their mother, Milah. Luckily, he hadn’t lost them or he wasn’t sure what would have happened to his brother. “Killian…you need to work this out.”

“Fine, then what the hell am I supposed to do?”

“This might seem like a far-fetched idea, but maybe…talk to her?” Killian groaned at the thought as his brother continued. “That brings up another topic. Don’t get me wrong, we like Skyping with you, but you usually just call. Something about the ‘bloody cell phone gets a great rate for England and sounds better than bloody Skype’.” The last part was said in a mocking quote of his little brother.

“I busted my phone.” A raised eyebrow was his only response. “I was angry, and drunk…”

“Ahhh, that explains that. So how about this? You give the lass a call on your home phone, setup a time to calmly talk about this, and perhaps tomorrow you head out and get a new phone.” He could see his brother ready to object. But before he could chime in, his wife did it for him.

“Oh, no you don’t, Killian! You are going to go and listen to her. You are going to talk and figure this out, otherwise you will regret it!”

He felt like ducking away from the screen when Elsa came into view and by the tone of her voice. “Bloody…were you listening this whole time?”

“I came back in when my husband stopped talking about the family. I tried not to listen, but…I can’t help it. Killian...she made you so happy.”

He looked down, knowing how true that statement was, but it felt lost now, unreal. Was it? Was it all an act? Did she just see an opportunity and that is all? Or was he wrong, did she really care and had thought she was trying not to hurt him. “I doubt she will be willing to talk to me anyway.”

“You don’t know that. You have to at least try.” Elsa gave him a sad smile, “She could be hurting just as bad as you are right now.”

That cracked his heart even more, the thought of her in pain. Part of him, the part still hurt from the past couldn’t believe she cared at all. But the other part of him, the part that had come back to life with her couldn’t bare that she could possibly be hurting. He swallowed, hardening his conviction. “Okay, I’ll call her.”

They both smiled at him. “Good, give us a call...on your new cell phone...tomorrow. Let us know how it goes.” His brother commanded, and his sister-in-law smiled at him with a nod.

“I will. Good night you two. Love you both.” They both signed off with their love and he sighed as the screen went blank. He looked at the clock; she should be on the way home from work soon. He would give her a little time to get home, and then he would call. Hopefully, she would still be willing
to talk.

Emma sat in the pub. The live music was peppy, her greasy dinner was basically finished, and she was already three drinks in, forming a good buzz in her brain. Tink was right, she needed this. Her friend was already out on the small dance floor and waved her over. She took one more look at her phone, and sighed, realizing it wasn’t going to ring anytime soon...or ever. She swallowed the lump in her throat, straightened her shoulders, threw her phone into her purse, and headed out to dance with her friend.

A few moments later his call came in, but she was already dancing to the loud music, and no one was around to hear the ring.
Chapter 13

Emma slowly woke and opened her eyes. “Oh god,” she groaned and closed them again. Even in her dark bedroom, the small light from her open door made her brain want to scream. Her hand pressed over her eyes as she still felt the room spin a little. She may have drank her sorrows away last night, but now those drinks were back with a vengeance. Her stomach lurched and she ran to her bathroom, barely making it before she let go of her dinner and the...how many drinks did she have again? Better out than in at this point.

She rested the side of her face against the toilet seat in the unlit bathroom and reached up and flushed the toilet. She wasn’t sure she could move from that spot, but she also wanted off the hard tile floor and back into her bed. She slowly got to her feet and leaned against the wall. She needed to get some painkillers in her and some water before she headed back to bed.

She stumbled to her medicine cabinet, took out the bottle of aspirin, and struggled opening the cap. Stupid childproof bottles! She finally managed to get it open, and shook three pills into her palm, and then leaned against the wall to get into her kitchen. She squinted her eyes at the light as she retrieved a bottle of water from her fridge. She swallowed some water and the pills and waited to see if they would stay down. Breathing a sigh of relief, she chugged down the rest of the water, then took another from the fridge and made her way back to her bedroom. She caught sight of her purse and fished out her phone.

“Great…” she whined. She forgot to charge it when she got home and her phone was dead. She plugged it in, and turned the phone back on. Seeing it was barely eight in the morning, she left it on the counter and dragged herself back to bed to continue sleeping off the hangover.

A few minutes later, her phone updated, showing a string of missed phone calls and voice messages from a restricted number.

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Killian stared at his alarm clock. He had been away already for hours but had no desire to get out of bed. It was already almost eleven in the morning…almost afternoon, but he didn’t care. He had spent all night calling her, leaving numerous messages. He was now certain he had missed his chance, and had lost her for good.

At first he thought that maybe she didn’t answer because she didn’t recognize the phone number. But after the tenth phone call, he was pretty sure she was just not answering. If a number had called him that many times he would have at least answered the phone to figure out who they were trying to reach.

He sighed, remembering the promise he made Liam the night before, but he wasn’t going to be able to keep part of it. He wasn’t going to be able to talk to Emma. But he could at least go and get a new phone; he needed it anyway. With a sigh, he sat up in bed and pushed off the covers. It was time to take a shower and go and wait in line for who knows how long to get a new phone.

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This time when Emma woke up, she could at least move without feeling like she was on the verge of death. He head was still pounding, and her eyes were not happy with the sun, but she at least felt a little human. She looked at her clock and realized it was almost noon.

She sat up and almost cheered that her stomach wasn’t going to protest. She made her way to her kitchen and put some PopTarts in the toaster and started her Keurig. She needed coffee—stat. She
reached for her phone, wanting to text Tink to thank her oh so sweetly for not cutting her off last night (not), when she noticed the missed calls and voicemails.

That was strange. She pulled up her call history and noticed they were all from a restricted number. She swallowed...her heart rate increased remembering the missed call a week ago. She dialed her voice mail and gasped at the sound of his voice. “Killian…”

“Emma...it’s Killian. I know you probably don’t want to talk to me...but I would like to talk to you. Please call me. My cell is broke. You can reach me at…” He left a different phone number, she quickly wrote it down, and he then finished with, “I miss you Swan.”

He wanted to talk to her! His voice sounded so...sad...lost even. Then her phone started to play the next message and she realized they were all from him. “Emma, it’s Killian again. You probably don’t realize this number is me. Or maybe you aren’t home yet, or out…” She heard his voice drop, the emotion thick, “having fun with friends. I’ll be up late; please call me.” He left the phone number again and a quick goodbye.

A little over an hour after the previous message he had left the next. “Swan. I know I messed up, I jumped to conclusions. I just...my past...please, just call me. We can talk about this. Please call me, love.”

The next two were pretty much the same thing, and the last one came in at almost eleven. “Emma, I hope you are okay. I hope you are out having fun and just not getting my calls. But if you are getting these messages, this will be my last voicemail. I don’t want to interrupt your sleep. I don’t want to bother you further. I hope you will call, love. But if you don’t, I understand. I wish you the best.”

Tears were streaming down Emma’s face as the message ended. He sounded like he had come to the conclusion she didn’t want him anymore, and that was the furthest thing from the truth.

She quickly ended the voicemail and typed the new phone number into her phone. She wasn’t sure what she would say, but she was just holding her breath as the phone rang...and rang...and rang. His voicemail answered, a message with just his name in his voice and the rest computerized. “Hi, Killian. It’s Emma. I would love to talk. I was out last night...with Tink. I just saw the messages. I would love to talk. Please call me.” She then hung up and sighed.

He had broke his phone. Maybe he didn’t get her messages. Maybe it wasn’t over. She wanted to temper her hope, but she couldn’t. But why didn’t he answer? Then she understood—the restricted number must be his landline in his house. Maybe he wasn’t home, but he would have to be at some point.

With a sense of hope, and not a care for her headache, she sprinted to her room to change. She tugged on her jeans, pulled on a hoodie, and then a pair of boots. She ran a brush through her hair and put it into a ponytail. She grabbed her purse, dropping her phone inside. She transferred her coffee to a travel mug, wrapped her PopTarts in a napkin, and was quickly out the door.

It didn’t take long and she was pulling into his driveway and up to the gates. She tried the intercom but there was no answer. She tried calling the phone number again, and still no answer. She parked her Bug in the drive. They were going to talk one way or another; better to do it now, not wait a moment longer, and it needed to be face to face. She started to munch on her PopTart and drink her coffee as she settled in to wait.

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Killian walked out of the store with his new cell phone, all his contacts in place. His phone showed missed calls and voicemail, which didn’t shock him. Between his brother, Robin, and Regina, he knew he would have a few. He was curious if there were any from Emma.
He got in his car and started it up and linked his phone’s bluetooth to the car. He backed out and started to drive as he told his phone to play his messages. As soon as he heard her voice, he had to pull the car over. It must have been the voicemail from the call she made where he threw his phone. His gut twisted at hearing her words, mostly garbled with tears.

That wasn't the only message—far from it. He also had numerous text messages.

ES: please let me explain
ES: I'm sorry for not telling you
ES: it's not why you think, call me
ES: I was wrong, I'm sorry
ES: please just talk to me
ES: I miss you
ES: please don't let us end like this

He scrolled through the rest, and swallowed hard when he got to the last one a few days ago.

ES: you probably won't get this. I'm sure I'm blocked. But if you do, I won't text or call anymore. But know, I'm truly sorry. I never meant to hurt you. I was just scared. I'm sorry.

His phone kept playing the messages from her, they tore at his heart. Any thoughts that she had been using him were gone, the emotion in her voice too real. He pulled the car back onto the road and started to drive for her place. He had to see her. He thought about calling but remembered she didn't pick up last night. “Shit,” he cussed at himself. He couldn't just barge over there; besides, if she had answered, it would be on his phone at home.

He adjusted his route and decided he would head to his place first, check his messages and see if she answered, and from that he could figure out what to do. And if he went a lot further over the speed limit than he should have, oh well.

It wasn't long until he was pulling onto his street, and his heart leapt at seeing the familiar yellow Bug in front of his gate. He smiled as he parked behind her and got out of his car, but he didn't know why she hadn't seen him yet. As soon as he got to her car door, though, he understood. She was curled up in her seat, her head against her arm on the window, sound asleep.

He almost didn't want to wake her, but he knew he had to. He knocked lightly on the glass and she jolted awake. She looked at him in shock and he gave her a soft smile and then motioned at the gate. “Let me open it and I'll follow you in.” She nodded in understanding and started her car as he went back to his.

The gate opened as both cars pulled through. He parked in the garage as she parked along the edge of the driveway. He rushed in the house and around to the main door, opening it right before she got there. She ducked her head a little and walked in. They stood in the foyer awkwardly, not sure what to say or do.

He cleared his throat and motioned to the living room. “Take a seat. Would you like something to drink?”

Emma nodded, taking off her boots and then headed for the couch. “Water would be great.”

Killian quickly fetched two bottles of water, kicked off his shoes and looked at his home phone. He really wanted to see what her message was, if she left one. But he would rather be talking to the real Emma anyway. It couldn't be a horrible response; she was here, after all.
He walked into the living room and handed her a bottle as he sat down on the other end of the couch. She took a drink and he finally got a chance to really look at her. She wasn't wearing any makeup, her hair was pulled into a loose ponytail, and she looked like she hadn't slept well...for awhile. He knew how that felt. But she still looked absolutely beautiful.

She was now biting her lip and playing with the wrapper on the bottle. Both were too nervous to start, and neither knew where. He scratched behind his ear and he caught her smile at the motion, which he returned. “I guess you got my messages.” She nodded and he continued, “I haven’t received yours today if you left one…”

“I did.”

“I got your other messages on the way home from getting this.” He held up his new phone and sat it on the coffee table.

“I thought you blocked me.” She said softly looking down at her water, fingers having pulled half the wrapper off the bottle now.

“No; I was a sodding fool for breaking my phone in a drunken...foul mood.” He sighed, “Emma, I’m sorry. I should have listened, but I was just...so…”

“No, I get it. I'm sorry; I shouldn't have hid it from you. I shouldn't have looked...it’s just...I don't trust easy...after…” she just stopped, she wasn't sure she could go on. He slowly reached for her hand and was glad to see she didn't pull away, but instead her head moved up and her teary eyes looked at him. “Sounds like we both have demons in our past that are still haunting us.”

Emma nodded in agreement. “Sounds like it.” She squeezed his hand. “Killian… I am sorry. Your statement back when we first met, that I didn't know you...well…” she looked down not wanting to admit it. “When I first went to look, I wanted to prove I was right. But when I got to your bio, and read between the lines…I knew how wrong I was.”

He snorted softly; that was definitely her: stubborn to a fault. He gave another small grin for her to continue.

“Then it also was just my damn curiosity. I used to work part-time at the sheriff's station with my brother while I got my degree, and I guess…” she looked up at him, “But I swear I did not do a background check. I just followed the clues.” She shook her head, “You were a mystery… I just needed to solve. Once I knew more, I wanted to know even more. I'm sorry.” She looked down at their joined fingers. “The reason I didn't tell you I knew was...well...one, I know how hard it is to talk about my past, so I wanted you to be able to in your own time. And two, I was worried that you would...leave.”

“Emma…” he scooted closer to her on the couch and sat his water on the coffee table, then took hers and did the same. “My brother actually asked me that—what I would have done if you told me at first.” Her big green eyes looked up at him in question and he pushed on. “I said I would have been angry, but I would have gotten past it. But this far in...there were more emotions...involved…”

“That it made it hurt more.” He nodded in agreement. “I know, I should have taken the chance then, because if you left then...it wouldn't hurt like it does…”

“Emma…” his hand went to the side of her face, his thumb wiped away her tears. “I'm sorry for how I reacted. It's just...after Milah, it took awhile to move on. I attempted to a couple times, but I found
out they just wanted me for my money, or fame. I never thought I'd get someone that actually liked me...for me. And then in you came all stubborn and difficult.” They both laughed. “I knew you weren't like them. I was hoping that when you looked at me…”

“I do see you.” She waved her hand at the house. “I don't care about any of this.”

“I know, I know. It's just, when it came out that you knew about all of it…it just brought all those memories and thoughts back up...and I reacted poorly.”

“We both acted poorly due to our past experiences.” Her hand came up and cupped his cheek as well, their foreheads touching. “Archie told me about the anonymous donation from the Lost Boys and Girls. I didn't put it together until our first date, but I knew you wanted it anonymous…I didn't know what to say. Honestly, the thought freaked me out.”

“Why?”

“Me and my tiny apartment, and old car…”

“I don't care about any of that.”

“I know...it’s just my insecurities.”

He caressed her cheek. “How about we just forget about this and start over?”

She pulled back and shook her head. “No.” His heart plummeted and before he could try to convince her she continued. “I can't start over; I don't want to go back to square one.” With that, she pulled him in by the lapels of his button-down shirt and kissed him.

He didn't waste any time and his arms were around her pulling her closer to him, one hand in her hair the other sprawled over her back. The kiss deepened, their tongues moving to taste one another, the heat between them quickly turning up. He pulled back slightly, out of breath as her lips chased his.

He grinned. “Forgive this bloody fool, my love?”

She nodded quickly. “Can you forgive me?”

“I did completely the moment I saw you parked at my gate.” She smiled back at him and he pulled her back to him, his mouth on hers, the passion increasing once again. They both had missed each other while apart, and their bodies and souls wanted to make up for lost time. Her hands were at his shirt working on the buttons, his at the hem of hers. They both broke the kiss, eyes staring at one another, gauging if they both wanted this, but they both instantly received the same answer as both had desire and need fully displayed on their face.

His hands lifted her hoodie, and she raised her arms to accommodate. Her hands were back to his shirt as he tossed the shirt to the floor and started to help her. In no time she was pushing the fabric over his shoulders and he shrugged out of it. Her hands ran over his chest hair and her mouth moved to suck at his pulse point, making him hiss as his hands grasped her silk-clad breasts, moving under the cups of the bra and over the already hardened nippled.

She sucked in a breath, and then nipped at his neck as he pulled down a cup of her bra and sucked a nipple into his mouth. His other hand moved to her back, quickly unhooking her bra. She leaned back and snaked her arms out of the straps and then moved on to her knees to get closer. His arms went around her and he grabbed her ass, moving her into his lap, mouth back on hers, tongues snaking against one another. They both groaned as the seam of her jeans ground against her core and the growing bulge in his pants.
He pressed her closer, his chest hair brushing over her straining nipples, the feel making the need between her legs grow even more. She rocked her hips against him again, and he moaned, breaking the kiss of her lips and traveling down her neck. She leaned her head back and to the side, letting her hips roll against his as his mouth continued to kiss and nip at that pleasureable point between neck and shoulder.

His hands squeezed the globes of her ass, pressing her closer to him, and groaning as she continued to move. She moved again, harder against him, and he growled into her skin and moved quickly, turning to the side and laying her back on the couch. Her hands were reaching for him. “Pants.” He said pointing at hers. “I’ll get mine.” She nodded, and they worked rapidly to remove the rest of the barriers between them, both sliding off their underwear while they were at it as well.

Her jeans and panties were thrown to the side as he slid all of his down his legs in one go. He turned back to her, biting his lip at the naked beauty before him. Her fingers caught his arm trying to pull him to her. His hand slipped down the inside of her leg, his fingers connecting with her core, he groaned at how wet she already was for him. He bit his lip and lowered his head.

Emma fiercely gripped harder on his arm and pulled. “Later...I need you.” His blue eyes looked up at hers, connecting from between her spread legs. He growled and leaned in and let his tongue lick her from core to clit, making her hips jump and her mouth moan. He groaned at her taste, having missed it, missed her so much while they were apart. But he understood her need; he had it too.

He was immediately hovering over her, kissing her, their tongues connecting, making her taste herself on him. She groaned into the kiss as her legs wrapped around his hips, pressing his hard length against her wet core. “God, Emma…”

He leaned up on his elbow, and reached between them, taking himself in hand. He rubbed the head against her opening and then over her clit, teasing them both. Her legs squeezed and she pleaded with him. He lined himself up, and thrust his hips forward, taking her all at once.

Emma screamed out his name at the sudden feeling of fullness, her legs gripping him tight. He stilled fully seated inside of her, relishing the feeling. Their eyes connected, and then their mouths in a briefly soft kiss. But it quickly became more intense, more passionate, tongues and teeth, moans of pleasure, and he started to thrust, and she leveraged her hips up to him. It was frantic, a reclaiming of each other. Hips thrusting, wet skin slapping against each other.

One hand came up under her leg and brought it up over his shoulder, allowing him to move deeper, and having him it that spot inside of her that made her see stars, made her body start to shake. “Fuck..yes..God..oh yes…”

He growled against her lips and then trailed them down her neck, burying his face there, licking and nipping at the flesh as his hips kept up the fast pace, pumping into her madly. Her inner walls started to flutter around her. “Emma...love...fuck.” He bit her neck trying to hold himself back, wanting, needing to feel her come around him, to pull him over with her.

Her hands grasped at his shoulders, her nails gripping into him, trying to hold on, but she knew she wasn’t going to be able to much longer. She couldn’t keep up with the pace, with the pleasure. “Fuck….” With one more hard snap of his hips she was flying, her nails digging in. “Killiannnnn…”

Her inner walls gripped him furiously, and he groaned out his pleasure as it raced through him and shot deep into her. Her muscles milked every ounce of satisfaction from him as he stilled within her. The only sounds left were their fast breathing and rapid heart beats. Her leg fell from his shoulder and down off the couch for her foot to land on the floor. He raised his head to look into her eyes.
Emma smiled up at him. “I missed you.”

Killian grinned back at her. “And I missed you too, my love.” He leaned down to kiss her again, “When we can move, how about we move this into the bedroom?”

“Sounds like a plan.” She bit her lip and gave him a mischievous look, “We do have all weekend.”

He laughed and shook his head. It was one of the reasons he loved her...but how exactly was he going to tell her that?
Chapter 14

Emma was getting ready for work and brushing her teeth, a smile coming over her face at seeing the second brush sitting in her tooth brush holder. Granted, she had her own at the ‘hers’ sink in his bathroom, too. In the week and a half since they got back together, they had definitely made up for lost time. The rest of the that weekend was spent mostly in his bedroom—well, at least once they got there.

She spit into the sink, wiped her mouth, and started on her makeup. Her nose smelled the coffee and what she assumed scrambled eggs coming from the kitchen. She was definitely getting used to this. They had worked out a routine: he would stay at her apartment Monday through Thursday, and she would stay at his house Friday through Sunday. She lived closer to work, and it didn’t put him further from the shop when he needed to go there so it worked out. It was especially nice to have someone cook her breakfast and dinner. It was a good thing she was also getting a lot of exercise with him around to work off all that good food.

She applied her lipstick last and then walked into the kitchen while putting on her shoes, hopping as she did so. Both their travel mug were filled with coffee, and a toasted english muffin with cheese and eggs waited for her, all folded in a napkin. She smiled as he turned towards her and looped her arms around his neck. “You spoil me.”

Killian leaned down and kissed her. “Am I not allowed to treat you like a princess, my love?”

“You will hear no complaints from me.”

“Good,” he said and kissed her again, pressing her closer. “We better get going; we had a late start this morning.”

She lightly elbowed him in the side and then picked up her purse, coffee, and breakfast sandwich. “And whose fault is that?”

His arms came around her, pulled her back to him, and nuzzled into her neck. “Can’t help myself; you are too bloody tempting.”

She felt the tingle to her toes, and knew if she didn’t pull away now, there was going to be a repeat performance and they would be really late. “Later...we HAVE to go.”

He sighed and let her pull away, “Okay...okay.” They gathered the rest of their stuff and headed out the door. Soon they were both packed into his car, since they were both heading for the shelter today.

Emma munched on her sandwich as Killian drove and took a sip of his coffee. She then remembered something. “Oh, I forgot to ask you something last night...since you had other things in mind when I got home.”

“Oh, so you are blaming your memory loss on our extremely pleasurable activities last night?” He smirked over at her. “I guess I was REALLY good.”

Emma lightly smacked him in the chest and he laughed. “Hilarious. Anyways...Mary Margaret is having a Sunday dinner this weekend and wanted to know if...” Why the hell was she so nervous? She swallowed her anxiety and continued, “you would like to go.”

He took a look at her, noticed her biting her lip and trying not to look at him. He wasn't sure why she
was so unsure. Did she not want him to go? Or was she not sure if he would be willing? He reached out and took her hand in his. “Emma...what do you want?”

She turned to him, “Well Mary Mar…”

He cut her off. “What do YOU want?”

Damn him and his perceptiveness. “If YOU are comfortable going… I would like you to. If you aren’t…”

“Emma…love, I want to go. I would love to meet your family.” He squeezed her hand. “You already met mine. I think turnabout is fair play.” He wiggled his eyebrows at her making her laugh and the nervous energy floated away.

She smiled back at him. “Okay. I’ll let her know to expect us both.” He always seemed to know exactly what to say to make her feel better. She squeezed his hand back, a comfortable silence between them as he drove and she finished her breakfast.

It didn’t take long before they were parked at the shelter and Killian walked Emma to her office door, leaving a soft kiss on her cheek before he went off to the kitchen to help Granny.

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It was the last day of January, and a very lazy Sunday morning—er, afternoon, by the time they made it out of bed. She was sitting on his kitchen island in one of his old, soft t-shirts while he was whipping up pancakes and bacon in nothing but his sweatpants. She couldn't help her eyes roll over his toned chest, covered in whorls of glorious dark hair that tapered to a trail leading to the treasure below. And she new first hand what a treasure it was.

“Why are you putting the bacon in the oven?” she asked as he took a tray over to the oven in the wall.

He smiled at her question. “Because it cooks really well in the oven and then I don’t splatter myself with the grease.”

“Interesting.” She was going to take his word for it, because he knew a lot more about cooking than she did. He then came back over and started sprinkling flour onto the blueberries he had taken out for the pancakes. “Ummmm…”

Killian laughed. “It stops the batter from turning blue.”

She smiled at him and his easy explanations. He might get a kick out her questions, but he always answered. “Or…they could just be blue.”

He tossed the berries into the batter and gently mixed them in, “This is true. If you want blue pancakes next time, love, then I can do that.” He turned on the burner and got out a griddle.

“You have all kinds of special pans now don’t you?”

“What can I say...as you know, I like to cook.”

He was waiting for griddle to heat up and got out two plates, and started to get everything else. “I can do that!” Emma said and jumped down from the island and smacked his ass on the way over to the fridge. She grabbed the maple syrup and sat it on the counter, followed by two forks. She then retrieved two coffee mugs. “Coffee is something I know how to make.”
He watched her walk around his kitchen, knowing where everything was, and he smiled, happy that she felt at home there. The pan was ready and he started to pour the batter onto it. When he was about ready to turn the first, Emma came up beside him and place his coffee down. His arms came around her and her kissed the top of her head. “Thanks, love.”

She snuggled into his chest, and his hands drifted over her back, one moving lower cupping her ass. He groaned, finding her not wearing any underwear. She looked up at him with a teasing smile. “Minx.”

She winked at him, and pulled away to make her own cup of coffee. “Please…you love it.”

He bit his tongue to stop what he wanted to say; it was getting more and more difficult to not tell her how he felt. He flipped the pancakes and tried to get all of his thoughts to focus. It didn’t take long until the pancakes and bacon were done. They both sat at the kitchen counter on the bar stools to eat.

“So, what time do we need to be there for dinner, Swan?” he asked as he got done with breakfast and took the last drink of his coffee.

“Five,” she said, standing and picking up the plates and silverware, taking them with her to the dishwasher.

He picked up the mugs and followed her putting them in the top shelf and shutting the dishwasher door. He then turned towards her. “So we have time.”

“We do. Whatever shall we do?”

His eyes raked over her, and saw a drop of maple syrup on her shirt. “Oh, look at that. Shirt’s dirty.” He backed her up towards the island, his hands on her hips. “We can’t have you in a dirty shirt.” He picked her up and sat her on the edge of the counter.

She shook her head and pulled the shirt off. “Can’t have that at all.”

He bit his lips at her nude form, ideas flashing through his head. “You look good enough to eat my love.”

“You already ate.”

“That was just the first course.” He reached out and picked up the maple syrup sitting on the counter. “Lay back.”

Emma leaned back onto the granite, as he moved to stand between her thighs. He reached under her knees and pulled her bottom closer to him. She groaned at the feel of him already hard in his sweatpants, pressed against her bare core. He moved the bottle over her and drizzled a small line of syrup over her breasts, down her stomach, and right over her bare mound. She wiggled under the coldness, their eyes locking.

He retreated from between her legs and she wined, making him grin, as he came to stand beside her. He leaned over and ran his tongue over the swell of a breast, making her squirm. His hand trailed down her side, past her hip and under the bend of her knee. His fingers slowly teased the bare lips of her sex as his tongue moved over her nipple, tasting her and the maple syrup. His other arm moved under her neck, cupping her shoulder, keeping her anchored.

“Killiannn…” she whined.

He grinned against her breast, and his tongue pressed more firmly against her skin. Her nipples were
now hard peaks. He sucked the one into his mouth as two fingers slowly pressed into her core. Her back arched and she moaned. With one breast cleaned, he moved his mouth to the other, his fingers moving slowly in and out of her. Her arm closest to him looped around his waist, her nails lightly biting into his bare skin. Her other hand layed sprawled on the granite, trying to grasp something as her back arched again, her hips moving against his fingers.

His tongue swiped over her nipple and then sucked it into his mouth, his teeth grazing over it as his fingers plunged at little deeper into her wet channel. “Ahhh...yes...pleasee,” she groaned as his fingers curled just right into that spot that filled her with pleasure, a spot he knew so well. He growled against her skin, and nipped against the plump flesh of the underside of her breast, his tongue then soothing the bite and licking the syrup away.

His mouth traveled over her stomach, licking away the sticky sweetness. His tongue then dipped into her belly button, swirling in and out just as his fingers did. Her grip tightened on him, as she gasped. He stepped away from her hold and moved back between her legs. His mouth settled over the last bit of syrup right over her pubic bone, and her fingers immediately threaded into his hair; he groaned at the small tugs on it. His tongue lapped over her flesh as his fingers moved deeper.

Having cleaned off the maple sweetness, he wanted to taste something that was even better: her. His other hand moved to hold her open to him, and he took a moment to watch his fingers press in and out of her, her hips rocking against them. His fingers were coated in both of their essences—hers from now and his from earlier this morning. The thought made his cock twitch in his sweatpants. He leaned in farther and licked at her sensitive flesh from where his fingers entered her up to her clit. He tasted her with a small mixture of him, as he heard her moan his name.

He curled his fingers inside her more as his tongue flicked at her clit, over and over. She arched and gasped, her fingers tightened in his hair, her inner walls started to flutter around his fingers. He sucked her bundle of nerves into his mouth, and she let out a scream as she fell over the edge, her muscles contracting around his fingers. He softly continued to lick her as his fingers stopped moving. Her legs stiffled slowly from their shaking, and her eyes reopened to look down at his bright blue staring back at her from between her legs.

He made one more hard lick against her, eliciting another gasp, removed her hands from his hair and stood. Her feet were already at his hips, her toes trying to push down his sweats. He smiled, “Still eager are we.”

He didn't expect an answer and his own hands dropped his sweats to his knees, allowing his hard length to spring free. The island was the perfect height, already aligning them, his tip brushing her wet folds.

He grabbed her hips and slid all the way home inside of her in one long thrust. They both let out a pleasure filled moan, but he didn't pause and retreated slowly to push back inside of her abruptly. “Faster…” she pleaded, her hand that was around him now grabbing the side of the island, her back aching. Her other hand moving to cup her own breast pinching at the nipple.

“Mmmm, yes. Play with those beautiful breasts.” He punctuated the comment with another hard plunge into her. Followed again by a slow retreat and then a hard forward push of his hips.

Her other hand released the hold on the counter and followed his command, groaning at the pleasure of his calculated thrusts deep inside and her hands teasing her nipples. Her legs wrapped around his waist trying to get him to speed up. “Killiannnn...please.”

He was happy to accommodate her request, not able to hold back anymore himself. He changed the
rhythm, fast and hard strokes in and out of her, her inner walls and moans signifying just how close she was to her release.

If his body was able, he would stay in this moment—this feeling—forever. The pleasure on her face, in her sounds, the way her body moved and responded to his, heightened the gratification moving through his own. The beauty and pleasure of their bodies coming together over and over was beyond description. But it was becoming too much, and it was going to end in a blinding intensification of absolute bliss.

He just needed to hold on a little bit more, and with another hard thrust he felt her come around him, heard her call his name and he let her pull him over the edge with her. With one more thrust his body stilled inside her, his hands grasping her hips, as his orgasm rippled through him, pouring his essence once again inside of her.

A moment later he came down to rest on his elbows, leaning over her and resting his face on her chest. Her hands came up, one ran over the side of his face, the other running through his hair. He pressed a kiss into her skin and then looked up at her with a smile.

Emma smiled back at him. “So, are you full now?”

He grinned, “Of you? Never.” He leaned up and kissed her to prove his point. Then he stood back up pulling her back to a seated position.

“Glad to hear it.” She wrapped her arms around his neck, kissing him again. “So...not saying you didn’t do a wonderful job cleaning me of that maple syrup. But, I really need a shower.”

“Care to have some company?”

She smiled and jumped down from the counter and picked up the t-shirt from the floor. “You are incorrigible.” She then started to head for the master bathroom.

He pulled up his sweats and followed her naked swaying bottom. “Does that mean no?”

She walked into the bathroom, and turned on the water. “Did I shut the bathroom door behind me?”

He fully shed his pants this time and then came up behind her, wrapping his arms around her. “You don’t want me to change, my love. Besides, you are just as bad as I am, my little minx.”

She turned in his arms gave a quick kiss, and then opened the door and pulled him into the shower. They got clean, and then dirty once again before they left the shower.

They walked out of shower with towels wrapped around them and smiles on their faces. Emma went over to her side of the counter and pumped out some lotion from the new bottle to apply to her skin.

Killian went to his side. “Should I be worried that the shower head will replace me?” She laughed. He walked over to her, with a raised eyebrow. “That wasn’t an answer.” He wasn’t worried at all; besides, the pleasure it brought her—well both of them, really—was more than enough of a reason. Hell, if he would have thought of it for his single days…

She giggled and looked up at him, her hand coming to the side of his face. “Trust me, it could never fill that deep ache inside of me that only you can.” She went to her tiptoes to kiss him. “And you most certainly fill that need, very...very...deeply.”

She kissed him again, and pressed her hips against his. He growled into the kiss. “If you keep this
up, you’ll need another shower before we head over to your brothers.”

She laughed and swatted him playfully on the chest. “Then you better get back over to your side.”

He gave a small pout and walked back to his sink. She just shook her head at him and he smiled, watching her get ready. Her shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and razor was in his shower. Her side of the sink had its own toothpaste, soap, and toothbrush, along with lotion, a hairbrush, and a few things of makeup.

He picked up his own toothbrush to brush his teeth as his mind thought about how right it all felt. He had to shake out of it; he was getting way ahead of himself. He needed to figure out where she was and how she felt first. He wanted to tell her how he felt, what he wanted, but he could tell her past relationships made her nervous. Even if he didn’t fully know the details, he didn’t want to push her too fast. Besides, he was happy with where they were; he wasn’t willing to risk it.

“Killian...Killian?”

He had completely zoned out in his thinking and hadn’t noticed her talking to him. He quickly spit out the toothpaste and turned to her. “Sorry...what?”

She was holding up two outfits on hangers from the closet—some of the clothes she had left there. “Which one?” He looked at the nice yet simple dress, and then the other nice blouse and dark jeans.

“Love, they’re your family. I have no idea how formal or informal, or what they expect. I was actually hoping you could direct me in what to wear.” He took a step closer, “But I can tell you one thing’s for certain.”

“And what’s that?”

“You will look absolutely beautiful in either one.” She rolled her eyes, but the smile gave her away as to how much she liked the compliment.

“Okay, so...jeans it is.” She turned to walk back to the closet and he lightly grabbed her wrist and turned her towards him.

“What’s wrong?” He could tell something was off, almost as if she was nervous. Was she worried about him meeting her family? Correction, meeting her sister-in-law, he had already met her brother...under less-favorable circumstances. Maybe that is what was worrying her—afraid he already made a bad impression and they wouldn’t approve of him. She bit her lip, her eyes cast down, not saying anything. “Emma...I swear love, I'll be on my best behavior. I'll try to make up for looking like a jackass the first time I met your brother.”

Her head immediately shot straight up. “What? Oh...no...you'll be just fine.”

He took the hangers and hung them on the top edge of the door. “Then what is it?” He asked pulling her into his arms.

She nuzzled her face into his bare chest. “I'm hoping you will like them.”

He brought his hand to her chin and tilted it up to look at him. “Why wouldn't I like people you care so much about?”

“Well he's a cop and she's a school teacher and they live in this small little loft apartment...”

“Emma, do you see me as shallow?” He asked gently, his brain starting to worry.
Her eyes widened in shock, “No...not at all.” Her stupid insecurities, from past issues, were interfering and making him question her view of him.

“Then why would their home determine if I like them? And a police officer and a teacher are very admirable roles, deserving far more respect than what I do.”

She smiled up at him, “I'm sorry. It's really not you. I know you wouldn't do that. And you are absolutely right, and it's one of the reasons I…” she cut herself off and looked down before she could finish that statement. A declaration of her feelings in this moment would not be ideal.

He rubbed her back, and just waited for her to continue, to work out what she wanted to say. Though he was curious as to how that sentence was supposed to end.

She looked back up at him, “My last boyfriend...he owned his own business. He liked all kinds of flashy things and made a good living. He could never understand why anyone would want to do a dangerous job or be a teacher when they don't make a lot of money. He was always trying to get David to start a business or...he would tell me I should use my degree and go into private practice. That I could make more money, get a nicer apartment.”

He shook his head at what an idiot that man was. “There is more to life than making money. I'm just blessed that doing what I love comes with that added bonus. He was a pompous ass.”

She laughed, “He was.”

“I hope you told him that when you broke up with him.” When she stiffened in his arms, he knew, “Don't tell me the bloody bastard broke up with you.” She shook her head and looked down. He hugged her closer, “I'm sorry, love. You don't need to talk about it.”

She pressed her face into his chest. “I left work early and went to his place to surprise him…” he closed his eyes already know where this was going and he held her tighter. “Well he was surprised and so was the woman in bed with him.”

He kissed the top of her head and she continued. “Turns out they had been seeing each other for months. He blamed my job, my unwillingness to better myself, i.e. make more money, and my...frigidity in bed.”

Killian couldn't hold in the laugh at that one. “What?” He pulled away and turned her face back up to look at him. “What the heck was he into? You are anything but cold in bed.” He stroked the side of her face. “I mean, the other reasons are ridiculous, but that one is just absolutely, completely wrong.”

She gave a small smile at how bewildered he looked. “Well, if I would have had half as much fun in the sack with him as I do with you…”

Killian laughed, and then kissed her hard. She returned the kiss pulling him closer. “Well, there you go. He was blaming you, but the issues where all his.”

She looked up into those impossibly blue, twinkling eyes, a larger smile on her face. “Thank you.”

“For what? Showing you he was a bloody fool, or for the great sex?” He raised an eyebrow at the last part and she giggled.

She leaned in and kissed him. “Both.”

====∞∞∞∞∞====
They pulled up to the curb just outside her brother’s building a few minutes before five. Killian was already opening her door as she was gathering her purse and the bottle of wine they brought over. She got out and took his arm as he shut the door, and they went into the building and climbed the flight of stairs to their door, a knotted ball of anxiety already in her stomach.

He leaned over her shoulder and quietly whispered, into her ear, “Relax.” He then gave a soft kiss to her neck, making her smile, and the knots began to loosen. He took a step back as she knocked on the door; he was trying to be calm for her but he felt like his own hands were sweating. Now he knew how Emma must have felt meeting his family.

A few moments later, the door was opening and David was immediately pulling his sister into a hug. She hugged him back tightly and groaned. “It hasn’t been that long since I last saw you.”

“Long enough.” They broke apart. “Seems you have someone else to spend your free time with now.” She was about to speak when David turned to her boyfriend. “And you must be the someone.” David gave Killian a wink over Emma’s head, immediately easing Killian’s nerves. He realized that David and Emma had a relationship much like him and his brother. That was something he could definitely handle.

“That would be me.”

David stepped back and waved them both in, and shut the door. Mary Margaret was walking up to them, and gave Emma a big hug as David turned back to the other man with his hand outstretched.

“Nice to meet you...again.”

“Pleasure is all mine, Sheriff.”

“Oh please, call me David.” The brunette finally broke the hug from Emma and turned to the men. “And this is my wife, Mary Margaret.”

Killian stuck out his hand to shake hers. “Pleasure to meet you.” But she wanted none of it and instead hugged him tight, which he accepted.

Emma shook her head, but couldn't help the smile. Her butterflies settled as her family was treating him like one of their own. “Forgot to warn you. She’s a hugger.”

Once she let go, she turned back to Emma and gave her a big smile and a wink. Emma groaned internally, realizing her sister-in-law also gave such a big, hard hug to feel up her man! They would talk about this later, but instead, she knew there was another way to get through the night. “Hey, we brought wine. We might want to open that now.”

The woman took the bottle from her, sat the wine on the dining room table with a smile, and then headed for the kitchen. Killian wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her against his side. His thumb lightly ran over her hip in a calming gesture.

Mary Margaret looked inside the oven. “Actually, dinner's almost done.” She turned to her husband. “Can you finish setting the table while I finish up in here?”

“Do either of you need help?” Killian offered.

“He's really good in the kitchen,” Emma chimed.

“Thank God one of you are.” David quipped.
Killian bit his lip not to laugh, and Emma stared at her brother, mouth wide open. “Hey!”

“Enough, you two,” her sister-in-law admonished them. “Killian, Emma, you can take a seat; it should be just a few minutes.”

Emma took off her coat and put it on the coat rack; Killian did the same and then followed her over to the table. Emma took her usual side of the table and he took the seat next to her as David finished setting the table by placing the silverware.

Emma took a deep breath; everything is going just fine, she had to tell herself. Her brother joking and not giving the overly protective brother speech right off the bat was a good sign.

“David, can you take the chicken to the table?” He didn’t answer but immediately went and took the platter along with the basket of rolls and brought them over to the center of the table. Mary Margaret was right behind him with the green beans and garlic mashed potatoes.

Killian looked next to him and took Emma’s hand. He could tell she was still nervous, though much better than she had been. But honestly, he also needed the reassurance for himself as well. She smiled back at him and squeezed it. The others sat down, and David began to open the wine. He poured some into Emma’s, then Killian’s and finally his own and then sat it down on the table. “Ummm…” Emma looked over at her sister-in-law. “Don’t you want any? You always have some.”

Mary Margaret looked quickly over to David, and after a silent conversation, she then turned back to Emma. “Well, we were going to wait ‘til later tonight to say anything, but…” She reached out for her husband’s hand, and his grin back to hers was huge. “We’re having a baby.”

Emma’s reaction was immediate, she threw up her hands, dropping Killian’s in surprise, the shock on her face evident, quickly followed by a big smile. “Oh my God!” She was out of her chair in an instant and around the table hugging Mary Margaret. “Congratulations!”

She didn't know what else to say, all the emotions running through her hard to place. Joy, happiness, elation, excitement for knowing that they had wanted this, that they would make awesome parents. Heck, in many ways they were kinda parents to her. She was also concerned for her friend’s health, if everything was okay, but those were far overshadowed by pure elation as she continued her hug.

Killian smiled and patted David’s shoulder. “Congrats!” He wasn't sure what else to say for having just met the couple. But from the smiles and joy on all of their faces he was pretty damn sure it was good news. For a brief moment, his mind thought of a future where...he stopped himself. Stop getting ahead of yourself, mate.

Emma then turned and pulled her brother into a hug. A few tears streamed down her face. God, this was going to be such a lucky kid. She squeezed tight once more, and quickly wiped away the tears as she sat back down. She couldn’t get over the shock and was still staring at the two of them when the questions started. “When did you find out? How far along are you? When is the due date…”

“Woah, slow down there, motormouth.” David got the evil eye from sister for that one.

His wife swatted at his shoulder. “We found out early this week. I’m eight weeks, so looks like the beginning of September.” She picked up the the bowl of green beans, “Let’s dig in, before it gets cold.” They all took their helpings and passed the bowls and trays.

They made small talk through most of dinner. Asked Killian about his racing, and how work was going at the shelter. David talked about one of his more interesting calls he had in the last week, and Mary Margaret talked about a cute thing that happened in her class.
Killian knew he wasn’t going to get any childhood stories out of this dinner like she got out of
talking about meeting Liam since Emma was mostly grown by the time she came to live with David and his
parents. But he was interested to find out that Emma spent most of her high school years with her
nose in a book, and not out with friends.

“She stayed up over 24 hours straight reading the third book. She refused to sleep until she was
done.” David said with a teasing smile to his sister.

“You introduced me to the first two books, it was YOUR fault.” Emma grumbled in her defense.
“Besides, if I didn't read it before you got done, you would come in and spoiled it for me. Like you
did with Dumbledore in book six!” She yelled back and throwing her napkin onto her empty plate
for emphasis.

In fact, everyone’s plates were now empty; they were just now sitting around talking. “Anyone up
for dessert?” Mary Margaret asked trying to change the topic. Killian could tell she was the the
peacekeeper in the family, however he was enjoying the sibling bickering immensely.

“Yes!” came the immediate response from Emma beside him and he almost laughed at the childlike
look her face.

David caught his look and smiled at the two of them; he had heard the happiness in his sister's voice
since she had met Killian, if you didn't count the week of misunderstanding. But with how happy
and content she looked tonight, and how attentive her new boyfriend was, it made him a very
pleased and approving brother.

Mary Margaret grinned at Emma's request and stood and headed into the kitchen her husband
quickly following her. They came back moments later. David carried a blueberry pie and ice cream,
while she had the plates and silverware. “Do you like blueberry?” Mary Margaret asked Killian.

“Yes, I do.”

“That’s good. Cause you will never see an apple pie...or apple in this house.”

Killian gave her a questioning look.

“That foul fruit will not step foot in this house.” Mary Margaret said sticking out her tongue with a
’yuck’ expression, and Emma just waved her hand as if to point out the fact. Killian just smiled and
happily took the plate of pie and ice cream she handed him, and made note not to make an apple pie
for future get-togethers.

Once they were all stuffing their faces with the dessert Emma asked the question she had been
holding out on after learning of the news, “So, have you thought of any names yet?”

David groaned. “Emma, will you PLEASE tell her that we’re not gonna name him ‘Leopold’?”

“Why not?” Mary Margaret whined. “It was my father's name!”

“People will make fun of him.”

“No one made fun of my father.”

“That you knew of.”

His wife rolled her eyes at him. “Okay, what about ‘Eva,’ after my mother?”
“I don’t know how well that’ll work with a boy.”

“It might not be a boy.”

Killian covered his mouth with his napkin to not laugh at the couple’s bickering, and he raised an eyebrow at Emma. She just smiled and shook her head; this was nothing new for her.

Soon, the night was wrapping up, and they all had work in the morning. Emma’s nerves were all gone, and she was so happy the most important people in her life seemed to get along.

There was no more shaking hands, just hugs from everyone. David gave Killian a hug, patting hard on the back. Once he pulled away, and Emma was embraced by Mary Margaret, he looked at the man in front of him, his expression serious. “Take care of her. If you hurt her…”

“I won’t.” Killian stated in a firm answer. He would never willingly do so; he would rather hurt himself.

David nodded at him, accepting the answer, and then they turned back to the women just as they finished their hug. They all said goodnight, and Killian and Emma headed down the stairs to go back to Killian’s house for the night. Both of their families just got a little bigger now.
The week after dinner with her family had been crazy. She was working long hours at the shelter, and he was at the shop or out doing car tests all day. Both were so exhausted that when he'd call to tell her he was heading back, she told him just to head home, as she was already heading to bed.

The first two nights he let it go, hearing the exhaustion in her voice. Wednesday night when she did the same, he was starting to worry. Had he made a wrong impression with her brother? He thought it had gone well. Has he done something wrong? He wasn't sure what to think, but not seeing her at all for three days and only brief phone calls and text messages was driving him crazy.

So he made a decision. It was Thursday evening and this time he wasn't going to call and ask. He stopped and grabbed Chinese food and then drove over to her place after leaving the shop. He needed to know what was wrong, and he wasn't leaving without an answer.

He knocked on her door, holding the take-out to the peephole so she could only see the bag. She was already saying as she opened the door, “You have the wrong apartme…” Her eyes opened in shock at seeing him.

He gave her a smile. “Hello, love.” She had her hair in a messy bun, was wearing a baggy sweatshirt and loose pajama pants with fluffy socks. She looked beautiful.

“What are you doing here?”

He was taken back by the accusatory tone and unsure of how to proceed. “Well I had wanted to see my girlfriend, since I've barely spoken to her all week. But now I'm wondering if she doesn't want to be anymore…”

He saw her look down, biting her lip. “Killian…”

He tried to swallow the lump in his throat. “Just at least tell me what I did wrong.” When he looked back up he saw that she was already in tears. He instantly went to her, pulling her into his arms. “What's wrong? What did I do?”

She held him to her tight, and he backed them into her apartment shutting the door behind him. “It's not you…” she said barely audible over shoving her face into his chest. He scooted them over to the couch and plopped the takeout on the coffee table as he got her to sit next to him. Her tears still coming in muffled sobs.

He rubbed her back, still trying to figure out what was wrong, trying to taper down the elation that it wasn't directed at him. “What’s wrong, Swan? Let me help you.”

She pulled back, and tried to rub the tears from her checks. “You can't.” She shook her head. “You shouldn't be here...I'm too crazy right now.”

“What? Why?” He was really confused, “You can tell me anything; what's going on?” Then he saw her blush, her cheeks, the skin viewed from the scoop neck of her shirt, he knew just how far down that went. But a blush didn't make sense with how she was acting. “Emma…” He took her hand. “Tell me.”

She sniffed again, her hand waving. “Just give me a couple more days, and I'll be fine.”

And I then his brain pieced it together. Slow on the uptake Jones. He yelled at himself, as a slow
smile he couldn't help reached his face. Granted it wasn't really his fault, he had never encountered hormonal Emma Swan before. If math served the last time would have been the week they fought.

His hand came out and caressed the side of her face, her body leaned into the affection. “Love, are you avoiding me due to your...monthly cycle?” She pulled away and looked down, but he reached out for her and pulled her back. “For what reason?”

She refused to look at him, “You don't need to be around me like this.” She said waving a hand at her ensemble. “Besides, I really don't need you here looking all...that.” She motioned at him. “When you won't want to. Not with me like this.”

He was trying not to smile, while she was talking, but he couldn't help himself. He pulled her closer, resting her head on his chest. “I don't know where you got all these notions about what I would and wouldn't want. But let me tell you a few things love. One, I want to be around you no matter what. If you're gloriously naked, wearing a gorgeous dress or in baggy sweats. No matter what, you are still the most stunning woman I have very seen.” Her face burrowed into his chest and he kissed the top of her head.

“Not to mention, the sexiest. Two, no matter what you may believe or that I have demonstrated recently, I can control myself if necessary. If you want me to, that is.” She pulled back and looked at him, giving him a questioning look. He gave a smirking smile in return, “And lastly, if you are okay with it, and if you want me anyways...well, I certainly don't mind.” Her eyes widened, and he kissed the tip of her nose. “Besides, I have heard that orgasms help with cramps, headaches, and other discomforts during this time.” He arched an eyebrow at her.

She pulled back, “Killian, you don't have to…”

“Oh, trust me, it would not be a hardship love. Anything but.” He pulled her close again, “Now if you don't want to, I can understand that and I won't force the issue.” His fingers lightly trailed over her spine. “But if those hormones are making you want to...I am definitely up for the occasion.” He took her hand and placed it over his hardening length, and she gasped as her eyes rolled back.

She pulled back again, her eyes still questioning. “You don't find it...well...gross?”

He shook his head. “I don't know who put that notion into your thoughts, love. But no, I don't find a normal bodily process gross.” He took her hand again, letting his thumb rub over the back of it. “I mean there are different steps that need to be taken than normal, but that's all.” His other hand had come up to the side of her face. “In fact, if you had just told me, we could both me enjoying my shower right now.” He felt the small shudder go over her her. “Tell me what you want, love? Dinner or…dessert?”

He could see the indecisiveness in her eyes, the war in herself of what she wanted versus what she had been told was wrong. She then bit her lip. “I'm not sure...how...I've never.”

He gave her a soft smile, “Do you trust me?” She nodded instantly making his heart swell. He stood from the couch and held out his hand, which she took and he pulled her off the couch and pulled her up to him. “Head to the bathroom, and remove any feminine products.” He watched her blush, and he leaned in for a soft kiss. “Wash up a tad, make yourself comfortable and bring out a towel with you.”

She squinted at him. “How often have you done this?”

He scratched behind his ear. “Only Milah. She opened my eyes to the fact that women may want to be intimate during. Before that, while I had no issue, I thought women were opposed to it during that
time. I now know each woman is different in regards to this…and most things, really.”

She nodded, then reached up and stroked the side of his face. “Are you sure?”

He leaned down to press her lips to his and pressed her to him. His mouth opening, his tongue delving onto hers. They both moaned, and she wrapped her arms around his neck, her hips pressing against his now-hard length. He pulled back his head, his eyes dark with desire, her hips still pressed to his. “Can’t you feel how sure, my love?”

“Mmmmhmrmrmrm.” She leaned up and kissed him again, then pulled away, she nodded her head, straightened her shoulders, strength in her resolve. “Give me a few minutes, and I'll meet you in the bedroom.”

She turned and headed to the bathroom, and he gave a small swat to her backside. She turned with wide eyes which he just returned with a smirk, and then headed for her bedroom. He was very used to this room by now. He started with his shirt, unbuttoning a few buttons and then pulling the rest over his head. He sat on the bed, and took off his shoes and socks. Then stood once again to get rid of his pants, leaving him in his black boxer briefs. He pulled back the comforter and top sheet to the end of the bed, and then sat down on the soft queen bed waiting for her.

A few minutes later, she walked into the bedroom in just her sweat shirt, holding an old towel, her hair down and brushed, while biting her lip. “Emma...come here, love.” He said with his arms open wide and she walked to him. He stood, and tilted her chin up, “If you don’t want to…”

“I do,” she said quickly.

He gave her a soft smile, and took the towel from her and placed it on the bed. Turning back to her he he moved his hands to the bottom hem of her shirt and pulled it over her head. She was deliciously naked underneath. “I’ve missed you so bloody much.” A smirk formed on her face, and then she started laughing. He was confused as to why she was laughing for a minute and then he placed what he said and he started laughing as well. He shook his head with a smile. “I swear that wasn’t intentional.”

Her smile grew. “Well, it certainly broke the tension.” She raised up on her tiptoes and kissed him, and then moved onto the bed, centering herself on it and the towel. She then looked back up at him. “You are overdressed. Those need to come off.” She motioned to his boxers.

“As you wish.” He gave her a wink and bent over removing them quickly and left them on the floor. His hard length bobbing as he strode over and climbed up onto the bed over her. Her legs spread wide for him as he moved in between them and crouched over her. His hand trailed over her side, and up to cup a breast. She arched into the touch and he watched her face to see how sensitive she was. She jumped a little as he pinched at the peak, and he noted to play a little more gently.

His lips trailed down her stomach and she tensed. “What are you doing?”

He looked up at her with a smirk, his hands spreading her legs wider. “Relax, my love.” He moved his face closer to her core and she tensed again. “Emma, his is as low as I’m going.” He said as his tongue flicked at her bundle of nerves. She moaned and he groaned against her, sending the
vibrations through her. “I missed you.” He said as he sucked her clit into his mouth, making her hips move against him, both of her hands now in his hair. He felt the tension in her change from being unsure to being on edge and ready to fall.

He was actually a little surprised how fast she was already there. She whimpered as he continued, her legs starting to shake around him. He knew her body, and knew she needed just a little bit more to send her flying. He moved two fingers to her core, and pressed them inside, curling them to that spot that had her screaming his name, and moments later she was. Her muscles contracted around his fingers as he slowed his ministrations.

A few moments later, he stopped and caught her eyes flutter open. He pulled his mouth away from her and smiled. “Better?”

She nodded. “But I don’t think we are done yet, are we?”

He shook his head. “Not by a long shot.” He pulled his fingers from her, and kept his eyes locked on hers while he wiped them on the towel, and then moved up over her. Kissing her soundly, he settled between her legs, and then she wrapped them around him.

His tip was already pressed to her entrance, and she tilted her hips, trying to take him in. He grinned into the kiss, and then pressed slowly into her, groaning as he felt her tighten around him. He pulled away from her lips. “God, I missed you.”

Her hands trailed over his back, pressing him closer. “I missed you, too.” She grunted when he pressed fully into her and then started to move. She brought her legs up higher, changing the angle slightly, allowing him to move even deeper. She gasped into his ear as he increased his speed, moving a little harder into her, his hips plunging in and out. The pleasure was exquisite. Had it really only been four days apart? It felt like so much longer.

As he continued his thrusts, his arms moved under her back to grip her shoulders from underneath, allowing him to plunge faster and harder. With her moans and gasps encouraging him, he buried his face in her neck, kissing the skin, nipping at her flesh. He could feel her inner walls already beginning to flutter once more. His mind briefly wondering how much her current hormones were affecting her. But her hands gripping his shoulders, her sounds increasing volume and frequency, and the start of her muscles gripping him had him forget everything but the pleasure she was creating in him and that he wanted to extend for her.

His hips continued to pump into her at her screams, and her body shook as she gripped him hard. He couldn’t hold on, and with another thrust he was losing himself to the pleasure inside of her. His hips stilling deep, his hands gripping her tight to him, and his mouth finding hers one more time in a searing kiss.

They broke the kiss and his head move to her shoulder, as they both tried to regain their breath. Moments later he started to feel a small rumble under him, but then it turned into a full giggle. He picked his head up and looked at her quizzically.

She laughed harder at the look on his face, which caused him to smile. “A man could get a complex with you laughing after sex like that, you know.”

Emma giggled some more. “Sorry. It’s not that. Really.”

He moved his arms from under her, and his hand came up to cup her cheek. “Then what is it?”

“I feel so good right now.” They smiled at each other. “I should have told you days ago.” She
winked at him, and he laughed.

“Yes, you should have.” He kissed the tip of her nose. “Now, I have a serious question for you.”

She swallowed a little look of worry on her face, “What?”

“Did I tire you all out, or are you interested in round two?”

“Round two? I might be game.”

“Good.” He pulled back, and gave her a smirk, “Care to join me for a shower?” She grinned, nodded, and followed him into the bathroom.

After the shower, they sat on her bed, partially clothed,. she in her PJ bottoms and a t-shirt and he in his boxers, both eating reheated Chinese food while watching Netflix on her laptop. She snuggled into his side and he kissed the top of her head. She was relaxed, and finally feeling pretty good. She pressed her face into his side, smelling him and taking the comfort in his presence. He was now her favorite choice in PMS relief. Well, he was much more than that. She should have known she could tell him anything.

“Feeling better, love?” She nodded into his side at his question as she took another bite of egg roll. “You sure you don’t need anything else? Some ice cream? Chocolate? Another go-around?”

She laughed into his side and swatted his shoulder, “I’m good.” She sat up and then looked at him. “Really good.” She leaned in and kissed him and he leaned in, his hand going to the side of her face. “Thank you.”

He shook his head. “Trust me, you don’t have to thank me. If you didn’t notice, I was pretty happy myself.” He winked at her and she laughed. “But, please don’t hide from me. Just tell me whatever is wrong.”

Emma nodded. “I will.”

Killian smiled and reached for her hand to give it a squeeze. They then continued to eat, when he remembered, “Oh, I was meaning to ask—how is the new counselor doing?” He tried to sound nonchalant, but he knew that the answer to this would be the major reason if his next was going to get a positive answer.

“Good. Ingrid has tons of experience; the only training I really needed to give her is on our systems and policies and how everything works, like what forms to use. We divvied up the casefiles last week.” She looked down at her take-out box, trying to avoid his confused look. But she knew she had to tell him. “So, as you must know from that, I haven’t been working late this week. I was just…”

“Trying to avoid me.” His hand came out and moved her chin up to look at him.

“I’m sorry. I just...it seems so silly now.”

“Emma, it’s not silly.” He leaned in and gave her another kiss. “But I want you to be able to tell me anything.” He looked deep into her eyes, “Anything.” They both swallowed. “Don’t ever think something is too silly to tell me. Or don’t be afraid. Just trust me.”

She knew what she wanted to say, but it wasn’t the right time. Tonight was definitely not the right
time, but she nodded. “I do trust you.”

He smiled back, and changed the subject. “Good. So, since Ingrid is doing a good job, do you think you could take that vacation that Archie promised you?”

She squinted her eyes at him and tilted her head. “What are you planning?”

“Well...next week starts the Daytona race weeks. I was wondering if you could come with me?” A little bit of panic started to rise inside her. Could she take time off work? A trip together...that was huge. But she also saw the hope on his face, and before she could say anything he continued. “We could fly in Wednesday night. Practice is in the mornings, but afterwards we could head to the beach. Warm sun and sand.” He reached out and took her hand. “We could watch the sunset with a picnic on Saturday for a pre-Valentine’s Day celebration. Unfortunately, the race is on actual Valentine’s Day...but I will make that up to you.”

He squeezed her hand and she was floored that he thought he would have to make up for his job having to be done on Valentine’s Day, when he was already trying to whisk her away to a warm beach. Part of her was worried about taking the time off, but she knew she deserved it, and from the look on his face, she just couldn’t say no, so she smiled. “Okay.” His grin was huge and he was pulling her in for a kiss when she stopped him. “I will ask Archie if it is okay. But if he says no…”

Killian smiled. “I doubt that will be a problem.”

She eyed him. “What did you do?” He pulled her quickly into a kiss, and for a moment she forgot about her question. But when she took a moment to catch her breath it came back. “Hey! Answer me.”

He looked sheepish, and his free hand was already up and scratching behind his ear. “I may have talked to Archie the last time I was in the office.” She was going to murder him. His hands both went up to stop her, “I just asked if his offer of you going on vacation was still on the table. He said yes, as long as the new counselor was doing okay and trained.”

“And that is why you asked that first!”

“I’m sorry, love. But, I’m really looking forward to you being there. I got to see what you do, and I want you to see me in action as well.” His hand came up to caress her cheek, “Not to mention to get you some place warm, and maybe in a bikini.”

She laughed and threw a pillow at him. “You already see me naked.”

“I’m still a man, love.” With that he pulled her to him and pressed her back into the bed, his mouth to hers. Oh he was definitely a man, and he was all hers. God, she was lucky.

Emma drove to Killian's house the next night after work. He was done early and requested that she spend the night with him. He of course reminded her of his shower, trying tempt her. It wasn't really necessary anymore; her lovely ‘friend’ was basically almost done visiting. But she really didn't want to make him have to get back in the car and drive to her place.

She pulled into the driveway, and he must have been watching the camera because she didn't even have to ring in to get the gate to open. She was ready to park on the side of the drive when she noticed one of the garage doors open and an empty spot. He was there, waving her in.

Emma pulled into the garage and parked her Bug, then got out of the car with her bag as the garage door closed. “Where did the car go that was here? There wasn't an open space before.”
He was already scratching behind his ear, "I uh...moved it to storage with the others." Others? Just how many damn vehicles did he have? He then started walking to the door into the house, and held it open for her. "I barely use it anyways."

She knew he had done it for her, but was just trying not to make it a big deal; her heart swelled at how sweet he was. He pulled her towards the kitchen, and she could already smell whatever he had cooking for dinner. Her stomach let out a small growl, and he chuckled. "Dinner is almost done, love." He walked over to the fridge and pulled out a bottle of white, one of her favorites that he kept stocked now. "Wine?"

"Please."

She sat on the bar stool and watched him work. A man that knew his way around the kitchen was a very, very sexy thing.

He handed her a glass while he kept one of his own. "So...what did Archie say?" he asked as he walked over to the oven and checked inside.

Emma swallowed her sip of wine. "Well, I'm not sure what to think. When I asked, it almost felt like he wanted to throw me out the door right then."

He raised an eyebrow in disbelief. "I doubt that." He walked back to her. "More like, he knows you need time off, and cares, and wants you to relax a little."

She gave him a glare but it quickly turned into a smile. "I suppose so. Even Ingrid was happy to take on the cases while I left. I just hope I have a job to come back to."

He reached out for her hand. "I highly doubt that would ever happen." He interlaced their fingers. "How about you relax and just think about what you're going to pack and what you want to do while there."

"I've never been there; you know better than me. So just surprise me?"

His grin got bigger. "I can definitely do that, Swan."

"So how are we getting there? Road trip? It's a little late to buy tickets." She didn't even want to think what the price of a plane ticket to Florida would be with less than a week to go.

"No worries, we are flying in on my jet. The only thing I need to get to them is your personal data so they can clear you."

"What?" Her brain was reeling, "You...you have your own...jet? Do you know how much that costs?" She wasn't sure why she asked that. She had no clue, but he more than likely did since he bought it. Her heart was racing; first all the cars, now a jet. The feeling that he was far, far out of her league slammed into her again. Hell, she didn't even know how to cook.

"Emma...relax. It is standard amongst drivers. We travel all the time; if we had to on commercial airlines with their schedules—bloody hell it would be a nightmare. With the jet, it's a lot smaller and can land at the smaller airports, and some tracks even have their own runway. The crew is on another one as well."

She nodded; it made logical sense. But that sense that they were from two very different worlds wouldn't leave her. They may have started life in relatively the same one, but they were worlds apart now. She gave him a smile that didn't reach her eyes. "Makes sense."
He could tell she wasn't dealing well with what he said. He had known she probably wouldn't take it well, based on their prior talks. He was hoping at some point it wouldn't bother her, but she was obviously not to that point yet. She was trying to act like everything was fine, but he knew better.

He gave her a smile and headed back to the oven, and pulled out the lasagna that was now ready.

“What can I do to pay you back for all this?” He quickly turned towards her voice and her question. “I mean, you always cook for me. You're taking me on this trip. You do my laundry that I leave here. You take me out to dinner and lunch. You spoil me rotten.” She was going on, and on about what he did for her, and he could see she was close to tears. He sat down the food and went to her, pulling her close. “And you just know what to say and do. What do I give you? Because I can't think of anything.”

“Emma…” Where did he even begin?

She pulled away, tears streaming down her face. “See...nothing.”

“Are you kidding me? Love...You do so much more for me, I'm trying to decide where to even start.” She gave him a look that said she didn't believe that. “Lass, you are much too hard on yourself.” He pulled her closer, “You have a beautiful soul. You care so much about those kids, about everyone.”

Emma shook her head. “What do I do for you?” She knew she was putting him on the spot, that she wasn't being fair. But she just didn't understand what her appeal was. He could have anyone; she wasn't that special.

He pulled back and cupped her face in his hands. “Emma...I get to be myself when I'm around you. You see me for who I really am, not the famous racecar driver. You don't take my shit and you call me on it.” He leaned in and kissed her nose. “I thought I would never be able to have the future I wanted ever again after Milah, and thank heavens you have shown me, given me hope that it's all still possible.” He gave a soft kiss to her lips, and his thumbs brushed away her tears. “You make me so happy by just being with me, talking to me, waking up next to me. How simple things that don't cost anything mean so much more than what any amount of money can buy.” He kissed her again. “You have such a huge heart, and you care so deeply. You bring out the best in me. You make me the man I want to be—the one I forgot to be for years.”

She was crying again but now for a different reason—she wasn't sure how she had done so much. But she could see that he meant every word. She wasn't ready to say what she felt, but she wanted to show him. She pulled him in by the lapels of his shirt and kissed him deeply. His arms wrapped around her back, pulling her close as he deepened the kiss, his tongue delving into her mouth, making her moan and press her chest against his, both trying to meld themselves together.

Emotions were running high for both of them, and there was really only one way this was going to end. He pressed her legs open and moved between them, then pulled her towards him. She got the hint and wrapped her legs around his waist without even breaking the kiss.

Then he was moving, he didn't even bother asking as he headed for the master bath. There was a shower with both of their names on it, and he intended on showing her just how much he cared for her and what she meant to him without words.
Chapter 16

Time breezed by and soon she was turning off her work computer for the last time for the next week and a half. Emma looked up to see Killian leaning against the doorframe to her office; she said she would meet him at her place, but he had insisted putting her luggage into his car that morning and that he would pick her up that night. He knew if he didn’t, she was more than likely going to linger.

But truth be told, as the time got closer, she couldn’t wait. She wanted to take this trip with him. She wanted to see him race. And, damn would some warm sun feel really good.

She had tried to pack all that she was going to take in her carry-on, still used to the commercial airlines. But he had gently reminded her that those rules did not apply in this case. So now she had slightly over packed. Okay, more than slightly: she had two bags of luggage and a bag for on the plane. But she had no idea what to expect, what the weather might turn into, or any idea as to what Killian had planned.

The weather was supposed to be sunny and mid to high seventies for most of the time there, with a few days in the sixties and some sprinkles. Those days weren't supposed to be race days, and Killian kept hoping it would stay that way. He explained that the rain could potentially end the race too early or delay it to another day.

Once her computer was shutdown and her desk straightened, she grabbed her purse and headed straight to him. He stood up and pulled her to him, giving her a light kiss. “Ready, love?”

“Sure am.”

He gave her a huge smile that lite up his face, as they both turned and headed out of the building and to his car.

The drive didn't take long, as they were leaving from one of the smaller regional airports and not one of the large international ones. The process was very different. While there was still security, and bag screenings, everything was very quick, and the people were extremely nice. But then again, when they only needed to clear three people—the two of them and the the pilot—for a personal jet, maybe that was to be expected.

The pilot was tall, with black spiky hair and dark brown eyes. His name tag said ‘S. Jetstream,’ and Emma had to try to keep the laugh in at the appropriate name. His greeting to Killian showed their friendly familiarity, and and then he turned to her. Shaking her hand, he said “Emma, nice to meet you. You can call me Dusty.”

“Hi, Dusty. Nice to meet you.”

He smiled at both of them and the turned back to Killian. “Bags are all loaded. I don’t expect any bad turbulence based on weather patterns. We should land in just under an hour and half, give or take, based on how many other planes are landing at the time.”

Killian clapped him on the back as he set for the cockpit and they took their seats in two seats facing each other with a small table between. They fastened their seatbelts, and he leaned over the table, she did the same, and he took her hand. “I'm so glad you were able to join me, my love.” She smiled in returned and he kissed her hand. They both sat back as the plane began to move, and soon they were off.

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The plane ride went smoothly, the turbulence a little more pronounced in the smaller plane, but all in all not bad. Especially once they moved to the couch; whenever she would start to worry, he would hold her and kiss her, thoroughly distracting her. She had also found out that the couch actually unfolded into a bed. He told her it came in handy when flying home across country after long races.

His eyes darkened with lust when she asked if it was only used for sleep. She had a feeling they would be testing that bed out if she was ever able to accompany him to those races. She was hoping she would be able to; at least a few of them. She wasn't looking forward to the times where he was free and she was working or when her weekend came, he was across the country. She tried to push the thoughts away and focus on the here and now.

Since the airport was right next to the track, a car was waiting to take them the small distance. He had already told her they would be staying in the motor home, which he already had stocked with food, but he was hoping he could convince her to go out to dinner. It was barely seven thirty. He smiled as he watched her take in everything. They were ushered through the gate and security and then driven to the RV parking ground in front of Lake Lloyd. This was the location all the drivers parked their homes away from home. The driver stopped in front of his; it was mainly black on the outside with a few dark stripes of maroon. The driver opened his door first and then went around for hers.

Killian got to her side, as the driver went for their bags. “Ready, love?” She nodded and went to the door. The driver had locked it for him after it was parked, and he fished the key out of his pocket. He headed up the steps first and then offered her his hand as she climbed.

Once inside, Emma's eyes widened and mouth dropped open. This was definitely not what she thought a motor home would look like. First, it was definitely bigger than her apartment. Two, the finishes were much nicer. Was that granite on the kitchen counter?

Killian just smiled and grabbed her hand, leading her away from the door so the driver could bring in the bags. They moved into the kitchen and living room area, and he then went back to the driver. “You can just set the bags there. We’ll move them later.”

Once the man was done, Killian tipped him and the driver gave his thanks and left. He then turned back to Emma who was just looking around in shock. “I'm guessing it is not what you were thinking it would be.”

She shook her head no, “One summer my parents took David and I camping, and they rented a small RV.” She turned around looking, her hands trailing over the custom woodwork. “It was nothing like this.”

He walked over and looped his arms around her waist, pulling her close. “Well, it's basically my home for most weekends of the year.” She nodded and looked up at him and smiled and he leaned down to kiss her. “How tired are you? Want to stay in and have something easy to make, or willing to go out?”

“The driver already left.” Then her eyes got big, “You aren't planning on driving this there are you?”

He couldn't help the chuckle. “Oh, God, no. I rented a car. It should be right around here somewhere.”

“You rented a car?”

“Usually I just stay at the track and have the food in the fridge. But we are here a lot longer this time,
and you are here.”

She bit her lip. “If you don't mind...I'm really hungry. And the trip wasn't bad, so I'm not tired.”

“Perfect, I know the perfect place. It's a little hole in the wall, but it serves up some really good food.” He gave her another kiss and then left her to freshen up while he went to go find the car.

He had been right—the restaurant was not big, and looked like nothing great, but the food was amazing. It was definitely a local favorite and frequented by the drivers. They returned back ‘home’ and had quickly tested out the king bed in the master bedroom. It was tucked into the back, and there wasn't much foot room around it, but it was comfortable, and definitely suited what they needed it for, a couple times.

The alarm went off much earlier than she would have preferred on vacation, but she realized he wasn't and she wanted to see everything. They quickly got dressed and ate breakfast, and then headed hand in hand over to the garage, where his team was putting any finishing touches on the car.

He had half pulled on his firesuit, and the top half hung from him, leaving him in a white T-shirt. She bit her lip and slid on her own pair of sunglasses, trying to hide her stare. God, he looked good like that.

Since it was still early, and the temperature still a little cool, she had opted for jeans, a T-shirt, and a light jacket. Her hair was in a ponytail; she realized with all the cars, the headset, and the wind, she would need it.

Robin met them as they walked into the garage. “Nice to see you again, Emma.”

“You, too. Glad to be here.” She looked around the garage, her ears wincing a little at the sound of hammering and air wrenches going off.

Killian leaned into her. “You’ll get used to it.”

She turned back to him smiling, and walked with him over to his car. This time, the car had all the logos on it from all his sponsors. She had learned it was a ‘paint scheme’ and tried not to snicker at the Magnum Condom logo. Damn it, Mary Margaret!

He caught her eye, and he wiggled his eyebrows at her. He knew what she was thinking, and loved that the blush deepened over her face down her neck. He tried to hold himself back, knowing exactly how far it went. He pulled her back to his front and leaned into her ear. “If you keep having those thoughts, I'm going to have to drag you back to the RV.”

She turned around in his arms, “Who says you have to drag me there?”

He gave a growl before he leaned in and kissed her.

“What do we have here?”

The voice carried to the two and Killian sighed into the kiss. He broke away and gave Emma a smile and then, turned to the man walking towards them.

Emma could tell the man was a driver—he had on a firesuit—and his hair was bleached blonde, almost white. The woman on his arm was gorgeous, a tall leggy brunette in much too high of heels to be comfortable, but her face had a genuine smile.
“Victor,” Killian gritted out as nicely as he could.

The newcomers got right in front of them and the man laughed. “Come on, now. Don't be like that. I beat you fair and square last season.”

Killian sighed. He was right. Victor may be an ass, but he did race fair and he was a good guy at heart. And in fact, he was kinda glad he lost the championship last year. If he hadn't...he may never had met Emma. He turned to her, “Emma, this is Victor Whale, driver of the 36, and his girlfriend Ruby Lucas.” He turned to them, “Victor, Ruby...this is Emma Swan…” he turned back to her and with a smile, “my girlfriend.”

Emma smiled and reached out to shake both of their hands. ‘Pleasure to meet you both.’

Ruby grinned and moved closer to Emma, “If all this car stuff gets too much, just let me know. I know where there is a mall or nail salon near every one of these tracks.” She gave her a wink and Emma laughed.

“I will remember that. But, I kinda want to know…” she waved at the garage, “how it all works and what happens.”

“You've never seen a race?” Victor asked shocked.

Emma bit her lip, looked down and shook her head no.

“Well, you certainly don't have to worry about her being a groupie.”

“Victor!” Ruby screamed at him.

“Bloody hell, that is completely…”

Victor held up his hand. “I’m sorry.” He turned to Emma. “Forgive me, sometimes my mouth moves before I think it through.”

She smiled at him. “It's okay.”

“Hey, Killian, mate we need you over here for a minute.” Robin yelled from deeper in the garage near the car.

Killian turned towards her. “I'll be right over there if you need me.” He looked back at the others, but mainly at Ruby, giving her a slightly pleading look. She nodded, and he sighed in relief. He knew Ruby and Emma would probably hit it off.

“Go...us girls can talk.” She waved him and also Victor away. As the men left to get to work with their crew, Ruby turned to Emma. “I know quite a bit; I've been coming to races with a pack of friends since I was a kid. Also know my way around a car, and no I don't mean just the back seat.”

She gave a wink and Emma laughed. “How about this, you ask me any questions you have, and I'll answer. Don't be afraid to ask; I won't laugh. Trust me. You are new.” She pointed her finger to a couple other women wandering around. “Others have been here for years with their husbands, and don't know a damn thing and don't care. The fact that you do care says a lot.”

Emma smiled at Ruby and looked over her shoulder at Killian, who was busy listening to Robin with his head poked under the hood. She felt like Ruby was going to be very helpful, not to mention it would be nice to know another woman around. She could share tips on what to wear...okay, maybe that was a bad idea now remembering Ruby’s choice in footwear. “Okay, can you tell me why the cars are in the garage like this? We aren't in number or name order.”
Ruby wrapped her arm around Emma’s shoulder. “Garage location is based on point standings as of the last race. Since it’s the start of the season, they are using the standings as of the end of last year. That is why Victor is in stall one, and Killian is in stall two.” She leaned in closer. “Just so you know, Victor barely beat him. I mean barely. It was almost like...well, a twist of fate.” She winked at her again, and Emma smiled and her heart beat a little faster at the knowledge. They continued to walk around the garage, and Emma asked questions that Ruby eagerly answered.

Emma and Ruby had followed the crew chiefs to watch their respective drivers do their practice laps. Emma had kissed Killian before he got in the car and now stood on a platform with another headset on to protect her ears. Ruby gave her an encouraging smile as they watched the cars move from pit lane, gain speed, and head out onto the track.

This was slightly familiar to her at least, having had watched him in practice that one time. However, that time was without other cars on the track going what she considered wayyyyy to fast. She kept reminding herself of all the safety equipment that the car had, as well as the track, that Ruby tried to reassure her with. She had told her that the drivers can flip those cars and run into the wall, and get up and walk away. Though the information helped, she was sure she never wanted to see that happen, at least not to his car.

She had been sure she wasn't going to find it interesting, cars just going around in a circle. But as she watched and saw them move around each other and the track, and how close they got to one another, it seemed like some crazy, synchronized dance, just that none of them had practiced that sequence prior. She listened to Killian’s jovial spotter tell him when he was clear to pass. She heard Robin and him talk about how the car was handling and what improvements were needed. It was much more complicated than it looked.

She was watching the 71 zoom around the track, passing the other drivers; some allowed him to, because it was practice, and others made it more difficult because they were having fun, like Victor. After a few more laps, Robin called him in so the crew could make the adjustments requested. They would take awhile, so he was done for the day.

Since Victor was staying out longer, the girls gave each other a hug, and Emma mouthed she would see her tomorrow. She then followed Robin back to the garage; the area was a little more muffled from the roar of the cars, so she was finally able to take off the headset.

Killian parked the car, took off his helmet and set it on the dash, then slid out of the window. Emma was immediately pulled to him in a deep kiss. His adrenaline was still pumping, and seeing her made him want to do much more than kiss her. But his brain cleared a little, remembering they were not alone. He pulled away, and cupped the side of her face. “I don't know about you but I'm really thirsty and starving. How about I wrap this up with the crew, and we head out of here for lunch and then head to the beach?”

She gave him a big smile and nodded yes. He reluctantly let her go and headed back over to the crew. A few minutes later, he was back and then went to the RV to grab their things, change, and then head out of the track and over to the beach. They found a small bar and grill right next to the sand, and dived into their lunch. She was shocked to find out just how many calories were burned racing, not to mention how hot it got in the car. It was no wonder he devoured the burger in record time and was on almost to the bottom of his second glass of lemonade.

He slurped up the rest of his drink, the waitress sat down another and left the table with his empty glass, and then he sat back and looked at Emma across the table. She was barely into her food, and he was all done, and she was just smiling at him. “Feel better?” she asked while munching on a
French fry.

He arched his back and patted his stomach, “Much. So, did you enjoy your time with Ruby? Or watching practice?” He was worried she didn't like it, was worried that she wouldn't want to come back. But he tried not to show it.

She finished another fry and the reached for her drink. “Ruby is really nice. How she walks around that place in those heels, I have no idea.” They both laughed and she munched on another fry. “Practice was interesting. It was almost beautiful and graceful in a way.”

That was not what he expected. “How so, love?”

She swallowed a bite of her burger, and quickly took a drink. “Well, it’s almost like a dance. The cars moving around one another, or side by side. One getting in front just to be passed on a turn.” He watched her close her eyes almost envisioning it and it made him smile, and his body relax. “It’s all very complicated but works so well, blends seamlessly.”

He laughed, “That is true, until someone tries to cut in where they shouldn’t and then a crash happens.”

“So, I guess more like a high school dance, then.”

They both laughed at that and she started to ask a few more questions about some of the terms he had told Robin that needed fixing. It allowed her to finish eating while he answered in detail all of her questions.

He loved that she was so inquisitive about what he did. It made him feel that she cared, that she took seriously something he did and loved. His heart swelled more and more at each question, showing just how much she had paid attention. His hand reached for her free one, needing to touch her, and interlaced their fingers together as they continued talking.

The sun was out and it was up to a nice 85 degrees—a bit warm for mid-February, even in Florida, but fate was on their side. They walked out onto the mostly deserted beach and he laid out a blanket. She sat her beach bag on top, along with their towels, and kicked off her sandals.

“Swim or sun first, love?”

“Not sure that water is warm enough yet; I may dip a toe in later. Right now, I just want the sun on my skin for awhile.”

He gave her a smirk. “Then you should get out of those clothes, darling.”

She gave him a sultry look and stood up to peel off her sundress, leaving her in a very tiny red bikini. She watched his eyes move from a light sea blue to dark sapphire, and was very pleased she had picked this suit. It had done the job quite well. She knelt onto the blanket, got out the sunblock from her bag, and looked over at him. “What about you?”

He shook his head, trying to take his eyes off her. She looked sexy as hell in that suit. Bloody hell man, get a hold of yourself. For crying out loud, you have seen her naked. Maybe that was the problem—his brain was already playing the images of untying those strings and tackling her to the blanket...he shook his head again, only to see her with a knowing smiling on her face. Minx.

Killian took off his sandals and pulled off his T-shirt, and he was already wearing his swim trunks as shorts. He turned back to her and was pleased to see the same look on her face as he had when she
changed. “Emma…” He watched her eyes move over his chest and then finally reached his eyes. He raised his eyebrow at her. “Want some help with that?” he asked, motioning to the lotion.

“Yes, please.” She handed him the lotion, turned her back to him, and pulled her hair over her shoulder.

He took the bottle and squeezed some into his hand while he looked around. There were some people here and there on the beach, but no one that close to them. He dropped the bottle to the blanket and warmed the lotion between his hands.

He started at the middle of her back, using a massaging motion as he went. Her head lolled on her shoulders and she gave a soft moan. He leaned in to kiss the back of her neck and then nuzzled behind her ear as his hands moved lower down to the small of her back. “Does that feel good?”

“Mmmhmm,” came the soft reply from her parted lips, eyes closed as she leaned into him.

His hand spread out towards her hips, and then worked up her sides as she swayed back into him. His lips left a kiss at the juncture of her neck and shoulder. His hands came up and his fingertips grazed the sides of her breasts. He heard her suck in a breath and smiled into her shoulder, placing another kiss there.

He moved his hands under the tied string at her back, and then up to her shoulders, kneading the muscles, eliciting a pleased groan from her. He kept massaging her shoulders, trying to keep his hands there and not move them down her front to palm her breasts. His swim trunks were becoming quite uncomfortable and he was even more thankful the beach was so quiet.

He leaned his head over her shoulder and kissed her cheek, “You’ll have to do your front love. Anymore and I’ll be arrested for public indecency.” He pulled her back against him, her bottom pressed against his straining pants to make his point.

Emma smiled out at the waves, and wiggled her ass against him for good measure. Her smile getting bigger at the groan that followed. “How about you lay down, and I’ll get your back.”

He closed his eyes, and took a breath. Laying down in his current predicament wasn't really going to be helpful. She turned around in his arms, her eyes traveling down. The licking of her lips did not help the situation. Her eyes traveled up to his, “Do I need to dig a hole in the sand?”

He gave her an evil look. “Hilarious Swan.” He smiled after taking a look at her. “But I'm not the only one affected.” He gave a pointed look to her clearly hardened nipples under her top.

She bit her lip and straightened her shoulders. “Turn over.”

The command in her voice did not help the situation, his body excited by it, but he did as he was told. He let out a groan as he laid down, the pressure driving him crazy. He heard her open the bottle and he had assumed she was going to stay seated next to him. Oh, how wrong he was. Soon he found her straddling his hips, her bottom resting on his, adding more pressure to a growing concern under him. She rocked her hips, and he couldn't help the moan that came from him. “Bloody hell, are you trying to kill me?”

She leaned over him, letting her breasts press into his back. “Your swim trunks can get a little dirty...you can just go take a dip to clean up.”

A growl came from his throat as his lust-filled brain became aware of her plan for him. Then her lotion-covered hands moved over his back as she pressed down against his hips. To anyone who was looking from a distance, she was just applying sunscreen, but what she was really doing was
working him into a frenzy. The relaxing movement of her fingers on his back and shoulders was a complete contrast to what she was doing with her hips; it was anything but relaxing. His body tensed his breath came in quick pants. He wasn’t able to keep his hips still either.

He grunted as she rotated her hips a little more firmly while her fingers kneaded the cords in his neck. “Emma...fuck.” He laid his head on his arms, his hands gripping the opposite forearm, trying to hold back. “Love...I’m not going to be…” He tensed and groaned again. “pay you back until we...fuck...get home.”

She laughed into his ear. “You have built up quite the credit in your account. I think you can afford a few on your own.” She rocked her hips again, and pressed her breasts more firmly into his back. “Now be good, and come for me.”

That was the last straw, that sultry voice telling him to come, and he did. All his muscles tightened and jerked and then released in pleasure. He bit his lip to try to keep in the sound, but he couldn’t help the gasps for air as waves of bliss cascaded over him.

She moved to straddle his legs, her touch gentling on his back, allowing him to relax and come down from the high. Slowly he picked up his head and turned to look over his shoulder. She was smiling brightly at him, and he shook his head. “There will be payback, my love.”

She bit her lip. “Mmm...I surely hope so.” She scooted over next to him, onto the blanket and started to apply sunscreen to the rest of her. She glanced over at him, “You may want to go take a dip.”

He nodded, “You are right, I should.” He stood and took a look around, glad still no one was around. “But not alone.”

Before she could register what he said, he pulled her up into a fireman's hold and jogged to the water's edge.

“Oh, don’t you dare!” she screamed.

“Oh...I dare.” he said, and when he was in up to mid-thigh, he dropped her in the water.

She came up quickly. Damn, that was cold. “You!” She splashed a wave of water at him, catching him in the face.

He laughed and splashed her back. They kept the water fight going, until he grabbed her by the waist and dragged them both under the surface, only to come back up with her in his arms. Her hair all wet, the sunlight catching in the drops of water on her face. God, she was beautiful. His hand came to the back of her head, and he brought her closer and kissed her.

The water was much too cold to stay in, or they might have had other ideas. They broke the kiss to breathe, and then laughed and shivered. She broke away to push him into the water, and then, laughing, she ran back to the beach. He came back up and raced back after her. She squealed as he caught her around the waist and tackled her to their blanket.

He were instantly kissing again, and he pulled her close to him, rolling to his side. “If this beach was deserted…” He didn’t need to go on; they both knew exactly what would happen. He rolled away and grabbed their towels, handing her one as he began to dry himself.

They smiled and then settled back on the blanket to catch some sun and warm back up.

They headed back to the speedway a couple hours later when it was starting to cool down. They got
into some warmer, clean clothes and Killian decided a grill out for dinner would be good. Besides, the other drivers and their families were out and about, and he thought it would be a good idea to get her to know everyone.

He pulled out the grill and sat it in front of the RV. Emma was behind him, bringing out folding chairs. He went back in to get the small card table and Emma followed him with their drinks and the raw chicken shish kabobs he had put together. The grill was starting to heat up as Ruby and Victor walked over.

“So what’s for dinner?”

Killian shook his head at Victor. “Not for you mate.”

Victor shook his head and snapped his fingers, and then pointed at Emma. “This is all your fault.” Her eyes widened, Killian gave him a warning look, and Ruby lightly slapped his shoulder. “Before you came along, he was all alone and would have plenty of leftovers.”

“Correction: I was making extra for my leftovers, which you wormed your way into eating.”

Victor smiled and then turned to Ruby. “Well, I guess this means Restaurant a la Jones isn’t serving tonight. Should we attempt to make something or head out?”

Ruby laughed. “We better head out.” She turned to Emma. “Neither of us can cook worth a damn.” The couple waved goodbye and headed off.

Emma turned towards Killian, who was now getting up to put the food on the grill. “We could have made more, and invited them.”

“Maybe tomorrow. And don’t worry about them, love. They have gotten plenty of food out of me over the years.”

She smiled up at him and took a drink of her beer, and looked as other people were heading out of the trailers. She recognized some of them from the morning’s practice.

“Killian! How are you doing?”

They both picked up their heads looking at the small family that came over to them, the woman had red hair, almost brunette and she was holding a small toddler holding a race car in each hand. The man had dark hair, and large grin. Killian put the lid back on the grill and smiled back, reaching out to shake the others hand, only to be pulled into a hug with a hearty pat on the back. They pulled back. “I’m doing good, Philip.” He turned to the little boy, “Wow, has he grown in the last couple of months.”

“And he feels twice as heavy,” the woman said, “You want to hold him...please?”

Killian laughed and took the boy from his mother’s arms. “And how are you, little man?” He asked as he raised him in the air and then blew a raspberry on the boy's tummy making him laugh and squirm.

Emma smiled at the two of them, her heart constricting, the image calling to her more than she wanted to admit. She got to her feet and came over to them, Killian smiled at her as he boosted the boy up again, eliciting more giggles.

“Emma, this is Phillip Haven, driver of the number 8, and his wife Aurora.” He motioned to each, and she reached out and shook both of their hands. “And this,” he brought the boy down to his side,
“is Phillip Jr.”

She smiled at the boy and took the little one’s hand and racecar in hers and shook it lightly. “Nice to meet you.” He just smiled and laughed in return, making her face light up at the happy noises.

The boy then dropped both of the cars and immediately started crying. Emma bent over quickly to pick them back up and tried to give them to the boy, but he refused to take them, saying “No.” Over and over.

Aurora huffed, and pulled the boy back out of Killian’s arms, then took the cars in her other hand from Emma. “Terrible twos. I apologize. He is in need of a nap. It was nice to see you again Killian.” She looked at Emma, doing a quick look over. “And meet you.” She then left to put the little one down to rest.

Philip sighed, and him and Killian grinned at one another. “So, Emma, what did a loser like this do to win you over?”

“Oi! Watch it—I finished higher in the standings than you did last year. I believe you were two places below me.”

Philip laughed. “Last year. The two years prior I finished ahead of you.” He then turned back to Emma. “In all seriousness, what is it that you do, Emma?”

Emma told him about her work at the shelter, and Killian chimed in about how amazing she was at it, which just made her eyes roll, but her heart feel full. They continued to talk while Killian turned the food on the grill, and they were soon interrupted by a young child squealing and two parents chasing after her.

“Killy!” The little blonde tyke with pigtails came bounding over to them.

Philip laughed, and Killian bent down on a knee to catch her. “There’s my tiny princess.” She wrapped her arms around him, hugging him tight. He pulled back and looked at her, “Now, Alexandra. You know better than running away from your parents.” She looked down and shook her head yes. “But I am happy to see you.” She looked back up and grinned with a thumb now in her mouth, as her parents walked up behind her. A smiling woman with blonde hair, and a man with light sandy brown smiled down at their daughter.

“She just had to see you,” the woman said, the southern accent thick, she then turned to Emma. “I’m Ashley Herman, and this is my husband Sean.” She then pointed at the little girl, “And if you couldn’t tell, this is our daughter Alexandra.”

“I’m Emma Swan,” she said, moving to shake Ashley’s hand but instead she was pulled into a bone crushing hug.

“So good to meet you.” She turned back to Killian as Emma shook Sean’s hand. “It’s about time to see you with a nice girl.”

Killian shook his head, laughed, and stood. The child turned to Emma in fascination, and grabbed her hand pulling her down to her level. Emma smiled at the girl. “You have pretty hair,” the girl said, her fingers already in it. “It’s the same color as mine.”

“It sure is.”

Killian smiled down at the two, and then looked back to Ashley and Sean. “It’s nice to see you, too.” The group exchanged hellos and started to catch up. Killian darted his eyes back to Emma, and
couldn’t keep the smile off his face as she sat on the ground with the girl braiding her hair. The image of the little blonde cherub that looked so much like Emma had him thinking things that he knew were much too soon to think, but his heart couldn’t help but hope—hope for that future that he could once again dream about, all because of her.

Soon, Emma’s hair was in many different braids and the food was done. Phillip excused himself to head back to his wife. The others also left to get their own dinner. Killian and Emma took their drinks and the cooked food and headed back inside after Killian put out the fire, the night now dark and too cool to stay outside.

He turned on the TV and used the satellite to bring up a movie as they started to eat. When the food was gone, they cuddled together to finish out the movie. Once the credits rolled, Emma stood from the couch, and put her hands on her hips. Killian clicked off the TV and looked up at her. “You said there was going to be payback?”

“I did.”

Emma walked towards the bedroom, dropping her clothes as she went. “I’m waiting.”

He bit his lip, shook his head, and raced after her, tackling her to the bed. He did get her back...more than a couple of times.

Emma stretched in bed as she watched Killian move around. “Go back to sleep, love. You don’t have to get up with me.” He kissed her forehead and then continued to dress.

Part of her wanted to snuggle back to the pillow and go back to sleep, but the other part of her wanted to be with him and see more of what he did. Besides, Ruby would be there, and maybe Ashley. She was still trying to get a vibe on Aurora. With a yawn, she sat up, exclaiming, “Nope, I'm up! Anything I need to be aware of today?”

He smiled at her as he pulled on his shoes. “Well...now that you mention it. There is the drawing today for our starting positions at noon. It will be televised.” Her eyes widened, and he continued, “Don’t worry, Emma. One, you always look gorgeous; and two, not even sure they will show anyone but the drivers and crew chiefs.” He didn’t want to say he didn’t know because he never had anyone accompany him to one before.

“Okay, no problem; I’ll ask Ruby and Ashley.” She got up and ruffled through her suitcase.

As he watched her walk around nude without a care in the world, his mind started to drift to wanting to stay indoors. He mentally shook himself and went into the kitchen to make an easy breakfast and to remove himself from temptation. “I'm glad the three of you are getting along.”

Emma emerged from the tiny bathroom and slipped on a long sundress and a light jacket, and then started french braiding her hair as she walked into the main room. She learned yesterday that her hair up was very mandatory with all the wind.

“Thank you,” she said as she took the offered toasted bagel and cream cheese, as she went to sit at the table. She finished her hair and then started to eat as he came over with a cup of coffee for her and sat down across from her to eat his own breakfast. She took a sip and smiled. “You are so good to me.”

“I try, my love.” He winked at took another bite of his breakfast.
“You succeed.”

They quickly finished and as he pulled on his firesuit, she hurried to wash the cups and left them in the sink to dry. They were then out the door and went straight to the garage hand-in-hand.

His other hand came up and fingered her braid, “I like it.” She hadn't worn it like that before, but it looked good. His hand fell back to his side. “I mean, I prefer you hair free, especially fanned out on my bed.” He said the end softly into her ear making her blush. “But it looks really nice, and also very practical.”

As they walked into the garage, Killian was immediately pulled over into a conversation the team was having. Ashley and Ruby were in front of Victor's stall chatting and Emma headed over. The two pulled her into quick hugs which she returned. “Okay, I have a quick question.”

“Shoot.” Ruby told her.

“I guess their is some televised drawing or something…”

“Yes! It's really cute, they have a fan of the driver and the crew chief now draw a number and that is the starting position.” Ashley answered cheerily.

“Is there a dress code?” Emma asked.

Ruby smiled, “The drivers are usually in their sponsor polo shirts and jeans. So it is casual. However…” Ruby smiled sensing what Emma was really asking. “They do show the audience, especially the significant other of the driver...if there is one.” Emma swallowed, her nerves racking up an inch.

“Oh sweetheart, don't fret. You already look adorable. Maybe just throw on a little more makeup.”

“I'm not wearing any…”

Ruby and Ashley leaned closer, and Emma jerked her head back. “Damn, girl, nice.”

Ashley rolled her eyes at Ruby. “Maybe just some colored lipgloss and some light eyeshadow? And only if you want. You look more than okay for this.”

Emma bit at her lip, not sure what Killian would want her to do.

Ruby caught her hesitation. “Oh don't worry about him. You walk on water with that man. He would think you looked beautiful in a potato sack.”

Emma was really blushing now, and needed to change the conversation. “So, Ruby...how long have
you and Victor been together?”

Ashley turned to the brunette, “Yeah, it's been awhile, when is the man going to pop the question?”

Emma laughed as Ruby choked on her water, and the conversation was effectively steered away from her love life. But what they said stayed with her, and she couldn’t stop the feeling of happiness with a small tinge of fear that seeped over her at the knowledge.

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The practice lasted a little longer than the day prior, but at least Killian and his crew were happy with the car this time by the end of it. All the drivers pulled into the garage and then headed to quickly change and head over to the fanzone area at the speedway to get ready for the drawing.

Emma took a look at the huge stage up ahead, to say that her nerves were going crazy was an understatement. Killian took one look at her and squeezed her hand, “Emma, if you don’t want to do this, you don’t have to. You can head back to the RV.”

She shook her head. “No, I want to.” She wanted to see this. She wanted to be there for him. The smile he gave her confirmed her decision even more. When they got to the group with the other drivers, the women were escorted onto the stage. Killian gave her a quick kiss and she turned to walk up the steps with the others. They directed her to a group of chairs off to the side. Ruby was quick to pull her into a chair next to her, and Ashley took her other side. A few other women came over as well; a red head sat down next to Ashley, and the two started talking immediately. Aurora took a seat at the end. A few other people people came in; Emma was pretty sure a couple of them were either the driver’s parents or a sibling.

Emma looked around. There were camera crews here and there, and the crowd out in front of the stage was huge. They were screaming and holding signs for their favorite driver. She caught many wearing shirts for Killian, as well as some of the other drivers she met. There were others though she didn’t know as of yet, but was sure at some point she would.

Ashley leaned over to Emma. “Hey, I want you to meet Ariel, she is the wife of Eric Sirena. He drives the #65 car.”

The redhead leaned over Ashley, reached out her hand and shook Emma’s. “It’s a pleasure to meet you. When we get done here, I’ll introduce you to Eric. Are you here all week?”

Emma nodded. “I’m here through next Sunday.”

Ariel smiled. “This is all new to you isn’t it?”

“Am I that obvious?”

All three women echoed “Yes,” and then giggled.

Ruby then patted her shoulder. “Don’t worry about it; you’ll get used to it in no time.”

“Yep, a few more weekends and you’ll be a pro,” Ashley chimed in.

Emma bit her lip, a few more weekends? She wasn’t even sure if or when she would be able to come back.

“What’s wrong?” Ruby asked.
“Well, I took a lot of my vacation days to come here. Not sure when I will have a chance to come back.”

Ruby and the other two women quickly exchanged a concerned look over Emma’s head, but Emma saw it. They all quickly recovered. “Not a problem. All the races are on Saturday or Sunday, and many of them take place a few hours from Charlotte. So you could easily get to most of them leaving Friday after work.”

Emma nodded, but none of this made her feel better. She watched as various fans were being escorted out on stage to sit at various tables. Each had a driver’s shirt on. She turned to the others. “What do you all do?”

“Currently I’m the stay home mom for Alexandra, and though she is young, I’ve already started home schooling her.” Ashley said with a smile, “But before that, I met Sean while I was in college to become a teacher; but it was love and we married young and Alexandra came soon after.”

“I was the swim coach at the local high school, and gave swimming lessons in the summer.” Ariel chimed in. “I still give swimming lessons on Tuesday and Wednesday when we are back home to kids in the area. And I volunteer at the senior center pool.”

Emma looked to Ruby, and the brunette grinned. “I was one of the Sprint girls when Victor and I met. Now that’s ended, so I do a little modeling work here and there on the side.”

Emma gave each of them a grin, but her mind was spinning. They all either had careers that they could drop things and go to the races with their partners, or they had given up their careers in some capacity to do so. She loved what she did; it was one of the reasons she became what she was—helping kids get a home. She couldn’t give that up.

She was pulled away from her thoughts by the announcements of the drivers and their crew chiefs being announced. She tried to shake off the thoughts; there were other things to think about. This time, she didn’t see the worried look that Ruby and Ashley exchanged.

First, Victor and his crew chief were announced. The fans cheered and he went over to sit with the fan wearing his shirt. Then Killian was announced; there were tons of screams, cheers, and boos, which was a surprise to Emma. Ruby leaned over and whispered in her ear, “Remember he is seen as the bad boy. Some people love him for it, others hate him. Don’t worry about it.”

She cheered as loudly as Ruby did for Victor when Killian walked onto the stage. She caught Killian’s eye and his smile grew large seeing her cheer and be there for him. They had to break eye contact as he and Robin turned and strode over to his fan. This fan was a cute, curly haired redhead. They both gave her a quick hug, and Emma tried to hide the laugh as the poor girl looked like she would faint. The three sat down as the rest of the drivers and crew chiefs were called on stage.

Once they were done, the announcer made a speech and discussed the setup of the Sprint Unlimited Race. They then were called up to draw for their starting positions.

Victor’s fan and crew chief went up first, and they drew starting spot eleven. Victor clapped and Ruby cheered.

They then called Robin and Killian’s fan, named Amanda, up to the podium. She hesitated and then closed her eyes and picked. Robin took a look and raised the number; she had chosen starting position five. Killian whooped and Emma cheered.

The rest of the spots were drawn and Eric, Ariel’s husband was lucky enough to get the starting
position, with a driver named Jefferson in the number two spot.

When it was all over, they exited the stage, Killian came up to her, and the group of them headed back to the their RVs and decided to head out and grab lunch together.

They walked into the restaurant and requested a seat out on the patio. Emma and Killian sat next to each other, with Ruby to her side and Victor took the head of the table with some ribbing from the others. Sean, Ashley, and Alexandra took the other side of the table, while Ariel and Eric scooted together at the other end.

The waitress was soon bringing over beers and a juice for the little girl, followed by BBQ ribs and wings, corn on the cob, coleslaw, and a few things that Emma was still trying to figure out what they were. They were all laughing and talking.

Killian looked over at her, the happiness of her laugh making him smile. He knew she would fit in well with everyone, but the fact she seemed to also liked them made it all better.

Emma took another drink, and then excused herself to the ladies room. Ashley jumped up and followed her, only to give a pointed look to Ruby on their way inside. Ruby nodded and also gave a nod to Victor. He smiled and got the others into a conversation, as Ruby slid over to Killian, “Can we talk for a second?” She then nodded to the side of the patio.

Killian wasn’t sure what was going on, but he stood and followed her, “Ruby, what’s wrong?” Ruby looked down, and tilted her head. He could tell she was trying to decide how to say whatever it was she was going to say. “Bloody hell, lass, just spit it out.”

“I love Emma. She is great. You two are great together.”

He swallowed, he could sense the but, “Just tell me…” Oh god, was she upset? Was there something wrong? Did she hate it here?”

“I don’t think she will tell you. But she’s worried.”

“About?”

“From our discussions, she loves what she does. Where she works.”

“She does. And she is amazing at it.”

“I think she is fearing that because of her job, she won’t be able to come with you to most of the races. And when she asked the three of us what we did, which you know, isn’t exactly full-time work. I could just see...well, the wheels spinning.”

He looked down and took a deep breath.

“Killian, I’m telling you this, so that you can reassure her. Or you two can flesh this out now. Figure it out. I’m not trying to worry you, I’m trying to…”

“Help. I know Ruby. Thank you.”

She smiled at him. “You’ll make it work.”

He smiled back. “I will try my absolute hardest. I don’t know what I would do without her now.”

She patted him on the shoulder. “I kinda figured that out already.”
He rolled his eyes and they both headed back to the table. Victor gave the two of them a nod, and they joined back in the conversation with the others. Ashley and Emma returning a few minutes later. Killian caught the look between Ruby and Ashley again, and while the conversation with Ruby worried him, the thought that the others cared enough to tell him made him feel good.

Sean, Ashley, and their little girl had left earlier, but the rest stayed to chat and ended up having dinner there as well. It was late when they got back to the speedway and stepped in the motor home. Emma took off her shoes and sat them in the corner and collapsed back on the bed. Killian laughed and then did the same next to her. “Long day.”

She nodded and curled up to his side. His arm came around her instantly, and she nuzzled her face into his chest. He glanced at the clock; it was almost eleven. She yawned and he smiled. “How about we get ready for bed.”

She shook her head, and started to kiss his neck. “Not yet.” She kissed his jaw, and then stifled another yawn.

He rolled toward her, and cupped the side of her face. “Emma, you can barely keep your eyes open.” She struggled to open them, and he just smiled. “Love, we are both tired. We have all day tomorrow. And trust me, you need to rest up. I have plans.”

“Okay,” she said quietly, and sat up, her eyes droopy. She pulled off her jacket, struggled slightly, and then slipped off the sundress, leaving her in just her underwear.

“Not fair, love,” he said, taking off his own clothes and getting down to his boxers.

She pulled off her bra and grabbed one of Killian’s t-shirts from the drawer by the bed and slipped it on. They both scooted under the covers, and she rolled back into his embrace, her head on his shoulder. He kissed the top of her head. “Good night, love.”

“Mmm, night.”

Killian smiled, and squeezed her a little tighter, her body fitting perfectly next to him, just like she did into the rest of his life.
Chapter 17

God, she felt good, as her brain started to wake, part of her wondering why it was so warm. But then the feel of pleasure shot from her core through the rest of her, and she let out a gasp, her eyes coming open as her back arched against the bed. Her surroundings clearing, but all her senses focused on the feeling between her legs.

Or more likely the person between her legs causing the feeling. She moaned as his tongue licked her from core to clit; swirled around it, causing sparks, then slid back down, darting into her. Her hands found his head, and her fingers tangled in his hair.

He growled, “Morning, love,” against her. The vibrations made her back arch again and her hips buck towards his mouth. Two fingers entered her as his tongue started to pick up the pace now that she was fully awake and flick against her bundle of nerves.

“Oh yes!” she moaned, her toes starting to curl, her body tensing and riding his fingers that were thrust in and out of her. He added a third and she keened. She felt him smirk against her, even though his tongue didn’t let up, and he increased its pressure, swirling over the bundle. His fingers curled inside of her, and after a few more swipes, her eyes closed, her body stuttered, and she cried out his name as pleasure engulfed her.

He slowed his ministrations as her body started to calm, and then he climbed back up her body, moving the shirt out of the way, his mouth latching onto a nipple, his fingers lightly pinching the other.

“Morning,” she gasped as he pressed his hard length against her thigh. Her body was already climbing back up the peak again. He leaned back and with a little help he pulled the shirt over her head. She realized then that her underwear were also off. She wasn’t sure how he managed that while she was asleep, but she honestly didn’t care at the moment. “Killian...please.”

His mouth found hers, and their tongues darted out, tasting one another, just as she felt his tip nudge her entrance. His one hand moved to her hip, and angled her up and he slid in deep in one long thrust. They both moaned at the feeling, and he stopped, fully seated inside her to kiss her deeply again.

Her arms and legs wrapped around him, pulling him closer, deeper somehow, and he groaned into her mouth at the sensation. His arms came up under her arms to brace himself on either side of her head as his hips started to move in long, slow thrusts. The slow drag in and out on her walls drove her crazy. Her legs tightened around him and her hips tilted, trying to speed him up.

“Gonna take this slow, love,” he whispered over her neck as he trailed kisses over her skin. His hips still moved against her at a slow and steady pace. His teeth lightly raked over the flesh, and then he pressed his nose behind her ear, breathing her in.

Her fingers traveled down his back, feeling his muscles shift and move as his body pressed forward into her and then back out. She whimpered at the feeling, her body slowing moving higher and higher, tension in her coiling tighter and tighter.

He wanted to take her harder, faster. His body was begging him to do it. But he wasn’t going to let himself. He might have not yet told her how he felt about her, but he was going to take this slow, he was going to make love to her. And maybe, just maybe later, he would get the courage to tell her the same. He pulled away from her neck, and his hand came to the side of her face; her eyes were closed and mouth opened in gasps and sounds of pleasure. “Look at me, love.”
Jade green eyes opened to look at him, the pupils dilated with lust, and hopefully another emotion. He continued to move, the feel of her around him...god, he would stay like this forever if he could. So tight, warm, and wet; her walls lightly fluttering, signifying just how on edge she was. He could already feel how close he was as well, but he gritted his teeth and tried to hold back.

He leaned further down onto his arms, adding a slight grind to her clit from his pubic bone on his thrust in. It got the effect he desired and she moaned again, her eyes starting to close once more. “Eyes...open...love.” He said through gritted teeth as he kept moving.

Her eyes quickly opened once again, her breath stuttering at the emotion she found in his deep blue ones, and the movement of his hips moving her higher and higher. She was so close. Her legs quivered around him, the pleasurable tension curling tighter and tighter, almost ready to snap. “Killian…”

He growled at the feel of her body shaking in his arms; they were both so close. Their eyes taking in each other, each emotion, and the bliss written on the other’s face. He thrust in again, grinding against her clit just a little harder and then he felt her walls clench around him, heard her voice call out, saw her eyelids flutter as she struggled to keep them open while she came around him. The sight of her was his own undoing, let alone the feel of her entire body grasping him, and he thrust once more and stillled inside of her. His lips found hers as the pleasure washed through him, and he released stream after blissful stream inside of her. Their bodies shuddered, and they gripped each other tightly.

As soon as he could think again, he rolled to his side, bringing her with him, one of her legs still wrapped around his waist, as their lips found one another again. She smiled into the kiss, and then he did, too. His fingers trailed over her cheek. “Happy Pre-Valentine’s Day.”

She giggled. “That was a really, really good start.” She kissed him again. “And just FYI, I wouldn’t mind waking up like that any time you feel like it.”

He laughed. “Duly noted.” He kissed her again. “So, I’m going to make breakfast. You can hop in the shower if you want, and then I’ll take one after. I was thinking, if you are interested, heading back to the beach with a picnic lunch. I know it might be a little cooler today than when we were there there last, but it should be nice.”

“She did that?” She retreated into the bathroom to get ready, while he tossed on boxers and headed into the kitchen.

He started to cook some french toast and sausage while beginning to pack the basket. He knew they needed to talk about what Ruby had told him yesterday, but part of him didn’t want to bring it up today. He sighed; hopefully it wouldn’t ruin everything. He tucked a few extra things into the basket for later, and went back to finish breakfast.

She got out of the bathroom and started to dress for the day. She put on a pair of jeans, a tank, a light long-sleeve t-shirt, and then figured her jacket would work along with some sandals. Layers was the only way to go when you didn’t know how the weather was going to behave.

Once dressed, she checked to make sure she was alone and looked through her suitcase. She pushed aside some things in her luggage, found the item she was looking for, and smiled. She tucked it into her purse for later, and then went into the kitchen where she could smell the food cooking.

She made the coffee and sat at the small table while he finished up, and then they sat down to eat. They made some small talk while they ate, but the comfortable silence was filled with smiles,
knowing looks, and gentle touches. Soon, they finished and she demanded to take care of the dishes while he showered and got ready.

It wasn't long before they were out the door and headed for the beach.

The day was a little more cloudy and not as warm as last time, but it was still warmer than back home. They sat out on the blanket this time, only worrying about sunscreen on the little bit of skin they both had showing.

He pulled out bottles of water for the both of them, and they sat next to each other staring out at the ocean. It was so peaceful he almost didn't want to speak, but he knew he needed to. “Emma…”

She turned to him with a smile that faded as she took in his serious look. She swallowed. “Yeah?”

He scratched behind his ear, not sure how to begin. “Yesterday, while we were at lunch, and you were in the ladies room...ummm...a topic came up.” He turned to look at her, and could see the confusion and uncertainty clearly on her face. “You know you can tell me anything that's on your mind or troubling you, right?” He didn't want to out Ruby for telling him, but he wasn't sure how to bring up the topic randomly either.

Her head spun at what exactly he could be referring too. She had thought about a lot of things. Some were just fleeting thoughts, others were pushed off because it was much too soon to voice them. “I know I can.” She took his hand, “But, I guess, sometimes I need to fully wrap my head around things first, if you don't mind.”

“He raised her hand to his lips and left a gentle kiss. “But, if something is troubling you, especially something that…you aren't sure where I stand, please ask.”

She gave him a small smile, but could tell he was talking about something in particular. “Killian... what topic came up that has you saying this?”

He took a deep breath and just decided to say it. “That you may be concerned about how your job will work out with mine and all the traveling.” He kept his eyes on hers, trying to gauge her reaction.

She swallowed, trying to figure out what to say. But one thing was certain, she was going to kill Ruby. “I've thought of it briefly, prior to coming here. Being here and meeting the others has...made me think about it more. Learning what they do...which is very different than what I do, or thought I would do. I...I don't know what you expect…”

Her grasped both of her hands in his and looked directly into her eyes. “Emma, I don't expect anything.” She looked like she was going to object, “I don't. This is fully your choice, and whatever you want, we can make it work.”

Her brows furrowed. “Choice?” She wasn't exactly sure what choice she had. She had to work, what else was there? She loved what she did, that she could help out other children that grew up like she did.

He bit his lip. “I know we are just in the beginning stages here. I get that, but at some point, down the road…”

Her eyes widened. “Wait, do you expect me to…”

He shook his head quickly. “As I said, I don't expect anything. I will support whatever you choose. But at some point, there will be options, options that I suppose are not feasible right now.”
Her brain was swirling at the implications. “If you think I'm just going to be a kept woman, you can…”

He couldn't help the smile on his face from her fire, and his hand came up and quickly cupped the back of her head and pulled her into a kiss. She melted into it for a minute and then pulled away slapping his chest. “Emma...listen to me love. I have said many times, I don't expect that. And honestly, if you did want that I would be quite shocked.” Her temper dissipated at his words. “I know what your work with those kids mean to you; I would hate to take that away from you.”

“But, realistically, Killian...how is this going to work?” She scooted over and laid her head on his shoulder.

He could hear the worry in her voice, and wrapped an arm around her shoulder while his other hand held hers. “It will work; we can make it work.”

“It's not going to be easy.”

“It will be worth it. You’re worth it.”

She turned to look up at him, their eyes meeting as he turned back to her and his hand moved from her shoulder to the side of her face. Her eyes were glistening with unshed tears, disbelief evident. “Why?”

His thumb brushed away a tear. “Can't you tell, Emma?” His voice caught in his throat. “Can't you see how much...I love you.”

Her mouth opened in surprise, shock evident on her features, as another tear escaped down her cheek. She wasn’t able to speak, so she leaned in and kissed him. Letting her actions speak where her voice couldn’t. Her arms wrapped around his neck and pulled him closer.

His arms pulled her into his lap as they continued the kiss. They only broke for air for seconds, and then went back in for each other, lips moving, arms grasping tight. She pulled away slightly and rested her forehead against his. “Killian...I…”

He shook his head, and kissed her again. “Emma...don't worry...I didn’t say it to pressure…” Her fingertips on his lips stopped him, and he looked at her in question.

A smile overtook her features, and her fingers trailed over the side of his face. She knew if she didn’t say it she would regret it. “I love you, Killian.”

He barely let her get the words out, the smile on his face bloomed full of joy, as his body tackled her back onto to the blanket, his mouth sweeping over hers again. They rolled to have her laying over him as the kiss continued, the emotions of their admission to another and the returned confirmations overwhelming for both of them.

They broke apart at the screeching of seagulls, the sound reminding them they were in public. They rolled onto their sides, his arm coming under her head to cradle it as their lips met again and again between smiles. Both of their hearts feeling lighter for finally admitting their feelings, not to mention that they were reciprocated.

After some time, Emma smiled at him. “So, you think we can really do this?”

“We will figure it out, love. There are plenty of tracks not far away from where we are living, and you will be able to get back Sunday night. You might be able to take a Friday off here and there, and we can fly out on Thursday.” He kissed the top of her head. “I know you won’t be able to make it to
all of them, but you being at some of them means so much.”

She wrapped her arms around him tighter, trying to will herself into believing that they could do it; that they could make it work. “And there are the weeknights.”

“Exactly, my love. We will see each other all the time.” He hugged her tight, and leaned his head against hers.

They laid in each other's arms, relishing the feeling and watching the waves roll in. A while later, and with the growling of Killian’s stomach, they decided that lunch would be a good idea. So they sat up and he pulled over the basket. He took a red rose from inside and handed it to her.

Her eyes shot up. “How?” She shook her head at his wink and then smelled it. “Thank you.”

He laid out a tray of various sliced cheeses and meats, along with some crackers, followed by grapes and two single-serve bottles of grape juice. “Now, that’s not really juice in there, but it does contain grapes.”

She unscrewed one of the caps and took a whiff; the scent of her favorite wine filled her senses. There wasn’t supposed to be alcohol on the beach, but he had disguised it for them. “You are bad.”

“And you love it.” He said with a smirk.

“You’re right...and you.” She smiled as his face softened, and then she was pulled in for a quick kiss.

His fingers trailed down the side of her face as he broke away. “And I you, my love.”

Her grin reached her eyes as she pulled back to set out the plates and napkins. He pulled his phone, and plugged in a small speaker into the earphone jack and turned on some music. They then started to eat, feeding each other grapes and various other combinations of the finger foods while sipping their wine.

They were basically done eating when Emma sat up, and bit her lip before reaching into her purse. “So, I found something. It’s really small, and silly. But I just HAD to get it for your for today.”

He sat up as well, across from her, and wipes his hands on his jeans. “Oh, now I need to know.”

She smiled at his face all lit up, and she pulled the box out from her purse and handed it to him.

He took one look and started laughing, the grin getting larger. “Where did you possibly find this?” He asked as he looked at the heart shaped box of chocolates with a picture of Captain Hook on the front, and the caption, ‘I’m hooked on you, Valentine.’

“I was at the store, looking for something to get you. This one container had all kinds of Disney covers, so I went through it looking. And lo and behold…” She waved her hand at the box. “I just had to. I know it’s not much, so the rest of your present is later.” She gave him a wink.

He let out a small growl, leaned over, and pulled her to him in a deep kiss. “I can’t wait to see the rest.” She grinned at his smirk, and he sat back on the blanket. “We can enjoy these later, because what I had planned for dessert will go bad, and these won’t.” With that he pulled out a small container with chocolate covered strawberries.

“You are just full of surprises. Just when did you have time to get this? Because I know they weren’t in your luggage like mine.”
His smirk got larger. “I have my ways, love.” He opened the box and took one of the large berries out for her. “Want one?”

She nodded and leaned in, and took a large bite. The chocolate was rich, the strawberry ripe; a little juice ran down her chin. She didn’t get a chance to wipe it away as his tongue licked at her skin, and then down to her throat, alternating licks and nips. She moaned and tilted her head allowing more access. He sat back up and took the rest of the fruit into his mouth, relishing the sweetness a moment before she moved in for her own kiss, both tasting the rich dessert on each other.

He groaned and pulled back. “If we keep this up…”

“You’ll be up?” She bit her lip on a smile.

He shook his head. “It’s too bloody hell late for that.” He caught her eyes heading south; as she bit her lip harder, her eyes dilated further. His hand came out to tilt her chin up. “How about we head back, and finish these...strawberries inside.” He looked around, as more people were starting to gather on the beach. “Somewhere more private.”

Emma nodded. “Sounds like a plan.” They hurried and put everything back in the basket and Emma gathered the blanket. They then ran to the car, and he quickly drove them back to the track. Once he parked, he took the basket from the car, and she followed him to the RV’s door, and inside.

Once he sat the basket down on the dining table, she was pulled into his arms, and her back was pressed up against wall of the kitchen. Part of her brain told her they should just move the couple extra steps to the bedroom, but when his teeth nipped at her neck, and his hard length pressed against the seam of her jeans, sending a shock of pleasure through her, all thoughts of breaking apart for even an instant drifted away as he rocked against her.

His mouth moved back to hers as his hand moved under her shirt, grasping her breast, making her gasp. His fingers then found their way under the cups of her bra to lightly pinch at the already-hard nipple. She whimpered into his mouth as his fingers found their way under the cups of her bra to lightly pinch at the already-hard nipple. She whimpered into his mouth as her fingers drifted between them to undo his jeans, her hands moving inside, under his boxers to grasp him firmly. He growled, and broke the kiss. “Minx.” He quickly pulled off her shirt with one hand, and unfastened her bra with the other. She released him long enough to kick off her shoes and unbutton her own pants, to slip them down her hips, taking her underwear with them.

While he kicked off her own shoes, and pulled down his own pants and boxers, her hands were on his shirt, trying to pull it over his head. Her brain cleared for a second, “Wait.”

He turned to her once his shirt was off, both now standing there fully naked, “What?” His hands went to her hips, his brain tried to clear to find out why she stopped.

“My present…” her hands sought his arms, “If we...continue...now.” Her breathing and heart rate were already heightened. “I won’t have a chance...to put it on tonight.”

He groaned and leaned in closer, his fingers flexed at her hip. “Emma…” He leaned in and nosed at her ear, his breath on her neck making her shudder. “I need you...now, love.” He moved his hips to hers, his hard length ground against her stomach. She moaned and his hands moved behind her and down to cup her ass. “You can always give me…” He pulled her up and braced her against the wall, her legs instinctively moved around his hips. “...My present...tomorrow.” He kissed her, his tongue teasing her lips, as the tip of his cock brushed her wet folds. “Tomorrow is Valentine's Day, anyway.” He rocked against her, his head glancing her swollen bundle of nerves. “Be mine now, love.”
She wanted to roll her eyes at his cheesiness, but as his hard length brushed against her again, her need was too great. “Yes, now...please...I’m all yours.” With her consent, he slid deep into her with one hard thrust, both groaned into each others mouths as they met in a kiss, their tongues twining together as his hips started to piston in and out of her. Her ankles crossed around his lower back, trying to pull him closer.

His hand held onto her hips, his fingers digging in as he held her still so he could slam his hips against her, his cock moving so deep, so hard into her. He shifted her hips slightly on the next thrust, trying to find that angle...and with a cry to a higher power out of her lips, he knew he found it. His thrusts continuing to hit that spot over and over, her walls starting to flutter, her fingers digging into his back, her heels into his ass.

His mouth found her neck, his tongue darting out to soothe until his lips attached. Her sounds, and words, and gasps in his ear, carrying him closer to the edge as well. He just needed to feel her come around him. His grip tightened on her hips, and he pulled her hips down as he thrust forward, trying to push her over the edge he could feel her barely holding on to.

“Fuck...Killian...” she whimpered as he slammed into her again. She could feel the coil ready to snap, each thrust taking her higher and higher. She just needed...

“God you...feel so...bloody good.” He growled into her neck, “Never want to leave...so tight...so wet...” He thrust hard again, his tongue licking at her neck. “All MINE.” He bit her neck, and clamped down harder as he felt her inner walls grip him tight, heard her call out his name, felt her fingernails dig into his shoulders. His body followed, his hips thrusting once again, his hands holding her tight against him, as he groaned out her name. His released, shooting deep inside her, as her body continued to shudder and contract around him.

As his senses slowly came back, he softly licked and kissed at the bite mark on her neck. Part of him felt bad for it; another part—a bigger part of him—revelled in the fact that he had marked her. Not to mention the fact that she had actually liked it. His continued attention on her neck released a soft moan from her lips, and he grinned into her skin.

“How did you even stay standing?” she asked finally able to talk.

He laughed into her shoulder. “I locked my knees and I’m braced against you and the wall.” He felt her giggle and he pulled his head back to look at her. “Is that funny?” She nodded. “Oh really?” He shifted his hips, causing him to shift inside her. Her eyes slid shut and she groaned. His hands slid from her hips to cup her ass, and then he pulled back from the wall. Her legs wrapped around him tighter, her arms wrapped around his neck.

“How much you want to bet I can turn you laughter into...” He started to walk back to the bed, his hands pulling her more firmly against him. “...A scream of my name in pleasure...” He lowered her onto the bed, following her down, and thrusting back inside, making her head fall back and her mouth open. “Over...” His mouth latched onto her hard nipple, as his hips thrust his growing erection back into her. “And over...” He bit at the tender skin under her breast leaving a small red mark, and making her gasp and thread her fingers in his hair as he thrust again. “And over...all night long.” And that was exactly what he did.

While they were allowed to sleep in longer than the prior days due to the race being a little later in the day, they still needed to get up due to all the press, pictures, and fans. They were dressed and out the door by ten, him in his sponsor polo and jeans, her in a maxi dress and denim jacket (with a high collar to hide the bite on her neck), and both with sunglasses since the sun was definitely out today.
His hand found hers as they started to walk to the garage and she was shocked at the difference. There were a ton of people around.

He saw her look, and he smiled. “This is really the start of the racing season. If you think this is bad, wait until later today or next week.” He squeezed her fingers. “Come on, let’s head to the garage.”

They got there a few minutes later and she saw Robin talking to a brunette woman, who was wearing a pantsuit of all things. Killian pulled her along with him over to the pair, who turned to see them.

Killian smiled at the woman. “So nice you could join us, your Majesty.”

Emma was shocked at his mocking tone, and she watched the woman roll her eyes at him and then look at her, giving her a once over.

“Is this her?”

Killian turned to Emma, and smiled. “Emma, this is Regina Mills, owner of Mills Racing; Regina, this is Emma Swan, my girlfriend.”

The woman actually smiled and reached out to shake Emma’s hand. “Pleasure.” She turned to look at Killian. “About damn time, Jones.”

He huffed, and Robin just shook his head, throwing his hand up and smiling at Emma, indicating that this sassing between the two was nothing out of the ordinary.

“Glad you could finally make it to the garage this morning, Jones; we need you for interviews and pictures, but first, I need you for some VIP fan meet and greets.” She looked towards Emma, “I’m sorry, Miss Swan, but we are going to need to steal him for a couple hours.”

He kissed Emma’s cheek. “Sorry, love. If you want to head back to the RV...or…”

She waved it away. “You’re working. It’s fine. I’ll find some of the girls, or wander around. Don’t worry. Do what you need to do.”

He smiled again, and pulled her in and kissed her once more.

Regina huffed and turned to Robin. “While he’s doing this, can you bring me those diagnostics we talked about?”

Robin straightened up. “Yes, I will. I’ll find you…”?

“My motor coach, we can...discuss there.”

Killian sighed. “Okay, where am I going?” He turned to Regina.

“Right this way.” She started to lead him out of the garage.

He turned back to Emma as he was walking away with his boss. “I’ll find you for lunch.”

She nodded and watch him walk out into the craziness outside. She turned back to Robin, and tilted her head with a smile.

“What?” he asked.

She tilted her head to the other side and squinted her eyes at him. He swallowed hard under her gaze,
her smile grew. She had a sneaky suspicion about something, but she decided to keep it to herself for
now. “Nothing...I’ll see you later. I’m going to go find the others.”

He nodded, let out a breath, and then walked over to the crew. His head moving to look at her
retreating form, then shook his head again, before returning to the conversation with the guys.

A few stalls down, she found Ashley, Ruby, and Ariel talking. They saw her, all smiled wide, and
waved her over. “Let me guess, he was stolen for pictures and interviews,” Ariel asked her.

Emma nodded. “Yep.”

“And you have never seen things this crazy, have you, sweetheart?” Ashley asked patting her
shoulder.

Emma shook her head. “Nope.”

Ruby wrapped an arm around her. “Don’t worry about it.” She looked at the others, “Shall we show
her around?”

They all nodded and led her around, showing her everything. Numerous times they had requests for
pictures, or the others had a reporter ask them questions about their time off with their significant
others. None of the press had seemed to know who she was yet; she wondered how long it would
stay that way.

The day was a blur; a crowded rush. The time with Killian at lunch seemed to rush by; his main
concern was trying to let her know it wasn’t always like this—that it was so bad right now because it
was the beginning of the season. Then he was kissing her again and being whisked away, along with
the other drivers, as well. Soon the girls were sliding closer. “He’s right, you know,” Ruby told her.

“What?” Emma asked.

“They are not all like this. This one, the Unlimited, and the Daytona 500 are a little nuts and crazy.
Then the last one, once it’s over...well for the winner. I learned that last year.”

Emma smiled and looked at the other girls, thankful she had them. She then turned back to Ruby.
“Actually, I have a bone to pick with you.” Ruby’s eyes widened, giving away that she knew what it
was. “But, since it turned out alright...I won’t kill you.” She winked at the brunette.

Ruby laughed, and then looked at the Ashley. “Well, that’s good, because it wasn’t just me.”

Ashley threw her paper towel at Ruby. “Trying to get me killed, too?”

“Okay, let’s go find a place to people watch until the opening ceremonies start,” Ariel suggested.

“I know just the place!” Ruby said, as they all followed her. And she did: a bar with a view out onto
the lake.

It was close to opening ceremonies and the sun starting to set, when the girls finally left their spots at
the bar, all but Ruby switching to water long prior. Ruby had to have a liver of champions because
she didn’t act even tipsy.

They headed over to the cars all lined up on pit lane now. Others were all waiting around; the stands
weren’t that full, but Ruby told her to wait until next week. It didn’t take long and the music and
introductions started, each of the drivers being called up to music and cheers from the crowd as they walked down the stage, shaking hands with the fans as they went, and then ushered down to pit lane. She cheered when Killian came on the stage, but gave a slight frown to the boos. She still was not used to the fact that people could hate him; he was a huge teddy bear, in her opinion.

She smiled as she watched him now in his firesuit walking over to the car, and soon, she was enveloped in his arms and he was pulling her off her feet, kissing her. The kiss deepened as she felt her feet slowly return to the ground; they then broke apart to breathe and lean their heads against each other.

“God, I missed you today, my love.”

She grinned, and leaned her head on his shoulder. “Missed you, too.” His arms wrapped around her waist. “Did it go well, though?”

“I believe so. I’m sure Regina will tell me exactly how I did.”

She pulled back and looked up at him, his arms still around her as the other drivers were still being announced. “So, what is up with her and Robin?”

He tilted his eyes and his brow furrowed. “What do you mean?” She smiled at him. “Oh, God, no.” She gave him a look that said she wasn’t buying it. “No. No way.” She tried to suppress the giggle as his eyes went wide, obviously putting pieces together. “Oh dear God, no.” She started to giggle as she had seemed to break the denial he had been in this whole time. With perfect timing, the two in question were walking towards the car, slightly too close for co-workers. Killian shook his head. “I do not need that mental image right now.”

She laughed, hugged him close, and kissed his cheek. “Sorry about that. Imagine what I will be wearing for your Valentine’s gift later.”

That got his thoughts shifted in a much more pleasant direction. “Ohh, please tell me more. Help me get those images in my mind, instead. Please, love.”

“It’s red and black…” He nuzzled into her neck as she continued. “And shear lace…” He groaned, and pulled her closer. “And that’s all I’m saying.”

“Tease.”

She pulled away, and swatted his shoulder. “You asked.”

They were interrupted by Regina, Robin, and the crew joining around the car. The rest of the drivers were announced and soon, the invocation was being given. Emma wasn’t particularly religious, but she joined in by bowing her head, Killian’s hand in hers, as she listened to the priest pray for the safety of all the drivers, crew, and fans. That was definitely a prayer she could agree on.

Soon, a country singer that Emma recognized the name of, but couldn’t name one of her songs, got up and did a stunning rendition of the National Anthem, all the fans and crew cheering as five planes in formation flew over the speedway right at the end of the song. He turned to her after that. “Okay, now it’s time for me to really go to work.” He pulled her back to him, and kissed her. His hand moving to the side of her face. “Love you.”

She grinned, her eyes sparkling. “Love you, too.” She hugged him, and then he turned to put his helmet on and slip into the car. She moved off with the crew heading back to the pit box with Robin staying there by the car. She climbed up onto the stand with help from Anton, and sat down, willing the butterflies in her stomach to settle.
She knew this was a short race, from Ruby, and that it didn’t count in the point standings. But she also knew that the drivers usually gave it their all, and that there was usually a lot of crashes. She sat with the headset on her lap while staring out at the cars. It was only a 75-lap race, with something called a competition caution at lap 25, where everyone was required to come in to get gas and new tires.

A few minutes, later the announcers were back, and a man was moving up to a microphone. If she thought the fanfare was already big enough, she was surprised when one of the big-name actors from the newest superhero movie was the one to scream, “Drivers, start your engines!!!!”

Emma jumped as all the cars started, their engines revving. She hurried to put on her headset and cover her ears to the sound. She breathed a sigh of relief as roar was muffled, and saw Robin climbing up into the stand and sitting next to her.

“Alright, Killian, everything feel okay?” Robin asked. She heard him through the headset only, even though he was sitting right next to her.

“Feels good, mate. Let’s win this.”

The cars started to pull out of pit lane and onto the track, taking a few laps under caution, until all of them got into their starting spots in two lines behind the pace car. She heard Robin tell him this was the last lap, and after they cleared the fourth turn, the pace car went down pit lane. She saw the cars come up, then start to increase speed. The green flag waved and they were off.

She watched him cross the line and almost immediately move from his spot in fifth to drive between third and fourth place. She bit her lip at seeing just how close he was on each side. Jefferson in the 12 car came up to block him from being able to move around the cars on either side of him, and she listened to Killian cuss him out over the com line.

Somehow, he managed to hold his spot through the corner, and Jefferson finally had to stop blocking in order for him to keep racing Eric in the 65. Killian inched past the other cars until his spotter happily told him that he was clear, and he moved into the top lane, getting behind Eric. He pulled up close to the 65’s bumper, both sharing the ‘draft’ Ruby had called it, as they were able to start pulling away from the rest of the pack.

Emma looked up at the scoring board, smiling at seeing the 71 in second, but was shocked that 14 laps had already happened. She turned back to see the 12 try to move in front the 92, but Emma saw what the others did. As Robin and his spotter was warning Killian, the 12 didn’t have enough room, and clipped the front of the 92, which then ran into him, shoving the 12 into the back bumper of Killian’s 71. She stood up, not breathing as she saw his car start to swerve. A pile of cars behind them crashed, and yellow lights started flashing around the track.

The 71 swayed back and forth in the lanes, but he kept it off the wall and from hitting other cars, and then was able to straighten out and drive away as a bunch of other cars came to a stop on the track, those in the back moving slowly around the debris of the others. Robin patted her shoulder, as he talked into the radio. “You okay, buddy? You got a worrier up here.”

“I’m just fine. Don’t worry, Emma, love. I’m fine. The car, on the other hand—how’s it look, mate? It’s handling okay.”

“It looks okay, stay out. If we need to, we can tape it when you come in on the competition caution.” Robin then told his crew to get the BearBond ready if necessary.

She took a breath, and let it out slowly as the cars traveled around the track during the yellow. All
but one car could make it off the track on its own; that one had to have a tow truck come drag it back to the garage. That driver’s day was done for sure; she felt a little guilty that she was glad it wasn’t anyone that she knew.

All of those involved in the crash that came to the pits were at the back of the pack of cars now. Emma then understood why Robin kept him out; he had been lucky and didn’t lose position. Now it was Eric, Killian, and then Victor, who had also managed to avoid the crash, in the top three positions. Sean was back in 8th, the wreck helping him move up from his way-in-the-back starting position.

Once the track was clean on the next lap, the pace car again exited to pit lane and the cars were at it again. Just after the line, Victor pulled up to Killian’s bumper and both together broke into the lead, pushing them out a few car lengths in front of the others. Emma took out her phone and took a quick picture of the scoreboard with the 71 in the lead at 20 laps.

Everyone knew that there were only 5 laps to go before the caution, and while some were trying to pass, the front was pretty stationary. They knew they were in a good spot, and they wanted to stay that way for pit stops. Eric had pulled in behind Victor and the three top cars were a good almost fourth of a track in front of the others.

It wasn’t long until the yellow lights came on and the cars slowed for the caution. The pace car went out just in front of Killian as they made their way around the track. She wasn’t sure what he was doing, but he kept getting really close to the bumper of the pace car. She gave Robin an inquisitive look, and the man just grinned, laughed, and shook his head. Then she heard him over the line, “Okay, buddy. No need to trade paint with the pace car. I know you know the driver, but back it off a bit.”

“Just having a bit of fun, mate.”

“Alright, heads up, this lap is to pit.”

Emma sat up straighter as the cars started to come down the pit lane, she grinned at Killian in the lead. He came into his stall and stopped right in the middle and his team instantly got to work on right sides while Leroy started loading the first fuel can. Rights changed, they all ran to the left, rolling the old tires. Anton jacked up the car instantly as the guys worked and Leroy loaded the second can. The second the gas can was disconnected and the jack dropped, Killian was off. Emma looked at Robin and the time clock he had, which showed the stop was just over 11 seconds. She smiled and shook her head; she still couldn’t believe how fast his crew was. She wasn’t shocked he was out of the pit lane first, followed by Victor, a couple cars she didn’t know, and then Eric and Sean.

The cars were all lined up again; this time, Killian was in first, choosing the outside lane. They came up to line, picking up speed, and the race was on once again, with Victor and Killian neck and neck. Victor got up a car length just have Killian catch him in the corner and get past him, and over the next few laps, they kept changing leads.

“Don’t eat up your tires, mate; we have a lot of the race left,” Robin cautioned.

“How many we got left?”

Robin took a look. “43 to go.”

“Fuel window?”
“I say we pit on the next caution, and you should be good to go from there.”

Killian backed off just a tiny bit, and slid behind Victor, giving him a bumper rub for good measure. It didn’t take long— fewer than 5 laps later, a car in the middle of the pack on the inside lane blew a tire and ran up into the car next to him, both spinning into the wall and taking out four other cars behind them. She was happy to see the cars either driving off track or the two cars that looked like they couldn’t had put their nets over their windows down. Ruby had told her that was the sign that the driver was okay. Two wreckers and safety crews went out onto the track to take the drivers and the cars off the track. The rest of the cars went slow during caution while the cleanup happened.

“Okay where are we at?” came Killian’s voice over the radio.

“By the time we get in, we’ll have about 25 laps to go.” Robin told him.

“I’m thinking, left tires and one can of fuel, thoughts?”

“Sounds good, you sure you don’t want four? This caution is due to a tire going out.”

His spotter chimed in. “That tire went out due to that car and a couple others banging into each other out there. I think we are good.”

“Alright; this time around, you come in.”

This time coming in, he was behind Victor, right on his bumper. Victor pulled into his stall and Killian came down the lane to get into his. The crew ran out, and Leroy immediately put in the fuel can as Anton jacked up the car. The tires were quickly changed, the fuel can disengaged, the jack dropped, and Killian was off the pit lane first, just in front of Victor, who also just took two tires. Sean was behind them, just having taken gas, followed by another car, then Eric.

Killian was whooping over the radio, making Emma laugh. “Good Job guys!” he cheered his team, as all the cars left the pits and got into line again, Killian once again choosing the outside lane. In a matter of minutes, they were off again, Killian getting out in the lead with Victor just back half a car length. Sean made it around the car next to him and got in behind Killian. Without anyone sharing his draft, they got past Victor and made some headway in front of the rest of the pack. Emma watched the other cars, now that they were getting closer to the end, the drivers were becoming more and more aggressive. They were bumping against one another, some lanes even trying to go four wide. She bit her lip and decided her nerves would do better just watching Killian at the front.

Eric had found his way up and was pairing with Victor, the two now making headway on the leaders. Her eye caught two cars spinning right behind them, from the group that was trying to go four wide. The caution went out as more cars got into the wall, spinning around. One hit the wall and spun back out, clipping another car, and then rolled through the grass in front of the finish line. All the cars slowed down; Killian was in the lead, followed by Sean, then Victor and Eric.

“Oh, I’m aware. Car is handling really well, though. Remember these setting for next week.”

“Then don’t go wreck the car, and you can have it next week.”

“It’s not bloody well up to me, now is it, mate?”

As soon at the track was clear, the cars were ready again, with eight cars already off the track for good for the night. They were off again, Victor trying to move up and between Sean and Killian,
making them three wide. Emma clenched her fits and bit her lip. Eric came up behind Killian and together they were able to clear Victor and Sean after a lap. Victor was then able to get in front of Sean.

Emma was shocked to see Sean actually get behind Victor to help him try to catch the other two. But then he realized it was his own shot as well to get up there, and then tried to get around Victor. With five laps to go, Emma was on her feet, as cars started to scatter, one not slowing in time, rear ending the car that had smoke coming from under the hood. The yellow lights came out and everyone slowed once again. This time, the cars could drive off the track; a few cars came in for a quick gas-and-go pit stop, but all the leaders stayed out.

This time, when they came up to get ready to go, Eric was next to him, and Sean was behind him; Victor was still in that same spot. Once they were off again, both Eric and Killian anticipated Victor trying to steal the middle and came up to block, trading a little paint as they did so. Taking the hint, Victor backed off, and Sean pulled up behind Killian as they took off, with Eric and Victor right behind them. Killian and Sean were able to pull ahead of the others by some distance with one lap to go. The rest of the pack of drivers was three- and four-wide; she felt herself holding her breath.

The two of them started to clear turn four, as the back of the pack was crashing on the back straightaway. With no caution yet, Sean swung out from behind Killian, both racing neck and neck to the finish line. Everyone was on their feet at they made it across. She couldn’t tell from where they were sitting, so he looked at Robin; he was looking at the scoreboard, trying to get his spotter to tell him what he saw. But then, Killian was on the radio. “I think he got it.” And there it was, the 53 in first and the 71 in second by a couple inches. “Wooooo, good race guys!” She could see the net on his window go down and his thumbs up to Sean as he drove by, the other drivers doing the same and then making it to pit lane, avoiding the crash on the back of the track.

Emma smiled and shook her head; he just lost, but he was in great spirits. Though, coming in second that close was pretty darn good. She could see Ashley running over to Victory Lane as Sean did his burnout on the track. She was happy for them.

Robin motioned to her, so she took off her headset and sat it down, and then he helped her down the ladder and back to the ground as the crew proceeded over to Killian and the car. She saw him already out of the car, his helmet off, and talking to a reporter. She stood off to the side with Robin, waiting for his interview to end.

“That was a really close race. A little shocked that you both didn’t trade paint to the finish line. Why was that?” The reported asked.

Killian finished his drink from a bottle of soda, the label clearly on display. “Listen. Sean is a good guy, and I’m really happy for him tonight. He raced me clean, and he helped me get in the lead a few times. Now if he had raced dirty, this race would have ended with both of our cars a lot more banged up.”

She smiled at that and the rest of the interview. He mentioned his sponsors, said that he looked forward to next week, and then the camera was turned and the reporter started talking about something else. When Killian turned away, she was immediately pulled into his arms, followed by a hard kiss. Her arms wrapped around his neck as they deepened the kiss, neither noticing the camera panning back to them to capture it on national television.
They broke apart from the kiss as the camera turned back to the reporter, neither of them realizing that they had been caught on camera. She smiled up at him, and his fingers trailed over her cheek. He could see more reporters coming up to him. “I've got a little more work to do tonight, love.” He motioned to them with a tilt of his head.

She turned to look, and realized what he meant, then looked back up at him.”Okay, perfect. Gives me time to put on your present.”

She gave him a wink as he growled and captured her lips once more. “I will be there as quickly as possible, my love.” She nodded at him and then walked back to the RV, taking her time, leaving him to answer all the reporters.

She got inside, turned down the lights, started some soft music, found the scrap of cloth in her luggage, and went into the bathroom to change. She took the time to undo her braid and brush out her hair. Then checked out her reflection in the mirror.

“Emma, love?” His voice rang out through the coach.

She grinned, looking at the clock—he really had hurried through the interviews. “In the bathroom; I’ll be out in a minute. How about you lay down and relax.”

He smiled as he walked through the dim kitchen back to the bedroom, the sensual music only adding to the pounding of his blood in his veins, traveling further south the closer he got to her. He kicked off his shoes and unzipped his suit, peeling it off him, quickly followed by everything but his black boxers.

He settled himself into the middle of the bed. “All ready, Emma. Please come out here; it’s torture not to see you.”

The door slid open and his mouth gaped open. She was always beautiful, gorgeous, and sexy. But the way the see-through black lace hung to her curves and the red delicate trim accented her waist, her luscious breasts, and the tiny triangle of what could hardly be called underwear had his mouth dry, his body somehow even more at attention, and his entire being begging to take and make her his.

She watched his eyes wash over her, which made her nipples harden and her core clench at the lust and possessiveness in his eyes. “I guess you like it.” She bit her lip as her eyes settled on the large bulge in his boxers.

He was on his knees in an instant and his arms grabbed her pulling her to him, and soon she found herself on her back, his mouth demanding, his tongue forcing itself into her mouth claiming every recess. She moaned into it, as he settled in the cradle of her legs, his hard length grinding against the lace of her panties, making sparks of pleasure shoot through her. His hands moved between them, grasping and palming her breast, fingers tweaking her nipples though the fabric, harder than usual but her back arched into it, needing, wanting, moaning her pleasure into his mouth.

He knew he needed to pull back and change course or this was going to end much too soon for his liking. His adrenaline and testosterone were still pumping from the race, and combined with the
vision of his love, this siren under him, the need to just take her in this moment was too great.

He pulled away from the kiss for a moment, trying to take a breath to clear his head, he looked into her jade green, lust-filled eyes. Her fingertips trying to press him closer and her legs moved around his waist. “Emma…”

She could see the lust in his eyes; she felt it, too, and she needed him as much as he needed her. She ached to feel him inside of her. “Please…” She rutted her hips against him. “I need you…inside of me.”

And that was all he needed. His mouth descended on hers again and he moved his hand between them to slide down her underwear, but one of her hands gripped his and brought it lower, pushing his fingers between her legs. He groaned into her mouth, and broke the kiss, when he felt the opening. His little minx was wearing crotchless panties, and they were dripping wet.

“God, Emma…” He plugged two fingers into her, making her head fling back a whimper escaping her mouth. His thumb pressed on the wet lace against her clit as his fingers fucked in and out of her in quick succession. “Is this what you wanted?” She moaned her response and shook her head. “No, not enough?” He presses a third finger into her, her hips moving with his hand to fuck herself on them, moving faster, her body building to the peak. “How about now?” He pressed his other hand into the mattress, allowing him to look down at his wanton love, his fingers plunging into her, her pleasure coating them. Her hips undulated against his hand; her body flushed; her hair spread across the pillow; and her mouth was open, moaning on a continuous loop of ecstasy.

She shook her head “no” again, her mouth barely able to form the words. “Need…you.”

God, he loved when she was like this: her body so full of lust and ecstasy that she could barely speak. His fingers worked faster and his thumb moved harder, feeling her getting higher, closer, but not giving her exactly what she needed.

“Me, love?” He teased, trying to ignore the pressure in his own groin, begging for release. “What part of me do you need?”

In shocking speed her hands were between them, pushing down his boxers, and then wrapping around his length. “Fuck me!”

He pulled his fingers from her in an instant, making her whimper at the loss, and grasped himself with his wet fingers. He pumped himself once, coating his length. His other hand tilted her hips and he plunged inside of her in one thrust. The sensation was enough to throw her over the edge, her legs gripping tight and her walls convulsed around him. He didn't wait, his hips driving through her clenching walls into her hard and deep over and over. His jaw clenched, trying to will himself not to be dragged over with her. His muscles flexed as he moved faster, harder into her.

One hand came to her leg, pulling it over his shoulder, allowing him to go deeper. Her head fell back, her moans grew louder, and her hands gripped his shoulders as he fucked her through her first orgasm, pushing her quickly towards another.

He was getting close—he could feel the pressure at the base of his spine, the tension about ready to snap. Her sounds, the pleasure on her features, the feeling of her hands on his back, and the tight, wet confines starting to grip at his hard length pistoning into her all made it much too difficult to hold on. “Fuck,” he nipped at her neck, his nose pressing into her skin. Her walls started to flutter around him, making him groan, signifying how close she was. “Come for me.” He lightly bit her earlobe, making her gasp. “Come around me, love…take me with you.”
He felt her legs start to shake, and he moved her other leg over his shoulder as well, before diving into her, grinding his hips into her hard at each thrust. “Mine…” he growled into her ear, noticing her body starting to shake.

“Killian…” she barely let out in warning, before her body snapped, pleasure engulfing her, pulling him with her. Her body clenched and released him in quick, hard bursts; her body shaking with each one.

He barely got out her name as he was pushed over the edge, his hips pressed flush to hers, fully seated as he pulsed and released deep inside her. His body shuddered and a mixture of curses and endearments issued from his lips as their bodies rode out the pleasure together.

It took quite a few minutes before he could move, and he slowly pulled her legs from his shoulders, massaging the feeling back into them as he went. His mouth found hers in a slow and soft kiss. Her arms slowly came back to life, too, caressing his back. The frantic movements from before now diffused into tenderness.

His hand came up to caress her cheek. “Love you, Emma.”

She smiled up at him. “Love you, too.”

With that, he rolled them to their sides, regretfully slipping from her. She curled her leg over his hip and pressed her face to his chest. His hands stroked her back lightly over the lace. “You’re keeping this, right?”

She laughed and pulled back to look in his eyes. “Oh yeah.”

“So, I have a surprise.”

She raised her eyebrows. “The picnic, rose, and strawberries—which I do want another one, since we didn’t get back to them yesterday—were more than enough for Valentine’s Day.” Besides he had told her he loved her; that itself was huge.

He sat up and she followed, a smile growing on his face. “It’s not for Valentine’s Day. It’s just because we are here, and we are so close. And I’ve been wanting to take you, and I’ve wanted to go.”

She reached for his hand and squeezed it. “You’re rambling. What is it?”

“I have a hotel for two nights for us near Disney World and Universal Studios…” Her eyes widened. “Which has the Harry Potter Theme Park.” His thumb traced over the Alohomora bracelet that she still hadn’t taken off since Christmas as he watched her smile bloom. She tackled him back on the bed in a hug and a huge kiss. He kissed her back, his hands running through her hair. Then he pulled back to look up at her. “So, you like the idea?”

She nodded enthusiastically. “I think that is a great idea.” Then her brows furrowed. “How far away is it?”

“Just a little over an hour. If we leave a little early, we can spend all day at Universal and then head to the hotel and go to Disney the next day.”

She leaned in and kissed him again, and then started laughing at hearing his stomach growling. “Hungry?” He wiggled his eyebrows at her. “For real food.” She playfully hit his shoulder and sat up.
“I am. Stay here, I’ll grab some food and bring it in here.” He stood and slipped on his boxers. “Find a movie or something; I’ll be right back.”

She turned on the TV; the news came on as she grabbed her phone, noticing the text messages. She opened them, and her mouth fell open. The messages were from Mary Margaret and Tink telling her that they had watched the race and that they saw the kiss. “Oh my God.” The realization of what they texted dawning on her.

Killian walked back in with two plates with sandwiches and chips, along with two cans of soda. “What’s wrong?”

She looked up at him, with a confused face, trying to remember what kiss they could be talking about. “Mary Margaret and Tink watched the race…”

He sat down next to her, and handed her a plate. She took it and sat it next to her on the nightstand. “Is that so surprising?”

“No…they said they saw us together; they saw us kissing.” With that she picked up the remote and looked through the DVR. He recorded the races and the commentary to look over later if needed. She started fast forwarding through the recording, looking for where they were possibly together.

He sat next to her, watching her carefully, not sure of what her reaction meant. She saw them standing next to each other for the invocation and the national anthem, but she didn’t comment. Then she fast forwarded to the end. She watched the interview with Killian and then sat the remote down. Now confused as to what they saw, the reporter talking away on the screen.

“Emma? Are you okay?” When she just lightly nodded, he wasn’t convinced. “You did realize you might show on TV right?” She nodded again, still not saying anything. He took her hand in his, and it caused her to move her eyes to his. “Love, are you okay?”

Before she could answer they both caught the change of the light on the TV and watched as the camera panned back to the two of them kissing. Emma gasped and Killian cringed, his hand tightening on hers. His worry of how she was going to take this grew as she was already seeming to freak out in front of him. He watched her look at the TV, her head tilting while watching it, as the camera turn away from them and back to the reporter with a smile on the reporter’s face.

“Emma?” She reached over and stopped the DVR and turned to him still not saying anything. “Please say something.” He reached and took her other hand as well.

“Holy shit.” She finally got out. He gave her a strange look and she started laughing, the concern on his face growing made her stop. “You’re famous.”

Those words were not what he expected. “What?”

“I mean…I KNEW that…I logically knew that. But…not until right now did I really...GET it.” She shook her head, trying to clear it. The look on his face told her he was still very worried about her. “I mean, I knew you were a racer. I knew you had money. I mean, I don’t care about that. But I didn’t really get, until just now, that you are truly famous.” Her hands squeezed his back. “I haven’t seen you that way. You’re…well...Killian. My Killian.”

He pulled her into his side, his arm wrapping around her. “I’m still your Killian. Always will be, if I can help it.” He kissed the top of her head, and she nuzzled into his chest. “Are you truly okay?”

“We were kissing on national television.”
He grinned. “I am aware. Does that bother you?”

She tilted her head up to look at him. “Why would it?” His eyebrow arched again, not understanding. She laughed. “I just made a claim on you on national television.” Her hand came to the side of his face as she leaned in and kissed him.

He broke away in a laugh, his worry finally washing away. “You staked your claim awhile ago, love.” He pulled her back down for another kiss, the food forgotten as she made sure he knew he was all hers.

They were up early, but the childlike excitement they both felt had them wide awake, dressed, packed, and in the car and ready to go in no time. They made a quick stop at Starbucks and were back in the car heading towards Universal. They had both agreed to pretty much ignore the rest of the park and head straight to the Harry Potter part. Only after they saw all that was to see there would they look at anything else, if they had time. The trip barely took any time, and they were already pulling up to the park just a little after it had opened.

Emma had pointed to the parking garage but should have known better when Killian drove up to the valet. One of the valet men helped her out of the car, and soon Killian was over with her, putting the ticket into his wallet, and in turn pulling out the tickets for the park. He handed one to her along with an express pass. He smiled at her questionable look. “If we want to see everything and maybe more than once, we will need to skip lines where we can.”

She nodded and shook her head as they strode to the gates. They got through security and scanned their tickets before getting inside and snagging a map. With a quick look, they they headed towards the back of the first park. Emma could feel the little girl in her bubbling with excitement. His fingers intertwined with hers, giving them a slight squeeze. She turned to him, seeing his eyes dancing, a large smile on his lips. She could almost see the young boy in him coming to the surface as well. Two kids who grew up never being able to experience something like this were going to today.

The weather was in the high sixties, and was to get to the mid-seventies today. They were both dressed in t-shirts, covered in a long-sleeved button down, and jeans. They both agreed that due to the lower temperatures that they would not be heading on any water rides, so they wouldn’t need to worry about the curse of wet jeans. Both finished their apparel with sunglasses, the sun already bright in the sky today. Emma also brought a small backpack, deciding that would be easier than her purse and would allow her to carry necessities.

She pulled her handheld camera out from the side pocket of the backpack, getting it ready as they walked, so close to already seeing the buildings come into view. She took pictures of the Diagon Alley sign and they looked at the Knight Bus, Killian snapping a picture of her standing in front. They took a quick look at the Leaky Cauldron, Emma snapping numerous pictures, the smile on her face not dropping an instant. They noted the food choices for later, the menu filled with many traditional English foods such as fish and chips and shepherd's pie.

Emma stopped in her tracks when she saw the first store, pulling Killian to a stop with her. He looked back to see her mouth open kind of in awe. He took a look over his shoulder to see Ollivander’s Wand shop. He turned back to her. “Want to head in, love?” She bit her lip and shook her head quickly “yes.” He just laughed and pulled her with him. Her camera was going off like crazy as she took pictures of all the shelves with wands and the plaques with descriptions of the different woods and cores used in making them. He took the camera and got her picture near the self-moving broom cleaning near the shelves of wands.

There then was a notice that a wand choosing ceremony was starting, and he was yanked back into
the main room from their joined hands by a very eager Emma. He wasn’t sure how it was possible, but he was falling in love with her more and more by the minute. To see her so happy made his heart full. They stood with a small group of other people gathered; it was still early, so it wasn’t too crowded yet. She had her camera out, changed to record video to capture it, and he moved behind her, to hold and steady her from behind.

A older man got up to the counter, dressed in robes, and started to speak and give history of the shop. Then he looked straight at Emma. “So I see you are here for a wand today.”

She moved the camera down for a minute and pointed at herself, shocked. The man nodded yes, and without a word Killian took the camera still recording and nudged her to go. He was going to make sure to get this. She walked up to the counter as the man kept talking about wands while looking through a shelf of boxes. He pulled one out and opened it, “Ahhh, yes. Mahogany wood, pliable, dragon heartstring, fourteen inches.” He handed it to Emma and she took it, looking at the detail in the wood. The man pointed at a shelve of wands, “Give it a small woosh to straighten the boxes.” She did as told but the shelves nearly collapsed the boxes with it. “Oh that won’t do.” The man took the wand back and reshelved it, then started looking again, pulling another box. “This one is very nice. Elm and unyielding, unicorn hair, nine and a half inches.” He placed it in her hands again, and asked her do the same swish again. She smiled and followed suit, this time the light above went out with a series of sparks. The man took the wand back quickly and swished the wand, the light turned back on.

Killian kept the camera recording, but his eyes were on her face the whole time. Her eyes were sparkling, the joy evident. She was loving every second of this. Her eyes found his, and he raised his brow and winked at her, making her blush a little more, as the man was looking through boxes once again.

“Okay, this is it. This is perfect.” He pulled out the wand, looking at it. It had an ornate engraved handle, the wand itself smooth with a few slight bends to it. “Willow, slightly bendy with a phoenix feather core, ten and three-fourths inches.” He handed the wand to her, and music started to play, a light came on engulfing her in a glow. She made a small giggle, and he couldn’t help his laugh. “The wand has chosen its owner.”

Everyone started to clap, and Killian stopped the recording and walked up to her. “So, I have a feeling we are getting that.” She nodded quickly, not relinquishing her grip on the wand. They headed to the cash register and she reached into her backpack to get her wallet. “Let me.” He said starting to fish into his pocket.

She gave him a hard look, stopping him in his tracks. “No. I’m buying this for myself. Besides, you already bought the tickets and the hotel, and…” Pretty much paid for the entire trip so far. He lifted his hands in surrender, but the smile didn’t leave his face. She was next in line, and paid for the wand, she kept ahold of it while the box and bag went into her backpack. He looked at the wand and back at her with a raised eyebrow. “These are supposed to also do magic tricks at various places through the park.”

“Shall we keep moving?” he asked, offering his arm. She nodded and they headed outside. On the way out, they saw what she had just referred to: there was a small metal circle in the ground in front of various windows. When you swished the wand over it, the various items in the windows would move or dance. At one of them, Killian stole her camera to get a small video of her performing magic. Her smile and giggle already performed their own sort of magic on him.

They strolled through Weasley’s Wizard Wheezes, looking at at the practical jokes and silly potions. Emma thought about purchasing a love potion, but with a kiss to her cheek, he told her she didn’t
need it. They stopped at the Magical Menagerie, which was full of all kinds of stuffed animals from
Hedwig to Fawkes. They rounded a corner to see a performance of Celestina Warbeck and the
Singing Banshees perform the number “You Charmed The Heart Right Out Of Me.” Emma already
had numerous videos and was snapping pictures constantly.

They then moved towards their first ride of the day and Emma put the wand away in the box and
back in her backpack. As they got closer, they saw a dragon perched on top of Gringotts bank and
they headed into the line. They moved quickly to the front of the line, but stopped to take pictures
inside. They walked through the bank with the goblins on either side, and got into the room to take
the ride. There were movie screens all around them; the chairs moved and air blasted at them as they
rode through a sort of reenactment of the scene from the movie.
On their walk out, they were both bouncing and full of energy. “That was awesome!” she exclaimed.

“I completely agree.” He saw one of the beverage carts. “Thirsty?” She nodded and he purchased
two bottles of water for them as they continued to walk around. They caught the performance of a
reenactment of “The Tale of the Three Brothers” by Beedle the Bard about halfway through,
performed using stick puppets.

Afterwards, they walked down Knockturn Alley and took a look at Borgin and Burkes. It was full of
dark magical objects, Death Eater masks, and a copy of the vanishing cabinet that when you open
and closed it’s door a bird would disappear and reappear inside. They took a look at a couple more
stores containing Hogwarts robes, sweaters, and shirts. It was already after one o’clock, and they
decided to head to the next park and see what they had there to eat. To get there, they had to go
through King’s Cross station. A park employee took a picture of them together standing at the
passageway to Platform 9 ¾. They then moved inside to the train platform, and they took a seat at a
bench to wait for the Hogwarts Express to come back to the station.

She leaned her head on his shoulder, and his arm came around her. “Happy, love?”

She nodded. “Very.” She looked up at him. “Are you bored?” She knew she loved Harry Potter, but
wasn’t sure just how much he liked it.

“Me? I’m having a ton of fun, Emma. I have watched the movies, so it makes sense. But honestly…”
He moved a stray hair behind her ear. “I just love seeing you so happy.”

She leaned in and kissed him, and pulled back slowly as the train chugged into the station. “I love
you.”

They both stood and he pulled her close, kissing the top of her head. “Love you, too.”

A couple asked if one of them could take a picture of the two of them. Killian complied and then
asked them to take one of them as well. They then boarded the Hogwarts Express, an exact duplicate
from the movies, and took a seat in one of the cabins. He pulled her close again, both taking drinks
of their water as they relaxed and their ‘window’ came to life, showing the trip from London to
Hogsmeade. The door to the cabin locked, and they watched as silhouettes of the characters moved
around. Harry, Hermione and Ron all talking and moving through the train. Out the window, the
flying car moved by, and Killian laughed. Emma lightly poked him in the ribs with her elbow and he
kissed the top of her head as the train ride continued and then finally ended at the station in
Hogsmeade.

Once they arrived inside the second park, Emma was at it again taking pictures. They saw the Three
Broomsticks and the entrance to the Dragon Challenge roller coaster. He looked at his watch; it was
getting closer to two o’clock. “Lunch or the ride?”
Emma tilted her head back and forth. “I am hungry…” She looked at the roller coaster, seeing the riders twirling around and going upside down. “But it would probably not be best to ride that just after eating.”

He nodded. “That is probably a wise course of action.” With that, they traveled into the express line and decided to take the Chinese Fireball red track. They screamed and cheered as they went around the loops and shot straight down and did flips. When the ride came to a stop, they didn’t have to say anything and jogged back in line, and this time they choose the blue Hungarian Horntail track. It was similar but also different, trying to create the temperament of the different dragons.

When they exited this time, Emma paused and took a breath allowing her equilibrium to come back. He wrapped his arms around her, holding her. “Okay, love?” he asked as he caressed her back.

“Fine” she mumbled into his chest. “How are you okay?”

“I go faster on the race track.”

“But the twists and turns and upside down?” She saw him about to respond, and a finger shot up and touched his lips. “Wait...you know what. I don’t want to know.” She took a deep breath and then stood up straight. “Okay, I’m ready.”

Both now starving, they went back to Three Broomsticks, luckily missing most of the lunch crowd—the line wasn’t too long. Killian ordered the shepherd’s pie and Emma went for Cornish pasties and they got butterbeer and pumpkin juice to try together along with water for each of them. The place was amazing. Emma kept looking around and taking pictures while Killian took the tray to the table. She came back and they both sat down. “This place is incredible!” she said, her eyes darting to all the decorated nooks and crannies.

“Let’s get some food in both of us, and then we can keep going.” He laughed at the huff she gave him. She took her plate and water and he did the same. He took a sip of the butterbeer, and licked his lips from the froth left behind. “Pretty good. Kind of similar to cream soda.”

Emma took the bottle of pumpkin juice, shook it as instructed, opened it and took a taste. “Mmmm, not bad. Kinda like apple cider with a touch of pumpkin and more pumpkin pie spice.”

They exchanged drinks, and took a sip of the other, both agreeing they were pretty good. But Emma preferred the pumpkin juice and Killian the butterbeer. So they exchanged drinks again, permanently this time. While the food was good for a theme park, Killian told her when they got home, he would make some truly genuine English fare to try.

They finished eating and went outside to catch the Frog Choir croaking out “Double Double Toil and Trouble.” Killian tried to contain his laughter at catching Emma mouth the words to the song with them. They then went for a less jolting ride, much like a minecart type, called Flight of the Hippogriff. The ride took them over Hagrid’s cottage and the pumpkin patch. The exit of the ride led them straight to Hogwarts Castle and the Forbidden Journey ride. The line went through Hogwarts, allowing them to see the moving staircases and Dumbledore’s office, before getting seated in another ride like the one at Gringotts. The journey took them around the grounds of Hogwarts, seeing dragons, large spiders, and the Whomping Willow, even being chased by Dementors.

At the exit to the ride, they encountered Filch’s Emporium of Confiscated Goods; Emma purchasing a Marauder’s Map before they left. As it was getting late, the sun already starting to set at this time of year, they finished up with the stores. Stopping at Honeyduke’s, they both picked up some chocolate frogs and Killian also chose a bag of Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans, having looked to make sure there wasn’t any to strange flavors in the bag. They got to see the Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and
Durmstrang students perform in the Triwizard Spirit Rally on their walk back to Hogwarts Express.

The train ride was very similar to the previous one they took, but interactions and the ‘window’ showed different things, keeping the experience new. With a pleading look from Emma, she dragged him playfully into one of the more general souvenir shops, where she picked up Gryffindor and Hufflepuff scarves. She laughed, wrapping the yellow-and-black one around his neck.

“Are you telling me I’m in Hufflepuff, love?” She giggled and nodded. “Not sure if I should be offended or not.”

“That notion just reinforces that you haven’t read the books.” She leaned in, tying the scarf, and looked up at him. “Those sorted into Hufflepuff show dedication, patience, loyalty, and value fair play.”

“I’ll give you most of those Swan, but I’m a race car driver, not sure there is much patience…”

She cut him off, with a soft finger pressed to his lips. “The patience is with me.” She removed her finger and leaned in for a soft kiss. She pulled back, “You are very patient with me...when I need it.” Her lips quirked. “So how about I go purchase this stuff, and we get to the hotel. Because I’m not feeling patient right now.”

He gave a small growl and pulled her back in for a quick kiss. “Lead the way my love.”

With that, they were quickly through the checkout and walking quickly to the park exit. Killian paid the valet and they brought up the rental car. Once inside, he made the quick drive over to the hotel. Emma’s eyes widened when she saw it. “Really?”

He turned into the drive to the Waldorf Astoria at Orlando and he looked at her. “What?”

She smiled and shook her head. “You know a Holiday Inn or something would have been more than okay.”

Then he got her meaning, and he reached for her hand. “And those places are filled with families, and very thin walls. I wanted someplace…” He drove up to the door, the hotel’s valet striding to the car. He continued, leaning into her ear, “Where neither of us had to worry about how loud we would be.”

She gave a small shudder just as their doors were opened. The bags were placed on the cart by the bellhop and they went to check in. Emma wanted to laugh as they took them to one of the top levels of the hotel, to a corner room, or suite rather, as they got inside. It had it’s own living room, kitchen and separate bedroom. It was larger than her apartment. The view from the window showed Disney World and Epcot.

Killian tipped the bellhop and was soon locking the door behind him. She was staring out the window, looking at the view, when she felt him come up behind her. His arms circled her waist his mouth was at the back of her neck. She tilted her head to allow him more access, as his one hand came up under her shirt, trailing over her skin, to cup her breast.

She moaned and leaned back against him, his hardness already pressing into her ass. “Can I interest you in some pre-dinner activities, love?” His voice was a few notes deeper with need.

She ground her butt back against him, making him groan and his hands grasp her more firmly. “I think I could be persuaded.” She didn’t even get a chance to say more as she was hauled off her feet, over his shoulder and soon found herself deposited onto the room’s big, soft, king-sized bed. They could always order room service, much...much later. And they did, while watching the fireworks go
off at Epcot from the window, only to produce more of their own afterwards.

Chapter End Notes

Please forgive any errors with the HP park. I have never been there, I had to use Youtube vids and travel's blogs to write it.
Chapter 19

The morning was a rush of eating their room-ordered breakfast and getting ready for the day at Disney World’s Magic Kingdom. The weather was still too cold for the water rides, so their apparel was basically similar to the day before, but clean. This time when they pulled up to the valet, Emma didn't even question it. She wondered if she was getting too spoiled, but the joyous, childlike happiness on Killian’s face had her instantly stop her worry as they made their way into the park, quickly through Mainstreet USA, and over to Tomorrowland.

They had discussed their plan of attack for the park the night prior while wrapped up naked in the sheets together after initiating their own round of fireworks. They would circle around the park and only do what they really wanted in each 'land', skipping over attractions that didn't hold interest for either of them. Which only left a few things to see, in their current land.

She got a picture of him with Buzz Lightyear right before they headed for the Toy Story ride.

After the ride and right before their way out of Tomorrowland, Emma had to literally drag him into the themed speedway. “I don't care if it’s nothing like real racing,” she told him as she held his hand, pulling him with her.

They each got their own car, and the “race” started, the cars barely going fast and following their own designated line on the track. She could hear him cursing behind her. “Language.” She reminded him of the children present.

“This is not how racing works, Swan!” he replied, indignant.

She had her foot all the way down and looked behind her to see Killian trying to catch up. “You’re only mad because you're losing!”

She saw the determination on his face, and as they looped around the track, he caught up in certain corners only to get left behind in others. As the finish line came into view, he was a good few car lengths back, and she couldn't help herself hoot and holler as she crossed the line first.

Once all the cars stopped and they were out and down the off ramp of the ride, she turned to him, and he had a scowl on his handsome face. “Oh come on, it's a children's ride. You can't be that upset you lost.”

“That was a pathetic excuse for an imitation of what racing in like. It's not like...” She could see he was going to keep going, but she held his hand, squeezed it, bringing their walking to a stop, and then went to her tiptoes and kissed him.

His talking obviously stopped, and a brief second later he was kissing her back, holding her tightly to him, her other arm around his neck. She then pulled back to look up into his eyes., “Better?”

He took a deep breathe, breathing her in, a sense of calm from her in his arms washing over him. “Sorry, love. Not sure what came over me.”

She smiled up at him, her fingers playing in the hair at the nape of his neck, “You love what you do, and you’re protective of it. And you are a VERY competitive person. You really hate to lose to anyone.”

He grinned down at her. “You are probably the only person I don't mind losing to, my love.” He placed a soft kiss on her lips and then pulled back to look around. “Okay, lead us away from here;
She pulled him with her to the Seven Dwarfs mine car ride, and then over to the Prince Charming Regal Carousel. Emma picked a white unicorn, while Killian took the black stallion to the side of her. They then stopped for a couple's photo op in front of Cinderella’s Castle, before getting in line for Peter Pan’s Flight.

Emma took a picture of him next to the name of the ride after they got off; the exuberant smile on his face made him look much, much younger. And when they turned the next corner, she immediately heard an intake of breath from him beside her. She looked up to see the costumed character of Captain Hook. She tried to keep in the laugh, she really did, but part of it escaped.

“You wound me, Swan.” He pointed at the figure. “Did I laugh at you yesterday?”

“No,” she said softly and then leaned up to kiss his cheek. “How about I get a picture of the two of you?”

“Yes, please,” he told her before he strode towards the figure. She got out her camera, watching him talk to the ‘Captain’. Killian was scratching behind his ear, making Emma squeeze her lips together tighter not to laugh at how embarrassed and childlike he was in the moment.

But with an arm wrapped around each other, the Captain bringing up his hooked arm, and Kilian bringing up his own, mimicking a hook with his finger, she just shook her head. “Say, ‘Ayyyyyyee’.” He rolled his eyes at her but did and she took the picture. She quickly checked it and gave a thumbs up at how perfect it was. For some reason she had a feeling it would be his new background picture on Twitter.

She came up to him, and he immediately took her hand and brought it to his lips for a kiss. “Thank you, love.”

“No problem. Now let's go into that Fantasyland store and get some souvenirs.” They headed inside and he was immediately engrossed in the Peter Pan area, as Emma drifted towards the other parts of the store. He found what he was looking for and then went to find her. He saw her in the Tangled aisle, her fingers lightly trailing over the plastic tiara. “You should get it.”

She jumped, startled her hand came to her chest. “You scared me.” Then she laughed; he had on a red plumed hat and had found a plastic hook. “Do you have plans with that outfit?”

Killian picked up the Tiara and placed it on her head. “Hmmm…the big bad pirate captain kidnapping the princess…” He watched a small shudder go down her body and raised his eyebrow. “I have to say, I think we...both like the sound of that.” He used the hook to grab her arm and pull her close to him, as his lips claimed hers.

She pulled away regretfully, and his eyes were slightly dilated. “Yep...totally buying this.” They quickly found their way to the registers to buy their items, both trying to keep certain thoughts out of their heads, especially in a child's amusement park.

They found their way into the Haunted Mansion, and this time, Killian had to keep the laughter to himself at how tightly Emma gripped him and the couple of times she let out a scream at the entirely innocent Disney ghosts. They rode a few more rides and then stopped for lunch at Columbia Harbour house. Killian got the lobster roll and she ordered the chicken pot pie. They both laughed that they had “It’s a small world” stuck in their heads after that annoying but almost mandatory Disney ride.
After lunch, they decided a light ride was in order and headed over to Aladdin's Magic Carpet Ride. Once inside the car—err, carpet—they were slowly lifted off the ground.

“I can show you the world…” Emma turned to him quickly, her eyes wide as he continued singing. “Shining, shimmering, splendid. Tell me, princess,” he took her hand looking into her eyes, “now when did you last let your heart decide?”

Her smile grew; he was really, really good. “I didn’t know you could sing. You’re just full of surprises.”

He shrugged and pulled her closer to him, his arm around her shoulder, as he started to sing again, her smile widening even more until she couldn’t help it and leaned in to kiss him. The rest of the ride was forgotten as they continued to kiss, and only stopped from a cough. They pulled apart to see the ride attendant asking them to exit the ride. They quickly left, both giggling as they made their way further into Adventure Land.

A Mickey Mouse-shaped ice cream treat on a stick later, they got in line for the Pirates of the Caribbean ride. Eventually they got into one of the boats with some other riders, and she curled up against him, under his arm as the ride started. They traveled through Tortuga and then a battle against a town by a pirate ship. Both agreed they needed to have a movie night to watch the movies together.

Afterwards, she directed them into Frontierland and Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, their stomachs now ready for another more thrilling ride. On their way out of the exit, they checked to make sure they had in fact gone on everything they wanted, and then started the trip back to the entrance, making stops at the souvenir stands along the way on Main Street.

Once outside of the park and back in the rental car, they decided to head to the hotel and eat at the more casual restaurant there for dinner. They quickly decided on dinner once seated. Killian choose a steak while Emma went for pasta, and they shared a bottle of wine. They knew they had to leave early in the morning since practice started tomorrow. But that didn’t stop them from having some fun when they got back to the room, enough fun to tire them the rest of the way out and fall to sleep early.

They got back to the trailer early the next day, but Killian only took enough time to get the luggage in the RV, change into his firesuit, and kiss her deeply once more before he headed to the garage to work with his team. Emma changed clothes, took some time to freshen up, and then headed out looking for the girls. It wasn’t long before she found them looking out over the lake, drinks already in their hands. “Mind if I join you?”

They all smiled at her, and Ruby waved at an empty chair across from her. “It’s all yours.” Emma took a seat, and then Ruby and the girls leaned in. “So, how was the trip?”

They all talked and watched the cars lap around the track for practice, and towards the end, they went back to their respective drivers’ garages. She learned that due to a few car issues, which they had fixed, Killian would start in the second Cam-Am Duel in tenth place. The girls had explained that the starting race at Daytona was different than the qualifying for the other races. The top two qualifiers would start first and second but the rest of the field was determined by two sets of smaller races of 60 laps each, the order of those set by practice times. Then the ending order of those races would decide the rest of starting order of the Daytona race.

Emma could see he was a little perturbed by the fact he was starting back so far, but she just wrapped her arm around him and rubbed his back.
He instantly started feeling better, the tension leaving him, and he gave a quick peck to her forehead. It was time to pack up for the day anyway. He gave a quick nod to Robin and his crew and they headed back to the RV. She could tell he was still a little upset about the practice and didn’t want to have him try to cook, and she didn’t want to subject him to her cooking, so she suggested delivery. They decided to order pizza and turn on a movie, deciding Pirates of the Caribbean would be a good choice; they might even watch them all. The races were late the next day and the press wouldn’t be around until almost noon.

A few hours later, pizza was done, as was ice cream, and they were into the third movie when she got an idea. She headed to the back, requesting a bathroom break to put her plan into action. She found their souvenirs from the park and then searched through her luggage to find the perfect thing to go with it. A smile formed on her face as she did so.

She changed quickly and adjusted the tiara on her head. She called out to the other room, “Killian?”

“Yes, love?” he called back.

“Can you close your eyes for a minute?”

A smile bloomed on his face, knowing that whatever she had planned, he was sure he was going to like. “Closed!” he yelled back to her. He heard her feet padding softly towards him.

“Keep them closed.” She said as he felt her put a hat on his head, and then pull out his hand and put something plastic over it. He then heard her walk away from him. He took a few moments to realize what was on his hand, and once he did the smile got wider, and his imagination caught up making his pants grow tighter, and tighter. “Okay, open them...Captain.”

He slowly opened his eyes, to look at her wearing a light pink silk camisole, with the tiara on the top of her head. He had been correct, she had outfitted him with the plastic hook and the plumed hat. He turned off the TV and slowly stood from the couch, stalking towards her. “Well, what do we have here? Did you stow away on my ship, princess?”

She smiled happy that he was going with the plan. “I was running away from an evil witch. I had nowhere else to go.”

He bit his lip as he got closer. “Stowaways are punished aboard my ship, royalty or not, Princess.”

He walked up to her, his hook going under her chin pressing it up to make her look in his eyes. He tried not to groan at the desire written in those jade green depths.

She bit her lip, her core already aching. “There must be something I have that you want.”

The hook trailed down her neck and pushed the small strap down and off your shoulder. “I already have you under my complete control. What could you possibly offer me?”

She looked up at him. “In exchange for you taking me far away from here, I will let you have me. Anyway you wish, without complaint or struggle.”

He stepped in closer to her, his body pushing hers backwards into the bedroom until her legs hit the bed and she fell back onto it. He leaned over her and spoke hotly into her ear. “I could just take what I want and then give you to my crew.” He pulled back and watched her swallow hard, wondering if he had gone too far, but desire still swam in her eyes. However, his face softened, his hand came to the side of her face. “Emma, if you wish to truly continue this...I will need a safe word, darling.”

She stilled, her brain pulling her out of her lust-filled fog, and she smiled up at him. “I trust you.”
“Love...if I am reading you correctly, and what you intend for me to do. I will put you through your paces, I will take as I please. You WILL scream and cry out.” He leaned in and nuzzled into her neck, feeling her shake. “You will beg me to stop...because it's too much.” He pulled back to look into her eyes. “The point of the safe word is I won't stop, I'll keep going...unless you say that word. Is that what you want?”

She absolutely wanted it and nodded her answer, the only question was what would would she possibly use. Something that she couldn't possibly say by accident, and with a smile she said. “Pumpkin.” He raised his eyebrow at her in question. “Well, I won't say it by accident, and it fits with the whole fairy tale thing.”

With a smirk on his lips, the ‘Captain’ returned. “Oh princess, as you will learn, this is no fairytale.” He took the tiara off her head and sat it on the nightstand, giving her a look not to object. He then turned back to her and his hook trailed down her neck and over her shoulder. “So, the deal is, I will take you where you want to go. But I shall have you any which way I please. When I please.” He watched her swallow hard and nod. “You will do exactly what I say, and when. If you do not, you will be punished. If you keep being insubordinate, I will hand you over to my crew for the trouble.”

She nodded her agreement. “Yes, Captain.”

Since they had been together he had cataloged away tidbits of information here and there about what she liked and he was damn well going to try and use every single one of them tonight. With that he sat on the bed next to her and then quickly grabbed her and pressed her down over his lap, his hooked hand between her shoulders. The silk chemise raised over her backside, exposing her pale cheeks and matching G-string to his gaze.

She struggled against him, her hips moving against his lap, making him ache and his pants tighten even more. His hand then came down and connected with her backside. She screamed and wiggled, her instincts making her try to get away. “Oh no princess. We may have a deal, but you still stowed away on my ship without permission.” He gave another smack to the other cheek and she squirmed again, but he heard the quiet moan of pleasure as he rubbed the stinging skin. “I you had come to me to make a deal before hand it would be different. I can’t have stowaways going unpunished on my ship.” She settled on his lap and he smiled, his hands rubbing the slightly pinkened flesh of her backside.

He spanked her ass a few more times, alternating sides, her whimpers turning to moans as he went. His hand stroked the red marks, and he let his hand dip lower between her legs. She was soaked and a growl ran up from his chest. “Such a dirty princess, you liked your punishment.”

She was aching now, hoping he wouldn't stop, but he did and pushed her to her knees in front of him. His hook and hand traveled from her shoulders down her sides and then grabbed the edge of the slip and lifted it over her head. He dropped it to the floor along with the hook; the need to touch her with both hands was too great.

His hands grabbed her breasts harder than usual, his fingers pinching roughly at her nipples. She threw her head back in a moan, and arched her back into his hands, looking for more.

But his hands stopped and she lifted her head to look at him as he stood in front of her, her head at just the right height as she knelted below him. He unzipped his jeans and pulled them and his boxer briefs down his legs to pool around his feet. His hard length jutted out to almost touch her face.

She licked her lips and her core clenched; her tongue wanted to lick the drop of pre-cum off the tip of him. But she knew he hadn't told her to, so she had to wait for the command. She clenched her hands at her sides as she waited.
He smiled down at her, seeing her try to restrain herself. His fingers caressed the side of her face. “Good girl.” He then raised her chin to catch her eyes. “Now look at me princess, and use that beautiful mouth to suck my cock.” Her tongue came out to lick the tip, and taste his salty sweetness. She moaned and leaned forward to take the head between her lips, her hands started to come up to help. Though, he pushed her hands away, “No touching. Just your mouth.”

She gave him a glare but dove in, her tongue trailing over the vein underneath as her mouth moved to take more of him in and then back off. Each stroke took him deeper and deeper.

He groaned as he watched her mouth move over him, her tongue swirling, her throat muscles swallowing around his cock. When her nose brushed his stomach, he growled and his hands threaded into her hair, gripping tight, tugging slightly. He pulled her onto him a little more forcefully, and pushed her off for a small breath before pulling her back onto him. Over and over he forced her mouth onto him, his grunts of pleasure escaping on each pass of her mouth.

God, she was loving this; her walls clenched and ached as he took what he wanted. She moved her hand between her legs, hoping to relieve the tension. Her fingers slid through her slickness and almost reached her clit when he quickly pulled out of her mouth and tilted her head back to look at him. “I said, no touching.” She was about to object, but saw his eyes almost black with lust, making her...want...more. “I decide when you get pleasure, not you. You will touch yourself, only when I allow it.”

He pulled her to her feet by her hair, his fingers cupping her head, relieving some of the pull. He pressed her front down onto the bed onto her elbows. Her feet were on the floor, her ass in the air. His fingers took hold of the strap of her G-string and pulled hard. It snapped and the fabric fell to the floor, the position putting her now bare ass and cunt on full display for him. God, she couldn’t wait for him to just take her; she needed it, she needed him inside her. But with his next words, she knew she wasn’t going to get it, at least not yet.

“You must like being punished.” He said as his hand came down hard on her ass once again. This time the pleasure was immediate. Part of her wanted to object to the punishment, he hadn’t been specific in his instructions, but the other part of her knew it didn’t matter. His hand snaked down lower towards her thighs and she whimpered.

His hand again came down in quick succession over the swell of her ass cheeks, down her thighs, the tips of his fingers coming in contact with the lips of her sex. He watched her face as he got closer and heard her cries of pleasure each time he made contact. He kicked her legs wider apart, and his hand cupped her bare mound, his middle finger slipping through her slickness to flick against her hard and swollen bundle of nerves. She keened under him, and he smiled. “Mmmm, such a naughty girl, you really like this.” His hand came down hard, calculated across her nether lips, his fingers sliding between to glance over her swollen clit.

She bit her lip, trying to hold back. “Oh, no you don’t, I want to hear every sound, every scream.” He said and then smacked the same spot over and over. She whimpered and screamed. Her legs were shaking; she was right on the edge—all she needed was one more. And he was gone, walking to the closet with a smirk. She glared at him, but stayed where she was, trying to catch her breath.

He pulled out a black tie from their closet and walked back to her, pulling her to her feet and binding her hands behind her. “Make it a little easier for you to behave.” He pushed her back to her knees as he leaned over her. “If you keep disobeying, I will just tie you to the bed.” He could see the want in her eyes, his still-hard length getting impossibly harder at the knowledge. He straightened back up, the tip of his cock ghosting over her lips, teasing her. “Open.”

She did as instructed and he slid inside, hands already in her hair, working more and more of himself
into her mouth. Once she opened her throat and started to swallow him down once again, his eyes connected with hers, staring up at him. “Fuck. Yes. Take all of me down that throat, princess.” He watched her head moving over him, taking all of him into that sweet mouth and he knew he was already close so he decided to change tactics.

He kept her head still, his fingers wrapped tight in her hair, as he started to thrust into her warm, wet mouth. Her tongue ran over him, her throat muscles repeatedly swallowed around him, her cheeks hollowing as she worked on him harder. “So good,” he grunted, and tugged on her hair, making her moan around him. “You love me fucking your mouth, don’t you?” She moaned around him again, the vibration ringing through him, and with another thrust he was coming, releasing his seed down her throat as she swallowed all he offered. He pulled out reluctantly leaving a trail of his release over her tongue, lips and chin.

She licked her lips, taking in his flavor, keeping her eyes on his. His hand reached out and collected what was on her chin with his thumb and pressed it to her lips. She sucked his thumb clean, and he felt the stirring of lust again already. His hand went to stroke her cheek. “Mmmm. Good Princess.” He reached down for her tied hands and pulled her to her feet. He pulled her to the bed, and sat back against the headboard and helped her over him, to straddle his legs. His hands pressed her down, her slick swollen flesh pressing against his softened cock. They both let out a pleasure-filled sound. She whimpered, missing his touch as he pushed her back to sit further away on his thighs. He widened his stance, allowing him free access to all of her.

“All on display just for me.” He bit his lip as his fingers trailed lightly over her skin, from her mouth, down her breasts, to press lightly into her core. Her back arched and her head leaned back, her hair tickling his calfs. His hands moved back to her breasts, testing their weight in his palms, his thumbs sliding over her nipples to then pinch and tug at them. He did it harder and she moaned louder. He leaned in and latched his mouth to one, sucking hard, teeth nibbling.

Her hips bucked looking for some sort of friction, but there was nothing between her legs, nothing to rub herself against. “Please,” she begged. He had kept her on the edge for too long, she needed release. She didn’t care what she had to do to get it.

He grinned against her flesh. “What was that, princess?”

“Please, Captain. Please.”

He heard the need, the pleading in her voice. He pulled back to look at her. “You beg so nicely, but you have yet to tell me what for.”

“Please, make me come.” Her hips moved, and then she turned her needy eyes to him. “Please, Captain.”

His hand grasped at her breast again, tweaking the nipple. His other hand moved down between her legs, his thumb pressing against her clit, as two fingers entered her. She moaned and rocked against him. “That’s it. If you want to come, fuck yourself on my hand.” Her eyes flew open only to see the smirk on his face. He was waiting for her defiance, waiting so he could possibly punish her again. But she wasn’t going to take the bait, no she would take her pleasure and hopefully tease him right back. She adjusted her hands in the binds and leaned back on her palms, shoving her hips down onto his fingers. She let the moans escape her mouth, as she rocked back and forth.

His eyes traveled over her writhing form, using his digits to find her release. She was his wanton princess alright, the sight alone bringing his cock back to life. He could see her getting close, and without a warning he moved a third finger into her. She cried out his name, breaking character in her passion as she tumbled over the edge. Her walls clenched his fingers as her back arched and she rode
Killian’s hand left her breast, and came behind her to untie her wrists, throwing the tie to the floor. Before she was fully back to her senses, he withdrew his fingers and sucked them into his mouth. He groaned at her taste, his cock now fully at attention, but he wasn’t even near being close to being done with her. He grabbed her ass and hips and rolled her onto her back, as he sat back on his haunches between her spread legs. He grabbed each of her wrists and pressed them above her head, as he stared into her green eyes now watching him. “Don’t move them.”

She nodded and his lips trailed down her neck, nipping at the skin as he went. He traveled down to her breasts, sucking hard at her nipples, and then nipping and leaving a red mark at the side of her one breast. His hands then glided down between her legs, and pressed her thighs open wide. His tongue darted into her, with his face pressed tight, making his beard rub against her tender skin. Her hips bucked up against him from the sensation. His thumb started to circle her clit over and over as his tongue curled repeatedly inside of her.

Emma’s hands grasped the pillow above her, as she whimpered, curses coming from her mouth as he was pushing her close to the edge in a rush. His tongue left only to press three fingers back in her and his mouth to suck on her clit, pushing her over, light shooting behind her lids as she called out his name again. He smiled against her, only to shove his tongue back inside, his fingers moving over her clit hard, not letting her come back down at all. She was tender; she didn’t know if she could endure another one so close, but damn if her body didn’t listen. She was groaning and whimpering and letting out noises that were probably not words.

He kept alternating his fingers and his tongue inside of her, his eyes gazing up at her over her bare mound, watching her wither in front of him. Her legs were clenching, shaking as he pulled another orgasm out of her. He still didn’t stop, his lips attached firmly to her clit, his fingers plunging inside of her, her walls still fluttering.

“Please…” she whined. “Please give me a moment, please...captain.”

He sucked on her hard and pulled back with a hard lick, making her hips squirm. “I thought you were mine to do with as I please.”

Emma saw the look on his face, the question in his eyes, she knew she could say the safe word, but she didn’t want to. God, somehow her body still wanted more; she just needed a short break. One that he just, in a way, gave her. She took a deep breath and found her voice. “I am, all yours...Captain.”

With that, he was back on her, his tongue dipping inside her to then trail over her clit, over and over, stroking the flame inside her back into an inferno. His fingers plunged back into her, her hips rocking onto them once again, wanting more, needing more. He could tell from her sounds how close she was, let alone from the quake in her legs.

But this time, he didn’t let her finish. Instead, he flipped her onto her stomach and pulled her up onto her knees. His hand pressed her back onto the bed. Her body was too worn out to complain that he had left her on edge again or about his manhandling. Hell, she loved the way he could just move her around as if she weighed nothing. Her bent legs were spread wide, her calves on either side of him. His hands were on his hips, as he lined up, and pulled her onto him in one quick thrust.

She threw her head back, her muscles contracting as she came hard around him, finally feeling him fully inside her. Her walls grasped his length hard, forcing him to grit his teeth, as he held himself deep inside of her. But before she fully came back down to reality he started to pull out and then snap his hips back hard into her, eliciting a grunt from her lips as he pressed deep. He pushed himself
to his knees, taking her hips with him, as he pulled out slowly only to plunge back in quickly. God, she was so wet and tight around him.

He pressed her hips down and his hand moved to her hair, gathering it up into a ponytail so he could pull her head back, making her back arch, and changing the angle of penetration, as he thrust inside again. She mewed as he hit that spot that had her seeing stars. His hips started to piston into her hard, hitting that glorious spot repeatedly on each thrust.

“So tight. So fucking tight,” he grunted, watching himself sink all the way inside of her to then pull out covered in her arousal. “So wet for me.” He gave a light tug to her hair, making her moan again, as he continued his assault into her. The sounds coming out of her lips, the flush to her skin, her tight inner walls fluttering as he watched her pretty little cunt take all of him over and over. His urge to fully claim her made his hand on her hip grip a little tighter before he let go to drop his hands under her, trailing over her clit, gathering her slickness on his fingers.

Part of him wanted to take the opportunity to claim her fully, but he refused to use this game they were playing to take what he wanted this way. He also didn’t want to make her say that word, if she wasn’t ready, thus ending the fun. But it didn’t mean he couldn’t play a little more.

He plunged in deep once more and stayed still, making his jaw clench, as she tried to move against him trying to get him to continue. He let her hair go to grab her hip, as his slick fingers traveled over the tiny puckered hole between her still-pink cheeks. He felt the exact moment she understood his intentions, as his fingertip started to massage the rim. She stiffened slightly, and then he felt her body relax, making a smile bloom on his face knowing she wasn’t going to protest. His index finger dipped inside to the first knuckle, her gasp and hips pressing back encouraging him as he moved the digit out just a little and then back in a little further. Each time he pulled out, he went back in further, pressing the finger down against the wall inside her, feeling his hard cock on the other side, making them both whine at the sensation.

His other hand left her hip to slide back between her legs and glide over her clit, making her shudder and push back against him. He transferred the moisture back to his other hand, and this time on the pulling out of his finger, he started to push both his index and middle into the tight little hole. She gasped, and then moaned as he got it inside of her. Her body tried to press back against him. “The naughty princess likes her ass filled, hmmm?” He asked as he flexed his hips and pressed his fingers fully inside her at once.

“Fuck...Yes.” she moaned, the feeling of being full, too full rushing over her. But god she didn’t want it to stop. She needed him to move. “Please...God...Please… fuck me.”

His free hand came to her hip, pulling and pushing her back onto his cock and fingers. “Captain will do.” With that, he was gone, his hips and fingers fucking into her with abandon, the sight alone enough, let alone how much she was loving it, to drive him over the edge. The debauched sounds she was making made him absolutely crazy. A string of curses came out of those gorgeous lips and he couldn’t hold back any longer; he lost it. His orgasm washed over him, heightening as her walls clenched around him, dragging his climax out longer. His hips stuttered against her backside, and with his last amount of strength he fell to her side, pulling her back to his front, burying his face in the back of her neck as they rode out the aftershocks.

Their heavy breathing started to calm and their sweat-soaked bodies cooled. With his head returning, she slowly removed his fingers and himself from her. He placed a kiss to her shoulder at her whimper. He stood and walked into the bathroom to wash his hands and to bring a wet washcloth back to the bed, only to find her exactly where he left her. He sat back down, and softly moved the towel between her legs. He caught the slight wince on her face, and moved the towel back over her.
behind gingerly. He then dropped the towel to the floor and laid back down, pulling her close to him again and bringing the blankets up over them.

He could tell she was almost asleep, but he had to talk to her. “Emma...love...are you okay?”

She nodded and turned in his arms to face him, her leg coming to rest over his hip, as she snuggled her face into his chest. “More than okay.”

“I saw the wince. Did I hurt…” A finger came up to his lips to stop him as she looked up at him.

“I’ll be a little sore in the morning.” She could see the regret starting to form. “Killian...don’t you dare. It was...amazing.” She kissed him softly. “I mean there were times I wanted to kill you…” They both chuckled. “But you played the part perfectly.” She bit her lip. “Were you okay with that?”

“I am more than okay with giving you whatever you want or need, my love.” He kissed the top of her head. “It was fun. But admittedly, it was a little difficult to treat you like that.” His fingers caressed her back. “Though I could tell you were...enjoying yourself.” She blushed and hid her face in his chest. His hand tilted her chin to look back up at him. “Emma, it’s okay to like that. I get it. You are so in control of your life every day, sometimes it’s nice to give that control over to someone else.” He kissed her forehead. “I’m just honored that you trust me like that.”

She grinned and leaned in to kiss him. He knew her so well and didn’t judge; just loved her. She pulled away to look into his eyes. “I love you.”

He smiled back. “And I love you.” He kissed her forehead again and pulled her tight as they let the physical exertion wash over them, and in minutes, they were both sound asleep.
The next day, they were up and out of the RV by noon. He was in his sponsor polo, she in a maxi dress and light, open cardigan. Both once again had on their sunglasses since it was a bright day. Today, she had her hair up in a braided crown around her head, which brought a twinkle to his eye when she came out of the bathroom with it, reminding them both of their adventure the night prior.

They walked to the garage, his pace slower at seeing the small grimace on her face. She could see the mixture of regret but also pride, that made her give a playful smack to his chest. He leaned into her ear and murmured, “Shall I carry you, Princess?” She glared at him, which made him laugh and kiss the side of her head. Once they got to the garage, he was quickly pulled away by Regina for the press, and she was pulled by Ashley back to her RV where Ruby and Ariel, along with little Alexandra, were waiting.

“So, we thought it was good to give you a glimpse about what tonight would be like,” Ruby said from the couch sipping on what looked like iced tea.

They all took a seat as Ashley started to work on her daughter’s hair. “So we have last year’s race all cued up.” She said as she started to brush out the long blonde locks.

“And don’t you worry, we aren’t going to make you watch the whole thing. We’ll just so you how the duals work, and some of the main racing.” Ariel chimed in.

Ruby patted her leg, “But we are going to show you all the crashes.” Emma stiffened at that. “You need to be prepared, Emma. Because it will happen.”

Ariel nodded. “They are very safe in those cars. You need to get used to it. Because I hate to tell you, honey, as Ruby said, it will happen.” She gave her a sympathetic look. “I’ve seen Eric go through so many crashes.”

“We all have.” Ashley said as she started to separate Lexie’s hair into pigtails. She then looked up at Emma, “It doesn’t take all the fear away. But it makes it a lot easier. Especially knowing which ones aren’t a big deal.”

The brunette next to her continued. “Just remember, you want to see that net over their window lower. Once you see that, it will be okay.” And with that they started the TV.

He was so tired from the press. He downed another bottle of water, his throat dry from answering so many questions. His eyes were still seeing stars from all the lights and cameras as he headed back to the garage looking for Emma. He had been gone for hours, and it was only a little while before the first race. Thank god he was in the second one, he needed a break, and to see her.

As he got to the garage he saw Regina and Robin talking. Was she actually smiling and laughing? He shook his head; he really didn’t need to let his brain contemplate why. He walked up to them, and they went back into business mode. “Hey, have either of you seen Emma?”

Regina shook her head, but Robin answered. “The last I saw her, Ashley grabbed her and they walked back to the campers.”

He saw Sean walk by and followed him back and into the other driver’s RV to find all the ladies there; music was playing and they were eating.
“Any left for us?” Sean asked before walking to his wife and leaning in for a kiss.

“We made plenty of taco salad.” Ashley replied and looked to Killian waving her head to the counter. “You, too.”

He thanked her, and grabbed a plate and piled it up behind the man in front of him. Emma jumped out of her seat and had him sit down. She was about to settle on the floor when he pulled her back into his lap and kissed her cheek. “Missed you.” While a little awkward to eat, she stayed on his lap as they all ate their dinner.

“So, what have you ladies been doing all day?” Sean asked.

“Showing Emma last year’s race,” Ashley replied.

Killian smiled until Ruby spoke next. “Wanted her to see the crashes and get prepared for them.”

He looked up at Emma on his lap and noticed that she was intently looking at her food. He sat his fork on the plate and rubbed her back until she looked at him. He could see the fear in her eyes. “Don’t worry, love. The cars are very safe. You should see some of the wrecks I’ve—”

She cut him off. “Yeah, they showed me.” She went back to her food taking a bite.

He looked over at Ruby and the others, looking for help, when Sean chimed in. “It’s like football.” Emma looked up with a questioning look. “No matter if you are the quarterback or a linebacker, you are going to get tackled. It’s just the sport. But, honestly we are safer in those cars than any of those players on that field.”

Ashley smiled at her husband, and Ruby nodded. “He’s right.”

Emma straightened her shoulders and looked around at everyone staring at her. “What is this, ‘make sure Emma can handle the race tonight’?” They all looked around at each other and then started laughing, with a echo of “Yes” from everyone but Killian who just kept a soft hand on her back. “Well, let’s change to another topic, shall we?”

They agreed and the boys started talking about the press, and soon Sean had to go and change because he was in the first dual. Emma and Killian exited and headed back to their RV for him to change, and then get back to the track to watch the first race with his team.

The first dual wasn’t too eventful: a few minor wrecks and a few unknowns getting further up in ranks than was forecasted. Sean came in 2nd, so he would start 3rd back in the inside lane or what was 5th place, while Victor would start in 9th.

Killian pulled Emma in for a deep kiss and then got into his car. Emma once again followed Robin back to the stall and got up into the pit box along with Regina this time. Regina already had her headset on and her phone out, going through emails. Emma put on her own headset and could already hear Robin, Killian, and his spotter talking. She had learned from the last race to ignore most of the chatter. It didn’t make much sense to her, anyway. Her brain only focused in on choice words or phrases that got her attention.

Soon the drivers were starting their engines and out onto the track, the green flag waved, and they were off. He was five rows back, but as soon as he passed the starting line, he was up and to the outside of the track and past the next row, already up to 7th place. She knew he was trying to get up to Eric so that they could draft together and get away from the rest of the pack.
By the third lap around, he was up to 5th, but Jefferson in 4th place did not want to let him pass and kept changing lanes in front of him, slowing everyone else down and letting the first three drivers gain a large lead up ahead. She heard his unhappiness over the ‘crazy arse’ ahead of him over the radio, and Robin tried to get him to calm down and just pull back a little and wait him out.

By the 21st lap, it didn’t matter; there was a tire blowout and a caution, so all the cars came in to pit road for fuel and four tires. His crew was amazing as always and got him up a spot into fourth. Jefferson was in third and Eric in second, which Emma knew put them both in perfect position to charge ahead of the field if they could get a decent start.

Which is exactly what happened. With one lap around together, they were already almost a fifth of the track ahead of the rest. Both took turns to swap positions to let their car cool off. The only issue was when the cars in the back traded paint or blew tires, bringing out another caution. Three cautions later, they were only a few laps until the end. Eric was in first, Killian in second; neither of them deciding they needed to go in for tires or fuel this close to the end. Luckily, Jefferson had been a little too reckless and caused a collision earlier that had him further back in the pack.

She could tell the drivers were not driving as recklessly as they were in the Shootout the week prior, knowing they didn’t want to risk their cars in the race making their starting position even worse on Sunday, which had her feeling really good about Killian and Eric’s chances. A few laps later, she was right, as Killian came in right behind Eric across the finish line, the other cars a good second back. By her calculations, that would mean he would start right behind Eric in Daytona with a 6th-place start. Which, honestly was perfect, especially since Phillip qualified into the second position and with Sean in 5th. All of them worked well together, trusted each other, and raced fairly. She also knew that with a few laps to go, it was anyone’s race between them, but at least it would get them all in a better position...hopefully a safer position.

She got down from the stand and waited behind the wall as his car pulled up and he got out, pulling off his helmet. Not waiting any longer, she ran over to him, and not caring if cameras were on or not, she was kissing him, and he returned it fully.

The next day started much earlier since the Daytona 500 was set to go off at one o’clock. The press was out in full force, not to mention all the fans. Emma was in awe by just how many people were there. The stands had sold out. Killian was whisked away early for meetings and press, so Emma and the girls walked around. The weather was beautiful and actually a little warm.

Soon introductions were done, and they were reunited by his car for a kiss and a long hug. Then the invocation was given and the national anthem sung, with planes flying by. Afterwards, she leaned in for another tight hug and a kiss, telling him to be careful and she loved him. He told her he would and he loved her, too, and as he got in the car, she headed back to her spot in the pit box. Then there was the announcement of the race’s grand marshal, some famous football player, who told the drivers to start their engines.

She checked her phone, seeing texts that David and Mary Margaret had the race on and were cheering for him. She smiled and then texted them back her thanks; the start was coming as the cars drove out onto the track. She put her phone away the cars came up to start the race. The green flag dropped and they were off.

The outside lane quickly gained ground and Sean moved up behind Killian as the four cars started to break away. As Sean moved by the 92, who started in first, the driver knew he was in the wrong lane and ducked in behind him. Emma tried to remember the drivers name—Booth, right; August. The outer lane was moving ahead, and the inner lane kept dropping further and further back;
however, through some maneuvering, Victor dropped down into the front of the bottom lane, right in front of Jefferson. Emma cringed, knowing that he was taking a chance trying to get Jefferson to help. That driver was crazy; it was a consensus among most of the drivers.

The middle and the back of the pack were going nuts. They were three-wide, sometimes four-wide on the track, trying to pass each other. They were already trading paint and a few cars were almost turned around, but luckily they didn’t. However, Emma was sure a couple had clipped the wall. She tried to just turn her attention back to Killian at the front of the pack. The front five cars were set ahead of the rest, but Victor and Jefferson were making up some room and were just almost to the back bumper of the 92.

Emma heard the chatter on the line and knew the group was all working to make a change, and with the all-clear, they seemed to swoop down into the bottom lane together on the next turn. Victor and Jefferson fell in behind them. Emma wasn’t sure if they were picking them up or making them stay behind them, but she had a feeling Victor wasn’t happy about it, and neither was the 12, since they both headed to the outside row, trying to once again work that lane to make some headway.

But it wouldn’t matter, because all of a sudden, a caution was out at lap 21 and Emma whipped her head around to try and see what happened. She wasn’t exactly sure, but saw one car coming to a stop in the grassy infield and two other cars against the wall at the top. As cleanup started, all the cars went in for tires and fuel. Killian’s amazing crew got him up to second place, right behind Phillip.

“Fantastic job guys!” Killian called out over the speaker to his crew. She loved that about him, he was always so complimentary to his team, he knew he couldn’t do it without them, which in turn also made them very loyal to him.

The restart didn’t last more than a lap as the back of the pack got a little too excited and another crash brought out another caution. “Bloody hell. Really?” Killian came over the headset, she could hear the frustration in his voice.

“Some of the first timers are getting overly excited. Just relax, mate.” Robin replied trying to calm him.

“I am too relaxed, going so God awfully slow. That’s the problem...mate.”

Emma saw Robin roll his eyes but try to contain his smile just like Emma did. They both smiled at each other, and then Robin took a deep breath to start talking with his driver again. Soon, only those who crashed prior and during the most recent wreak came into pit lane for further fixes. The rest then started the green at lap 34, with so many laps of caution.

Starting in the outside lane was a benefit and soon, Killian was in the lead, with Eric right behind him, Sean swooping in after, and then Phillip giving up the inside lane to get into the 4th spot. Victor stayed on the inside lane, followed by Jefferson and then August, the three of them giving the other four a run for their money. One lane would get a lead, then the other, and that’s when it looked like some of the drivers decided they may want to switch lanes. When Killian got out front, Eric moved far enough ahead of the inside lane that he swooped down in front of Victor. Some air had Victor swerving and heading into the top lane; luckily, the space had not yet been filled and he snuck in behind Killian, but that caused Sean to slow and the whole lane behind him, creating a chain reaction the middle of the pack was not ready for.

Cars were rear ending each other or spinning around, and the yellow lights were turned on as some cars came to a whirling stop and others either limped or were able to slow and carefully drive by. She could hear Killian shouting over the speaker. She knew he would have words for Eric later; the drastic measure could have taken them all out of the race, as well. She clapped her hand over her
mouth hearing words that she knew must be swearing but was pretty sure they had some English
connotation that she was unaware of. She looked over at Robin, and could see he was just as
frustrated by the move but was doing his best to calm down his driver once again.

It seemed that almost everyone but some of the cars in the back thought it was a good idea to come in
and get new tires and gas, since by the time the wreckage was cleared and they were let into the pits,
they were at lap 57.

Those who had stayed out were obviously looking to just get an extra point for leading a lap because
as soon as they got their lead lap, or fell back, they were pulling into pit lane. Those drivers had
broken up the balance, though, and Victor was currently in the lead, followed by Eric on the outside,
with Killian followed by Sean on the inside. As soon as Eric was far enough ahead of Killian, he
pulled down in front of him. Killian didn’t appreciate it and thumped his bumper a couple times.

“Hey, watch it. You don’t need his bumper going through your radiator.” Robin warned.

“I’m just sending a message.” Killian retorted and then pulled back, and started drafting with Eric
again for the advantage of progressing further.

The lanes kept moving back and forth but Killian’s line with Eric up front stayed in the lead the
most, and by lap 84, a caution was back out for a blown tire, and all drivers were back in the pits.
Only this time, they came back out with Killian in the lead on the outer lane and Eric in the lead on
the inside. Victor tried to go three-wide and make his way down the center, but neither of them let
him in, and with a small slide, he slid back a number of spots before he was able to get in line on the
top.

Emma chugged at her water and stretched her arms at lap 100. She couldn’t believe they still had 100
to go. Not long after, without a caution in sight though it could happen at any time—the pack was
starting to come in for more fuel and tires. It was the first time she had witnessed pit stops while not
under caution. She kept waiting for Killian to come in, but he wasn’t and neither were the others
around him. Then finally Eric, as the leader, came down and Killian and the rest followed him in.

Killian whooped and cheered his team as he got out of the pit first and onto the track ahead of
everyone else. She had to agree; they had done an outstanding job. Killian was in the lead, followed
by Phillip then Victor and Eric. Sean, August, and Jefferson were on the inside and trying to catch
up, but a caution came out at lap 124 due to debris on the track. Some of the first drivers into the pits
stopped, but those who recently went in decided to stay out this time, hoping another caution would
happen once again. With the way the race was going, Emma thought it was a pretty good bet.

On the next start, Killian got out first, but as soon as the lane got far enough out, Victor dropped
down to the bottom, and what must have angered him was when Eric then dropped in front of him
afterwards as well. Emma shook her head; there were going to be some words exchanged after this
race, she was sure.

The cars were once again exchanging the lead between Killian and Eric. The inside row would get a
run and then the outside row. Victor would try to go up the middle but then find himself back behind
Sean. Phillip would try and barely slide back into the place he left in front of August. Jefferson tried
to start a third line down the middle and a couple of cars actually were following him; however, once
he tried to get into a gap that wasn’t big enough for his car, another yellow was out, with a few more
cars hitting into each other and the wall at lap 137. The cars saved gas as they went around on the
cautions laps while they cleaned up the track and the pits stayed closed.

Once everything was cleaned up and two cars were taken out on wreckers, the pits were open and
the cars were in, followed by Jefferson limping in for fixes. Killian’s crew maintained him the lead,
with Eric out next followed by the rest. The next start had the both of them out in front; just those following them slightly changed around. Each driver tried to make it up, tried to get to the front, but neither leader would allow it, and they would only get maybe up a spot or fall back a few. Each time the cars went three-wide, Emma got nervous; when they went four-wide she would cringe, just waiting for someone to hit something.

Another tire blowout at the back, with the car skidding against the wall, brought out the yellow flag at lap 176 and all drivers went in. Killian opted for four tires and fuel to help with grip, while some drivers decided to only go for two, thus having him lose three spots to August, Phillip and Victor. But on green, Killian quickly pushed Phillip up to get a good lead with Eric right behind him. Sean dropped in behind them, leaving August and Victor behind on the inside line.

A few laps later, the two below gave up and followed the others on the outside lap as they led around the track and broke away from the rest of the pack. The middle pack moved in two or three lines each, while another group of stragglers had lost the pack completely and were trying to work together to catch up at the back. But they didn’t work together too well, because one mistakenly slipped too far to the side and air flipped the car in front of them around, catching them as well and bringing out another caution with only 12 laps to go.

Almost everyone opted to stay out, believing they had enough fuel to get to the end—and to keep their positions. On green, Killian was able to get out with a good push from Sean, as Eric went to the middle to get around Phillip. The two rows stayed separate this time, as they all vied for position. Emma’s knuckles were white as she held her hand in fists, watching the cars moving and trying different things to get ahead. The laps ticked down; all the positions but the top two were changing places, but who was in the lead kept going back and forth between Killian and Eric.

With two laps to go, Killian was able to get a good lead with Phillip behind him, but Eric, followed by Sean, was catching up. With one lap to go, she was on her feet. They were almost neck and neck at the back straightaway. Regina was on her feet as well as they watched. Anything could happen; any of the cars behind could try to come around to win themselves, thus leaving the others to slow; or someone could try to cut up past someone or go around.

Within sight of the finish line, she could see cars crashing on the back straightaway, but before yellow could come out, Killian and Eric were both over the line, followed in quick succession by Phillip, Sean, August, and Victor. Emma looked to Robin; it was too close to call from where she was. But when she heard the hoots and hollers from the com, she knew the answer, and before she knew it, she was wrapped in a hug from Regina and Robin. Then, as if she realized what she was doing, Regina quickly composed herself and stood back, straightening her hair as she made it down and off the platform.

Emma let go of Robin to watch Killian do a burnout across the finish line, then grab the checkered flag and drive it down the track. She knew her cheeks were going to hurt from the large smile she carried, but she didn’t care. The sound of how happy he was came over the speakers. Before long, Robin told him they would see him in Victory Lane. Robin nodded at her and she took off the headset; once she was back on the ground, they were heading over to meet him by the car.

Robin told her to stand back a little bit unless she wanted to get soda all over her. She did as instructed as Killian pulled the car onto the stage. As soon as he got his helmet off, disconnected, and sat it down next to him, he started to get out of the car and confetti started to fall. He stood on the window frame of his car as his team and the crowd cheered while he and his team started to shake and spray the cola all over the place. Now she understood what Robin meant, and before she could move closer he was off the car and a reporter came up to interview him.
“Congratulations! You finished 2nd last year in the championship, had some issues off the track, but it seems like you put it behind you and finished first on the first course of the year. What happened?”

“Honestly, I think finishing second last year, and that speeding ticket I got was one of the best things that could have happened.” He quickly looked around and once he caught sight of her his smile somehow got bigger and he reached towards her. She came forward willingly, and he pulled her into his side. “I got to realize what was really important and take a look at what I was doing, and what I really wanted out of life. I’m still learning, but I think I got some priorities straight. Which allowed me to really listen to my team, and work things out. And it was a team effort today. They were able to move me up when it was virtually impossible to do it out there on the track. I need to thank them and Robin Loxley, my crew chief; Mills Racing…” He continued on naming the manufacturer and all his sponsors for their support and help. “Not to mention…” he turned to look at her again, with a soft smile, “Emma.” He looked back at the reporter, “She’s changed everything.” He smiled wider and she hid her face in his suit in embarrassment.

The reporter smiled, “We should let you celebrate the win with your crew and...girlfriend?” Killian nodded, his arms wrapping around Emma. “Well, congratulations,” the reporter turned back to the camera. “And there is Killian Jones, your Daytona 500 winner.”

He was pulling up her chin and quickly claiming her lips, and lifting her off the ground and twirling her around in his excitement. She squealed into the kiss, wrapping her arms around his neck, feeling how exuberant and joyous he was about everything. She tried to hide the slightly watery eyes she had at his words to the reporter while he continued to kiss her, as his team and the crowd continued to cheer.
Chapter 21

The win felt like a blur of activity. Reporters, bigwigs, and multiple photos alongside the trophy with a hat from each of Killian’s various sponsors. After it was all done, it was time to get ready to go home, and with the adrenaline still running through them, they quickly proceeded back to the RV. The moment they both walked inside and into the kitchen, Killian turned and pinned Emma back against the wall, testosterone pumping through his veins; his need for her was far too great to wait a moment longer. His mouth descended onto hers, devouring. His tongue was already darting inside her mouth to taste. His hands on her hips pulled her tight against his hardening length, ready to posses.

And God, did she want him to. She moaned into his mouth as her hands went to work, trying to find the zipper to his firesuit. She needed it off...now. His hands moved to unbutton and pull down her own zipper on her jeans. Her fingers finally found the hidden zipper and immediately started to pulling it down. She pulled back from his lips so she could watch the zipper trail lower, slowly exposing his chest, the hair damp with sweat, down lower over his abs and the slim line of hair going down, down and...her mouth turned into a wicked grin finding him without his boxers, and oh so ready to go. Her hands came up to push the sleeves down, and as soon as his arms were free, the top of the suit fell back and his hands pushed down her pants and underwear to her knees. Both of them desperately tried to remove them and her shoes as quickly as possible.

The moment they were off, her hand moved to his hard shaft, eliciting a groan and his mouth latch onto the skin at her neck, biting and sucking, leaving his mark. His own hand darted to her core. “Fuck...So wet for me.” He groaned as his teeth nipped again, and his fingers dipped inside her. Her head fell back in a gasp, her hips rocking on his digits, as her one arm looped around his neck to hold on for dear life while her other hand grasped him firmly in long strokes.

The pungent smell of him—all male, sweat, and sex—heavy in the air made her head swim, already teetering on the edge of oblivion. But then his head pulled back to look at her and he removing his fingers, leaving her gasping, aching and wanting. Her eyes flew to his now-dark blue ones. His lips smirked right before he sucked his glistening digits into his mouth, tasting her, making her core clench. Her grip tightened around his length and he growled in response at the feeling. Both hands moved to her hips, lifting her against the wall. Her legs instinctively wrapped around his waist, while her hand lined him up to where she desperately needed him. Then both thrusting their hips together, plunging him fully inside her.

His mouth was back on hers in an instant, both her arms around his neck deepening the kiss, using that and the wall for leverage to rock back against his thrusting hips, quickly working them both back up to the edge. Her hands gripped tighter to his sweat-soaked back, sticky from the spray of cola in winners circle. But she didn't care; as their bodies ground against one another, their mouths fused, only breaking slightly on moans and gasps of pleasure.

He took a small step back, breaking the kiss and allowing her back to slid a little down the wall, angling her hips for him, his fingers digging into them as he pistoned back deep inside of her. He knew she would have marks from his fingers, and the thought just spurred him on more.

She gasped at new angle, her eyes caught the smirk on his face as he picked up the pace. “Yes!” she screamed, voicing what he already knew, her inner muscles fluttering in confirmation. “Oh God...fuck...harder.”

He readily complied, knowing she was on the verge, he started to chase his own release as well as he plunged in and back out of her in rapid succession. Her nails dug into his shoulders, making him
groan, the slight pain adding to the immense pleasure. With one more thrust he felt her start to contract, her hips jerking, her mouth opening on a scream of his name, as his body took over pushing through her convulsing muscles, prolonging her pleasure while he found his own. With one more thrust he held himself deep and grunted her name as he lost himself and followed her over the edge.

Their heavy breathing and rapid heartbeats was all either could hear as they held onto each other. His hand drifted from her hip to under her as he pulled her back up and pressed himself against her, his lips finding hers again. The kiss was now soft and slow, gentle and loving. She sighed into it, her fingers sliding through his wet and sticky hair at the back of his neck. The feeling had her laughing, making him pull back and raise an eyebrow at her. Her hormones now under control, the need for a shower was much more apparent. “You...well now we...reallyyyyyy need a shower.”

His eyes danced. “What are you implying, love?”

“I'm not implying anything...you stink.”

He laughed, and ground his hips against her, making his softening length, still partially inside her move, rewarding him by her biting her lip. “You didn't seem to mind a few minutes ago.”

“Well, now I do.” She teased back. “Besides, even if I don't want to, we need to pack and get home.” She started to try and break away from him, but he kept his arms around her stopping her, as he started to walk to the bathroom with her still wrapped around him. She raised her own eyebrows at him in question.

He smiled as he walked into the shower, her back pressed against the tile. “What? You said you wanted a shower.” She laughed as he turned on the water, but it quickly turned to a moan as his mouth worked back down her neck.

They didn't actually leave the RV for two more hours, but when they did, they both had large smiles and their luggage ready to go. Their ride to the airport was waiting for them. By the time they got back to his place, it was almost midnight. The bags made it to the bedroom, barely. But minutes later, she found him slowly stripping her clothes and leading her into one last round of celebratory sex before they drifted off to sleep in each other's arms.

===∞∞∞∞∞===

The next day back to work for Emma was rather difficult. It wasn't just the fact of having to work again after a week and a half, or even getting up early that made it so difficult; no, it was Killian—naked, hair ruffled, kissing down her body, begging her to stay a little longer—that made it VERY difficult. But somehow she managed to leave, and was only fifteen minutes late.

Archie had told her to say congratulations to Killian on the win. Tink wanted all the details she could get while at lunch, especially after she had seen the answer Killian gave the reporter. With pink tinged cheeks Emma admitted that they had finally told each other they loved one another. Quite a few times, actually, though she held that tidbit to herself. She was really glad that Ingrid had done well while she was gone and only a few things were left undone for her to do when she got back, which allowed her to actually leave work on time and head back to his place.

As he rang her through the gate he told her the garage door was open, which it was. When she walked into the house, the smell that greeted her made her mouth water; he was cooking something delicious. “Honey, I’m home.” She called out with a laugh and she could hear his chuckle in reply as she hung up her coat. She walked into the kitchen, and smiled at the glass of wine waiting for her. “God, you are the best,” she said as she took it and a sip while she kicked off her shoes into the pile by the backdoor.
“I know,” he replied with a wink and then turned to check in the oven.

“Besides this wonderful-smelling meal, what did you do today?” She asked as she scooted to sit on the counter next to him.

He closed the door, and moved towards her, spreading her legs to stand between them, his mouth claiming hers in a slow yet passionate kiss. Then he broke away regrettably to reply, “Missed you, mostly.” He gave a quick kiss to her nose. “I also unpacked, did some laundry, and went into town for…” he started to reach into his pocket, but then stopped and looked at her biting his lip. His eyes were unsure and he took a deep breath. “If it’s too soon, just tell me…”

Her mind flew into a million different directions at that, and shockingly each one she thought of, she wouldn’t say no to. The realization was shocking to herself. “Just relax and tell me…”

He took his hand out of his pocket and he had a key with a keychain that looked to have buttons on it, her eyes widened and he must have saw, because he was instantly diverting his eyes, his other hand scratching behind his ear as he quickly blurted out, “Relax love, I’m not asking you to move in with me.”

The brief flash of disappointment wasn’t seen, which she was glad for, because the feeling was surprising to herself.

“And there is no need to return the gesture.” He said as he placed the key in her hand, and only then did he look up at her. “I just want you to have it. No need to wait for me to be home without letting yourself in.” He pointed to the buttons on the keychain. “Top is the gate, bottom the garage. The key works for any of the doors.”

He was watching her, waiting. She broke out of her thoughts and smiled at him. “Thank you” was all she could get out, so she pulled him in for a kiss. Her thoughts tried to figure out why she felt the disappointment, why he made it clear it wasn’t about moving in. Did he not want her to, or did he think she…oh, of course he thought she wasn’t ready, especially with that prologue. But maybe he also wasn’t. She squeezed her hand with his, the key between them, she decided to send a message. She looked deep into his eyes her other hand trailing over the side of his face. “Just so you know…I’m not scared anymore.” His eyes widened at her words, a grin starting as she pulled him in for another deep kiss.

Then the timer buzzed and he regrettably pulled from her grasp, his thoughts swimming at her words. He went to the oven to pull out dinner and sat it to the side. He was about ready to ask if she wanted it to be more when she spoke up.

“If you come to my place tomorrow, I can give you my spare key,” Emma said as she jumped down from the counter to grab two plates and bring them over.

He nodded. “Sounds good.” Even though the course of action was set, he couldn’t help to wonder if he had broached the subject of her moving in, if she would have accepted. Up until a few moments ago he had been sure she would have said no. He had contemplated it all day today. As he had unpacked their bags, he realized exactly how much of her stuff was actually at his place. The her's sink and closet were no longer bare—far from it. He had actually loved putting her clean underwear in the empty drawers, her clothes in the closet. Even as he had the key made, he had been trying to decide. But unlike the rest of his life, he knew he had to take the safe route with Emma; she was much too important to him to muck this up. But her words...he turned to her. “Emma...were you hoping…did you want…”

She smiled and cut him off by going to her tiptoes for a quick kiss. “Killian...food is getting cold.”
She redirected the conversation back to dinner even though part of her wanted to answer. But she didn't want to force him to go down a route he wasn't ready for either, and she had a feeling if she had said she was ready, he would do it just to make her happy, even if he wasn't there yet.

He nodded and they plated their food and sat down to eat, the topic changing to her day back at work. After dinner, they took to the couch and turned on the television, a movie they had both seen playing as they continued to talk with her curled into his side. The topic turned towards the coming weekend and the race in Atlanta.

“I was thinking about that. I can't take time off again so soon, but I could fly out after work on Friday and then come back with you after.”

He smiled and kissed her forehead. “Sounds great. Just let me know what time, and I'll have Dusty there with the plane.”

She sat up and looked at him, “What? That's crazy. I can get a one-way flight to Atlanta for not that much. A heck of alot cheaper than sending the jet to pick me up.”

He sighed. “Emma…” The money didn't matter. What mattered is that she was safe and would be by his side sooner.

But she didn't care, as she sat up straighter. “Don't ‘Emma’ me. Even if it wasn't the money, it's still a waste of fuel and time for your pilot just to pick me up.” Not to mention that she felt like he paid for everything, which made her feel horrible.

He could see he wasn't going to win this one. “Okay, but I will pick you up from the airport.”

“It will be late and you…” She stopped at the look he gave her. “Okay, fine. Deal.” With that he pulled the hard-headed, yet independent woman he loved back into his side, and they finished the movie.

The week actually went quickly; much too quickly. Because as soon she pulled away from the curb at the airport, having dropped him off, her lips still tingling from his kiss, she missed him. She had to just keep reminding herself it was only one night apart, and then she would be seeing him again.

He was telling himself the same thing as he settled into his seat on the plane, as Dusty went into the cockpit. It had been weeks since he had slept alone, and he wasn't looking forward to it. “Just one night.” He said out loud, trying to convince himself it wasn’t that long.

The next day she went to work, with her luggage packed and sitting by her door for the flight out. She had slept terribly the night prior, and this morning wasn’t any better as she realized she had gotten used to him spoiling her with breakfast. So instead, she stopped to get coffee and a muffin on her way into work.

Killian had a very similar issue the prior night as well. Even though they had talked before bed, and he had told her good night, it just wasn’t the same. But he wasn’t about to tell her that. He was trying to make the separation as easy on her as possible. He knew she loved her job, loved working to get those kids homes, and he wasn’t going to make her in any way feel bad about it. He would just have to learn to deal. Though he couldn’t help but want her to miss him as well.

He yawned as he walked to the garage to talk with Robin and his team, only to be shocked to see Regina there. But then, he shouldn’t be as she was talking to his crew chief. He was going to have to actually talk to his friend and see what was actually happening between the two of them at some point. No matter what, Robin was possibly moving on from his dead wife and that was a very good
thing, for him and his son.

He walked closer and Regina saw him. “Oh, perfect. I wanted to talk to you.” Robin nodded at both of them and headed over to the car as she turned to Killian. He almost wanted to take a step back because of the smile on her face. “I just have to say, you did a great job. The press loved your victory speech, and they want to know all about Emma; it’s turning your image around…”

Killian shook his head and waved her off. “Wait...stop. No...No, no, no. I can already see where you are going with this. I didn’t say any of that to change my image. I didn’t start dating Emma…”

“I know you care about her…”

He stopped her again, “Bloody hell, Regina, I love her.” Her eyes widened at the realization of what he was saying. “I’m doing what is best for her, for us. I don’t care what it does to my reputation, good or bad. Period. Do you understand?”

She nodded, and a small soft smile formed on her face. “I’m happy for you, Killian. I know how hard…” She stopped obviously not wanting to bring up the past. “Okay then. I promise I won’t use that angle. But then we will need to do something else. I do want to turn your image around. It’s time. Besides, if this progresses further, do you really want to stay the bad boy?” He shook his head no. She brought her hand up to tap along her temples as she thought, and then a grin formed. “How’s that charity you formed coming along?”

“Well, I have the organization setup and I transfer money to it to help out causes here and there.”

“So you haven’t gone further? Got some staff, do some fund raisers?”

“I didn’t really think about it,” he admitted as he crossed his arms over his chest.

“I’ll have my lawyers get in contact with you, take a look at the organization structure and get to work. Once it’s all setup, you can do some fundraising, get some shirts, present checks. It will be good press.” He rolled his eyes and she sighed, “And the charities needing money will get what they need, and even more than what you were to give them alone.”

He had to admit that part sounded positive. “Okay, but I get to say what organizations and charities get money.”

“Of course...what was it for again?”

“Orphans. It’s the Lost Boys and Girls.”

Regina clapped him on the shoulder. “Perfect. I’ll start making calls.” And with that she had her phone out and was walking out of the garage.

Killian shook his head, but at least she had listened to him, and she actually seemed happy with him; even happy in general. He shook his head again, and with a smile, he went to go talk to his crew so they could soon get out there for practice.

Emma was so glad the plane was finally landing. There was a very small, young baby on the flight that did not like the air pressure change and the poor thing was screaming for most of the flight. There was a very large man on one side of her, and a geeky teenage boy on her other that she swore was trying to constantly look down her shirt. But there was no way in hell she was going to tell Killian she had a bad flight, because if she did, she knew he would insist on his plane the next time.

So before she got to the airport exit doors to the baggage claim, she took a deep breath and tried to
release the tension. She then walked out and immediately there in front of her, he stood. She smiled wide and rushed over to him. His arms went around her, and she buried her face in his chest, taking a deep whiff. “Missed you,” she admitted into his chest.

He smiled. “It was only one night,” he replied, but hugged her tight because he had missed her as well. “Come on, love; let’s get your bag.”

She shook her head, stood back and waved at her large purse and carry-on. He just smiled and shook his head. Taking her hand, they walked out to find a car waiting for them. As soon as they were in the back seat and the doors were closed, he was leaning in and she was meeting him halfway for a kiss as the driver pulled away from the curb.

The next day, Emma found the girls and told Killian she would see him after he got done with qualifying, while the girls headed off to catch up. Killian went to the garage to meet with his crew, and unfortunately the person he had been avoiding since coming to Atlanta was in the stall next to his, waiting for him.

Eric smiled. “Hey, what’s going…”

Killian cut him off. “Don’t! I’m still angry at you and the bloody crazy stunts you pulled last week.”

The other man sighed. “I know...I’ve already told the others I was sorry. Ariel already gave me quite an ear full after the race.” He dropped his head, and ran his hand over his forehead. “And I’ll tell you the same thing. I’m sorry. I was being…” The man smiled, “a bonehead.”

Killian chuckled. “Okay.” He held out his hand and Eric shook it. With that, the two men started to talk. A little later, qualifying started, and the girls went to watch them. This part was new to Emma, and what most qualifying would look like from here on out. Ruby explained that all the cars would be out on the track with a random line up racing for their best times for twenty-five minutes; the top 24 times would then try for the best time for 10 minutes, with the top 12 then racing for another five minutes. The one at the end with the fastest lap time would be on the pole. Ruby did also tell her that on tracks smaller than one and a quarter miles, the officials would eliminate the top 24 and just go right to the top 12.

“You’re lucky, Emma. Qualifying used to take hours, now it’s compacted into an hour,” Ashley told her.

The other girls just nodded, and she smiled at them. “But, to be fair, the guys didn’t have to be in the car as long. They would just get in, go do a few laps and come back in.” Ariel chimed in.

“True,” Ruby replied. “Victor hated it though, all the waiting. At least out there they get to stay busy.” The other two nodded and Emma just grinned, imagining Killian fidgeting while waiting to race and for the results. Yeah, this was a much better option.

Once qualifying was over, Sean was in 5th, Eric in 3rd, Victor in 2nd, and Killian had won the pole. Emma couldn’t keep the smile off her face as they headed back to the garage to tell the guys to go change and they were all going to head out to the local hangout together to get dinner.

The next morning Killian left the RV early to deal with press. He insisted that she stay and sleep in and that he’d see her for lunch before the race. She had agreed and rolled over to hug his pillow, burying her face into it and soon she was asleep once more. She managed to wake a few hours later and had just finished getting ready when Killian came back to the RV. Together, they had lunch and then went back to the garage to get ready for the race.
This was a part that Emma was starting to get used to. The introductions, the invocation, the singing of the national anthem, the loud sounds of planes flying overhead, followed by parting words of love, a deep kiss, and wishing him good luck before following Robin back to the pit box, where she put on her headset and got ready for this race of 325 laps. The track was only one and half miles, unlike the two and half at Daytona.

Killian, starting first, maintained the lead, and that lead did not change much until green flag pit stops when he had to come in for fuel and tires. But as soon as the cycle of cars went through, he was back in the lead, and due to his fast pit crew with an even bigger lead than before. There had yet to be a caution, which Emma knew was unusual, and the longer it was, the more worried she got. It was actually a pretty uneventful race; a few cautions did finally come out—one or two blown tires—but most were for debris, and she wondered if officials were just calling it to actually bring out a caution and get all the cars back together since Killian had almost a two-second lead each time.

But as the race moved on, with only 26 laps to go, what Ruby called a “big one” happened. Emma was on her feet as soon as it started, and let out a breath as Killian and then Victor were able to stay out of it, but it seemed almost everyone else after them and well through the middle of the pack was caught up in it. She looked on worriedly as cars crashed into the wall, some going into the grass, more hitting each other, and some hitting the wall to then shoot back into the grass hitting another car. It was a bad game of bumper cars, with pieces of cars going everywhere. This time it wasn’t just a yellow caution that came out, but the red lights. The drivers who made it through had their cars stopped on the opposite side of the track while the cars all finally came to a stop. Wreckers and ambulances raced onto the track to help the drivers and start cleanup.

“How’s the car?” Killian asked.

“Looks like you missed everyone; good job, mate.” Robin told him as the spotter agreed.

“Sorry for the delay, love,” he told her, making her smile and Robin grinned at her.

Emma leaned over into the speaker on Robin’s headset. “Not your fault; at least you aren’t part of it.”

They all engaged in some idle chit chat along with some strategy-planning while the track’s crew kept working. It took just over a half hour to clean up the track, soak up the spilled fluids, and get underway once more. Quite a few cars were completely out of the race, including the one that had caused it in the first place, Jefferson’s. Phillip’s car had his rear bumper gone; Eric’s front bumper was missing and had a ton of Bearbond on almost all of the passenger side Sean was similar, but the drivers side; and all of them were now behind those that made it out without or barely a scratch.

Besides Killian in 1st and Victor in 2nd, Emma didn’t really know any of the drivers until Phillip in 12th. But then the green flag was out and the race was on once again. She bit her lip as she watched the unknown cars work their way around, being extremely aggressive. She was on her feet once again as the top four cars were all in a position to possibly win. On the last lap, after the fourth turn the car behind Killian swung out to try to go around, their cars scraping against each other as Killian, Victor and the unknown number 14 shot over the finish line.

This time she knew it was Victor that won, and she was pretty sure Killian had got 3rd. She looked to the scoreboard and saw that she was right. She could tell he wasn’t happy with the 14, but Robin was trying to calm him and tell him 3rd place was a good finish, and they got the extra points for leading a lap and most laps led.

Phillip had managed to make it up to 7th, while Eric came in 12th and Sean 14th. She knew they wouldn’t be happy with it, but with how bad their cars were damaged, it could have been a lot worse. She took off her headset and got off the pit box, waiting for his interviews to be over. As
soon as he was done, he spotted her in the crowd and walked directly to her, pulling her into his
arms, and hugging her tight, placing a kiss to the top of her head.

“Come on, love; let’s get out of here,” he said as he pulled her with him to the RV. He took a quick
shower while she finished packing her things, and it wasn’t long before they were at the airport and
waiting for their turn in line to take off and head home.

Monday after work she went back to her apartment, finding Killian there already draining a pot of
spaghetti. She smiled as she walked in. “You know you don’t have to always cook for me.”

“Hello to you, too, love,” he said as he leaned over and gave her a quick kiss. Her arms then
wrapped around him from behind, as she rested her head on his back. He sat the drained pasta to the
side, and went back to stirring the sauce. “It’s a simple bolognese recipe, and better for us than take
out.” He then turned in her arms, “Besides it gives me something to do while I wait for you to get
back after work.” She helped get out the plates and they head to the table to eat.

It took her until halfway through the meal to decide she needed to say something. “So, I took a look
at the racing schedule for the next few weeks…” She left it hanging and watched his head turn
towards her. “They’re pretty far away…” She really didn't want to say it.

“Aye, I know.” He sighed. They both knew this was going to happen, but for the whole month of
March it was all pretty much out on the west coast, and he knew Emma couldn’t take the time off
again so soon. He also didn’t like the idea of her flying out that far all by herself and he knew damn
well she wouldn’t let him send the jet for her.

She reached her hand out for his, and squeezed. “You know I would be there if I could.”

He gave her a soft smile. “Emma, it’s okay. You have your work; I have my work. This was bound
to happen at some point. It’s okay. It’s not like I haven’t been to plenty of these all by myself
before.” She nodded, and he squeezed her hand back. “We’ll talk on the phone, text, use Skype.
We’ll be fine.” His thumb rubbed the back of her hand. “Besides, just think of the hot, crazy sex
we’ll have after being apart.” She laughed at him and pulled back her hand to smack his shoulder.
His words had the desired effect to relieve her worry and make her laugh.

That Thursday he flew out to Las Vegas. She recorded all the practices and qualifying that she
couldn't see while at work. Ruby also texted her the Twitter handles for herself, Ashley, and Ariel.
On her lunch break, she took out her phone and downloaded the app and then proceeded to follow
them and then read back a ways on their accounts. She found that Ruby usually tweeted during the
race, with an impressive amount of followers, more followers than even Victor. Emma also followed
the guys as well. Her account barely had anything on it. But she took the time to update her page, a
picture of her at the Harry Potter park as the banner and a close up of her that Killian took at Disney
as her main picture.

Before her lunch break was over, Ruby and the others had already followed her back, and Ruby
tweeted to her that she would miss her this weekend. She replied to tell everyone hello, and then she
got back to work, dropping her phone in her purse.

Once home with only a minor pit stop of her own to get dinner at Granny’s she quickly changed and
then fished her phone back out to text Killian and see if how it’s going and see if he could talk. He
texted back almost immediately that he’d be done in about an hour, with the different time zones
coming into play. She munched on her grilled cheese as she saw a Twitter notification. She smiled
wondering if someone else left her a message, when she opens it, she almost dropped the phone in
shock.
Since lunch, she had gained over two thousand followers, and as she looked on in wonder another one followed her as well. What the? Then she realized what happened: the fans who follow Ruby saw her tweet, and they figured it out. With a little worry, she scrolled back down her own page and found there wasn’t anything she tweeted prior to worry about, and she hadn’t put anything too personal on it. She had to remember that now that her and Killian were together, she was a part of all this. “Well, they are going to be shocked at how boring I am,” she laughed to herself. Both she and Killian rarely ever posted anything at all, so she doubted it would be much of an issue.

She turned on the first practice and scanned through it to listen and see the bits that Killian was in. Luckily, it looked like his car was doing okay, and his times were well up in the top 5. With the buzz of her phone, her lips turned into a smile at seeing his name pop up. “Hi,” she answered.

“Hello love. How was your day?”

“Interesting…” she laughed and then she told him about her Twitter adventure, which had him laughing. He himself hadn’t even gotten on Twitter since early November. She saw another follower, and smiled brighter at seeing that it was Killian. “Wow, Ruby and the others followed me before my own boyfriend.”

“I’m very rarely on here love. But, I can change that if you wish.”

She rolled her eyes, “Oh please. No need.” Then she sighed, “I miss you.”

“We’ll be okay, Emma; just a couple of days,” he told her—and himself.

She wasn’t sure how to take his answer. She was glad that he sounded like he was doing okay, but did he really not miss her? She tried to shake the thought away. “So, I watched some of practice. Looks like it went well.”

He agreed and he told her about his day as well. They continued talking until both of them were yawning and told each other goodnight.

The next night was the same, both asking about their days. She said she missed him, and he told her it would be okay. Saturday was pretty much the same, but she was able to watch qualifying and the second practice live, making being apart a little easier while it was on. Killian qualified 4th, with their friends scattered through the rest of the field. On Sunday afternoon, they talked before the race, and she wished him luck.

It’s very different to see the race on tv rather than being there. While it’s easier to see the cars on the screen, it’s a lot harder to watch him. She whined at the TV every time they showed another part of the field of cars and not his, since she wanted to keep an eye on his car. There were a few minor wrecks, and more cautions than the last race at Atlanta. Killian got pushed up into the wall, which had her on the edge of her seat, but he was okay, and the car was alright. He was still able to come in with a 2nd place finish, this time with Eric in first, Victor in 4th, Phillip in 5th, and Sean in 6th.

Right before he got on the plane to head, home he called her, and asked if she could meet him at his place. He really wanted to sleep in his bed tonight. She agreed and headed over, using the new key for the very first time.

When he got home, she was there, in bed watching television, or had been. She was sound asleep, the TV still blaring and the lights still on, and he knew it was a valiant effort. He placed his bag gently on the floor and shed his clothes down to his boxers. First, he turned off her light, and then moving to his side of the bed, he sat softly, trying not to wake her. He slowly pried the remote out of her hand and turned off the television, but that was what woke her up. She startled, and her eyes
opened quickly. He saw the moment she knew she was awake and he was there; a large smile spread across her face as she quickly moved into his arms, her face pressed to his chest, her arms holding him tight. He leaned his head against hers, breathing in her sent. “Hello, love. Sorry to wake you.”

“Don’t be silly.” She kissed his chest and looked up at him. “I tried to wait up.”

“I know.” He pulled her down into the bed with him, allowing him to lay back on his pillow and hold her tight. He sighed at the comfort of being home. The RV was wonderful, but it’s just not the same. He bit his lip in thought, as his hand lightly stroked at her back. “Feels so good to be home.” He leaned down and kissed the top of her head, adding “With you next to me.”

She turned her head and moved up to kiss him. “Yes, it does. God, I missed you.”

He smiled at that, and ran his hands through her hair, and decided to lighten the mood. “I think you just missed using me as your pillow.”

She laughed and gave a very light swat to his chest as she laid her head back on it. “Yes, that must be it.”

“Emma, I have a question...Do you mind if, when I’m home, we can be here? It’s not that I don’t love being at your place with you...it’s just...I already spend almost half the week away, and I’d really like...”

She pats his shoulder and turns on her chin to look back at him. “Oh, I get it. I do. That is just fine. When you’re gone, I’ll be at my place, and when you are home I can stay with you...if you want me to.”

He gave her a strange look. “Of course I want you here, love; why wouldn’t I?” She shrugged her shoulders and leaned her head back on his chest, her fingers playing in his chest hair. “You also know, while I’m away if you want to come over, you are more than welcome to be here without me.” He could feel the grin against his skin, instantly making him feel better; her hand slowly creeping under the sheet and down his stomach also did wonders, especially when her fingers wrapped around him making him groan out her name. The night was no where near over yet, and they had a few days of being apart to make up for.

The next day after work, she stopped at her apartment, and grabbed more of her work clothes to take back to Killian’s place. She sighed as she also stuffed in her heating pad, and other feminine necessities she would unfortunately need this week. But she smiled remembering that he didn’t seem to mind last time, and was very happy about being at his place with that amazing shower.

However, those blasted hormones during the week had made her more clingy, but luckily he seemed to have no problem with it. Though when he had to leave on Thursday, it was absolute torture, with tears in her eyes as they said goodbye and irrational feelings of him leaving her. He held her tight, rubbed her back, kissed her forehead, told her over and over he’d be back soon, he’d call when he got there, and that he loves her. She finally managed to pry herself away from him, and watched him walk into the small airport. That night, she returned to his house with a pint of Rocky Road, and stole a worn t-shirt of his to wear, and turned on the Princess Bride.

The following day, she got a text from Ruby telling her that she and the girls miss her, and they can’t wait to see her again. Emma returned the sentiments, and then muttered to herself that at least someone misses her. Ruby then sent her a Twitter message with a picture of the sun and the temperature out in Phoenix, telling her she is missing out on the warmth and sunshine. The resulting tweet gets her a ton more followers in the hours afterwards, and requests from people to post pictures of herself and Killian. She isn't too sure what to think of that.
That night she went back to her place, ate Granny's take out, when he called. “Hello, love. How are you feeling?”

She smiled at his concern. “Hi, I’m okay. Just miss you.”

“I know, but I’ll be back in two days.”

She knew it was partially her hormones that made those comments irritate her more than usual, made is so that she couldn’t let the statement go. She knew she shouldn’t say anything, but damn it, she couldn’t help it anymore. “So, who do you have there that has you so preoccupied you don’t miss me at all?” Silence greeted her for a few moments, and the range of emotions went from “oh crap, what did I just say,” to “Oh my God am I right?”

He was shocked by her words, by her anger, and wasn’t sure what to even say for a good minute, until her last words spurred him into action. “No...no, Emma, God no. Trust me, I want you here, it’s just…” He realized he had to tell her; keeping how he felt was obviously doing worse than telling her. “I didn’t want to trouble you with how much I miss you, love. But I miss you...I miss you so very,” his voice caught, “much, love. I promise, no one else is keeping me preoccupied. Unless you count lunches or dinners with our friends. And even then, I’m still missing you; they miss you, too.”

She smiled at the term ‘our’ friends, tears in her eyes at his words. Damn, she was a freakin mess. “Why didn’t you want to tell me?"

He could hear the tears in her voice, and it made his heart squeeze. “Emma, I never meant for it to hurt you; exactly the opposite. I didn’t want you to worry about me. I didn’t want you to feel bad for not being able to travel with me. I was hoping to make it easier on you. I can tell now that that was a bloody horrible idea.”

She sniffed. “I’m sorry, I’m just so damn emotional right now, and I…”

He stopped her. “No, love, I was the stupid git. I’m so sorry, Emma. Please believe…”

“I do. I love you. God...I miss you.”

Killian let out a small laugh. “I love you, too, and bloody hell, I feel incomplete without you here. It’s incredibly difficult to get any sleep without you next to me.”

She giggled at that, lifting his heart. “Trust me, I know the feeling.” And with that, they both eat dinner together while they continued to talk.  

==∞∞∞∞∞==

Killian started in 5th place in Phoenix, and after the first five laps he was in the lead, and led most of the race. There were a few wrecks from blown tires, and some of the drivers in the middle of pack tried to gain position and pulled into the other lane without enough clearance. Each time the crashes happened, Emma would get worried that she couldn’t see where Killian was. She just kept telling herself if she couldn’t see the car then that meant he wasn’t involved, but she was still used to being able to see where he was at all times.

She followed Ruby’s Twitter feed during the race and replied to a few comments where she called out some of the drivers for the way they were driving, voicing her agreement. With a few laps to go on a restart, Jefferson hit the gas a little too fast, rear ending August in front of him, which caused a chain reaction in the front top lane of the pack, while most of the bottom late was able to go down the track to avoid it. The rear end damage on Killian’s car, forcing him to give up the 1st place position once the pits opened so they could take a little more time to patch up the car.
Luckily, his crew performed as marvelously as usual and they got him out as quick as possible and into 7th place. As soon as they restarted, he tried to work his way back up as fast as possible. He moved around cars, into the top lane, and then around once again. By the time the cars reached the finish line, Phillip won, and Killian came in 4th. While she knew he would be disappointed, he was at least in the top 5. She was proud of him, and would make sure she told him later.

The interview with the first reporter showed just how angry he was. When asked about the crash that lost him 1st place, he shook his head, clenched his fist, and his jaw ticked. “I’m hoping after all the insanity that he has shown this year, officials will take action. He is a menace on the track, a danger to himself and others.” Robin stood behind him, nodding in agreement.

Of course that was the moment that Jefferson had to walk by and make an off screen comment, that Emma couldn’t hear, but Killian reacted immediately. “You bloody buggering prat!” Killian yelled as he tried to launch himself at the other driver, only to have Robin immediately hold him back, telling him to calm down, that Jefferson wasn’t worth it. Killian quickly got a hold of himself, waved off the camera for further questions, and he and Robin quickly headed back to the trailers.

Emma sent him a quick text wanting him to know she was proud and loved him. Send him some support after everything.

ES: You were fantastic. 4th is amazing. I love you. See you tonight. ❤

It was only a couple minutes later when she got a text back.

KJ: Thank you. I love you too. Miss you. Heading to airport now.
KJ: Don’t wait up, love. I’ll sneak into bed with you when I get home.

When he arrived home, he did just that. She was sound asleep, hugging his pillow. He quickly undressed, slowly pried the pillow away from her, and then crept into bed beside her. His arm wrapped around her waist, his face nuzzled into her neck, he took a deep breath and his body relaxed now that he was home, right where he belonged.

The week proceeded as normal. Emma worked and stayed at Killian’s. Killian went into the shop to meet with the team a few times, and also dropped off the paperwork for the charity to Regina for her team of lawyers to start working on. Ruby and the girls started a group text to keep Emma up-to-date about things. Texts also included adorable pictures of Alexandra with various hairstyles Ashley tried on her. Emma used some of them herself for work.

On Tuesday morning, Killian asked her if she would like to go out for a movie and dinner after work. Which she absolutely did; a date night was very much needed. They saw each other a lot, but with him gone on the weekends, it made things a little more difficult. They went out for Italian and she picked a cartoon flick about some bunny joining the police force that they both actually enjoyed while snuggled close to one another.

This time when he had to leave on Thursday, she was more in control and instead of crying, she kissed the hell out of him, leaving him breathless, wide eyed, and with a “bloody hell” murmured from his still-tingling lips.

By Friday night, the tension of the last few weekends away from each other were taking their toll. “God, I miss you so bloody much, Swan,” Killian whined into the phone as he lay in bed, the tv volume low in the background.

She sighed. “I know; same.” Her laptop forgotten next to her in her own bed while the music still played from it as she stretched out giving a soft groan.
That small sound from her was all it took to get his blood boiling. He tried to push down the impulse, even as his hand trailed down his stomach and crept under the elastic of his boxers to take hold of himself. “You okay, love?” He asked trying to sound normal but he should have known she knew him too well.

“I’m fine; just stretching...what are you doing?” Her voice held the smile that was already on her lips as she looked to the phone next to her on speaker as if looking for a confirmation to her thoughts.

“Oh...by that tone, I think you know exactly what I’m doing.” He squeezed his hardening flesh a little more and allowed himself a soft moan. “Would you like to join me?”

The response was immediate. “God, yes.” Quickly she pulled off her pajama shorts and underwear in one go; he did the same with his boxers.

“Tell me what you are wearing,” he demanded in that tone that made her burn and ache for him.

“Just my black camisole. I just got rid of the rest”

He grinned. “Mmmmm. Eager are we?” She hummed her yes. “Though I do love that top, take it off and play with those lovely rosy nipples.” The silk was off in an instant, and her hands were on her breasts, her fingers lightly tweaking the peaks, eliciting a soft moan. “That’s it. God, I wish I could take them into my mouth. Suck on those sweet buds.”

She moaned again at his words. “I wish I could run my hands over your chest, run my nails through that chest hair, feel it brush over my breasts.” He changed the phone to speaker, and placed it on the bed next to him, as his then free hand roamed over his chest doing as she said, his eyes closed trying to imagine it’s her doing it.

“Take a hand and trail it down your body, think of my lips taking the same path. God, I want to kiss every last inch of you.” He licked his lips at the thought, and she did exactly as he said. “Now bring them down to that sweet cunny of yours. Please tell me you are wet for me love.”

Her fingers traveled to her core, already knowing that she was sopping wet, and finding she was right. She whimpered as her fingers traveled over the sensitive flesh. “So wet for you. Need you so much.” she whined.

With that, he brought the hand that was on his length to his mouth, and gave his palm a long lick, coating it in saliva. “I wish I could taste you right now. You’re delicious, my love; I crave you on my tongue.”

She flicked her fingers over her clit lightly, imagining it was his tongue on her, making her squirm and gasp. “I want to taste you, too. God, I want to wrap my lips around you.”

He moved his wet palm to his hard shaft, and groaned thinking of her mouth sucking him down. His jaw clenched as he pulled his fist over the head and then back down. “Fuck.” He bent his knees and put his feet flat on the bed, allowing him to buck his hips into his hand. “If you aren’t already, bring that other hand down, and dip two fingers inside of you.” He could tell the moment she did as he said because she keened into the phone, her breath came out as a shaky yes. “Mmmmm, I want to be inside of you. Always so hot, tight, and wet. I’d take you hard and fast.”

Emma sped up her fingers pressing inside her, as her other fingers circled her clit faster. Her breathing sped up. “Fuck...yes...I need you...” she cried for him as her legs started to shake from the mounting tension.

His hips started to thrust up into his fist, envisioning it was her instead of his hand, her sounds over
the phone helping his imagination along as he groaned. His body quickly moved to it’s peak. “So close...so fucking close...Let me hear you...come for me.”

She rocked her hips, and ground down a little harder on the bundle of nerves. At his request and hearing his shuddering breath, her body snapped and she cried out his name in pleasure as she shuddered and clenched around her fingers.

Her scream brought him over the edge with her, his hips slamming up into his fist once more as jets of his seed shot out coating his hand and abs in long white streams. His hand stilled, as he tried to regain his breath. She removed her fingers and her own hands fell to her sides as her body laid sated. She sighed out, “God, I miss you.”

He let out a soft chuckle. “And I, you...and that is a very large understatement.” He looked down at his stomach. “Also not as messy when I’m with you.” He joked as he took his discarded boxers to clean his hand and stomach.

She laughed as she sat up and pulled the chemise over her head, and the sheet over her cooling body. “Might be cleaner for you. Not me.”

The part of him that loved seeing his seed drip from her, that primal part of him, groaned at the thought. “You don’t seem to mind.” He teased.

She smiled. “No, I don’t mind...I kinda...crave it.”

His eyelids squeezed tight and he groaned at her teasing, “Are you trying to work me up again love?”

She giggled. “Don’t tell me that you just have one round in you. I know better.”

Killian bit his lip, and looked at the clock. Quickly adding in the adjustment to the timezone it was almost midnight back home. “That you do. And while I would love to go again, it’s already late for you, my love. I don’t want to keep you awake when you have work tomorrow.”

She let out a long sigh. “I hate it when you are right.”

He chuckled. “I know you do. I love you. Good night Emma.”

“Good night, I love you, too.” With that, they both reached for their phone and ended the call. She reached out and turned off her light as he got up and headed to the RV’s bathroom for a shower.

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The next day she went and had lunch with Mary Margaret and David before she went back to Killian’s to watch the race. It was easier to watch there so that she could then stay there and wait for him to get back. He called her right before the announcements and she wished him luck. They ended their call with an I love you, and him telling her once again not to wait up for him since he would be late flying in from California.

This time, Killian was starting 8th after having a few issues with the car in qualifying. However, luckily they weren’t too bad and they were easily fixed prior to the starting of the race. With the help of a few cautions for a blown tire and some debris, he was able to make his way up to 5th by lap 37 of the 200-lap race. The next caution at lap 63 allowed him, with help from his crew, to get up to 4th, right behind Phillip and Victor, with Sean and Eric trailing behind him.

After another debris caution on lap 104, no one had really gained or lost position, all still bunched together. A few laps later, Jefferson in 2nd place tried to take the lead from August. He moved up quickly right in front of him, and the air movement made August lose control of his car, slowing
speed and fishtailing across the track, causing a chain reaction behind him as he tried to right his car.

Sean slowed, Killian did as well behind him, both trying to avoid the car. However, some of the cars behind didn’t get the word and did not slow down, and everyone plowed into each other.

Emma was on the edge of the couch, her fingers gripping the cushions as Eric was pushed into Sean, both running into Victor and shoving him up against the wall. Yellow lights flashed around the track.

“No...no, no, no.” she chanted as they both spun down into the grass. Victor’s car then rammed into Killian’s, that then shoved him forcefully into the back of Philip. Killian’s car then hit the outer wall hard and bounced off, metal, foam, and bits of tire flying as Phillips car spun 180 degrees. The 71 careened down the inside of the track, hitting another spinning wreck and directing Killian’s car to the inside retaining wall at almost full speed.

“No!” She screamed as she watched the jarring impact as the front of his car crumpled in on itself. “Oh, God.” Her voice trembled.

Her eyes were glued to the screen, praying as the TV moved back and forth to all the cars caught in the wreck as the red flag came out, since almost half the field of cars were someway involved. The track was littered with mangled cars.

She watched as Sean, Victor, Eric, and Philip all put their nets down, signaling they were okay. But when the camera went back to Killian’s car, the net was still up.

The reporter finally spoke. “We are still waiting for Jones to put down his net.” The television showed ambulances rushing to the scene, as a medic quickly got out and ran to the car. “Wait, we are getting word that there is no response to the crew from the 71.”

Emma’s heart clenched, as Robin’s voice came over the TV. “Killian? Respond. Killian? Answer me...Mate?!?! Killian...Killian!!!!”
Chapter 22

The reporter finally spoke. “We are still waiting for Jones to put down his net.” The television showed ambulances rushing to the scene, as a medic quickly got out and ran to the car. “Wait, we are getting word that there is no response to the crew from the 71.”

Emma’s heart clenched, as Robin’s voice came over the TV. “Killian? Respond. Killian? Answer me...Mate?!?! Killian...Killian!!!!”

The audio from Robin was quickly cut off, the camera zoomed in on the scene, and the reporter attempted to chime in. “Folks, we are trying to get as much information as we can. As of right now we know that the paramedics are at the car, and are assessing Jones before moving him.”

Tears were falling down her face as she watched the scene. She should be there right now, goddamnit. The ring from her phone startled her and she dropped it, rushing to pick it up, hoping it was Robin or someone...it was David. She answered but couldn't talk; he must have heard her breathing. “Emma...relax. Take a deep breath for me.” When she didn't do as he asked he repeated himself and finally she managed to take that breath. “Now let it out slowly.” She did so as her eyes watched the medical personnel move around. “Again.”

She tried to, but when she saw the crew start to cut away at the car, trying to get him out she lost it. The sobs punctuated by “No...please...God...no.”

“Emma, we are on our way over. It's going to be okay.” She could hear the car starting, and absently knew the phone was being passed.

“Sweetheart...keep breathing,” Mary Margaret told her, voice gentle almost as if she was trying to soothe a small child.

Then she watched as they pulled him out of the car. The fact that he wasn't moving, he wasn't helping, was making her stomach lurch. The words of the reporter were barely heard. “They have him out of the car, and onto the stretcher.” They showed them quickly push the gurney inside the ambulance and the medics closed the doors behind them. Immediately, the lights and the siren were on, and the ambulance raced off of the race track. “The lights and sirens are a good sign, folks. As soon as we have more news on Killian Jones's condition, we will cut into the broadcast.”

The cameras swept over the track, and she caught sight of his crew as they rushed out of the pit. They were probably on their way to the hospital...where she should be. Mary Margaret spoke again. “Emma, if the siren is on that means...”

She didn't need to hear the rest; it meant that he was still alive. At least for now.

She heard the beep of the gate, and hit both buttons on her keychain, unable to do anything else. It didn’t take long until she heard them enter through the door from the garage, with David calling out, “Emma?”

“David!” she cried, desperately needing her brother. He ran into the room with Mary Margaret right behind him. Before she knew it, her brother scooped her up into his arms and held her tight as she sobbed into his chest.

Mary Margaret pried the phone out of Emma’s hand and looked up Robin’s number, so she could send out a text.
ES: Robin, this MM, Emma’s SIL- please as soon as you have any news let us know.
ES: Her brother and I are with her.

The TV was still on Emma watched the wrecker pull his car off the track; that image just made her cry that much harder. The camera then changed to the track’s infield care center, where some of the other drivers involved in the crash were being discharged after being evaluated by the doctors.

Victor recounted what he saw happen in the crash, told everyone he was okay, and then hoped and prayed that Killian was alright. “Our thoughts and prayers are with you, buddy.”

The same sentiments were echoed by the other drivers as they exited, all hoping that he was okay. But there was still no update.

Mary Margaret found the keys and pressed the button shutting the garage door, then she jumped as Emma’s phone chimed signifying a text. She looked quickly to find it was Ruby.

RL: We are headed to the Hosp. now. Let you know what we find out. Stay strong.

Mary Margaret was about to answer when a few more texts came in.

AS: Eric and I are heading to check on Killian. It will be okay.
AH: Almost to Hospital, text you soon. Remember to breathe.

The brunette gave a soft smile at seeing the new friends Emma had made, and the concern they had for her. “Emma, your friends say they are on the way to the hospital to check on him.”

Emma barely nodded, her vision only on the TV, anger creeping in as the now-clean track was ready for the race to resume only with a lot fewer cars, and as if one of their drivers wasn’t just taken to the hospital. They had all told her about the crashes. How many times did they say it was safe? That really bad crashes you could walk away from? Why the hell was she here, and not with him clear across the country? What if...she couldn’t let herself think that.

David looked over to his wife, over his sister’s head. They weren’t sure what to do, both knowing that if anything happened to Killian...neither wanted to contemplate what it would do to her. The phone beeped again and Mary Margaret took a quick look.

RL: At hospital. All I know is he is stable.

Mary Margaret breathed a sigh of relief. “That’s Robin. Killian is stable. That’s all the information he has. But Emma...” she reached her hand out to tug on her friend's arm, getting her attention. “He’s okay. He’s going to be okay.”

With the news, she was able to take a breath, the tears now in relief. She knew it could change, she knew he could still be hurt pretty bad. But it gave her hope. She nodded and leaned back into her brother for support. The race continued in the background, and about five minutes later the reporter cut in. “We have a small update, we have been told that Killian Jones is currently in stable condition. When we know more, so will you.”

The race continued and then finished without any more word. Jefferson, the driver who had caused the wreck was the one to actually win it, followed by August Booth. The knowledge made Emma furious. How was he allowed to continue when it was his fault? In the end, Killian came in 32nd, Phillip right in front of him, and the rest followed, all their cars wrecked in the crash and their finishing position called in the order they were in when the caution flag was waved.

They both tried to get Emma to eat dinner, but she wasn’t hungry, even when David offered to run
and get her grilled cheese and onion rings. It was almost eight when her phone rang, seeing that it was Robin, Mary Margaret immediately handed over the phone.

Emma quickly answered it, “Robin, please tell me he’s okay.”

“Hello, beautiful,” came the raspy reply from Killian.

“Oh, thank God!” The new tears that streamed down her face this time were from happiness. “Are you okay?” David and Mary Margaret shared a smile, both their shoulders relaxing because it was him on the phone.

“Sore, but I’ll be fine. They are letting me out soon, but I’ll be home late. Don’t wait…”

“Are you kidding me? I’m not supposed to wait up for you? After the hell you put me through?”

“Emma…”

“And how the hell are they letting you out? What happened?” She heard the grunt of pain on the other side. “What’s wrong?”

“It just hurts to move, love. I’m okay. I’ve had worse.”

“You’ve had worse? That doesn’t make me feel better.” How dare he try to play this down? Even though she wanted to hear his voice, talk to him, she knew there was only one way to get an answer. “Put Robin on the phone.”

“Emma…”

“I love you. You scared the hell out of me. Put Robin on now.”

He sighed over the line. “I love you, too.”

She heard the phone passed and then Robin was there, “Hi, Emma.”

“I want the truth—what is wrong? How is he?”

“The crash pushed the steering column into his chest. It knocked the air out of him, cracked a couple ribs, gave him a concussion, and a few good bruises. It knocked him unconscious, which caused them to take him to the hospital. He’s going to be sore for awhile, and he is for sure out of the next race.”

Emma could hear Killian objecting in the background, and Robin sighed. “No matter what he may say. The doctors, myself, and Regina all say he is out the next race. The doctors back home will determine when he can come back after that.” He turned away from the phone, and tried to muffle the speaker. “Bloody hell mate, no arguing.” He then returned back to the phone, “Ruby and Ashley went back to track and are packing Killian’s things. I will ride with him on the plane back and will drive him home.”

“So, he’s really okay?”

“Yes, Emma. He is really okay. He will be just fine, sooner if he listens to the doctors. But he did give us a bloody good fright, didn’t he?”

“You can say that again.”

“Emma, the doctor has just come in. I’ll get the discharge orders and give them to you.” She wanted
to laugh at that, they both knew how stubborn he was. “I’ll have him call you when we get to the airport.”

“Thank you, Robin.”

“You’re welcome. See you soon.” And with that he hung up the phone, and she closed her eyes, taking a few deep breaths. She then opened them to look at her brother and sister-in-law. “He’s okay. He’s okay.” Mary Margaret hugged her, and David rubbed her back. Once her nerves were more calm she turned to look at her brother. “How did you know where he lived?”

“Ummm…” David looked a little nervous. “I may have accessed his record from the speeding ticket to get the address.” It might have been the fact that she knew Killian was okay, it might have been the fact that she was so relieved, but she couldn’t stop herself from laughing. She was so grateful to have such a wonderful brother and sister-in-law.

After telling them she was fine at least ten times, David and Mary Margaret finally left for the night. She sent a text to Archie letting him know that she wasn’t going to be able to come in the next day, and he immediately replied that it was more than okay, and he hoped that Killian would get well soon.

The waiting for him to get back was driving her insane, so she resorted to something she rarely did to take up her time and vent her frustration. Clean. His house was pretty much spotless, but she threw in a load of clothes, put away the dishes in the dishwasher, cleaned out anything in the fridge that was going bad, arranged the shoes by the door, and everything else she could think of. Until she heard the small honk.

She rushed to the front door, opened it, and ran out in her bare feet to see Robin walking around the car to the passenger seat, Killian already had the door open to. “I told you to wait for me!” he yelled at Killian.

“I’m not a bloody invalid, mate.” He replied as he slowly made it out of the car, trying to shake off his friend’s hands.

“Let him help you,” Emma demanded, as she tried to will herself not to run to him and possibly hurt him.

Killian’s head snapped up and he winced from the movement, but he did as told and allowed Robin to help him out of the car and into the house. Emma stayed out of the way, almost afraid to touch him for fear of hurting him or that he might disappear. “I’m home now; you don’t have to help me into my room.” Killian complained even as Robin continued to walk him into the bedroom. Emma quickly moved past them and pulled back the blanket and top sheet so that Robin could sit Killian down on the bed.

Once Robin stood back up, he looked at Emma. “Good luck with this stubborn bastard.”

She smiled at him, “Thank you, Robin. For everything.”

He nodded at her. “I’ll go get his bags and bring them in the door and lock it behind me. But before I do,” he reached into his back pockets, and pulled out some folded papers and a bottle. “The doctor’s instructions and pain meds.” She took both from him, and quickly looked through the papers as he continued. “He’ll need another pill in about an hour. He also has an appointment with his doctor already scheduled for 1pm tomorrow. I’ll come and…”

She waved him off. “I’ll take him.” They both looked at her, and she looked to Killian. “I’m taking
tomorrow off. Archie already approved. I assume you know where the appointment is?”

Killian nodded lightly and then started to move to sit back in the bed, to rest against the headboard.

“Okay. I’ll see you both later. Don’t worry; I will see myself out.”

“Thanks, mate,” Killian said as his friend walked down and out of the hall. He then turned to Emma, who was hovering at the end of the bed looking through the doctor’s instructions. She hadn’t even tried to touch him yet; heck, she was barely looking at him. He swallowed hard. “Emma?”

“Yeah?” she asked absently as she continued to read all the restrictions, and what to look out for in case she had to rush him to the hospital.

“Emma...look at me.”

She stared harder at the paper, trying to hold back her emotions. For some reason she just knew if she looked at him, she would break down. She could already feel the tears in her eyes, and he didn’t need to see her like that. He didn’t need to take care of her right now. “Let me go get some water so you can take one of these,” she said as she shook the pill bottle and walked out of the bedroom.

“Don’t you dare think of moving while I’m gone,” she called over her shoulder as she left.

Once she got to the living room she made a pitstop into the small powder room, and locked the door behind her as the tears started to fall. Before they had arrived she couldn’t wait to see him, make sure he was okay. But then as soon as she saw him try to move, saw Robin having to help him around, it made it even more real and all the thoughts and feelings that she had almost lost him came rushing back. However she needed to get control of herself. He needed her, and he needed to get his medication soon, and she didn’t have time for this. She took deep breaths, turned on the water and splashed her face a few times, trying to remove the puffy redness.

She took one more deep breath and exited the bathroom, quickly went to the kitchen to grab a few bottles of water, and checked the time; it was almost two in the morning. She padded quickly back to the bedroom and sat two bottles of water on the nightstand beside him. She took one more and loosened the cap and sat it down as well, before she went to her side and sat one down for herself.

“Tired, hungry?” she asked as she grabbed the shirt she was going to sleep in and started changing, her back to him.

He sighed as she continued to go about doing things, still not looking at him. “Got some sleep and ate on the plane.” He watched as she grabbed her clothes and walked away to put them in the hamper. “Did you eat?”

“I’m fine. A little tired,” she replied as she came back, head down, and scooted into bed.

He could tell she was avoiding the question, so the answer was she hadn’t. “Emma, don’t make me get out of this bed and get you something to eat.”

“Killian...”

“Emma...look at me.” He watched her jaw clench from her side profile, her eyes close tight, her hands,fisted into the blanket. “Are you THAT angry with me?”

That broke her out of it, and she turned to him, her eyes searched his face, “Of course I’m NOT angry with you. Why would I be angry with YOU?”

“Well, until just now, you have refused to even look at me...please talk to me, Emma.”
“Everything’s fine.”

“You know you are a terrible liar.” He reached his hand out to her, and she reached hers out for his. Slowly, they made contact, and he saw the small intake of air as she touched him, her lower lip quivering. “I’m okay, love. I’m okay.” He clasped his hand with hers, and gave a light tug on her hand to get her to come closer. She shook her head no. “Why?”

“I don’t want to hurt you.” She motioned to him; she wasn’t sure what to do. He sat up straighter and winced. “See.”

“Emma…I need to have you in my arms just as much you need to be.” He slowly started to lift the t-shirt off of himself, and her hands were there to quickly help him. “I may have gone through things like this before, but it doesn’t mean it doesn’t shake me up a bit.”

As soon as his shirt was off she gasped at the dark bruising over his chest and abdomen from the steering wheel. Her fingers started to reach of them, but she stopped and pulled back. He took her hand and pulled it to him, and laid her palm against his chest. “Gently.”

She felt his warm skin, felt his chest move and breath, and her lips trembled even as she tried to stop it. She tried to pull away, but he kept her hand there. “Killian…”

His hand moved from her wrist to her elbow and tugged lightly. “Please.” She relented and slowly sank into his side, barely touching him, only to have his arm wrap around her and pull her closer. He let out a sigh and kissed the top of her head as she settled hers on his shoulder. “I’m sorry I worried you.”

She nuzzled her face into his neck, took in his scent, reveling in the feel of him there with her. “I’m just glad you are home. That you’re okay.”

His arms tightened around her and he winced, she tried to pull away feeling that she hurt him. “It’s not you, Emma. It’s just close to me needing more pain medication.”

She turned to the clock and he was right. She took out a pill and handed it to him so he could down it. “Okay, time to get some sleep. Those are doctor’s orders.”

“I’ll agree as long as you curl up with me.”

She shook her head, but couldn’t help the small smile. “Oh, wait. Liam, does he know?”

“I sent him a text when we landed. So he wouldn’t worry.”

She nodded as she got up and turned off the lights, and then her own as they carefully maneuvered together under the blankets, to sleep in each other’s arms. Now that she was back where she belonged, she was going to make sure she was never not there, ever again. She wasn’t sure how, but she would find a way.

The next morning, Emma woke early and got up to make breakfast. She couldn’t cook like Killian could, but she could make scrambled eggs with cheese and toast. She perused the doctor’s instructions and noticed the restriction on caffeine. “No morning coffee,” she sighed, but instead poured them both a large glass of orange juice. She then took the tray back into the bedroom, and sat it down on her side of the bed along with herself. She watched him for a second, willing the tears to stay away at the bruises peeking out from under the sheet on his chest. Instead her fingers lightly trailed over his face.

It was time for him to take his medicine again, so she knew she needed to wake him, “Killian…” she
called softly as she leaned over and kissed his cheek. “Killian...wake up.” She kissed his nose, and the corner of his mouth.

He smiled into the kiss and started to reach for her and then groaned at the movement, as his brain caught up with his body. “That bloody hurts.”

Emma nodded, as her fingers lightly trailed over his cheek. “Here—time for your pain killers.” She helped him sit up, and gave him the juice so he could take it.

He swallowed it down, and then looked at the food. “Breakfast in bed, what did I do to…” he stopped at the hard look she gave him. “Thank you, love.” She moved the food between them and he furrowed his brow, “No coffee?”

“None for you. Doctor’s orders.” She smiled at his pout. “Oh no. No puppy dog eyes. It’s not going to work. If you want to get back on the track, you need to heal, and that means doing what the doctors say.”

He smiled, and was relieved to know that she wasn’t going to try to talk him out of getting back in the car. They started to eat breakfast, and then get ready for his doctor’s appointment. It was the first time they ever took a shower together that was just a shower. Even if he had tried to hint at more, she shut it down fast, and he knew better than to argue. Once all dressed and ready to go, she stole the keys to his car, knowing that it would be a softer ride than the bug, and there was no way he was driving. To her small surprise, he didn’t even question it as they both got into the car and he directed her where to go.

The doctor ran a ton of tests, many that they had run at the hospital as well. In the end, he confirmed what the others had said, and told him that he was lucky and that the concussion was minor. His ribs were cracked, not broken. He also gave Killian some hope: as long as he did what the doctor ordered, he might only have to miss one race, maybe two. They made an appointment for the following Monday, and with the good news, they headed home.

She got him home and into bed. “You know, he didn’t say I couldn’t move. Or that I needed bed rest,” he complained.

“True, but he did say to take it easy. In here is close to the bathroom, and you have the TV. Also.” She got into bed next to him, and leaned against his shoulder. “I can cuddle.”

He smiled and wrapped his arms around her, and he raised his eyebrow. “We could do more than cuddle.”

Emma rolled her eyes. “He said no strenuous activity.”

His fingers lightly trailed over her arm. “It doesn’t have to be strenuous, love...I know you like to be on top.”

She looked into his eyes, challenge in them. “Oh, really? You think that if I’m on top, you can just lie there?” She got to her knees and straddled his hips; he moaned and his eyes closed as she put more of her weight on him. She rocked a little, and he rocked back only to then wince from the movement. She shook her head. “Yeah, I thought so.” She climbed back off him, and curled softly into his side, as he let out a loud sigh. “Sorry, buddy; not happening.”

He pouted as he took the remote and tried to find something to watch on TV, while they figured out what pizza they wanted to get for delivery.
The following day, Emma went into work only after Killian convinced her he would be good and would be alright alone. She immediately got questions from Archie, Tink, and Ingrid when she walked in the door, asking if Killian was okay. She told them the story, and later at lunch, Tink asked her how she was, but she couldn’t, wouldn’t tell her everything. Once work was over, she went to her apartment to grab a few more clothes, then stopped for take-out and headed back to Killian’s.

He laughed when she dropped the food off by the bed and then looked around the house, making sure he had followed orders. “I swear, I’ve only been to the bathroom and the kitchen to get food.”

“Just had to make sure with you.” She winked as she changed into her PJs and plopped into bed with him.

The next day, when she came home the next day, she was shocked to see a car in the drive and Victor and Ruby inside visiting with him. All of them were sitting in the living room. “I know love, I know. I’m supposed to be relaxing, but I swear, besides answering the door, I have been sitting on the couch.”

Victor raised his hands. “We are both witnesses.”

Ruby smiled, “Honest. He’s been a good boy.”

Emma laughed and shook her head. “When, how?”

Victor laughed. “We live about a half hour away. Not all, but many drivers live close to this area, where many of the various racing headquarters are. We just usually get enough of his smug face on the weekends not to come by during the week.” Killian threw a pillow at him, and they all laughed.

They ordered Chinese that night, and Emma made a mental note to bring some healthy food home with her tomorrow. When Killian was starting to get sleepy, their guests decided it was a good idea to head home as well. They bid them goodnight, and Emma walked them to the car.

Ruby gave her a tight hug. “We are so glad he’s okay, and that he has you to look over him.”

Victor nodded. “You’re probably the only one he listens too.”

Emma laughed, but also knew they were more than likely correct. “Well, hopefully he’ll be better and we’ll see you at a race soon.”

Victor and Ruby gave each other a look, catching the fact that she was certain she would be at his next race, but they recovered quickly and gave her each another hug, and then headed back home. When she got back inside, she gently woke a dozing Killian from the couch, and ushered him into bed.

The week went on with Robin, Eric, Sean, and Phillip all visiting during the day while she was at work. All were trying to keep him company, but also to make sure that their friend was okay and following doctor’s orders. They obviously knew him well. But to be honest, he was being good for many reasons. One, he wanted to get back to racing as quickly as possible. His chances of a championship got lower and lower the more races he missed. But second, and most important, was Emma. He didn’t want to disappoint her or make her worry.

That weekend was really hard, watching practice and then the race without him being in it. Jefferson pulled more questionable moves, which caused another wreck; this time, he was caught up in it himself. Luckily, no one was injured, but he finished 41st and poor Phillip was collected with it to finish 40th. The rest of the race progressed as normal, and Sean almost won but the 14 car got just
past him to come in first.

That Monday, Emma took the morning off to take Killian to the doctor. He had tried to convince her Robin would do it, or he could take a car, but she wouldn’t hear it. With some more tests, the doctor was happy to say that his concussion looked a lot better, and even Emma could tell the bruises were better and he was moving around easier. He was off the prescription pain killers and was just taking ibuprofen. If Killian kept up the healing progress, he could potentially race that Saturday in Texas. Emma looked confused for a second, before Killian explained the spring race in Texas was always on Saturday night.

Once Emma drove him home and then headed to work, Killian called Robin to tell him what the doctor had said, and to get the guys ready to head out to Texas. As long as the doctors cleared him to be okay to drive, he could handle the little pain from the bruises and still-taped ribs. But when he talked to Robin, he was shocked to find out that NASCAR officials had reviewed the last few races and that Jefferson was put on probation for his reckless actions for the next 12 competition races, docked 25 points in the standings, and issued a hundred-thousand dollar fine.

“Wow,” were the only words he could say. The officials had actually done something; the only question was if it would actually do some good.

“I know, mate. It’s too bad that you had to get hurt, as well as all the wrecks and more cars damaged, but hopefully this will get the message across so he stops before someone really gets hurt.”

They continued to chat and discussed things for the upcoming race. Later, Emma brought home a roasted chicken and prepared garden salad; this time, they were eating in the family room while watching television. The doctor had lifted quite a few restrictions. “So, when do we fly out?” She asked him.

“Well, I need to fly out Wednesday, due to the Saturday race. But, if you can still go, getting in on Friday night will work…”

She shook her head. “Nope, I’ll leave with you on Wednesday night. Archie already approved.” Emma knew this week Archie was willing to give her a pass without question, since everyone was worried about Killian, and all wanted her there with him when he went back racing. But at some point, the excuse wouldn’t work. She drove the thought out of her mind; she’d deal with that later.

He wanted to question her taking more time off, but he was too happy to have her coming with him. He’d have to express his thanks to Archie when he saw him next, and made a mental note to get some tickets for him and the shelter for the Charlotte race nearby. “Okay then, after work on Wednesday, we’ll head out. We’ll stay until Sunday morning and then fly back.”

“Sounds good,” she said, taking another bite of the salad.

“I just hope the doctor will clear me for the race.” He knew his doctor was hopeful, and things were progressing well, but there was still a chance they would say he couldn’t race.

She leaned over and grasped his hand. “It will be fine. And if for some reason, they say no, then you’ll be back at the next one.”

He brought her hand to his lips and kissed her knuckles. “You know love, the doctor did clear me for some physical activity.” He bit his lip, his eyebrows waggled at her.

She pulled her hand away and laughed. “Listen, Saturday night after you race, and thus the doctors cleared you, we can have as much…physical activity your heart desires.”
He bit his lip harder, his eyes darkening. “Are you sure you want to put that offer on the table, darling? Do you really think you can handle it?”

She wanted to groan at that popped T—he knew exactly what it did to her. “I’m sure you are the one who couldn’t handle it.”

His smile grew. “We shall see.” He then winked at her, giving her that smirk that made her legs rub together. Which of course he saw, and made him chuckle. “You know, Swan, I do love a challenge.”

She shook her head and tried to hide her smile. Oh yes, she knew that; she also knew this was a game that they would both win, no matter what.
Wednesday came quickly. Emma spent the time clearing as many case files as she could, got Ingrid up to speed on a few in process, and stopped at her apartment to grab her suitcase and some more clothes. She noticed the fine layer of dust starting to gather from non-use, but she pushed the thought away. There were very good reasons she was at his place right now and not home.

After work, she went back to his place; a car already sat in the drive waiting to take them to the airport. She parked her car in the garage and ran inside to quickly change, kissing Killian’s cheek in passing and yelling over her shoulder as she ran into the bedroom. “Don’t you dare lift those bags. Get the driver to do it!”

He smiled and shook his head as he opened the front door for the man to do just that, as he motioned to their luggage.

In minutes, Emma was back out of the bedroom, purse in hand, now in more comfortable clothes: a long shirt and leggings.

Killian locked up behind them and then they all got into the car headed to the airport. The flight was less than three hours long, so they ate dinner, watched a movie, and he asked how her day went. Soon, they landed at the small airport in Fort Worth, luckily only having to circle once for a plane that was in front of them. The ride to the track barely took any time, and soon they were waved through security to the doors of the RV. As the driver put the bags inside, they were greeted by their ‘neighbors’.

“You’re here!” Ruby came running up, giving Emma a huge hug. Victor was just behind her, strolling to them and then giving Killian a firm handshake. The brunette then turned to Killian, looked him over for a second, and gave him a much more gentle hug. “You look much better.”

“Thanks. I feel much better.”

“So, the doctors say you are good to go?”

Killian sighed, and Emma leaned into him, wrapping an arm around him. His hand went to her hip. “My doctor said he believes I’ll be cleared, but I have to see the doctors here tomorrow for the a’okay. Robin has my alternate waiting just in case.”

Victor clapped him on the shoulder. “Best of luck, buddy.”

The four then went inside, and pulled up the news, talking and laughing, while playing a few games of cards. Ruby texted the girls to let them know Emma and Killian were here, so they would get the messages when their own planes landed.

“Ems, you should really chat more on twitter.”

Emma gave Ruby a strange look. “Why? I don't have much to say.”

Ruby laughed. “You don't have to say much. Just short updates. Quick pictures.” Emma gave her a strange look. “The fans are asking for it, here look…” she took out her phone and went to her Twitter app, showing her all the messages that were directed at her, or her and Killian, or her and the girls.

She sighed. “I turned the notifications off cause it was going off so much.” She didn't need to know
she had another thousand or so followers every time Ruby tweeted her something. “I don’t understand why I need to do that though.”

Victor stopped his conversation with Killian having overheard them. “Well, I know my fan base increased once Ruby started tweeting.” He then looked at his girlfriend. “And no, that has nothing to do why we are still together, sweetheart.” Ruby patted his cheek and rolled her eyes.

“Emma, don’t listen to them. You do not need to do anything.” Killian gave Victor and Ruby a hard look, almost wondering if Regina was somehow involved. Victor wasn’t her driver, but he wouldn’t put it past her to plant the seed.

Emma gave him a look, her head tilted a little. She decided they would talk about this later without the other two around. She turned to Ruby. “I’m good. Besides, I barely know how to do anything on there, anyways.”

Ruby rolled her eyes again. “I could teach you.” She saw Emma’s glare and held up her hands. “Okay, okay. If you change your mind, let me know.”

Around ten o’clock, the other couple said their goodnights and headed back to their own RV, while Emma and Killian changed for the night and cuddled in bed with the TV playing.

“So...do you not want me posting on Twitter, or do you?” Emma asked looking up at him.

“Emma, it is completely up to you. If you want to you can. If you don’t, you don’t need to.” He leaned in and kissed her forehead.

“You didn't answer my question.”

He sighed, his jaw clenched. He didn't know how to answer the question. “I want what makes you happy.”

She could tell he wasn't lying, but she could also tell there was more to it. She had to change tactics. “Why don't you Tweet, or barely do.”

He wanted to laugh; of course she wasn't going to give this up. That was just how his Swan was. “I’ve never really thought about it. I never have moments where, ‘oh I need to share this with fans.’ However…” he sighed again, “Regina has been requesting for me to engage them more.” His fingers trailed over her back. “But that request is not on you. I don’t want you uncomfortable in anyway. And if I do post, I will only post stuff about me or racing, and not you, unless you okay it.” He only added that last part so she knew he wasn't trying to keep her hidden. He didn't want her to feel like that, either. It was her choice; he was only going to subject her to this world of his on her terms—as much as possible, at least.

She smiled at him, his intentions clear. God, she loved him. She leaned up and kissed him; his hand moved to the back of her head keeping her there longer. “I love you.”

He smiled. “I love you.” He leaned in and kissed her again, and then groaned. “Are you sure I can't tempt you into some physical activities tonight?”

She laughed and lightly swatted his chest. “We have a deal, and you are not swaying me. After the race, once the doctors clear you.”

He huffed and pouted. “You’re mean, love.”

She giggled at the look on his face, as she picked up the remote and turned off the TV. “Goodnight,
Killian,” she said as she curled up to his side.

He smiled down at her, reached over to turn off the light, hugged her closer, and pressed a kiss to her head. “Goodnight, my love.”

The next morning, they were both up bright and early and over to the doctors for the checkup. She could tell he was nervous. She stood off to the side as they ran more tests and scans. Her mind absently wondered if all the scans were good so close in a row. But she didn't have long to think as they were then ushered back to the exam room and the doctor came in.

“I know your ribs are still mending as are the bruises, but your concussion is no longer an issue. And since you have stopped all the narcotics for the pain, as long as you feel you are able to drive, I'm going to clear you.”

A smile bloomed over Killian’s face. “Thank you, Doc!”

As soon as he walked out of the door, Killian swept Emma into a hug, and kissed her soundly. His good mood from the news made her smile into the kiss.

He pulled back, the grin on his face got wider. “Come on, we need to go tell Robin and get me in that car!” He took her hand and pulled her with him, she had to lightly jog to keep up with him. But she didn't care—his happiness made her happy. The little bit of worry she had of him being back in the car she pushed way, way down.

Once they got to the garage, the whoops and hollers rang out. More than once Robin had to remind the crew that he was still injured and to be careful with him. Once the word of his clearance came down to the garage, the officials allowed him back into the car. He gave her another deep kiss, and then with the joy of a five year old, he put his helmet on and got into his car. Well, a new car—the other one was wrecked beyond repair.

She shook the thought out of her head, and checked her phone.

RL: We’re at Fuzzy’s Taco’s in the infield. No joke. Where is the Brazilian Taco place? ;)

Emma snorted at Ruby’s innuendo, but also knew that Mexican food meant margaritas and honestly, she needed one.

She found them there, all at a table with a decent view of the track. Everyone gave her a hug, and with a deep breath, she asked for a group picture. Ruby’s eyes lit up, knowing what she was going to do. Emma took a few group selfies, picked the best one of them and posted it to her Twitter with the caption: 'In Texas with @rubyredlucas @ashleyherman53 @arielsirena watching practice.’

Ruby’s grin got bigger, and Emma glared. “What?”

“So...you are going to post now?”

Ashley and Ariel’s own grins got bigger as well. Emma gave a soft laugh. “Killian very much wants me to be comfortable doing whatever. However, from our discussion, Regina wants him to interact more with fans...and I thought if I can help him…” She had contemplated this a lot since they talked. “…Then I'm going to do what I can to help.”

Ruby just gave an even larger smile. Ashley patted her on the shoulder. And Ariel chimed in, “I'm sure it will; probably turn that image of a bad boy around.”
“Wait...maybe I shouldn't then. Isn't that the image they were going for?” Emma worried, maybe she hadn't thought this through.

Ashley laughed. “They did until that speeding ticket. After that, Ms. Mills has been trying to turn the image around. Why do you think all of his service time was with kids and animals?”

Ariel laughed and chimed in. “Yeah, I bet she was so happy when you two got together, I mean…” She was cut off my a quick elbow to the ribs from Ruby.

The brunette had caught the look on Emma’s face, and quickly reached across the table and took her hand. “Emma...stop.”

Emma tried to bring her thoughts to Ruby, but her head was swimming a little bit. Was he just with her for his image?

“Emma!” Ruby snapped her fingers in front of her friend’s face trying to break the chain of thought.

Ariel looked down, having realized what her words might be construed as. “I didn't mean it like that.”

Ashley, nodded. “We know.” She patted Ariel's arm and then turned to lay her hand on Emma’s shoulder. “He loves you, Emma. We all see it.”

Ruby snapped her fingers again, “Emma...look at me!” This time the yell got her attention. “You KNOW Killian. He wouldn't do that. He does his own thing, he barely listens to Regina. Even she couldn't predict the two of you.”

“But what if…” Emma started to ask and Ruby nipped the thought in the butt.

“No what ifs. Your meeting wasn't a setup. He isn't with you to change his image. He doesn't care about that. Heck, just last night he told you only to do what YOU wanted on Twitter. I was there!”

Emma nodded, she was right. She took a deep breath and nodded. She remembered how after she told him she wasn't interested and lashed out, he stayed away from her. She remembered their fight and how upset he was and they almost broke up. He never posted anything on Twitter, like ever, and nothing about her. He didn't expect her at all the races. If he was using her to change his image, all that wouldn't happen. Now she felt bad for even thinking it. “You're right.”

“I usually am.” Ruby said and gave her a wink. “I think we all need another round of margaritas,” she said as she looked around for the waiter.

Emma reached out for Ariel's hand, who still looked upset. “It's okay. You didn't mean anything by it. I'm the crazy one.” Ariel squeezed back, and gave her a big smile. All the girls caught up over the next round of drinks while they watched the guys practice.

That night, with practice over, dinner with friends done, and both of them snuggling in bed watching a movie before bed, Emma got the nerve to ask, and pulled back to sit up and look at him. “Can I ask you something?”

He could tell immediately whatever it was, was serious. So he didn't reply with the obvious, 'You just did.' so instead, “Of course, love. Is something wrong?”

“So, I learned that Regina is trying to change your image from being the 'bad boy’.” Her fingers even made the quotation marks. “Did you know about that when you met me?” She was going to ask if there was a way she could help, or why he didn't ask before, when she saw his hands grip the sheets
tight turning his knuckles white.

“What the hell had Regina told her?” he thought. He was going to kill her. “Emma... what did she ask you to do?” He shook his head, muttering to himself, “I told her, damn it. I told her not to bring you into this.”

Her eyes widened at that, a smile creeping onto her face. She—and, well, Ruby—were right. Before she got to respond, he started in again, this time taking her hand in his.

He had to make sure she understood. “Emma... while I knew she wanted to change my image from the bad boy and that's why she had me working hours with children and the animal shelter, you—or a girlfriend—was never part of the discussion, I swear…” He squeezed her hand, looking her dead in the eyes. “Nothing about my so-called image was ever on my mind when I met you, or why I wanted or now want to be with you.” He shook his head. “When she brought you up after Daytona, I was very explicit not to bring you into it. If she wants me giving to charity, or doing photo shoots, or entertaining fans, fine. But she wasn't going to use you for that. I guess I'll need to make it more clear to…”

Emma cut him off by crashing her lips to his. The thought that he was so worried about her, made her heart soar. She pulled back a little, to see his dazed and confused expression. She smiled, making him more confused. “Killian, I never talked to Regina. I haven't even seen her in weeks. So call off the witch hunt.” His brow furrowed more, which made her laugh because of how happy she was at how protective he was about her. Her hand cupped the side of his face. “The girls and I were talking, and it came out that you... or well, I guess Regina, was trying to change your image.”

She looked down for a minute, deciding she needed to tell the truth. “I have to admit, what you were just worried about me thinking, I did worry about. Ruby promptly told me I was wrong, and I knew you better than that. And she was right. I was really just going to ask if there was anything I could do to help. I'm okay with helping.” Her fingers traveled over the side of his face. “I love you. I want to help you.”

Killian had to swallow the lump in his throat, his emotions high. “Emma…” His hand came up, cupped the back of her head, and pulled her to him; his lips claimed hers, his tongue darted into her mouth, and his arm wrapped around her, pulling her close.

She started to lose herself in the kiss, and then quickly pulled back. “Nice try, buddy. Not going to happen.” She attempted to pull away and his arms tightened around her.

“The doctor cleared me.” He said as his lips trailed down her throat

Emma’s eyes closed and she bit her lip on a moan, with the last moment of clarity her hands came up to his chest and pushed him back. “Nope. The deal was after the race.”

“Emma…” he whined.

But she just shook her head and laughed at his pout. She wiggled out of his arms and laid down next to him. “So... putting the topic back on course... how can I help you…” she caught his raised eyebrow and bit lip, and shook her head. “With your image.”

Killian groaned. “Honestly, I have no idea. I’ve been thinking of ways to keep you out of it; I never thought you would want to... be in the limelight, I guess.”

“I don’t want to be in the limelight, but I don’t mind it as long as it helps you, and I get to be with you.” He smiled at her, and she curled up to his side. “So, if you think of anything, let me know.” He
nodded and kissed her forehead, as his arm wrapped around her. They finished the movie, and then curled up together to get some sleep.

The next day Killian qualified for 10th place. He wasn’t happy about his finish, especially since the car was more than fine. Robin and his crew tried to cheer him up—that it was a very good finish for what he had been through—but he didn’t want to hear it. Robin and Emma shared a look, and she nodded at the man before she turned back to Killian. “Hey, how about we get out of here?” He nodded, and they waved to the crew before the two of them headed back to the RV.

Killian sat down on the couch a little too gingerly for Emma’s liking. “Are you okay?” she asked.

He smiled back at her, but it didn’t totally reach his eyes. “Fine, love.”

She shook her head and sat down next to him. “You’re lying.” She laid her hand softly against his taped ribs. “They hurt, don’t they?”

Killian closed his eyes. “I’m fine. I’ve driven with worse.”

“Killian…”

He clenched his jaw. “Emma...I’m driving tomorrow. Don’t try and talk me out of it.”

“That’s not what I was going to do. But if you are thinking it, maybe you shouldn’t.” She watched his eyes close and his teeth grind, she knew he was more upset about what was wrong with him, not upset with her. “Okay, okay. But, what hurts? Is it bad?”

He shook his head. “It’s not bad, it’s just...I don’t have the full range of motion I normally do. My muscles are tight, and the area’s tender.”

“That makes sense. How can I help?”

“Not sure you can.”

“How about I get you some ibuprofen?” With his nod, she went and got him some pills along with a bottle of water and brought them back to him. “Heating pad? Massage?”

He swallowed the pills and smiled at her. “If you don’t mind, my shoulders and back are tense from holding myself a certain way to protect my ribs.”

“Killian, why didn’t you ask before?” She helped pull him up from the couch, just shaking her head, “Come on, get in bed, lay on your stomach...or whatever way you can get comfortable. And take that shirt off.”

He smirked at her as he lifted his shirt. “If you wanted me naked, Swan, all you had to do was ask.”

Emma just shook her head and laughed. “Lay down.”

“As you wish,” he replied with a wink and laid down on the bed, his one arm under his head, the other on the side with his hurt ribs, laid flat at his side.

She gently moved up onto the bed, and straddled his legs, making sure not to put her weight on him. “Let me know if it hurts, or needs less pressure.” Her hands then started to work the muscles in his neck. She could feel how tight they were. “Killian...you should have told me.” Her fingers worked to press into the knots and began to work them out. He moaned under her, and she immediately
stopped.

“No...please don’t stop. It hurts, but it’s loosening; it’s helping.”

“Okay.” She started working again, and as soon as those muscles loosened, she worked her way down the cords of his neck, and then to his shoulders. She found the muscles to be just as tight. “Hold on—I’ll be right back,” she said as she got up and off the bed and went into the bathroom, to come back out with her body lotion. She got back onto the bed, put some lotion into her hands, and rubbed them together to warm it. She then started to work it into his shoulders, the lotion allowing her to work easier over his skin.

“Mmmm...god, that feels good love.” He then let out a grunt as she found another knot in his shoulder.

“Sorry.” She continued to work on it and he winced but she could feel it start to unravel. “But it’s your own fault. I could have helped before this.”

“I didn’t want to…” He sighed and grunted again as she found the next trigger point. “...Worry you.”

“So you would rather be in pain that worry me? Or do you mean, you didn’t want to admit that you still hurt and have me try to talk you out of driving again so soon?” Her hands started to work down his shoulder blades.

“Both?”

She shook her head. “Killian...should you be driving?”

“Emma, I have driven with worse. I can handle pain. Nothing I have wrong will be a danger to myself or others. I have to get back on the track; if I don’t...”

She knew the answer to that: his shot at the championship went further and further down the drain the more races he was out. While she cared more about him than the championship, she knew how important it was to him. “Okay, just don’t do anything that will cause permanent damage, AND tell me when something is wrong. Let me help you.” She pressed harder into the next knot to make her point.

He grunted. “Bloody hell...okay love. Okay. I agree. I surrender!”

She laughed and leaned down and kissed his back, and continued to work out the rest of his tense muscles. “Okay, all done. How does that feel?” When she didn’t get an answer she moved over and looked him in eyes...well, closed eyes. He was fast asleep. She smiled, turned off the light, and left the bedroom to let him sleep.

The next day, Killian had to talk to the press and answer questions about how he was feeling and his opinion of the probation that Jefferson was under. The same questions, with the same answers, over and over and over again. Emma came with him for the interviews this time, usually just standing out of the way. She could see the agitation from the repeated questions, but he smiled and was courteous with everyone.

Afterwards, Killian gave her a quick hug and kiss before he had to head to the driver’s meeting and she retreated to find the girls, and then all of them explored and talked while they got ready for the race. Soon, she was in pit lane, her arm around Killian, as they and the rest of his crew stood by his car for the race’s opening ceremonies. Just before he got in the car, she caressed the side of his face, kissed him deeply, and stared into his bright blue eyes. “Take care of yourself. I love you.”
He smiled wide, leaned down for one more kiss and rested his forehead against hers. “I love you, too. See you soon.”

They broke apart for him to get in the car and her to head back up the pit box with Robin, and in a few minutes, the race was off, with 334 laps to go. Emma took a deep breath and let it out, trying to control her nerves. Every time his car came close to another one, every time another car near him seemed to swerve, or he made a move to pass, she tensed. She shook her head and tried to will herself to relax. The girls told her it would get easier with time; however, she also knew their drivers hadn’t found themselves being rushed to the hospital after a crash.

She just had to keep reminding herself that he was okay, that everything would heal soon, as her eyes kept watching him circle the track. A blown tire brought out the caution at lap 47, and with the help of his team, he was able to move up from 10th to 9th. She could hear his agitation over the line when Robin asked him if the car was okay. “The car is just fine, mate,” he said again, and Robin shared a tight-lipped look with Emma. She knew that Killian’s agitation was with himself and not with the car.

Things stayed green and forced everyone to come in for green-flag pit stops. Killian stayed out just long enough to get a point for leading a lap and then came in for four tires and fuel. The next caution came out at lap 124, when two of the cars at the back of the track traded some paint and one got into the wall, causing debris on the track.

More green-flag pit stops happened due to the fact that cautions did not come out for a few cars that had scraped the wall. Though with the slight damage to a few cars, another debris caution was called at lap 243. Emma was glad that so far, the race hadn’t been too eventful, but she could tell he was not in peak condition because he was only up to 8th place, all of which were due to his crew and their fast pit stops. Killian was luckily able to keep the place, but not able to advance.

With 19 laps to go, another caution came out for two cars getting together and running into the wall. The caution came out and the cars came in, Killian opting for two tires allowed him to get up to 7th place, and that was where he crossed the finish line. Emma smiled at Robin and he helped her down so she could run over to the pit wall and wait for the cars to come in.

As soon as he got out of the car, she rushed over to him, and he held her tight, breathing her in, only to then be accosted by cameras and reporters while Sean, the winner, did his burnout on the track.

“Killian, how did it feel to be back in the car?” asked one reporter.

“You only moved up three spots the whole race; was the car or your injuries the issue?” chimed in another.

He cut any other questions. “I want to thank my crew for giving me an excellent car and also for the quick pit stops that allowed me to advance. As you all know, when coming back from an injury, it can take a little while to get warmed back up; I’m sure next week, I will be in much better form.” He went to thank some of his sponsors and then ended the interviews. He then brought Emma to his side to head to his team. He thanked them all, patted Robin on the back, and then the couple retreated to their trailer.

Once they got inside, he twirled her around and pressed her up against the wall. “Finally.” His lips caught hers in a deep kiss, his tongue darting inside to taste, his hands flexing on her hips.

She pulled back to look at him, “Wait.”

“Wait? Remember the deal? Once the race was over and the doctor cleared me…”
“Killian...I can tell you are still in pain, and if you want to be better for next week, then you need to take it easy.”

“Emma...” he whined. “It’s been over two weeks.” He swallowed. “I need you love.” Desperately, he thought to himself.

“I want you, too,” she said and moved to her tiptoes to kiss him. “But...how about I take the lead this time?” He raised his eyebrow at her. “You just lay back and...enjoy?”

He bit his lip and groaned. “Emma...you don’t need to. I’m—”

She cut him off. “If you say you are fine, I’m going to hit you.” She pulled back. “Go take that off, take a shower, and then lay on the bed.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said with a mock salute as he retreated to the bathroom.

While he was in the shower, Emma changed into her black lace nighty and contemplated how to do this. She needed to find a way to stop him from moving and hurting himself, when a tempting thought entered her head. She smiled and dug through their luggage for what she would need and hid it under her pillow.

She heard the shower turn off, and a few minutes later he walked out of the bathroom, rubbing the towel through his hair, the rest of him completely naked—well, except for the tape at his ribs.

She bit her lip as her eyes roamed over him. God, she loved looking at him. Her eyes dilated further at seeing the evidence of his thoughts about what she was wearing growing in front of her. Her green eyes darted to his own lust-filled gaze. “It has been far too long.”

“Oh, I agree love,” he said, dropping the towel and coming towards her.

She held up a hand to stop him. “Lay down.”

He obliged and settled into the middle of the bed, moving his pillow right behind him, and then looked at her expectantly. “Come here, Swan.”

She moved up onto the bed, on her knees next to him. “Comfortable?” she asked while searching under her pillow.

“All but a certain part of me,” he winked and looked down bringing her attention to his now fully erect shaft.

Unconsciously, she licked her lips and swallowed hard; she’d get to that in a minute. She reached out and pulled one of his arms out to the side, letting his hand caress the side of her face, and she dragged it down to slide against her breast. She watched him bite his lip holding back a groan. She then pressed his arm down, and in the next instant she was tying his wrist up in the end of one of his ties.

Killian’s eyes widened, his heart rate sped up, as he figured out her intentions. “Swan?”

She smiled at him. “Do you mind if I have my way with you?”

He shook his head. “I have no problem with you tying me up in bed, love. Especially in this way.” The lustful look she gave him had him squirming and making even more blood rush south. He knew this was going to be torture, but so very worth it.
Emma tied his arm down to the side of the bed, not giving much slack. She then moved to the other side doing the same thing. “Still comfortable?”

He tested the bonds—they were tight, but not cutting off blood flow, and he didn't have any give to move his upper body, but the position didn't hurt. “Yes. I'm good. God, please come here.”

“Not yet.” She went back to her pillow and pulled out the long silk tie to her robe. She saw the questioning look on his face. “Legs straight down.” She commanded and he obeyed quickly. She pulled at his legs a little, making sure he had no slack. “Still okay?”

He had to smile at her concern, but he nodded his consent, and she began to bind his legs to bed.

When she was done she stood back up. “Comfortable?” She asked one last time.

He tested the bonds, and his movement, and then realized, he could barely move. She had him perfectly immobile. He couldn't move his legs, or his hips at all. His eyes flashed to hers in realization. She didn't want him to move, didn't want him hurting himself. While part of him knew it was going to be agonizingly frustrating, the other part couldn't help but love and want her even more for caring about him so much. “I don't hurt at all love. Now why don't you come over her and ravish your prisoner.”

She moved up onto the bed, her teeth biting her lip, looking at her gorgeous hostage. All muscle and chest hair on display. The hair that trailed down through the defined V of his hips to his hard shaft, fully at attention all for her. She leaned over him, letting her fingers trail over his cheek, then down the side of his neck, over his pecs. Her nails lightly raked through his chest hair, making him groan, and then she flicked her fingertips over one of his nipples, making it harden at once and he sucked in a breath.

“Emma…”

She moved to the other side and did the same thing, then leaned over him, and let's her lips trail down his next. She licked and nipped at his flesh, taking her time to swirl her tongue over his freckles. She could feel him struggling against the ties. “Relax...you are going to be here for awhile,” she said again and then let her tongue trail over his collar bone.

He groaned and bit his lip, trying to keep still. It wouldn't matter if he couldn't—he was tied down; the most he could do was maybe raise his arms an inch. God, he wanted to touch her, taste her.

Her mouth moved across his chest, leaving kisses and nipping at him. Her tongue darted out and flicked at his nipple, making him squirm, and then she licked around the tight bud.

“Fuck…” He whined at the sensations she was giving him. His cock was throbbing with need now, aching for attention. But he could feel her smile against his chest as she switched to the other side and repeated the pattern. God, she was enjoying torturing him; the knowledge making it that much harder, literally.

She decided to take pity on him, and leaned back up to kiss him, her hands moving through his hair, her tongue slipping into his mouth. They both moaned into the kiss, and then she broke away and moved down the bed to straddle his knees. She leaned down and kissed his breastbone, her hands at his sides trailing down as her lips followed the trail of hair down his abs to his hips, her hair tickling down his skin as she went.

He groaned and his hips tried to move when her lace covered breasts brushed his cock. Then he tensed when her hot breath blew over him, his eyes shot open to see the sight.
She was leaning over his hard shaft, her hands, sliding over his hips, her tongue licking her lips. Her eyes shot up to look at him just as her tongue darted out to lick the drop of precum leaking from his tip. She moaned at the taste, and he let out another “Fuck!”

“Not quite yet,” she said with a smirk, and then gave a soft lick around the head making him moan, as she did it again, and again almost as if she were licking an ice cream cone, with her tongue darting to lick the slit at the top when another bead of liquid formed.

“You’re killing me...love,” he said, his breathing faster.

“Can’t have that.” And then she took the head into her mouth sucking lightly, swirling her tongue around him. She could feel him struggle to try to buck his hips up at her, but he barely moved. She started to move down on him, taking a little bit more of him each time, and then back off, hollowing her cheeks, sucking at she did so.

His sounds and words were starting to blend together now. He was sure it was nonsense now, a muttering of cursing and her name along with, “Fuck, don't stop.” But at the same time, he wanted her, too. He was getting so close and he just wanted to be inside her, deep inside her. 

“Love...stop...I’m going...so close…”

She wasn't going to listen to him, and instead took most of him deep in her mouth and now down her relaxed throat, and swallowed around him, then backed off humming as she took him in again to only swallow around him once more.

He knew she wasn't going to let up, having redoubled her efforts. Watching her take him deep into her mouth, the feel of the vibrations around him, the feel of her throat contracting around him was just too much. Oh, how his body wanted to thrust, but all he could do was give in to her, and with a loud grunt of her name he did. His body erupted, his seed shot down her throat as she swallowed around him, his body shuddering as she continued to suck all of him down.

She released him slowly, and licked her lips, as her eyes trailed over him. She could see his heavy breathing, his eyes barely open, as she crawled up his body. “You okay?”

His eyes fully opened and looked at her. “Very.” He smiled up at her, “Going to untie these now?”

She shook her head. “Not done with you yet.”

He looked down at himself. “Well, you are for a little while at least.”

“Not too long, I know you.” She winked at him. She knew very well how quick his recovery time was.

“Kiss me, love. I need to feel you.”

She shook her head, “I should go brush my…”

He shook his head. “We have been over this: it turns me on to taste myself off your lips. Very sexy proof of what you just did to me, if you will.”

With that she leaned back over him, let her lace covered breasts press into his chest, as her lips claimed his. This time his own tongue slipped into her mouth, making her moan against him. He broke the kiss and smiled up at her. “Well, at least you don't have my mouth and tongue tied down.”

He cocked his eyebrow at her. “Emma, take that off and let me taste you.” She gave him a questioning look. “Let me suck on those glorious nipples. Lick between your beautiful breasts.”
She wasn’t going to say no to that request, so she pulled the black lace nighty off of her and threw it to the floor, leaving her in a tiny little G-string.

He arched his brow again, and motioned to it with his head. With a grin, she moved to the side to take them off as well, finally baring herself fully to his view. God it had been much too long for his liking. She then came back up, and straddled his chest, being careful not to put her weight on him. He moaned at feeling her bare mound press against his chest, he could feel her already wet against him, and could smell her feminine arousal, clouding his brain with lust once again.

She leaned over him, and the moment her tight nipples were in reach his mouth latched on, alternating between sucking, nipping, and flicking it with his tongue.

“God,” she moaned and arched her chest to him to give him more access as her head tilted back. He moved to the other one, giving it the same attention, then sucked hard pulling back and off, pulling the tip lightly between his teeth. She gasped and he did the same with the other, before his face pressed between her breasts, his tongue licking, his mouth then closing over the underside of one of the plump mounds, sucking, trying to leave his mark. Going harder, when her hands, treaded into his hair holding him there as she gasped and whimpered above him.

He could feel her center brush over him, the wetness increasing, her unique delicious smell driving him crazy. “God, love, let me taste you.”

“You are…” she whimpered, her fingers pressing him to her more, begging not to stop.

He nibbled on the other side, “Not here...straddle my face love. Let me taste you.” Her eyes shot open, he could see the mix of uncertainty and also desire within them. “I want to thrust my tongue deep into you, taste you fully, feel you come over me.” He knew he got her then, and she slowly pulled away and moved over him, her knees straddling his head, her hands braced on the headboard.

“Okay?” she asked breathlessly.

“You need to breath.” He laughed at that, making her hips twitch at the breath of air over her.

“If I tap your leg with my head three times, you need to let up. Will that work for you, love?” He wanted to laugh again but pushed it down; he wasn't going to have an issue, but he wanted her to feel okay about it.

“Okay,” she agreed, and lowered even more, spreading her legs wider, and thus opening herself
even more to him. She knew she got to where he wanted her when his tongue started in again, swirling around her bundle of nerves, then moving down to gather her wetness from below, and then travel back up to her nub giving it a few quick flicks. She arched her back, and her hips moved over him, his groan making it apparent that he didn't mind her movement at all.

His senses were drowning in her and he welcomed it. He could feel the muscles in her legs quivering as he continued to work her over, bringing her closer and closer to the edge. He thrust his tongue inside of her and her hips moved against him, a whimper escaping her mouth, as her hands abandoned the headboard and grabbed his hair. He groaned as she lightly pulled at it, her body reacting to the pleasure he was giving her.

“Ohh….yes...fuck...yes…” She keened above him as he kept thrusting his tongue into her, as his nose brushed against her clit. She let out a louder “Fuck” as her hips instinctively rolled against him. “Oh, God,” she whimpered again, and he could feel her walls spasming above him, her hips seeking her release. His mouth moved to her clitoris to suck the little nub, and she screamed, “Killiannnn…” her back arching. He thrust his tongue back inside her, feeling her walls spasming around him, a new surge of her desire wetting his lips. As her body started to relax, he lapped at her fresh arousal. God, he could stay between her legs for hours.

“Mmmm...God,” she said and lifted off of him, pulling her fingers from his hair and using the headboard to move off of him.

“You don't have to move yet,” he told her, already missing her over him. Her eyes darted down his body, catching his length once more fully at attention. He really did like doing that to her, she thought, and smiled as she climbed off and sat to his side. “I have other things in mind,” she replied before she looked back at him, and then saw his face, and she immediately blushed. From his chin to his nose, his face was coated in her arousal, but her core clenched watching his tongue moving to lick it from where he could reach.

“Let me get you…” she got to her feet and glad her legs weren’t still jello she retreated to the bathroom.

“I don't mind.” He said as she came back with a warm, wet washcloth. She gently wiped his face, and then let it fall to the floor, as she straddled him again, this time lower, over his hips. “Oh, yes. My love, please take me in.” He tried to move his hips, but there was still no leverage.

She leaned over him, kissing him, letting her tongue taste a hint of herself on his lips, and he opened instantly, letting her in. She broke the kiss a few moments later to sit back up, her one hand resting on his chest as the other went between them, grasping his hard shaft and positioning him at her entrance. Slowly she started to lower herself onto him, both gasping at the feeling.

Once he was fully seated inside, she took a minute to savor the feeling. “It’s been way too long.” He growled, trying to move his hands to grip her hips, but couldn't. “I wasn't the one saying no, Swan.”

She smiled. “Just looking out for you.” She leaned over him, the movement inside of her making them both moan as her lips met his in a soft kiss. “I love you.”

He smiled up at her. “I love you to, Emma...but please, for the love of God, move.”

She laughed and sat back up, and pulled off of him, to then drop back down. “Fuck…” he grunted.

“Ohhhh, God.” She whimpered at the same time, her hands moving to his chest to help steady
herself as she continued. Her hips rocked forward and up and then back and down, the movements a little faster and a little harder each time.

He wanted to thrust up into her, press her hips down into him. Hell, roll her over and put her knees over his shoulder and plow into her, but he couldn't. All he could do was lay there and take what she was giving him, watch her breasts bounce above him and not be able to touch them, caress them, sit up and suck them. Watch and feel her hips move but not be able to grasp them, guide her movements, grind his hips up into hers. He couldn't reach between them, and press his fingers to her bundle of nerves and stroke her higher and higher up the ledge where they were both headed. But God, he didn't want her to stop. The feeling of her so hot, tight, and wet around him was heaven, her movements pleasurable torture. She moved back down, swiftly grinding her hips. “Bloody hell...yes, take it. Fuck yourself on me, love.” He only hoped he could last long enough for her to come first around him.

His words, the look in his eyes, the gruff sound to his voice showed just how much he was loving every moment of it as she was. She was so close; she didn't want it to be over so soon, but she wasn't going to be able to last.

“Touch yourself. Let me watch you.” He groaned as her hand immediately followed his request. He could feel her fingers brush against both of them as she worked over her flesh, pressing over her clit, her inner muscles fluttering as her hips continued to move.

“Ohh...soooo...close.” she told him, praying he was as well.

And he was; he was barely hanging on by a thread. “God...yes...take me with you. Need to feel you come around me.”

With another push of her hips and her fingers she was flying, her walls clamping around him, both moaning each other's name and other nonsensical words as they shuddered and crashed over the edge, him right after her.

She couldn't stay upright and she laid down over his chest, trying to avoid his injured ribs, as she rested her head against him. His pulse thundered under her ear and his breath was in quick pants, hers doing the same.

As soon as he could tell she was coming back to her senses, he spoke. “Love, you okay?”

“Better than okay,” she replied, nuzzling into his chest.

He grinned. “Good. Think you are okay enough to untie me?”

She prompted herself up a little to look at him. “I don't know. I kinda like you like this. To do with as I please.”

He laughed and then looked at her seriously. “You must know I would already do anything for you, Emma. You don't need to tie me down for that.” She blushed a little but smiled at him. “Please take these off. Not being able to hold you is torture.”

“Well, when you put it like that.” She sat up, reluctantly separated from him, and went to untie his wrists and then feet. As soon as she got back to the side of the bed, his arms were around her and he pulled her to him, her back to his front, his hands all over her, one grabbing a breast, the other already traveling between her legs. “Killian!”

“I'm no where near done with you. I think our agreement was, and I quote ‘we can have as much physical activity your heart desires’. Well, do you plan on breaking our deal?”
She squirmed and turned her head to look back at him. “No. But I just did all that so you wouldn’t hurt yourself.”

He leaned in and gave her a tender kiss. “I’ll take it easy. I swear. But, I missed you, and I NEED to touch you.”

“As long as you are careful.” How could she really say no? Hell, she was craving his touch as well.

“Mmmm, good,” he said and leaned in to kiss the side of her neck, as his fingers lightly pulled at a nipple, the others moving gently over her bundle of nerves making her moan. He moved his mouth to her ear. “Oh, and just so you know. At some point, I’m going to return the favor.”

Her mind was clouded from the pleasure his hands were bringing, she pressed her backside against him. “What is that?”

“I can’t wait to tie you up and have my way with you too.” His deep voice and his breath washed over her neck; the thought made her body shudder in his arms. He hummed in amusement. “I think you like the idea as much as I do,” he said and went back to work, sucking at the flesh of her neck. Emma knew she’d have marks, but she didn’t care.

Both of them stayed awake, getting very reacquainted until the early hours, catching a few hours of sleep only to get to the plane and catch a few more on their way home. Killian had been true to his word and was very careful not to strain his injured ribs. However, that couldn’t be said for the rest of their bodies.
That Monday, Emma went back to work and Killian had to head into Mills Racing headquarters for a meeting with Regina and her lawyers. It seemed they were done with the paperwork for the charity and Regina was insistent on getting it started. She wanted the charity active and ready to go by the Charlotte race and make some big show at their home track. That was fine with Killian; he was already looking into getting tickets for all the kids at the shelter anyway.

He got there early and the receptionist directed him into the conference room. It didn't take long for everyone else to join him. Regina sat at the head of the table, as he knew she would, and the rest of the group took their seats. Mostly men, only one woman, but she sat next to Regina directly across from him.

Regina didn't waste time. “Okay Kathryn, what do you have?”

She laid out all the paperwork and explained what each was for, how it protected him and the race team, etc. Then the next documents where how the charity—well, actually foundation—would be setup. Killian would be the head director or chair, Regina would be another, and then he needed to have at least a third, though he could have more if he wished.

“I was thinking Robin, or your brother, or…” Regina cleared her throat, “Emma...if you want.”

He wasn't sure what to say. “Um, do I need to decide right now?”

Kathryn shook her head. “We can put myself down as a temporary, until you choose who the other person is, so that we can adopt the bylaws.” She pushed more papers in front of him, explaining that they decided to use some of the most simple by-laws. They could be changed at another time if he wished. “Now, the directors just decide what to do with the charity, give direction. But you will also need staff.”

Killian looked to Regina. “I thought this would allow for more money to come in for the charity, with staff it sounds like more leaving.”

Regina raised her hand. “It takes money to make money. You know that. What the staff would do is help to raise more money. Also, some of the staff can be volunteers.”

“Exactly,” Kathryn continued. “You would need a handful of staff to start; some can even be part-time until it really takes off. The rest can easily be volunteers.” She pushed over another list. “This is a list of people to start out with, with a description of what they do. Below that are the types of jobs you usually see volunteers do.”

“This is a very similar setup to the Mills Heart Foundation. We can even spare a few regular volunteers to help out at the start.”

Killian looked at the list of jobs. Executive Director, Volunteer Coordinator, Fundraising Director, Marketing Director, and Operations Director. He was at a loss at what to do, “I don’t know…”

“Kathryn’s team will be your legal area of expertise while I am on the board. So that will be covered. We can use Mills Racing’s Human Resources department to help fill those spots, as I did for mine. I’ll also ask my directors if they know of anyone to fill those positions. If you have
recommendations, then we will go with those.” She took a breath. “Killian, this is your charity. While it may seem that I am dictating a lot, I just want it to work out. But what you say goes.”

He gave her a soft smile and nod. “Thank you.” He knew how difficult that must be for her. “Please find out if you know of anyone, for any of those jobs, and I guess I’ll be looking at resumes.” He wanted to see if he could go over them with Emma, though he wasn’t sure if he should bother her. She had her own job, and he didn’t want to give her more work to do.

He signed off on the paperwork, not to mention a pretty large check for starting money that Kathryn advised he notify his tax person about for the tax breaks. They all agreed to meet again once he decided who else would sit on the board and whom he wanted for each position.

Emma spent part of her lunch break talking with Tink as per normal, while the other part she spent on Twitter. She answered some of the innocent, non-invasive questions from Killian’s fans.

Favorite color, coffee or tea, and favorite movie she would answer, for her or Killian. But she wasn't going to tell everyone if he wore boxers or briefs. Besides, she rationalized she couldn't answer the question. It didn't have an either or answer. He wore nice, fitted, boxer briefs. Just even the thought had her squirming in her chair and Tink laughing at her with a knowing smile. Emma, of course, threw her napkin at her. Which just made the other blonde laugh even harder, having proved her right.

Once she got home—no, wait, to Killian’s place—she was exhausted; having not worked those few days the week before had made her need to stay later than she wanted. She felt bad for taking the lunch at all, but as Tink said, “Emma, you need food and a mental break.” She had been right; she felt more productive after, but getting home...dammit...back to Killian’s an hour and a half later than usual didn't sit well with her.

She parked her car in the garage and made her way in the house. She of course had texted him to let him know she would be late. She knew he was more than likely going to be making dinner and she didn't want him to wait, but upon walking into the house, she could tell by the delicious smell that he was obviously in the middle of cooking.

As soon as she shut the door, his voice carried to her. “I’m in the kitchen, love.” She smiled, as if his location wasn't obvious to her olfactory senses. She quickly made her way to him, kicked off her shoes, and walked into the kitchen to wrap her arms around him from behind as he stood at the stove, stirring something that smelled divine.

His one hand came up to hold her arms and a contented sigh escaped his lips. “Anything I can do to help soothe you from a trying day?”

“You already are,” she mumbled into his back as her nose pressed into his t-shirt, getting a whiff of just him instead of the food. His scent and his body in her arms were already comforting her.

He smiled, happy that he could help her just with his presence, much like she did for him. ‘God, I love her.’ but instead he asked, “Hungry?”

“Starved,” she replied, still snuggled against him.

He turned to move the pan off the burner and she went with him, making him laugh. He slowly turned in her arms to face her, her nose now nuzzling into his chest. His hand came up under her chin, raising her eyes to look into his, and then he bent down to kiss her softly. He smiled again as she hummed into the kiss. He slowly broke away, and stared into her big green eyes as his hand moved to put a strand of hair behind her ear. “I would love to stay right here with you. But if you
wish me to feed you, I need to finish dinner.” She gave a slight pout which had him laugh and then kiss her nose. He walked her over to the bar stool, and had her sit as he poured her a glass of her favorite wine. “Here, relax. It’s almost done.” he then retreated back to the stove to finish up.

After the second sip of wine, and watching him move gracefully around the kitchen, she asked, “So how was your day?”

He sighed. “I met with Regina and her lawyers about the charity.”

“I thought that was a good thing, but you don’t sound happy.” she frowned for him, he had been so optimistic about it.

He ran an errant hand through his hair, making her know he was really frustrated before he continued. “It’s just a lot bigger than I was thinking it would be. Picking directors, and hiring staff...I just want to help the kids. But…” he broke off, unsure of what to say. He heard her soft footfalls behind him, and one arm hugged him again, the other reached around him with a glass of wine to offer him and he chuckled. “Thanks, love.”

She rubbed her hand lightly against his chest in a soothing manner. “Killian, you can tell me anything.”

He knew he could, it was just...he didn't want her to think less of him. He loved his job, and he was good at it, but he didn't have a clue about the real business world. He never went to college, like Emma did. In some ways, he had almost hoped Regina would have just taken the reins and ran the whole thing so he could focus on what he knew. “It’s just...I...there is so much...I’m not…” Damn, this was hard to say.

She could feel him struggling with telling her, and she wasn't sure why. Whatever it was couldn't be that bad. She turned him around to look at her, “Killian. I love you. If you tell me what’s wrong, we can deal with it together.”

“I love you too, Swan.” He said and leaned in to give her another kiss but it also delayed his answer. When she pulled back and raised her eyebrows at him, he knew he had to say. He took a deep breath. “I’m out of my league here, Emma. I...don’t know what to do.”

Emma had to bite her lip not to laugh, she wouldn't dare with how it obviously hurt him to tell her that. She was worried it was something much worse than that. But she had to kill the tension that was radiating off of him. “Wait, are you telling me that me, Killian-know-it-all-Jones...doesn’t know everything!?” she asked incredulously. “How is this possible?” She looked around the room. “Did I fall into an alternate universe?” She asked with a big smile and fake shocked eyes which got the desired result, him grinning and holding back laughter. She then turned serious, “Killian, you don't need to know everything. Hell, the fact that you recognize that is good. It’s better than thinking you do when you don't and doing it wrong. I can help you if you want, and if I don't know, we can find someone that does.”

He wasn't sure how he could love her more, but she just proved him wrong...again. His hand came up to cup the side of her face, his fingers traveled over her cheek. “I don't want to make you work more than you already do.”

He shook her head. “Killian, the charity is a wonderful thing. It will help so many kids, heck, more than what I'm even able to do in my work. I would love to help out where I can...if you are okay with that.” The last bit had her eyes cast down in uncertainty.

He raised her chin to look at him again, “I would love your help. Of course I would.” He leaned down to kiss her, and with a growl from her stomach, they broke away both in a chuckle. “I better feed you.”
With that, they headed back into the kitchen so he could finish supper, while she got out the plates. While they ate, he told her about the meeting with the lawyers and what positions he needed to fill. She relayed what she was doing at work and what she had responded on Twitter, to which he told her, “I know.” He pointed at his phone, “You are on my notifications.” Which caused her to blush and start to apologize, which he stopped immediately. “Emma, I love it. No worries. Just only do what you are comfortable with.”

After dinner, they sat on the couch, a movie playing in the background they had both seen prior. She leaned against his side, his arm holding her to him and his hand playing in her hair. “So…,” she started, “I think Robin and/or your brother would be good for the board.”

He smiled. “I agree, though I think having my brother in London could be a problem. I’d have to see if he physically needs to be at meetings.”

“I’d think Skype would work.”

“I hope so. I would like his input. Though, knowing my brother, he would give it to me no matter if he’s on the board on not.”

Emma chuckled in agreement at that. “Him and Elsa for that matter.” She snuggled a little closer. “As for the other positions, I'll check with Mary Margaret and David; they may know some people who do things for the school or the police office. I’ll also ask the girls, they seem to work with non-profits some, too.”

He leaned over and kissed the top of her head. “Have I told you lately how wonderful you are?”

She tilted her head up to look at him. “Yes, but I'm always willing to hear it.” They leaned into each other to share another kiss.

After much discussion that week, they had compromised on how she would get to the next race. He insisted she didn't have to go, though he would love her there. She felt she had to be there; she wasn't going to go through that horror again and not be there, though she didn't tell him that. But she also knew she had to be realistic. She couldn't take every Friday or more off. She rationalized with herself that practices weren't as dangerous and she could miss the first one.

So, since the next track wasn't too far away, she would drive there after work. It was only a three and a half hour drive to Bristol. He had of course offered the jet, or even to pick her up at the airport, but she refused. He agreed to her driving, but only if she took his car. When she had argued, he had said, “Emma, I know you love your car. But it’s older. I don't want to worry that you are broke down on the side of the road.” She had huffed her agreeance, for an attempt at a compromise. They would ride in the RV along with the driver back home after the race, the car pulled along back with them.

And that was how she wound up driving his Camaro all the way to Tennessee on Friday night. The three and half hour drive turned to four and a half by the time she got there. He was waiting for her at the track’s security checkpoint and jumped into the passenger seat. He gave her a quick kiss, and while she followed his directions back to the RVs, she could see the tension ease off of him.

He brought her bags inside, as she followed, a yawn already coming out as she followed him into the bedroom. He tilted his head at her. “Hungry?”

She shook her head no. “Got something on the way.”

“Oh, then let’s get ready for bed. I can tell you are exhausted, and I missed you so bloody much, and I was so worried….” He took a breath, “I just need you in my arms.” She had texted him a few
times at rest stops. But having her driving alone, at night, that far, had driven him crazy. God, did she feel like this when he got into the race car?

They both quickly changed and got into bed. She rested her head against his chest and sighed in contentment as he wrapped his arms around her. “Emma?” he asked softly not sure if she was asleep yet or not.

“Yeah?” she replied with a yawn.

“Please, no more driving by yourself out to races. My nerves can’t take it.”

She twisted her head to look at him. “You drive at almost 200 miles an hour, and I went the speed limit—well a little more than that when there wasn’t traffic. And YOUR nerves can’t handle it?”

“It’s different. One, it’s my job; I’m trained for it. Two, if anything goes wrong, there are trained medical staff waiting in the wings. You could have been off the side of the road with no one…” he shook his head to clear it.

“You know, I drive all the time. I have driven longer distances by myself before you. I’m a big girl, Killian.”

“I know.” And he did, he really did, but telling his nerves and heart that was another thing. He had to try another direction. “But can you tell me, honestly that you liked that drive?” Her long sigh gave her feelings away. “See…I could have had Dusty come and get you.” She groaned and pressed her face into his chest. “Or, even though I love you being here. I understand if you need to stay home.” She shook her head a little too quickly, and he felt her body tense at that. His fingers came under her chin, to have her look up at him. “Emma...what’s wrong?”

She shook her head again and looked away, “Nothing...I'm just...tired.”

He could tell that was a lie, and he called her on it. “Now, how about the truth?” she refused to look at him, and then he finally caught on. “You’re afraid of me crashing again.” He took a breath. “Emma, I can't promise I won’t…”

She cut him off. “I know. But...you don't know what it was like. To see that…”

He pulled her closer and kissed the top of her head. “I'm sorry, Emma. I'm sorry you had to see that. But, I’m okay. The doctor said I can probably take the tape off in the next week or two. It looked worse than it was.”

“Killian...I'm not upset you crashed.”

He tilted his head in shock. “Wait, what?”

She let out a deep breath, tears in her eyes. “I mean, I am, but I’m really upset I wasn't there. I had to get info on how you were through Robin, or the girls, or the TV. I should have been there!” she snapped loudly, and then quickly looked away. “Sorry.”

Then he understood, and he gently turned her back to him. His thumbs wiped away her tears. “Why didn't you say anything?”

“Because it’s my issue. Not yours.”

“Love, we are in this together. You aren't on your own anymore.” He leaned down and gave her a soft kiss, and then leaned his forehead against hers. “That fear you had about not being there if
something went wrong is the same fear I had all night. Trust me, I fully understand. What can I do to help?"

She smiled up him, his understanding making another, happier tear escape her eyes. “I have no idea,” she admitted with a small laugh.

He grinned at her honest answer. “Then we’ll figure it out...together.” He gave her another soft kiss. “Tomorrow. Now, we get some sleep.” She nodded in agreement and they snuggled in together, quickly falling into dreamland.

The next morning, Emma soon learned how different Bristol Speedway was from the other tracks she had been to. When Killian had called it a short track, he wasn't kidding: it looked almost like the track fit into a football stadium. It was only a half-mile track, but the banking, as Ruby called it—the slope to the tack on the turns—was greatly increased to almost thirty degrees, which thus allowed for more speed. It was also a lot louder, forcing the girls to retreat inside to watch qualifying.

While they watched, Emma asked them for recommendations for people to fill the positions in the charity, which they all agreed they would let her know about. When qualifying was over, she knew she would find a very happy boyfriend, and she was right. He had placed second, and it showed with the smile on his face. “Feeling better, huh?” she asked as they followed the others back to the trailers to change so they could all head out together to grab a bite to eat.

He wrapped an arm around her. “Much.”

The next day, the race was much more eventful than quite a few Emma had witnessed. The girls had warned her the track was known for wrecks because the drivers had to vie for position in the corners, and boy oh boy had they been right. Her knuckles were white from the close calls, or clipped fenders, and rubbed sides of his car. The 71 had looked pristine at the starting line, but at lap 473 out of 500 it was nowhere near. There was barebond in many places, and a missing back bumper, but the car was still driving, and Killian was still happy with it. At least his car was still going, unlike Victor, whose car was taken out on a wrecker, but at least he was okay.

The lead had gone back and forth between Philip, August, and Killian most of the time. Philip had the most laps led so far, so there was no way at this late stage for the others to take that extra point away from him. But the men didn't care about that as they traded more paint, trying to get in the lead to cross that finish line.

And soon, they were. Emma, Robin, and Regina were all on their feet as Killian and Philip came to the finish line, August trying to get around them. But it was Killian that made it across first! With whoops and hollers coming over the com, and hugs being exchanged in the box, while the other cars pulled along past him, giving him thumbs up and congratulating him.

Emma and the team quickly made their way to the victory circle, as Killian finished up his burnout and took the checkered flag. She knew this time to stay out of the way until all the soda was gone from the crew's hands as he got out of the car, but she was quickly pulled to his side anyway for a deep kiss before the reporter could even ask him a question.

After he pulled away, he regrettably turned from Emma back to the red-headed woman with the microphone. “Congratulations on the win! And the victory celebrations to come,” she told him with a wink, that made him chuckle and Emma hide her face. “It must feel good to come back from that accident, with the missed race, to finish seventh last week and now this win at Bristol. How did you do it?”

He smiled wide. “I have a great team, good doctors, and the best ever medicine in the world.” He
said looking down at Emma making her blush even more.

“I’m sure she is,” the reporter chimed in before he continued.

“This was a challenging race, like it usually is here. It requires a very different strategy than other tracks. We had a good one thanks to my crew chief. I had a wonderful car, thanks to my team, Mills racing, and…” Killian went on to thank his list of sponsors and then his fans.

When he was finished, his crew rushed in for a group hug. The reporter laughed and turned back to the camera. “And there is Killian Jones, your winner at Bristol. Zelena Green, back to you in the studio.”

The string of victory pictures followed, making both of their eyes see stars. Once it was over, they headed back to the RV. There, he took a quick shower while she packed. Emma noticed the car had already been hooked up to the RV to be towed home. They settled on the couch for the ride; any other victory celebrations would need to wait, since they were no longer alone once the driver pulled them out of the speedway. But it didn’t keep him from driving her absolutely crazy with his kisses and roaming hands on the way there. Then again, she wasn’t exactly innocent either.

The next week, they agreed that Emma would take a flight—in a regular plane, to Killian’s dismay—to Richmond on Friday night. It was a quick one-hour flight, and luckily, the airport wasn’t far from the track.

He was there waiting for her when she got there at almost eight, with a cute little sign with her name and a bouquet of roses. She blushed like crazy, but threw herself at him anyways. They both laughed breaking the kiss as he ushered her out of the airport and into the waiting car.

Due to the short flight, she wasn't exhausted like the week prior, but she was hungry. She wasn't surprised at all to know that a late dinner was waiting for them. “You should have ate,” she told him as they walked into the RV and she kicked off her shoes while he put her bag in the bedroom.

“What can I say, it doesn’t feel right to eat dinner without you anymore.” She blushed but knew the feeling. “Sit, relax. I just need to warm it up.”

She didn't complain as she took a seat at the already-set table. She took a minute to look at her phone, check Twitter for any of the girls’ updates, and then her email. Only to be a little shocked to see an email from Elsa. She was about to tell Killian, but stopped at reading the subject line. ‘Secret.’ With a lot of curiosity she looked around to find him busy with dinner and thus clicked to open the email.

Emma,

You may already know this, but I also know Killian. He probably hasn't told you, but his birthday is coming up on May 8th (his 29th). It’s up to you what you wish to do with the information. ;)

Hugs,
Elsa

P.S. I haven't forgotten about Killian’s baby pictures. I’m working on getting all of his and Liam’s scanned to digital.

Emma smiled at the email, and did a quick reply to tell Elsa thank you for the information and no he hadn't told her. Granted, she hadn't asked. But in the back of her mind, she vaguely remembered coming across it in his bio, though that search had been long prior to when they were together.
As he came back to the table with their plates, he caught the sneaky smile on her face. “What are you up to?”

She laughed. “Wouldn't you like to know?”

He raised his eyebrow. “Perhaps I would.” He sat their plates on the table and then took his seat.

She picked up her fork, and decided a little teasing would be okay. “Elsa just sent me a quick email, telling me she was working on getting your baby pictures scanned so I could see them.”

“Oh, bloody hell.” He shook his head and dropped his eyes in embarrassment.

“Well, she’s doing the same with Liam’s, so you aren't alone.”

He looked up and smiled. “Oh, good. I was much cuter.”

Emma laughed, and winked. “I bet.”

“You don’t believe me? I was an adorable child.”

“Mmmhmmmm,” she agreed with laugh and took a bite of dinner.

“I was! You’ll see, we’ll have beautiful children…” he cut himself off in realizing what he said, as she started to choke on the food in surprise. She quickly reached for her water to help swallow it down, while Killian’s ears turned bright pink. “Apologies, love. I...that was, that wasn't the way…” his fingers were already scratching behind his ear.

As soon as she could breathe, she took another gulp of water, and then reached across the table for his other hand. Her head was spinning, but not because she was scared. Which in and of itself should have frightened her, but it didn't. He had actually thought about it! “Killian...do you...ummm…” She wasn’t sure what to say.

He looked up and into her deep green eyes. “This isn’t how I had envisioned having this conversation.” He gripped her hand tighter. “But, Emma...you must know, I’m completely in love with you. Of course I’ve thought of it. Bloody hell, I think of it all the time. Especially if I see you holding Phillip Jr, or playing with Alexandra. But...if that’s not what you want…” God, it would kill him if she didn't want that as well, but it would kill him more not to have her at all.

She grinned, and squeezed his hand back. “I would be lying if I said I didn't think the same thing when you hold or talk with those adorable munchkins as well. You'll make an amazing father, Killian.” She took a breath, “Someday, I do want that.” She saw his nerves relax, and his smile widen. “Though I do have one condition.”

He straightened up, readying himself to hear the worst. What did she want? For him to stop driving first? Or what? “Yes?” he asked.

“Well, living in the Nolan home while being a Swan wasn't easy. What with school, and doctors and everything. Always having to explain.”

His thumb caressed the back of her hand. “I’m sure it wasn't, love.”

“I came to realize how important having the same last name is in a family.” She said with a smile.

“I can see that…” He cut himself off as realization of her meaning came to him. His eyes grew and a smile bloomed on his face. He couldn't even speak with the knowledge that she had thought about
marrying him.

Emma looked away, embarrassed, worried she said too much. “I’m...not saying now. Or-or anytime soon. It’s just that...” How could she tell him that with the pregnancy scare back in high school she had promised herself that she wouldn’t have children without being married first. With both of them wanting that future. But she was brought out of the thought by his lips kissing the back of her hand, and their eyes met.

“Emma, no worries love. I believe we are on the same page; I understand exactly what you mean.” They both shared a smile and decided to finish their dinner.

Qualifying went well once more, now that he was back in the swing of things. His ribs and muscles didn’t hurt nearly as much. He placed fourth to start, and part of that was the car setup, but they had a plan and it was an easy change on the first pitstop.

He was a little shocked to get out of the car and not see Emma there. He walked over to Sean and Victor talking, and asked them. “Hey, do you know where the girls are?”

“I think Ruby said they were watching from our place,” Victor told him.

Killian nodded and started to head back to the RVs. Victor laughed and Sean grinned as he spoke. “Just can’t stay away huh?”

Killian turned back around to the guys. “And that’s a problem why? I seem to remember how you both acted when you met your lady loves.”

Both men put their hands up in surrender. “There was no offense in that, man,” Sean told him.

“Honestly, we’re just glad you joined the club,” Victor confessed.

Killian couldn’t help but smile, nod, and turn back around to only hear Sean say, “It was about time!”

He went back to their RV, showered, changed, and then found his way to Victor and Ruby’s trailer. The screen door was open, letting the breeze in. He could hear all the women talking, but couldn’t make any of it out. He knocked. “Hello?”

The girls all got instantly quiet, then hushed whispers were exchanged as Ruby came into view. “Hello, Killian.” She opened the door and motioned for him to come in.

All the ladies just looked at him, none saying a word, making him uncomfortable. “Uhhh...did I come at a bad time?”

With that Emma immediately jumped up from the couch, and pulled him into a hug. “Not at all, silly.” She then gave him a quick kiss, “Fourth ain't too bad. Car problems?”

He could almost feel her trying to change the subject, but he wasn't going to question it; how bad could a secret between girls be? “Yeah, but Robin and I have it sorted.” He looked at the girls, still quiet and looking at them. “Ummm...I was thinking, since it’s early, the two of us could head out to dinner. Unless you have other plans?”

“Oh, that sounds perfect.” Emma told him and took his arm to pull him out of the RV. “Bye ladies, see you tomorrow.”

He told them goodbye as well, but the moment they were outside, Emma stopped. “Oops, my purse. Wait a sec.” She dropped his arm and went back inside.
As she came up the steps she looked at the girls, a finger to her lips about what they had discussed. All the girls, including little Alexandra, made the motion that their lips were sealed. Some couldn't help giggling as she grabbed her on purpose left behind purse and then made it back down the stairs to him. “Okay, ready.”

With that, they walked arm-in-arm back to their RV to get changed to head out. A car was ready for them to take them to a movie. Afterwards, they opted to have dinner at an Italian place across the street, and then the car picked them up to take them back for the night.

The Richmond track was a little bigger than Bristol, three-fourths of a mile instead of a half, and the banking not nearly as steep. By the first lap of the 400-lap race, Killian had moved from fourth to third place. Eric, Phillip, Victor, and Killian then traded the lead through most of the race. Only other cars got a lap led when there were some green-flag pit stops. There was still the trading of paint, debris on the track from cars rubbing each other or the wall, and some minor crashes in the middle-and-end-of-the-pack of cars.

The interesting thing on these smaller tracks that Emma first noticed at Bristol was how often the lead cars would then be passing the cars at the back of the track, so many drivers were getting laps down because of it. This made her extremely nervous every time Killian had to weave around the cars at the back of the pack while also chasing or trying to keep the lead. Some of these cars caused backups, and thus caused lead changes as well.

She could also tell by the comm how aggravated Killian was with some of those drivers. “Move outta the way, you bloody git!” or “You’re three barmy laps back, bugger. Get your arse over.” She knew he was angry, but she couldn't help herself from the small laugh at his choice of words, some of which she was sure were even worse but she had no clue what they meant. She looked them up on her phone, only to clap her hand over her mouth and to shake her head. He definitely had a dirty mouth on him; the only problem was that it made her squirm in her chair, thinking about what that dirty mouth did to her last night.

Then they were crossing the finish line. Phillip had a car-length lead, and Killian and Victor were fighting for second. But it was Killian that finally edged him out just as they crossed the line. She took her time getting down from the box, knowing that as soon as he got out of the car, the reporters would be asking questions.

Which was exactly what happened when she got there. His eyes caught hers while he was answering question, and his eyes lit up, his smile getting bigger. As soon as he was done with them, he took the few short steps and enveloped her in a hug, then they headed back to the RV and prepared for their trip back home.

Tuesday night after dinner, while they were in the family room to relax, and Killian brought a small stack of papers with him. Regina had given him a few resumes that her HR team had come up with. The stack also contained a few that the girls had found and one that Mary Margaret had worked with prior. They had agreed to both look them over and see if any deserved an interview for the charity positions.

The first couple were set aside as No's right away based on lack of experience. “Next,” Emma said holding out the next paper. “Belle French. Oh, she's the one Mary Margaret gave a glowing recommendation on. She said she was really smart, and very friendly. Also said she got along with difficult personalities.”

Killian looked at her resume, “She volunteers at the local library, has organised many fundraisers for it, the local schools, and homeless shelters.” He read further. She was highly educated. “I think an
interview is in order.”

Emma smiled. “Agreed.” They put the next one in the No pile, and then she lifted the next. “Mulan Fa. Ruby’s recommendation. Said she was great at raising funds from corporations. They worked on a few charities together while Ruby was NASCAR’s Sprint Girl and her girlfriend.”

Killian raised an eyebrow. “Will that cause any complications?”

“I asked the same thing; I didn't want any awkwardness. But Ruby assured me the split was amicable and that they are still friends.” The resume also went in the to interview pile as well as a few others. “Well, looks like a good start.”

He nodded in agreement, and leaned over and kissed her cheek. “Thank you, love.”

“No need. I want this to go well as much as you do.” She snuggled closer to him and rested her head on his chest.

The next race was at Talladega. It was much too far to drive—over six hours—and Killian flat-out told her no. She was slightly miffed at him for it, but she agreed she didn't really want to drive that far either, especially at night. Though she could have flown into Birmingham, the drive from there to the track was almost an hour each way. She didn't want him to do that either. But she was also resolute in not allowing him to send the plane just for her.

It gave her only two options: not go at all, which to her was not an option, or to take the day off, which she didn't want to because she wanted to take time next week for his birthday. Luckily, Tink had come up with another idea. “Emma, they have internet at the track or Killian does, right?”

“Of course.”

“Then take your laptop, have your phone here forwarded to your cell and work from there.”

“I’m not sure Archie…”

Tink laughed. “Seriously? He loves Killian and you. Working from home or a track or whatever here and there shouldn't be a problem.” And after lunch with Tink, she asked her boss if it would be okay.

“Emma, you work hard. I trust you will actually be working and not abusing the privilege. Besides, we allow others to work from home when they can for sick kids or other things.”

With that she had a plan, for this week and others. She couldn't do it every week, but at least she had another option. Killian, of course, was thrilled. “See, I knew it would work out.”

She rolled her eyes and shook her head at him, but she couldn’t help but smile either. Things were working out really well; it felt almost too good to be true.

The flight out on Thursday night was quick, and the tiny airport near the track made it extremely easy to deboard and get to the RV in no time. Emma had a couple extra bags this time due to bringing her work and laptop. She sat them near the dining table and then followed him to the back.

They had grabbed dinner prior and ate on the plane, so they had the evening free. “Shall we go say hi to everyone? Or watch a movie?” she asked.

“We’ll see everyone tomorrow. If we attempt to watch a movie, we’ll just distract ourselves anyway. I have a much better idea.” With that he looped his arms around her, and pulled them both down onto the bed.
She giggled as they bounced, and then once they settled, said “You’re insatiable.”

“When it comes to you Swan, I definitely am.” His hands tangled in her hair and pulled her down to claim her lips with his own.

It didn’t take long until all of their clothes were littering the floor around the bed. Killian’s scruffy chin was teasing the skin between her breasts, as his lips sucked first one and then the other of her nipples into stiff peaks. Her hands threaded through his hair, pressing him closer and moaned her approval. His one hand snaked between them, moving between her legs, his fingers moving through her wet folds, eliciting a shudder and a whimper. “Killian…”

He smiled against her breast. “Right here, love.” He sucked at the peak once more, with a slight nibble, before letting it go and switching sides again. His fingers delved deeper, circling her clit, making her back arch up at him. “Unless you want me somewhere else.”

She couldn’t decide whether to press him back to her breasts, or push his head between her legs. Part of her wanted his mouth on her, he was so good at it, but another part of her wanted the dual pleasure of his fingers below and his mouth on her sensitive nipples. She pressed his face back to her chest, and bucked her hips up at him.

He grinned against her once more, taking the hint. Two of his fingers plunged into her core and she rewarded him with a moan, and her hips moving against them. His teeth bit at the side of her breast, and then sucked in small mark into her skin as this thumb started to stroke over her clit while his fingers continued to thrust.

“Oh…yes…” Her fingers tightened in his hair, pulling it slightly making him groan and thrust his hips and fully hard erection against the mattress. Then he started to curl his fingers inside of her, and her body arched again. “Fuck.”

“In due time, love,” he told her as he now started to kiss down her body.

She gripped his hair tighter and tried to pull him back up, “No, now. I want…need you now.”

He caught the desire in her eyes, and removed his fingers, sucking each on in turn, keeping her eye as he crawled up her body. “I can never deny you anything.” He sat on his knees between her legs, wrapped her legs around him, held her hips to raise them up to meet him, and slid home slowly into her. “Play with those gorgeous breasts, Swan, since I can’t.” He told her and then slid out only to thrust back inside.

She moaned at the push of his hips, as her hands came up to do as he requested. She cupped the plump flesh while her fingers tweaked and twisted at the peaks. She bit her lip, while her eyes watched his moving back and forth from watching her actions to the view of him sliding in and out of her.

The view was amazing, and he couldn’t decide which one he liked better, both turning him more and more. Watching her small, hands working over her own beautiful breasts, pleasuring herself, or watching his cock push inside of her, filling her and then pulling back slick with her wetness. His hips thrusted harder and faster due to sight, the feel of it, and the sounds she was making. And from the sounds she was making, he could tell she was close, and with a few more plunges into her, he could feel she was too.

He adjusted the position, and moved over her, her legs wrapped high around his hips, as his mouth connected with hers.
“Yes...Yesss...” Was all she could get out as his hips continued to thrust, but also ground his pelvic bone against hers on every move. She felt the cord twist impossibly tight because of it, and with another hard push of his hips he was pushing her over the edge. Her arms grasped tight to his shoulders, as her scream was quieted by his kiss, while her body tightened around him.

He moaned into the kiss, and the feel of her muscles contracting around him, and with a few more plunges inside of her, his hips pushed himself deep, and held as his own pleasure took over, and washed through him.

He had enough thought left to roll them both to the side, his arms holding her close, as she snuggled into his chest. He smiled and kissed the top of her head. After a few minutes, she turned to look up at him, “Now movie?”

“Alright. But let’s put on something we won’t mind missing the last part of.” He smirked at her, and she reached for her pillow and smacked his side with it, making him laugh.

The next morning, Killian left Emma at the dining table with a kiss to her lips while she started to work and he headed to the garage. He waved, nodded, or said hi to the other drivers and different crew he passed on his way to the stall. His crew were already there, finishing getting the car ready for practice. Robin stood at the row of computers, monitoring the readings.

“How does she look?” Killian asked his crew chief.

“Hey, mate. She’s doing pretty well. We made a couple tweaks based on the predicted weather. Looks like it’s not going to be as hot as we thought. There may even be rain on Sunday.”

“Bollocks.” Killian ran his hand through his hair, he did not want to hear that. Rain delays were never good, unless you were in the front. It could push the race to the next day or call the race as it stood at the time the delay started. Something both the drivers, sponsors, and the fans hated. “Let’s hope it goes around us.”

“Agreed. But either way, we will be ready. Just try to stay up front.”

Killian laughed. “Don’t I always?”

“Just who I was looking for,” came a voice from behind them. The two men turned to find Regina walking towards them, they each brought a hand to their chest asking which one. She gave an affectionate look to Robin. “I meant Killian.” Her hand lightly brushed Robin’s arm. “But will lunch…” She looked at Killian, “a lunch meeting work to discuss things?”

Robin’s smile bloomed. “I believe that a late lunch after practice will work just fine.”

Regina nodded and then motioned for Killian to follow her out of the noisy garage. Once they got somewhere a little quieter so they could talk, Killian started. “Regina, the two of you don’t need to sneak around for my account.”

She looked like a fish out of water. “What?...Uh, what are you talking about?”

He had never seen her so flustered before. “It’s okay. I figured it out. If you both are happy, then I am.” Wait, was she actually blushing?

“Thank you, Killian. I didn’t know how you would react. I know Robin and you have worked together for a long time, longer than we have, and…”

He stopped her. “Regina. Just don’t hurt him. That’s all I ask. He’s…” he cleared his throat. “He’s
had enough pain.”

She nodded. “I understand, and I won’t.”

He accepted her answer with a nod of his own. “So, what did you want to talk to me about?”

“What?” She blinked at him for a second. “Oh, right. First, Kathryn got back to me. Liam doesn’t need to be physically present; a phone conference or Skype will work for board meetings.”

“Perfect. Then I want to add Liam and also Robin to the board.”

“Great. I’ll let her know.” She raised her eyebrow a moment, looking as if she was debating to say something.”

“Spit it out, Regina. I’ve never known you to mince words.”

“Why not Emma?”

He should have expected that. He took a deep breath. “She has her own job, at a shelter no less.”

“Conflict of interest.”

“Exactly. I mean she’s helping out. We’re looking at the resumes together. I will certainly take her input. She wants to help volunteer, etc. But…”

“I get it. Actually, that’s part of what I was going to ask. How is the recruitment going?”

“We have a list of candidates for some of the positions, and we have interviews set up next week. But we haven’t found anyone for Executive Director to interview yet.”

“Okay, I’ll have my team focus on that. Though I actually may know someone. One of my older sorority sisters, Mal, has a daughter who has worked with a lot of nonprofits. I can find if she is looking for a change.”

“Personal recommendations are preferred actually. So please let me know.” She agreed and with that he went back to his crew, while Regina turned around already on her phone inquiring.

It was really nice to be working at the track for Emma. She actually felt like she got a lot done due to the extra quiet and staff not just stopping by in need of something. But the best part was Killian coming in for a late lunch with her. Not to mention that later on they went out with their friends...yep, the other drivers and their respective others were now both their friends.

She always had Tink, and of course David and Mary Margaret, but it was really nice to have friends outside of work or family. It was also great to have girlfriends that could give her the heads up of what to do, or what would be in store with her life as the girlfriend of a NASCAR driver. It was challenging, but he was worth it; they were worth it. The nights with just the two of them were also extremely worth it. The early mornings however…

Well, they could go take a hike. While he always told her she could stay in bed, and for the really early mornings she did. It just wasn’t the same to be in bed without him. She wasn’t sure when exactly him next to her to sleep had become a necessity, but it was. This was one of those mornings. She lay there for an extra twenty minutes, with sleep not returning, until she gave up and decided to get ready for the day.

Less than an hour later, she was out and about and headed towards the garage to look for Killian—or
the girls, more specifically. They had a few more things to plan, and today would be the last time they would get a chance to be alone and talk before it was put into action.

It didn't take long for her to find Killian and Robin looking at monitors. She came up behind them and wrapped her arms around him.

He could tell it was her before she even touched him, and his arm lifted instinctually to come around her and pull her to his side. He kissed her forehead as he kept talking with Robin.

Robin gave her brief smile as he replied, “The weather still hasn't dissipated; in fact, I think it's worse. At the very least we are going to get the edge of it, which will certainly mean a rain delay. Hopefully, that's all it will be.”

The girls had explained that last night, and she had asked the silly question. “Well, why not just put on window wipers?” While Ariel tried not to laugh, Ruby and Ashley couldn't contain it.

“Emma, going 200 miles per hour on, at the very least a wet track, at worst a downpour, where you can't see five feet in front of you?” Ruby asked incredulously.

“That wouldn't be good,” she replied. Not good at all.

“Now they do put on windshield wipers for the road courses. But those are at a lot lower speed, and only for light rain,” Ariel chimed in. Emma was sure she was trying to help.

Her mind came back to the present, as Killian responded to his crew chief. “Well, that means I need to get a good starting position. How’s the modifications from practice going?”

“They’ll be done before qualifications start.” Robin promised. And he was right—the repairs were done prior to Killian getting in the car. As soon as he pulled out from the garage, she and the ladies found a corner to get something to drink, watch, and plan.

When qualifying was done, Killian had won the poll and would start first in Talladega. It was cause to celebrate, and they did back in their RV, alone and very much together.

The first thing Emma realized the day before was that Talladega was like Daytona. It was massive, and as Ruby told her, a restrictor-plate race. Those lovely plates kept the cars from going too fast. But it also led to more drafting and working in pairs to create that needed speed.

They were all hoping to get the race in today due to the weather. The stands were already more sparse than any she had seen prior, and the reason: the damn rain. They had started the race already an hour and a half late due to the blasted storm. Even though it was short, they had to wait for the jet dryers to dry off the track.

But luckily they were now off and racing, and Killian was luckily still in the lead as he came in for a green-flag pit stop at lap 26 of 188. Most of the cars followed him in; only some stayed out, trying to get the point for leading a lap.

There was just one issue: more rain. The caution was called while the few cars had stayed out and just as the rest were coming back on the track, effectively putting all the lead cars behind the others. Luckily, it was just a few sprinkles and the green flag was waved again, but while the front cars tried to get down to the pits, they held up Killian just long enough for Philip to take the lead with Victor's help.

Killian was a lone driver without a dance partner it seemed, until Sean got behind him. The two then gained some speed, and started to make their way up the outside. Other cars fell in behind them as
they moved up the track, catching the lead cars.

By lap 57, it was Phillip, Victor, Killian, and Sean, in that order. The first two on the inside, and the other two on the outside, each row with a string of cars behind them. But that is when a couple cars got into each other, and Eric was pushed into the wall as two other cars rolled into the grass.

Once the caution was over, they were at it once again. Eric’s car was battered but running and now in the middle of the pack while Killian and Sean were able to take the lead. They held it for a few laps before the inside lane put Phillip and Victor back in front. It kept going this way, back and forth, another caution for a car rubbing the wall or a blown tire here and there.

At lap 95, Robin chimed in over the com. “Okay, we are past halfway, this race ends today one way or another.” Meaning by someone crossing the finish line, or more rain and the race being called as the race stood. By the way the dark clouds looked coming in, Emma had a feeling it would be the second option, as she pulled her jacket more firmly around her.

It was lap 106 where it all seemed to happen. Killian was in the lead with Sean pushing, Phillip and Victor right behind them, when she saw the drops start, just as Killian’s spotter did. He was just telling him over the com, but it didn't matter, the downpour happened too fast.

It was a blur as Killian, then Sean and the rest started to skid, moving all over the track. Philip went down to the grass, Killian and Sean into the wall. Victor barely avoided them, as other cars tried to slow and take evasive action. It seemed to take forever, but it was barely a few seconds, when the caution came out, which didn't take long to turn to red.

Between the crashing cars and the downpour, it was almost impossible to see. No one had expected it to rain so hard, so quickly. Emma was standing, trying to see his car. Trying to see if his window net was down. Her heart was beating erratically, her breath held, as Robin spoke over the com. “Killian?”

Deep breaths came over the line, and then, though it sounded a little strained, “I’m fine. I’m okay.”

Emma took in a deep breath and then sat back down next to Robin and motioned to the microphone. He leaned in closer to her so she could talk. “You aren't fine.”

Killian gave a short chuckle. “My almost healed ribs aren't too happy with me. I don't think they got hit or anything, just the seat restraints digging into still-tender areas.”

“We'll see what the doctor says,” Robin told him.

She could almost hear his eyes roll before he responded. “Yes, mom.”

The wreckers and the ambulances were out all over the track. Luckily, everyone had reported back they were okay, all nets were lowered, and the fans still there in the rain cheered. It didn't take to long, though, for the NASCAR officials to call the race. Based on the time the caution came out, Victor was in the lead, and also one of the few cars still intact. He was followed by Phillip, Killian, and then Sean.

As soon as Killian was out of the car and in the back of an ambulance with a couple other drivers headed to the infield care center, Emma was out of the booth, umbrella in hand and on her way there as well.

It seemed like forever before he was cleared, luckily with no extra damage to his ribs, with the good news that the tape could probably come off next week. Just in time for his birthday, Emma thought, but didn't say anything.
The big problem was at the airport. The rain was also not letting anyone out. So the two of them along with Dusty had to wait for the rain to slow and then wait their turn in line before they could take off.

Not knowing how long it would take, they grabbed some food, ate, and then pulled out the plane’s bed. Both were fast asleep in each other’s arms before Dusty was even able to take off at close to two in the morning, heading home.

NOTE: At the end of the chapters going forward, I’m going to include the points total. So you know the standings as of the end of that chapter. (Yes, I have an excel spreadsheet keeping track.)

Car - Driver - Points - * = leading
#71 - Killian Jones - 359
#8 - Phillip Haven - 360
#36 - Victor Whale - 361
#53 - Sean Herman - 370*
#65 - Eric Sirena - 350
#92 - August Booth - 354
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 282
The following week was going to be extremely busy, especially for Emma. But she wasn’t going to tell Killian that. Because part of what she was doing was a secret, and it needed to stay that way. She had her job during the day, phone calls and emails for the surprise during lunch and any free moment she had, and then after work, she met up with Killian at a nearby coffee shop to interview candidates for the charity.

That’s where she was heading right now; she parked a few places from Killian’s own car. She got out and quickly walked inside to find he was waiting at a table with two drinks in front of him. She smiled as he got up from his seat and brought her in for a hug and quick kiss. “How was your day, love?”

“Good; even better now,” she replied and gave him another brief kiss before they both sat down. He moved one of the cups in front of her with a wink. “Thank you.” She brought it up for a drink. “Mmmm,” she said and took another sip of the hot chocolate with cinnamon. He knew her so well. While she loved—no, needed—coffee in the morning, at night, she really loved a hot chocolate (or wine, wine was good too). “So, who are we meeting first?”

“Merida Ferguson, for the Operations Director position.”

Emma took the resume from his hand and looked at it to refresh her memory. MBA, prior experience with charities and also businesses. She was one of the other recommendations that Ruby had given them. She was interrupted from looking further.

“Excuse me.” The couple looked up to see a woman standing at the table. She had long red, curly hair that you could tell she had tried to pull back into a low ponytail to look professional, but it was trying to escape. She had a gentle smile and determined eyes. “I’m Merida, here for the interview.”

Emma and Killian smiled, and he stood and then motioned to the chair for her to sit. “Thank you for meeting us here.”

They both sat back down, and the redhead answered. “No thank you for meeting with me. I have always wanted to help start a charity, get in on the ground floor. And this one sounds like it will do a lot of good.”

Killian grinned; obviously she had done some homework. “Good, so you know what you would be getting into. We have to start from square one, and what I...what we are looking for is someone with the experience and drive to start it out right.”

The three talked for over an hour about Merida’s experience, what they envisioned for the charity, and what she thought the first steps would be to accomplish. By the time the three shook hands and let her know she would get a call soon either way, they already knew their answer. As soon as the redhead walked out of the coffee shop, Killian turned to Emma. “Well, I think we have one down. Do you agree?”

“I think she’s perfect. She knows what she’s doing, and can easily take charge; sounds like she has an excellent battle plan.” She winked at him.

He laughed. “That she does.” He looked at her cup. “Refill? We have another interview in…” he looked at his watch. “Wow, five minutes.”

“No, I’m good. Maybe some water.” He was about to go get it when she laid a hand on his chest. “I
can get it; want something?”

“Water would be grand. Thanks, love.”

She smiled back at him and then went to get the waters, and she wasn’t back at the table long when their next interview came in. The man was nice, but all over the place. He couldn’t seem to stay on one line of thought without skipping to something else. He was very smart, extremely smart. But she wasn’t sure if he realized he was leaving things out, or that he thought they just knew and skipped forward. She looked over at Killian, and he gave her a small raised eyebrow. She held back her laugh, they were both in agreement on this one.

Emma quickly looked at her phone for the time. “Nathaniel, we have another appointment in a few minutes, so we’re going to have to unfortunately wrap this up. It was a pleasure to meet you, and you have a very impressive resume.”

Killian nodded. “Yes, thank you for coming. We will let you know soon.” The man nodded, shook their hands vigorously and then headed out. Killian shook his head. “Did you catch all of that?”

Emma snorted while laughing, making him chuckle. “I have no idea. But he’s not going to work.”

Killian agreed. “Okay, it’s time to get out of here, pick up dinner, and go home.”

She nodded, followed him out, and never thought to correct him that it was his place.

Tuesday was similar for Emma, except during her lunch break, she headed back to her apartment to pick up the packages she had bought and had shipped to her address so Killian wouldn’t see them. She took her other suitcase out of the closet and put the boxes inside, along with a few more pieces of clothing. The only clothing left was her summer stuff.

She knew she should bring up the point with Killian that they were basically living together. “Basically?” she said out loud and snorted, that was an understatement. Her apartment was really just storage. She hadn’t stayed a night in weeks, or months more likely. But something stopped her from ever broaching the subject. They had talked about kids and marriage for crying out loud; why was just finding out if they were living together so terrifying? “Because then it’s really happening. It’s the first step.” She wanted it to happen, she wanted it all to happen, but that scared little lost girl was still afraid it would all just vanish.

She took a deep breath, and shook her head. “I’m sure he’ll bring it up. I don’t want to ask to move in with him. You don’t do that,” she told herself, then zipped her bag and headed out of the apartment to head back to work.

After work, she met up with Killian again, and they had two more interviews. This time, they liked them both, and then they grabbed a pizza to go, and both drove back home.

He got out of his car with the pizza and saw her go to her trunk—well, actually hood on the Bug—and take out some luggage. His eyebrow lifted. “I thought you had your luggage here.”

“Last one, and I brought some cooler clothes since spring is here.”

He walked up to her. “Here, let me.”

She shook her head. “No, I got it. You have the pizza.”

He furrowed his brow, but waved his one hand in surrender and backed off as he got the door into the house for her. She pulled the bag along behind her as she passed him, and went to the bedroom,
while he went into the kitchen. He sat the pizza on the island and went to get plates and two sodas. His mind still on the luggage. It was a reminder that they technically didn’t live together. Well, they did...but Emma still had her apartment. Which she never used.

He bit his lip as he opened his own can and took a drink. Should he say something? They were on the same page, right? But why hadn’t she commented on it? Did she want to keep the apartment? To keep that space? The...he swallowed hard...the easy out? He didn’t want to think about it, but he would need to talk to her about it. But as soon as she walked into the kitchen he pushed it out of his mind. Later, he told himself, but a small voice in his head said ‘Coward.’

He shook it away and opened the pizza box. They both grabbed a slice and their drinks and headed for the couch. She turned on the TV, the slice already in her mouth. She gave a soft moan. “This is sooo good.”

“Best pizza in town; heck, anywhere I know of.” He took a bite of the cheesy goodness himself.

“So, what did you think of the two tonight?”

“Belle is very sweet, warm, intelligent. She has the credentials, and I trust your sister-in-law.”

“I agree; I think she will make a perfect Volunteer Coordinator. Oh, and that reminds me.” She sat her pizza down and looked at him. “Since the race is Saturday, and we get home midday on Sunday, Mary Margaret wants to have us come over for Sunday dinner. They are finding out the sex of the baby this week, and I think they want to celebrate.” Granted that wasn’t the only reason, but she wasn’t going to tell him that. Heck, he had still not told her his birthday was coming up. She just hoped he didn’t hate what she had planned.

“That sounds fantastic, love. I know you don’t get to see them as much as you used to.” He leaned over and kissed her temple.

“It’s okay. I was there all the time because I didn’t have anywhere else to go. I love them, but sometimes I felt like a third wheel.” She leaned against his shoulder and looked up at him. “But I don’t have to worry about that now.”

He smiled down at her, “No, you don’t.” He gave her a brief kiss and then sat back up. “Now that that is settled.” He was glad to spend time with David and Mary Margaret on his birthday. It would be nice to be with family on his birthday, well Emma’s family, his one day he hoped. He hadn’t been with family on his birthday in years. He knew he should tell Emma, but he knew if he did, she would feel pressured to make a big deal out of it. He didn’t want that. He already had what he wanted most: her. “So what did you think of Mulan?”

Emma swallowed her bite of pizza, “Oh, she’s great. Very straight laced, smart, a ton of common sense. Ruby was right, she knows what she’s doing. I think she will make a great Fundraising Director.”

“Good; me too. I’ll tell Regina and her team will draft up the paperwork and make the phone calls for Merida, Belle, and Mulan tomorrow.”

Emma smiled. “All women so far...interesting…” She winked at him.

His eyes widened; he hadn’t even thought of that. “Emma, you agreed on them. I was just looking at who was the best…”

She cut him off with a kiss and then broke with a laugh. “I’m just teasing you. I know you. You are hiring the best person for the job. I’m not worried; none of those girls are going to swipe you off
your feet and take you away from me.”

He smiled and leaned down to her, their lips almost touching. “You are the only one I want, and besides, you already swept me off my feet.” Then his lips claimed hers.

Her hand went to his chest, fingers flexing, while her other hand tried to hold onto her plate. She moaned as his tongue dipped into her mouth, and her nails dug into his shirt, and then her brain realized where she was gripping him and what she felt, or actually didn’t feel. She pulled back, “The tape is gone.”

Killian nodded. “I had my doctor’s appointment today, and they said I could take the tape off.”

Emma’s only answer was to take both her plate and his, set them on the coffee table, and then move to straddle his lap. Her arms wrapped around his neck. “I think this is cause for celebration.”

“Aye,” he agreed finding her mouth once again with his, as his fingers traveled down her back to find the edge of her shirt. Breaking the kiss he pulled it over her head, “And this is the perfect start.” He said as his mouth closed over the swell of her breast, making her moan, arch her back and shift her hips in his lap. He groaned. What a wonderful celebration it was.

As Emma was packing up her office on Wednesday, Tink knocked on her door and waved the large manilla envelope. “Mission accomplished.”

Emma grinned and gave her friend a big hug, then broke away taking the envelope. “Thank you so much.”

“No problem, least we could do. Archie and I just want a picture.”

“Deal,” Emma replied as she put her laptop in her bag and zipped it. She took a brief look around the office. “Okay, ready to go.”

They walked out and Emma locked her door. Tink turned to her and took a hand. “Relax. He’s going to love it.”

“Thanks again! I’ll see you later.” With that, she was out the door and on her way for the last two interviews this week. They had a couple more next week for the Executive Director position, but hopefully by the end of the night, they would have their Marketing Director.

The first interview went well; the man was smart, sophisticated, in a designed pressed suit. Said all the right things, but Emma just felt there was something off. Would he do well as a Marketing Director? She was sure of it. But was he the right one for the charity? Absolutely not. She didn’t see his personality working well with who they already hired, Killian, or herself. She knew the charity wasn’t hers, and she really wasn’t part of the equation. But she still wanted to help out where she could.

They didn’t have a chance to talk to each other when that interview ended and the next started almost immediately. But almost instantaneously, she knew the next person would fit personality wise much better.

She could tell he was nervous, when he sat down and lightly bumped the table, almost spilling their drinks, he had let out a accented, “Bloody hell.” Then, realizing what he said, his eyes went wide, he satup straight, and then, “Sorry about that.” Killian laughed, which made Emma smile.

“No worries, mate. So what part of England are you from? And what brings you here to the States?”
Luckily, the man also knew what he was talking about, because Killian and this Will Scarlett seemed to instantly strike a friendship. She could easily see the two along with Robin watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football. She had now watched a game or two with Killian watching soccer, wait...wait...sorry...football.

Soon, their time was up. “Well, mate, thanks for your time. But we have to get going, we have a plane to get to for the next race.”

They all stood and shook hands. “Thanks for taking the time. I hope to hear back soon, I can’t wait to start. Also, good luck on the track.”

They said their goodbyes, and quickly headed back to the house. The car for them was already waiting. Killian directed the man to their bags. He still couldn’t believe how many bags she had. Even with her work stuff, she never had this many bags before. Though he wasn’t going to question it—he always told her there wasn’t a bag limit since they were taking his plane. She went to quickly change out of her work clothes and was back in a soft pair of yoga pants and a long-sleeved tunic shirt, her hair out of the braid and flowing. He couldn’t wait to get her to the plane and have her curled up next to him—or on him, if he had his choice.

“You coming?” she turned to ask him, catching his eyes roaming over her and raised her eyebrows in question.

He held back the laugh, locked the door, and quickly followed her to the car, while he thought hopefully soon if he had a say in the matter.

Emma made a quick order of chinese food on her phone that would be ready on their way to the airport, and then turned to Killian. “So what did you think of the interviews?” Her eyes caught his roaming over her once again. She mentally patted herself on the back for her choice in attire.

“Uhh…” He had to take a second to register her words, and he then sat up straighter. “Well the first one is a for sure no. While he might be smart, and knows what he’s doing…”

“His personality was horrible,” she said for him.

“Exactly.” He reached out for the back of her hand and brought it to his mouth for a kiss, “Now the second one, Will...he was smart, almost cunning.” They both laughed. “But in a good way. I think he will get along with us and who we have already hired. I think he’s a good choice.”

“I agree. So, just one to go.”

“That’s right, and then we have to find space. I don’t want to stay at the shop longer than we have to.” Emma nodded in agreement.

Soon they had their food, their bags were loaded in the plane, and they were in the air. Dusty notified that they could take off their seat belts and move around the cabin. It didn’t take long, and Killian was pulling Emma into his arms and back onto the couch.

“Killain! Dusty is in the other room.”

“Correction: Dusty is piloting the plane, and he doesn’t come back into the aircraft area unless I request him, or if it’s an emergency.”

“What if he has to go to the bathroom?”
“He has his own up there, along with anything else he may need.” His hand ran down her sides, one stopping to cup a breast. “So how about it, love? Join the mile high club with me?” He wiggled his eyebrows at her.

She laughed, and swatted his shoulder. “As if you aren’t already a member.”

“I’m not,” he replied honestly. “I didn’t fly with anyone else before you.” His hand came up and pushed a strand of hair behind her ear, and then caressed the side of her face. “I just want you. Bloody hell, I always want you, you vixen.”

Her smile widened, and she grabbed the lapels of his shirt and pulled him down with her on the couch. He went willingly, settling himself between her legs, which then wrapped around him and pushed his already hardening denim covered length against her thin-cloth-covered core. He groaned as his lips found hers, his tongue teasing them before plunging inside—something he was hoping to do soon down below, as well.

She moaned at the feel of his weight over her, his arms braced on the couch under her, surrounding her. God she wanted him. But she couldn’t help but think that another person was less than a hundred feet away. Part of it made her uneasy, the other part liked the risk. She pulled back. “The food will get cold.”

His lips continued down the side of her neck. He wasn’t playing fair at all; he knew what that did to her. She moaned, and he smiled into her skin as his hips ground against her. “There is a microwave, love.” His teeth lightly nipped at her collarbone, and then his tongue ran over the bite soothing it, as his one hand moved from her side, to work its way under her top, then under the cup of her bra. She arched her back, and mouth opened in a gasp, as his thumb strummed at her nipple. “Do you really want me to stop so we can eat dinner?” He asked her as his mouth moved over her skin, and down the V of her top. “Or should I use my mouth for much more advantageous goals?” His face moved to the left and his teeth grazed over her covered nipple.

Her hips bucked up at him. “Fine!” She pulled him up to kiss him hard. “Dinner later; dessert first.”

He smiled. “Love the way you think,” he said and then pulled back, and sat on his knees. She sat up, her hands quickly removed her top, and her bra quickly followed. He pulled off his own shirt and saw her working on her leggings and underwear. Quickly they went down her legs, until she was toeing them off. “Mmmm, so eager now.”

“Please what, love?” he asked as his fingers snuck under her shirt, lightly pinched at her nipple as his teeth did the others over the fabric.

Her hands stroked up his back, and then threaded through his hair, trying to press him closer. “Killian….please…”

“Please what, love?” he asked as his fingers snuck under her shirt, lightly pinched at her nipple as his teeth did the others over the fabric.

Her hips bucked up at him. “Fine!” She pulled him up to kiss him hard. “Dinner later; dessert first.”

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“You are slow,” she said and started in on the button and zipper of his pants.

“You’re the only one to call me…” He was cut off, as her hands went inside his jeans, under his boxer briefs and grasped his hard length. “God!”

She smiled and licked her lips as her other hand pushed the rest of his clothes down his legs. Her hand moved over him with a firm grip. Her other hand came up, she licked it, and it joined the other one.

He groaned and he resisted the urge to throw his head back, because he wanted to watch her. He moved just enough to kick the clothing off his legs, and then her mouth was on him, taking in the
head, her tongue swirling over it.

“Fuck!” The pleasure was intense. His one hand came up to cup her head and tangle his fingers in her hair. He tried to breathe as she sucked him in further, while his other hand reached down to grasp her breast and roll her nipple between his fingers. He felt her moan around him, which just added to the pleasure. “Emma…” God, how fast she could work him up. With another move back onto him, he could feel her take him down her throat, swallowing around him, and then pulling back off, tongue trailing over the underside of him.

He was already out of breath; he knew if she did that one more time… His fingers tightened in her hair and he tried to gently pull her off of him. The look in her eyes told him she knew exactly how close he was, and the smirk and lick of her lips set off a spark inside of him.

In an instant she found her sitting back against the couch, him on the floor, and her knees of his shoulders. She didn’t even get a chance to say anything, because his fingers were spreading her open, and his mouth was on her. Tongue delving deep inside her, making her hips move up at him. “God...Killian...Yes!”

His thumb came up, stroking over her clit over and over as his tongue moved in and out, licking around her core and then plunging back inside. She could barely speak; sounds were coming out, but completely unintelligible. Both hands were in his dark hair as her hips kept pushing back at him, riding his tongue—so close, so close to the edge.

More...more...that’s all he could think about. He wanted more of those sounds, more of her fingers tugging his hair, of her hips arching to to meet his tongue and fingers, more of her taste. He then moved his tongue up, to suck on that swollen bundle of nerves, as he pushed two of his fingers deep inside of her. His name on her lips had him smiling as he worked them into her fast and started to curl them as he withdrew. Her legs started to quake on his shoulders; her breath came in quicker gasps. His tongue changed to quick flicks against her clit, and her body tensed further. Her grip on his hair was almost painful, but it fueled him on further. He added a third finger and on the second thrust, she was screaming, her body shocking, her inner muscles gripping at his fingers.

He smiled against her as his fingers and tongue slowed, but kept going, pushing her through, keeping it going, making the pleasure last longer. His eyes flicked up over her body, watching her breath come out in quick pants, and her eyes slowly flutter back open. When her eyes locked with his, she was pulling him back up to her.

Killian went more than willingly. He was beyond hard, the tip openly leaking and needing desperate attention. His mouth and face still wet, she pulled him in for a kiss anyways, making her taste herself on him, fueling the fire in both of them even higher.

“Please...now…” was all that she could gasp out.

He backed away and stood. “Over love. Hands and knees.” She didn’t even question it, and got on her knees on the couch, her arms and head resting against the back, with her ass high in the air. He bit his lip, as his hands moved to those beautiful globes, caressing them. One hand trailed around to her front to play with her breasts.

She shifted back at him, signifying she was tired of waiting. He released her breast, and brought his hand to his hard length, giving himself a few long strokes, and then lined himself up. God, she was wet. He slid the head through her drenched lips, bumping it against her clit a few times, and made her shudder.

“Stop teasing and fuck me, Killian!”
“As the lady insists,” and with that he took her in one long thrust. His hands moving to her hips, to hold himself deep, as both took a second to revel in the feeling. “So good...you always feel so damn good around me.”

“Feels even better when you move,” she whimpered, and pushed her hips back against him.

His hips moved leisurely in and out of her, his hands kept her hips from going faster. “Slow and gentle?” he asked, and she shook her head no. He already knew that, but liked to tease her. Then he gripped her hips, and slid out and then slammed back in, rocking the couch in the process, and made her gasp. He did the same a few more times, and then leaned over her shoulder, his hands moved to cup her breasts. “Or fast and hard, love?”

He could feel her trying to catch her breath. “Fuck me, Killian! God, just...fuck me!”

“As you wish,” he said, kissed her neck lightly for a second, and this his hands moved back to her hips. He then stood back straight and pierced the back inside of her, claiming her in deep, hard strokes. He was far too worked up to last long like this, but he wanted, needed to feel her come around him. His one hand left her hip again as he continued to thrust wildly inside of her, and founds its way around her to where there were joined. His fingers teased through her folds, and then pressed against her clit.

Her back arched and her head flung back at the sparks that seemed to run through her. “God! Yes...don’t stop...” She begged as she pressed herself back against him every time his hips surged forward, her hands clamoring to hang onto the back of the couch as her knees moved against the fabric due to his punishing and highly pleasurable pace. Every time she thought the next thrust was going to push her over the edge, it just seemed to push her higher; she was so damn close. “Killian...please…”

He knew what she was asking for, begging for; her could feel it as well. The tension curling tighter and tighter, the feel of it almost ready to snap, but not quite there. He leaned over her again, changing his angle, and bringing his chest to her back, his mouth to her neck, his hand at her hip now back to her breast. He groaned at the shift as his hips continued to roll and fuck into her core. His fingers tweaked her nipple and her clit, and his mouth found her ear. She shuddered against him, almost there… “Come for me, Emma. Let me feel your tight little quim milk my cock dry.”

“Oh God,” she whimpered. “Yes...” His dirty words were enough of a push, and with with one more thrust of his hips, she was soaring, her body tightening in his arms and around him. Her head flew back onto his shoulder and he found his pleasure as well, and pressed himself deep as he spent himself inside of her.

His arms held her tight, as their bodies shook. As soon as he could feel his legs, he pulled her to lay down on the couch with him, his chest cushioning her head. His hands moved through her hair, as he pressed her closer.

She pressed her face into his chest, as she slowly came back to earth—or as close to earth as she could get on a plane. Then a laugh sprung to her lips as she heard his stomach growl. “I am not getting up to warm up the Chinese food.”

He chuckled. “No worries, love. Give me a few more minutes, and I will get it for the both of us.”

“You better...” she poked his chest. “This was your idea.”

His smiled got wider. “Are you complaining?”
She shook her head no, and snuggled closer. “No, just pointing out facts.” She stretched against him. “So that’s the mile high club, huh? I can see what it’s so popular.” They both started to laugh.

The next morning, she got up the same time he did. They had breakfast and he was out the door to go to practice. He thought she was going to be working from the trailer, but that wasn’t her plan. As soon as he was gone, she gathered her stuff and went to find Ruby. Just as planned, Ruby, Ariel, Ashley, and little Alexandra were at Ruby’s waiting for her.

She pulled the extra suitcase up into the RV, and was shocked to see the assortment of presents on the kitchen counter and table. “Are those...?”

Ruby nodded. “Everyone has been dropping off presents secretly. We just have to keep him out of here. Victor and the others are on that.”

“Everyone knows it’s a surprise and not to mention anything.” Ashley told her.

“We have wrapping materials as you requested right here.” Ariel told her, pointing at the rolls of paper, scissors, tape and bows.

“You guys are seriously the best. Thank you!” Emma said and opened her luggage to take out the various boxes. She gave some of them to the girls to open, and then took out the last box with his present so she could wrap it. She had already looked at it, back at her apartment, but she opened it again to show the girls. “You think he’ll like them?”

They all nodded, but Ruby answered, “He’ll love them. But before you wrap them, we have to look!” She said and grabbed them away from Emma before she could object. The other two crowded around to get a view as well. Leaving Emma just to shake her head.

Ruby looked up at her. “So when does the rest of the present get here?”

Emma smiled. “Late tomorrow. Hopefully there aren’t any delays.”

“He’s going to be so happy.” Ruby grinned and then looked back at what she had in her hands.

“As long as it all goes as planned,” she said and then tried to wrestle the gifts back from them.

Killian was getting frustrated. “Mate, the car is fine. We don’t need to fix anything. I’ve got the fastest time so far, let me come in. There is no reason to stay out longer.”

“Are you sure? It’s not too tight or too loose?” his crew chief asked.

He sighed; why was he keeping him out here? “Robin, listen. The car is great. Are you getting some reading you aren’t telling me about?”

What he didn’t see was Emma walking into the garage and nodding at Robin. Robin smiled, and answered his driver. “Nope everything looks good, time to bring it in.” Then Emma turned back around and left again.

Killian rolled his eyes. About bloody time. But he didn’t say that. He knew it was a new car, after his last one was destroyed in the rainstorm. Robin must want to make sure it is in tip-top shape, he thought. He came down the track, avoided the other cars and brought it into the garage. He got out of the car and Regina was there waiting for him.
“Killian, can we talk a minute?”

He nodded and placed his helmet in the seat of the car. He turned to Robin. “Really, mate, the car is fantastic. Don’t touch her.”

“Will do. Now get out of here and go eat.”

Killian shook his head lightly at his crew chief and then headed with Regina out of the loud garage. They walked back to the RVs as they talked.

Regina started in as soon as they could hear clearly. “So the interview with Lily is on Monday, same coffee shop, right at five thirty.”

He nodded. “Perfect.”

“I have one more scheduled at seven, and the last one on Tuesday at five thirty as well. Out of the three, you should be able to pick your Executive Director. Though, looking at the resume, and knowing Mal…”

“You know who you would pick.”

“I don’t know her daughter, but I know Mal. She is smart, determined, and knows how to get things done. If her daughter is anything like her, then yeah, I do.”

“Noted. How about the offer letters for the others?”

“All done, and the calls have been made. They have accepted their positions. They will be able to start full-time in two weeks, but they are all willing to put in time prior if needed.”

“It’s cutting it close with the Charlotte race in three weeks where we want to announce the charity. But I have confirmed that we have tickets for all the workers and children at the shelter.”

“Perfect. This looks to be turning out.” She stopped walking and so did he, she turned to face him. “Now, I know you want to get out of Mills Racing headquarters for the charity as soon as possible. I understand. But let’s get the announcement out of the way first; don’t push too much at once.”

“Wow, this coming from you?”

“I know how important this is to you. The location is of least necessity. Besides, I need you focused on your main job, first and foremost.”

“You don’t have to worry about that. And you can thank Robin and the team for a great car. Though I’m not sure Robin realizes it.”

Regina fought smile for a second which he didn’t understand but she spoke before he could ask. “I’ll let him know. See you later,” she said and quickly headed back in the direction they had come from.

Killian just shook his head and finished walking to his RV. When he got inside he saw Emma sitting at the table working at her laptop, right where he left her. He came up behind her, wrapped his arms around her, and took a deep breath. “Missed you.”

She leaned back and turned to kiss his cheek, “Me too. I don’t know about you, but I’m starving. Are you done for the day?”

He let her go and moved to the side of the table. “Yep, the car is fan-bloody-tastic. Qualifying should go well tomorrow.”
“Good. Go take a shower, and I’ll make sandwiches.” He gave he a quick salute and headed back to the bathroom. Once he was all cleaned and dressed in a navy button down and jeans he came back out to a sandwich, fruit, and iced tea. As he settled in and they both started eating, Emma spoke up. “So I was thinking maybe a group of us could head over to the casino tonight. They have some restaurants, bars, live music. Could play a few games as well.”

“That sounds like fun. Wait, tonight is Thursday right?” She nodded. “Oh, you might like this, actually it’s a bit of a tradition. The group goes to the buffet, it’s seafood and crab night.” He waved his hand at her to stop what he thought she was going to say. “I know, I know. Seafood in Kansas. But trust me, it’s good.”

She did trust him, but she didn’t have to. She already know about it. Emma, in her research for this weekend, found out about the attached Hollywood Casino to the race track. She also found out about the tradition from the girls as well, and they all raved about it, hence the light lunch she had made. “Sounds good to me.”

After they ate, the group gathered and headed to the casino. Some of the visitors there for the race this weekend recognized them, and they were stopped for pictures and autographs here and there. The guys hit the poker tables while she and the girls grabbed frozen drinks and hit the penny slots.

They all sat in a group, talking, chatting, and hitting the spin button over and over. Some time later, when her money in the machine was running low, the reels started to clang, clang, speed up and then bells started ringing. The girls turned to look, and that is when Emma realized, “Oh my God, I won!” She screamed, granted she had only been betting a penny a line, so she didn’t win the big jackpot, but it was...she looked again… “A thousand dollars!?!?”

The girls crowded around, and watched the machine flash and her amount total go up, “Good job!” Ruby congratulated her, Ariel hugged her, and Ashley jumped up and down.

Emma was in shock. “I never win anything.”

“I beg to differ,” Ruby said and tilted her head towards the guys at the poker table. Killian was looking over at them, having obviously saw the scene of her winning and he was smiling at them.

Emma’s grin widened. “You are absolutely right. But...I’m not going to chance it. I’m cashing out. I’m done for the night.” The other girls whined, as she pushed the voucher button. She stood and left them playing, cashed out the voucher, and then headed over to the guys. She came up behind Killian, and he grabbed her hand and pulled her to his side.

“So what did you win?”

“You saw that, huh?”

“You screamed. You scared the hell out of me, until I saw the look on your face.” He pulled her tight to him. “Was about to run over there. But the flashing lights, and the girls jumping around you, kinda gave away that there was no danger.”

“Oh, my hero,” she said and kissed the side of his cheek.

“Come on man, bet or fold,” Victor huffed.

“Yeah, and no girls at the table,” Sean said with a teasing voice.

“Oh, bugger off,” he told them and then put some chips into the pile. “Raise five.”
Emma watched with interest and wondered if the chips were worth a dollar or more. Somehow she had a feeling it was higher. Hell, she was sure the pile of chips was worth more than how much she just won.

He then turned back to her. “So what did you win?”

“Oh nothing much, was just playing penny slots.” She tried to play it off.

He looked her in the eyes. “It made you happy. That’s what matters, what was it?”

“I won a thousand.” She said softly.

“What?”

“See, I said it wasn’t anything…”

“Emma, that’s amazing. That’s not easy on penny slots.” He smiled at her and kissed her again. Then seeing it was his turn, he looked at the new card turned up on the table and threw in a few more chips. “Raise five.”

Eric groaned. “Fold.”

Victor looked over. “That’s pretty good for pennies. What were you betting a line?”

“Just one a line,” she told him.

“Well, then even a nicer win,” Victor told her.

Killian smiled and pulled her to sit on his leg. “I found my good luck charm.”

“You’re going to need it.” Sean told him as he matched his chips, and threw in more. “Raise ten.”

Killian looked at his cards again, smiled and then threw the extra chips in. “Call.”

Victor also threw in the required chips, and then they turned their cards over. Thanks to the table draw, everyone had a pair of nines. Sean also had a pair of Queens, Victor a pair of eights, and thanks to the two in Killian’s hand and the one on the table he had three kings. The dealer called, “Full house wins,” and the other men groaned as the dealer pushed the chips to Killian’s pile.

“See, my good luck charm,” he said and leaned in for a kiss.

“Oh good lord, get a room.” Victor yelled at them.

They chuckled apart and Killian turned to him. “After all the time I had to deal with you and Ruby, this pales in comparison, mate.”

Eric and Sean laughed. “He has you there,” Sean told him.

The girls walked over and leaned over their respective significant others. “So,” Ruby started, “The buffet is open.”

“Cash in,” came from all the guys, making Emma laugh. As she seen the money being laid down on the table from the cashed in chips, she was now certain the chips were more than a dollar each.

They walked over to the buffet, paid, and went inside. It was huge! The waitress showed them to their seats, took their drink orders, and Killian then led her to the food. “This is one of many things I
found to love about the States.” They each picked up a plate and the group went directly to the seafood. “Get what you want love, but this is where we will mostly be at.” She laughed as she watched the group pile their plate with shrimp and crab legs. She saw the salad and desert areas, the various carving stations, as well as all sorts of other cuisines.

She decided to join in with the crowd, and grabbed some shrimp, crab legs (as well as the instruments to crack them with), some melted butter for dipping, and then a few spears of roasted asparagus to be healthy. And followed the others back to the table. She grinned at seeing them already digging in and breaking the legs, taking out the succulent meat. She shook her head and sat between Killian and Ruby. She picked up one of the legs, cracked the big leg with her hands, and pulled out the meat, and tried it first without the butter. Her eyes closed to the taste, “These are wonderful!” she said; they tasted so fresh.

Killian winked at her. “Told you.” They all dug in, talked, told stories of other times they had been there, and ate and ate and ate. She was stuffed; heck they were all stuffed by the time they were done and walking slowly back to the RVs.

“How did I manage to also eat that blueberry pie and cheesecake?” She asked to no one in particular.

“The same way I don’t know how I downed the apple pie and brownie.” Ruby said and leaned on her.

“Oh no, I have enough in my stomach weighing me down. I don’t need you, too,” she said, pushing Ruby’s arms off her and towards Victor.

They all managed to get back home, and she and Killian returned to their RV and went to the bedroom, both laying down on their respective side of the bed. She turned to look at him. “If you think we are having sex tonight...there is no way...I’m way too full.”

He started laughing, and then grabbed his side in pain. “I fully understand Swan. I guess I’m not used to anything else filling you up but me.” He winked at her.

She grabbed her pillow and hit him in the face with it. “You’re horrible.”

He pulled her close and kissed her neck. “Yes, but I’m your horrible.” She couldn’t deny that, and she was happy he was.

=====∞∞∞∞∞===== Qualifying went well as Killian had thought it would—he won the poll. To the reporters, he complemented his team and Mills Racing for getting him such a great car. But when he got back to the RV, Emma wasn’t there. Her computer and work were packed up, so she must have been done for the day. He had a feeling she was probably with Ruby and the others. He found his phone and sent her a quick text.

KJ: Back from Qualifying. Taking a shower. Where can I meet you?

He went into the bedroom, taking off his fire suit as he went. He then continued into the bathroom, turned on the shower, and let it heat up while he got out his towel. There wasn’t a response yet. Not thinking about it, he proceeded with the shower.

On the other side of the the track, Emma took out her phone from her pocket and looked at the message. “Well, that’s Killian. He’s back from qualifying. I need to go.” She looked at the girls around her. Ruby was on a ladder, Ashley stood on a chair, and Ariel and Alexandra were placing stuff on tables.
“No worries, girl, we got this!” Ruby told her as she took a piece of tape off her arm to attach to the paper.

“Yep, we got it!” little Alexandra chimed in. “Killy’s going to love it!”

Emma couldn’t help smile at the little girl. “I sure hope so.” She took one more look around. Then back to Ruby. “Victor knows the plan for later right?”

“Yes, he knows. It actually works really well with the way Killian cleaned them out at the casino.” Ruby giggled.

“Okay, then I’m outta here. Text or call if you need anything. I owe you guys!” Emma said, as she grabbed her stuff to leave.

“I’ll remember that...if Victor ever proposes,” Ruby grumbled.

Emma, Ariel, and Ashley all shared a look, but decided not to say anything. “Bye!” Emma yelled and headed out the door to rush back to the RV. She was there when Killian came out of the bathroom.

“Hey,” he said, rubbing his hair dry with the towel. “Looks like you got done early with work today.”

She stood and came over to him, wrapped an arm around his neck and leaned in for a quick kiss. “It was slow, so I turned it off. Hung out with the girls per usual. And awesome job getting the poll,” she told him and kissed him again. She had quickly looked at the running order before she got back so she would know where he would start tomorrow.

“Mmmm...thank you. So...what plans do we have tonight, or can I lure you…”

She shook her head, “You are so bad. But we do have plans. I guess the steakhouse is also really good, and the gang want to head over.” She wrapped her arms around his neck. “And besides, since the race is late tomorrow, we can sleep in. So we can stay up as late as we want to.”

“I’m going to hold you to that.” He winked at her, and then pulled back to head into the bedroom to change. While the steakhouse was nice, it was still in the casino so it didn’t call for formal clothes. Which was fine by him, and he knew Emma wouldn’t complain either.

It was during dinner when Victor made his promised move. “So, I think we need a private rematch for yesterday.” He said while looking at Killian.

Sean smiled and chimed in. “I agree.” Then he looked to Emma, “With no ‘good luck’ charms.”

Eric nodded. “Besides, no offense to the women, but it’s been awhile since we have had a guys night.”

“So, I think we need a private rematch for yesterday.” He said while looking at Killian.

Sean smiled and chimed in. “I agree.” Then he looked to Emma, “With no ‘good luck’ charms.”

Eric nodded. “Besides, no offense to the women, but it’s been awhile since we have had a guys night.”

“And we have never had a girls night with Emma,” Ruby said.

Killian could tell he was being ganged up on, but he looked at Emma. He really wanted to spend the night with just the two of them. But he would defer to her; if she wanted to stay in for the night, then there was no way they were going to talk him into it. But if she wanted a girl’s night, he was willing to part with her for a little while. He sighed. “What do you want, love?”

She smiled, and knew she had him. She bit her lip to add to it. “Well...it has been a really long time since I’ve had a girls night. But I think we can call a curfew.” She grinned at the girls and they
laughed. “Maybe, midnight?”

“Ugh, fine. If that’s all we can get.” Ruby groaned, but gave a side wink to Emma.

“Okay, rematch it is,” Killian agreed. “Besides, I could use some more of you guys’ money.”

Emma and the other girls laughed, and some of the guys rolled their eyes. But after dinner, the guys headed back to Eric’s for the game, and the girls supposedly headed back to Ashley’s. Ashley did head back to her RV with Ariel, to stay with Alexandra and in case Killian stopped by so they could possibly postpone him and give a heads up to the others. Ruby and Emma, though, were already in a car, and telling the driver where to take them to pick up the rest of Killian’s gift.

And luckily, the plan went without a hitch, and they were back before the poker game finished. Emma was already in bed, and watching TV by the time Killian rolled in, having won a little more from the guys as well. But true to their earlier conversation, they didn’t actually get to sleep for a few more hours.

The next day, race day, started with a quick brunch and Killian out the door to deal with the media. That allowed Emma to make sure everything and everyone was ready. That all the vendors, gifts, and everything was set for later. And with everything going as planned, Emma was finally able to relax. Now, to see if Killian liked it. Why he still hadn’t mentioned his birthday bothered her; hopefully afterwards he would tell her why.

The day went by quickly and she was soon back by his side, listening to the national anthem with their arms around each other, and then kissing him as he got into the car. Though she had on the headset, this time instead of climbing into the booth with Robin, she just nodded at him and kept going to find her new seat for the race with a few others.

With the wave of the flag, they were off, and Killian maintained his lead. He was right—the car was fast, and made for this track it seemed. It stayed in the lead until he had to come in for a green flag pit stop. But he only had to give up the lead for a couple laps, and then once those drivers came in, he was back out front. The only positions really changing where those behind him.

A couple cautions came out, one for a flat tire and the car hitting the wall, a few others for debris. Killian and Victor battled on the restarts, Killian getting the lead for a car length, then Victor, until the straightaway, and then Killian’s car just took off. At lap 236 of 267, Killian had already led over 200 laps when the next caution came out. The question was, since they just pitted twenty laps ago, should he come in for just fuel, two tires, or four?

“It’s up to you, mate,” Robin told him. “You know how the car is handling; what does she need?”

“Four, let’s go for four. And fill her up.” Killian replied. She could tell he felt that was best, but was worried what the other drivers would do.

Jefferson was out first, having only pitted for fuel; Phillip, Sean, and Eric were next, getting two tires; and Killian came out 5th, followed by Victor and August, who had opted for four tires each.

She knew he was probably second guessing his decision now that he was starting back at fifth. But after the caution laps, they still had 28 laps to go. Two laps in, he was already up to 3rd, with Victor right behind him. Positions kept changing, but those who got the four tires were continuing to move forward. And as soon as Killian was able to maneuver around Jefferson with 8 laps to go, he was in the lead and gaining.

Emma prayed there would be no caution flag as she saw Victor and then August also get around
Jefferson, and he started to lag back behind the others. As they came around to the last lap, Emma and everyone else was on their feet cheering. It didn’t matter if there was a caution or not, as long as he didn’t run out of fuel or bust a tire, Killian was going to win. And in a few short breaths he was over the finish line, soon followed by Victor, August, Philip, Eric, and then Jefferson. Sean had a small altercation with another car and came over the line with sparks in fourteenth.

Emma stood, and Ruby and the others waved her away. “I’ve got this, Emma. We’ll see you later.”

With that she was off and running over to victory lane while Killian accepted the checkered flag and continued his burnout. By the time she made it there, his car was pulling in. More cola was spilled, his team screaming and cheering, as his eyes seemed to search the crowd for her. Once he was off the car, he was dragging her towards him. Her arms came up in time to try to keep the sticky soda off her outfit, as his mouth descended to hers. He slowly pulled away at the questioning of the red headed reporter, who couldn’t help smiling at the couple.

Killian answered her questions, and thanked his team and sponsors as always. But she did one thing he wasn’t prepared for. “And there is your Kansas Speedway winner and Birthday boy, Killian Jones. This is Zelena Green; back to you in the studio.”

So instead, he pulled her back into a kiss trying to distract her, which she went along with for a moment. But the look she gave him told him she heard. He sighed and mouthed into her ear, “I’ll tell you later.” He would have to explain why he didn’t tell her. But first, they had a ton of pictures to take care of.

Once Emma got done with pictures, she found Regina nearby while Killian was finishing up pictures with the team and sponsors hats. “Okay...I need your help. How…”

Regina just smiled at her. “I already have it worked out. Don’t worry.” And as soon as the pictures were over, she did just that. She walked up to Killian. “I know you probably want to head back and celebrate in quiet. But I have some reporters here, and not only to talk about the win, but a little about the charity as well. So go clean up, put on something comfortable, and come back with Emma to the Presidential Suite. Can we say a half-hour?”

Killian sighed, but nodded in agreement. “Okay. But not for too long.”

Regina smiled. “No worries; it will be up to you.”

With that, Regina headed to the Suite, and the two took off to back to the RV to cleanup and change.

Killian exited the bedroom, all squeaky clean, and dressed in a nice black dress shirt, tucked into jeans. With that cue, Emma quickly texted Ruby they would be there in ten. She had also redone her hair and makeup while he was in the bathroom, and slipped her camera into her purse.

“Ready?” She asked.

He nodded and sighed. “I just wish we could stay here.”

She smiled. “I know. Don’t worry, we still have time to celebrate. Remember, we leave tomorrow.”

He nodded. He did know, but he also knew she still remembered what the reporter had said. As they started to walk to the Suite, he took her arm, and began. “I know you heard what she said. And, I know I didn’t tell you. But…” He sighed. “My birthday is tomorrow.”

Emma bit her lip. “Why didn’t you say anything?” She really was curious.

“I…” He wasn’t sure how to say it. “It’s not a big deal. It hasn’t been a big deal for years. And...I
didn’t want you to worry about it. We have so much other stuff going on.” He picked up her hand and kissed the back of it. “I’m just happy to spend it with you.”

She smiled up at him and squeezed his hand with hers. “I love you.”

“And I you.” They got to the building and made their way inside to the door of the suite. “Now, let’s get this over with,” he said, but her arm tugged him back.

She leaned in and kissed him, as her other hand pressed send on her phone. Then she slowly pulled back to look at him, and they both smiled as he opened the door to a dark room.

“Did we get the right…”

But then the lights turned on, and a mass of people jumped up and screamed, “Happy Birthday!”

Killian took a step back, his eyes going in every direction. Streamers, balloons, and banners were everywhere. His eyes quickly went to Emma and saw her non-surprised smile, and slowly he realized what happened. As he took in the faces of Ruby, Victor, Sean, Ashley, little Alexandra, Eric, Ariel, Regina, Robin, his crew, many of the other drivers, their wives and children, and then his eyes landed on two more, and his mouth fell open. “Liam? Elsa?”

They both came over, and Liam wrapped his arms around his brother in a big bear hug, patting his back wholeheartedly. “Happy Birthday and amazing win, Little Brother.”

He was shocked, and almost forgot to rebuff. “Younger brother!” He turned to the right as he heard a chuckle. “Elsa.”

“Congratulations, Killian,” she said as she wrapped her arms around him.

He pulled back, looking at them. “Where are…?”

“Anna stayed with the boys, back home. But,” she pointed to a table filled with presents and cards, “They may have made you something.”

He was still in shock. “How?” He looked at them, the others, and then back to Emma. “You knew.”

She smiled. “I may have had a little heads up, since SOMEONE didn’t say anything.” She came over and wrapped her arm around Elsa’s shoulder. “Remember, I have inside information now.”

They all chuckled, and he stared back at his love. “You organized all of this? You did this…for me?”

He was in awe. This was amazing. He looked at everything, and everyone, and she had somehow kept it all a secret. Hell, she would make a great Executive Director. She would be amazing, but he didn’t want to make her feel pressure to give up her job. “This is…Emma…thank you.” He pulled her into a kiss, and she went willingly, they only broke apart at the whooping and hollering.

“I can’t take all the credit.” Emma told him. “I had a LOT of help from everyone.”

Killian, again looked at the crowd, as they all stood around him, with smiles. “Thank you. Just…wow.”

“Well, we must of done a good job, he’s speechless. That’s unheard of,” Liam said and everyone else laughed.

Victor came up, and gave him a drink. “I think it’s time for a toast to the birthday boy.” Ruby gave Emma a glass as well, everyone else had one. “Killian, you can be a real son…” Emma and Ruby
gave him a glare, and he looked at the kids… “errr...SOB on the track, a force to be reckoned with. As we again learned tonight.” Everyone cheered. “But off the track, you are a friend to everyone. So, when Emma came to us, asking for help to organize this for you, there was no doubt in anyone’s mind. You deserve this and so much more. Happy Birthday!”

A chorus of Happy Birthday’s rang out around him, and then glasses clinked and everyone drank.

“Present time?” Little Alexandra asked.

Emma nodded. “I think that’s a great idea.” She pulled out her camera, which Ashley instantly took from her.

“We’ve got the pictures tonight.” She motioned to herself and the others. “You need to be in them, too.”

“Thank you,” she said and then tugged Killian to the table of gifts.

He just looked at all of them, “Wow...this is…” Nuts? Crazy? Awesome? He wasn’t sure. He for sure hadn’t expected anything.

“Dig in!” Ruby screamed, impatient. Which caused some laughter. And that is exactly what he did.

He started with the cards. Many were from some of the other drivers, and inside were various size checks, all made out to the new charity. One big envelope, he opened, and he felt a lump in his throat. It was a big card, made out of poster board, colored and signed on with crayon. All the kids at Emma’s shelter, along with everyone that worked there had signed it.

He looked to Emma, and she smiled at him. “We need a picture of this one, I promised Archie and Tink.” He pulled her to his side, and they both held up the card with smiles, and Ruby took a picture.

He handed it carefully to Emma, and turned back to the table and tried to clear his throat from the emotion that ran through him. He then found two handmade cards from his nephews, his smile got bigger at the picture of a pirate ship on the one Thomas had made. He held them up, and Ruby got another picture.

He went through, and started to unwrap some of the gifts. Ball caps, bottles of wine, etc, etc. When the last one was done, he turned back to everyone, and rubbed his hands together.

“Wait, one more.” Emma said, and pulled a box out from under the table and handed it to him.

“Emma, after all of this…” He waved his hand to the room, “You didn’t need to…”

She cut him off, “I wanted to. And I had a little help,” she winked at Elsa. “Hope you like it.”

He ripped off the wrapping paper, and sat the box on the table, as he removed the lid. Inside were two hardback books. The one had a picture of him as a baby on the front, the other had a picture of him and Emma from his win at Daytona. He opened the first one, and realized they were photo books. The pictures were printed onto the page, and pages bound into the book. They were his pictures as a child, along with Liam, his mother, and even a few of his father. He stood, there in more shock, and then looked at Emma, and then Elsa.

“I...I...thank you.” He knew Emma had told him that Elsa was scanning the pictures, and now he saw the effort. He then turned towards the second book, and he could see Emma bite her lip nervously beside him. This one contained pictures of them, since they started dating. Pictures at the beach, at Universal and Disney World, from his various wins, Christmas, parties, hanging out with
their friends. His smile, just got wider and wider. He looked back to Emma, and then reached out and pulled her to him for a deep kiss. His hand in the back of her hair, keeping her lips pressed to his.

After a bit, Liam coughed. “Plenty of time for that later you two.”

They pulled back, and he caressed the side of her cheek, still just looking at her. “Thank you. So much.”

She smiled, relieved that he liked everything. “You are welcome.” She turned to look at everyone, “Time to party.” At that, the lights changed, music came on. Some went to the dance floor, others headed to the bar, while Killian wrapped an arm around her and they started to talk to everyone.

A little before midnight, Emma broke away from Killian and found Ruby, and they headed to the back for the final surprise. When they came back out, a large cake was lit with 29 candles, and Killian turned to see it, his smile getting even bigger as everyone started to sing Happy Birthday.

“Love, it’s not my birthday yet…”

Emma lifted her phone and showed him the time, it was a minute after midnight. “Yes it is.” Once everyone was done singing, “Now make a wish.”

Killian looked at everyone around him, his friends, his family, and then Emma. He had everything that he wanted...well almost everything, and then he knew exactly what to wish for. He wanted that future, with the amazing woman in front of him. With a deep breath, he leaned over, and blew out all the candles in one breath.

It was close to two in the morning when they both made it back to the RV. The party was over, their goodbyes made, Liam and Elsa safely seen to the hotel, and the two of them by themselves...finally.

Killian was still in a slight shock over it all. Everyone, EVERYONE had been in on it. That knowledge alone was powerful, the feeling something he couldn’t begin to describe. All he knew was the women in front of him, his blond haired goddess, was the most amazing woman he had ever met. And, by some miracle, she was all his. He walked towards her, his hand moved to cup her cheek, his thumb brushing lightly against her skin. Her eyes twinkled, and her lips turned into a smile. “You are so beautiful, inside and out. And...God, do I love you. What did I do to deserve you?”

She moved to her tiptoes, and wrapped her arms around his neck. “Just being you.” She leaned in and kissed him. “And I love you.” She kissed him again. “Now…” she said as she stepped back, and started to slowly take off her clothes. “I have one more present for the birthday boy.” She peeled off her dress to reveal a black and red lace matching bra and panty set, along with a lovely garter belt and stockings.

He swallowed hard. “Have you been wearing that...all day love?” He felt out of breath at her beauty. God, he wanted to devour her.

She smiled back at him and nodded. “I have. And I have been thinking about what you would think…” she stepped close, and ran a finger down the unbuttoned V of his shirt. “And what you would do when you saw it.”

His hands came out and pulled her closer, pressing her against him. “Well, I think you look good enough to eat,” he said leaning closer, and then pressed his lips to her neck, and then moved up to have his teeth tug at her earlobe. “And, I think that is exactly what I want to do.”
Her hand came up to press against his chest. “This is your present, not mine.”

He leaned down, and she was quickly hoisted in his arms, her legs instantly went around his waist. “But you presented me with such a tasty, scrumptious dessert. How am I able to resist this beautifully presented delicacy?” He asked while he walked over to the bed.

How could she deny him, when he said it like that? Hell, she really didn’t want to. He laid her back softly on the bed, her hair fanning out around her. “As long as that’s what you want.”

He moved to her side, and his hand came up to trace over her. From cheek, to neck, down between the valley of her breasts, around her bellybutton, down her hip, sliding along the garter and to the leggings and then back up. “I just want you.” He said, and turned his head to kiss her deep. She moaned against him, and he pulled her closer, and then his hand ran down her spine, moved over her hip, and then to cup her lace-covered mound. He groaned against her lips, at feeling the warm, wet fabric. “God, love. What have you been thinking all day?”

She smiled, “About this. About your hands all over me.”

“Just my hands?” He pressed his fingers against her lace covered core and groaned as he felt the seam open and his digits press inside of her. “Crotchless panties as well?” The knowledge that she had been walking around like this, all day in front of everyone, was almost more than he could bear.

She moaned at the contact, and shifted her hips towards his fingers. “Mmmm, hands, mouth, anything…” she pleaded. She had been thinking about this moment all day; well, that and between worrying that the party wouldn’t go off without a hitch. Heck, she had already given herself enough foreplay just thinking about what he would do! With that, she rolled them both over, and she straddled him. His hands instantly were on her hips, grinding him against his jeans covered hard length.

“This position works too,” he said as his hands moved under her legs, gripped her ass, and then pulled her over him and spread her legs wide as he pressed her core down to his mouth.

“Killian…” She screamed as her head flew back and her hands gripped to his hair, as his tongue slipped inside of her, his nose brushing her throbbing clit.

“Mmmmmm,” he moaned from under her at her taste, while he used his hands to tilt her hips as he wished, and he plundered her depths through the open seams of her underwear. “God, you’re wet, love.” He pushed his tongue back inside, and then out to lick up to her clit. “Did you think about this?” he asked as he teased her clit, and plunged his tongue back inside.

Her fingers gripped his hair as his hands moved her how he wanted her. She allowed him to move her as he wished, and moaned his name and her pleasure while trying to answer his question. “Yes. Yes, I thought...about this…” How could she not? He was too damn good at it not to. God, that talented tongue of his was dancing over her, inside of her, and driving her to the brink so damn fast, she couldn’t…“Fuck!” she screamed as she felt her body explode above him, and then drift out on the waves of pleasure he produced.

He groaned and pressed her close as he continued to lap at her, pushing her through the orgasam. He loved the feel of her body quaking and moaning over him. His arms came back under her, and then he rolled her over and sat back on his knees.

He quickly unbuttoned his shirt, used it to wipe his face, then threw it to the floor. He had his pants and underwear halfway down his legs by the time Emma’s eyes opened. She was about to sit up, when he threw the rest of his clothes in a pile with his shirt, and his hand came out to stop her. “No,
“But…” she said and nodded to his lard length, bobbing between his legs, and she looked back up at him, as her tongues came out to lick her lips.

A small growl came out of his mouth, his hands gripped her legs, pulled her closer to him, and spread them wide. “Need you, right now,” he told her as he reached under her and cupped her buttox, and then guided her all the way onto him.

She started to wrap her legs around him, and he shook his head. “No. Deeper,” he said, his brain past the point of full sentences. He leaned over her, and put her knees over his shoulders, pressing him oh so deep, just as he wanted. It put him at that angle that hit all the right places, making them both moan at the contact as his arms were braced her sides and his eyes stared into hers.

Neither of them would last long in this position. She knew that, especially the moment he started to move and every nerve ending inside of her seemed to spark from the contact. Her hands traveled over his back, gripping, trying to hold onto something, just not to fall too fast. And right now in this position, that’s all she could do, because she was along for the ride.

Everything seemed to come to a crux inside of him as he plowed into her. The emotions of the day, from the win to the surprise party, the love he had for the woman in his arms, the absolute beauty he had before him, and the pleasure moving through him as he moved inside her was all coming to a head. He watched her eyes, trying to stay focused. Her lip bit between her teeth. “So close…so very close…let go…love…”

With his words, she stopped trying to hold out, and with the next thrust of his hips she was gone with his name on her lips, and with another thrust he was grunting hers as well. The pleasure coursed through them both as they gripped to each other tightly. When Emma was finally able to move, she let her legs fall from his shoulders to his sides, and he moved down closer to her. She could tell he was about to roll to the side, but her arms gripped him tighter. “Stay.” She said softly, and then felt him relax against her, resting his face against her still-bra-covered breast.

“Love you, Emma…and…thank you.” He kissed the swell of her breast lovingly. “The day was more than I could have ever hoped…or dreamed.” He hugged her closer to him, and she smiled and kissed the top of his head.

Around noon, Killian, Emma, Liam, and Elsa all got onto the plane together to head back to Charlotte. Killian still couldn’t believe they were here, and that they were staying until Monday morning. They were going with them to David and Mary Margaret’s for Sunday dinner, which had been the plan from the beginning, only he hadn’t been told. He also now suspected the dinner was for more than the gender reveal of the baby. He would always remember, from now on, just how sneaky Emma could be. In the best ways, of course.

The flight was quick, especially with everyone talking, and looking once again at his and Liam’s baby pictures. Emma requested the stories behind them. At one point, she leaned over and kissed his cheek, and whispered in his ear. “You were right. You were an adorable child…” then with a wink, “You actually still are.”

Elsa and Liam laughed, and Killian tilted his head. “Not sure how to take that, love. That I’m still adorable or that I’m still a child?”

Emma grinned. “Both.”

He huffed, and shook his head. “I guess I’ll just have to prove again later that I’m very much a man
and not a child.”

Liam threw up his hand. “I don’t want to hear about this!” Elsa snickered, and Emma turned away with a blush.

They got back to Killian’s house, dropped off the luggage, did a quick change, and then headed over for dinner.

David opened the door, and he quickly enveloped Emma in a hug. “Hello, stranger.”

“Hilarious,” she said pulling back, seeing Mary Margaret walk over, the swell of her tummy now visible. “David, Mary Margaret, this is Killian’s brother Liam, and sister-in-law Elsa. Liam, Elsa, this is my brother David, and his wife Mary Margaret.”

Pleasantries and more hugs were exchanged, as they all came in and were told to take a seat, that dinner was almost ready.

“Do you need any help?” Elsa asked.

Mary Margaret shook her head. “No, but thank you. David, I just need you to get the roast and potatoes.” He was quickly up and in the kitchen, helping his wife, as everyone else took their seats. Emma opened the wine and poured a glass for everyone but her sister-in-law. Just as she was finishing, the two came back with platters and bowls of food in their hands.

The beef roast, along with potatoes, carrots, gravy, and rolls, were spread out on the table.

“This looks delicious,” Elsa told Mary Margaret.

“Oh, thank you. So how was the flight over? Did the surprise go as planned?”

Killian just smiled as Liam spoke. “Perfect; we got in on Friday night, luckily no issues. Were able to spend the morning with Emma, and then got to watch my little brother race. This time in person, and not on the telly. Which,” he looked to Killian a proud look on his face, “you were amazing.”

Killian, felt a blush come over him, and looked down as the roast was passed to him, and he took a few pieces before passing it.

“Yes, congratulations Killian on another amazing win,” David told him.

“Well, thank you. My team, gave me an amazing car…”

Emma laid a hand on his arm. “Yes they did, but take some credit. You did the driving, and made the correct decision to get those 4 tires.”

He smiled at her, as then took some potatoes, as everyone kept passing the food to fill their plates.

“The surprise went really well. I’m pretty sure he had no clue it was coming.” Emma said with a grin.

“I had NO clue.” Killian admitted. “I can’t begin to thank you…all of you…”

Emma waved him off. “Killian, it was your birthday! Of course I was going to do something. I still don’t understand why you didn’t want to tell me.”

“I told you…” He started.
“Because he’s used to only me remembering,” Liam said, somber. Which stopped everyone, and they all turned to him.

“Liam…” Killian gave a soft warning.

“No, it’s true. Our mother was great with birthdays; she would go all out. But after she died, well, our father never remembered...or didn’t care. And after he was gone, we couldn’t afford much. Both of us would try to remember and do something. It was maybe a small cake if we had the ingredients, or maybe a handmade card, or even a pack of gum or deck of cards. But at least we remembered for each other, and tried to celebrate. But when, he left for the states…”

Killian interrupted. “You always called me, and wish me happy birthday. I don’t need anything. I just use it as a day to remember how grateful I am for what I have in my life now,” he said, and lifted Emma’s hand to his mouth for a kiss. “But, last night…” He softly chuckled. “That was amazing; more than I could ever have dreamed.”

She leaned in and whispered, “You’re worth it,” and then kissed his cheek. Everyone sat the food back on the table, and started to eat. She squeezed his hand with hers, they smiled at one another, and then began to eat as well. The two families slowly got to know one another.

During dinner at one point, Emma turned to Killian, while Elsa was giving pregnancy tips to Mary Margaret and David was telling Liam about the fishing off the coast. “Well, I think they are getting along pretty well.”

He nodded, and gave her a quick kiss on her temple. “I do believe our families like each other. In a way, I guess this is like our parents meeting each other.”

She grinned with a little somberness. “I guess you are right.” Except for Killian’s nephews, both of their families were sitting around the table.

Later, after everyone finished, Mary Margaret chimed in. “Everyone up for dessert?”

“Sounds wonderful, las.” Liam said.

She slowly got out of her chair, and as David went to go with her, Elsa stood up. “Nope, we’ll take care of it.” David nodded and sat back down in his chair, while the two ladies headed into the kitchen.

Killian was laughing at the story that David was telling about one of his cases during the week, when the two started walking back over. Everyone stopped, and looked to see a round cake, with white frosting, and a few candles on top. Mary Margaret sat the cake on the table, and turned to Killian, “This is actually a two purpose cake, hope you don’t mind.” He shook his head, of course he didn’t mind. “The color inside is actually, the gender of this little bundle here.” She said with a blush.

“I don’t mind at all, in fact it’s an honor.” He told them and they all began a rendition of Happy Birthday once again. He smiled, thought of the same wish from the night before, and blew out the candles. He was handed a knife, but he handed it to Mary Margaret. “You should do the honors of cutting it.”

She took the knife, and he could feel the excitement radiating off Emma next to him. Then she pulled out the first piece, and the cake inside was a soft baby blue.

Emma was out of her set and screaming, “It’s a boy! It’s a boy.” Before the slice was even on the plate fully. She wrapped her sister-in-law in a deep hug, and David quickly took the knife and plate out of his wife’s hands with a smile and shake of his head. Congratulations, handshakes, pats on the
back, and hugs went around the room. With a hug to David, Emma finally sat back down, but she was still bouncing in her seat. Killian couldn’t help but feel the happiness radiating off of her. His mind was not able to block the thoughts of what it would be like if it was happening to them.

“Do you have a name picked out?” Emma asked as David started cutting the rest of the cake and passing it along the table.

“We were thinking Leopold after my father.” Mary Margaret chimed in.

Emma looked at David. “I thought you…”

“We are going to call him Leo.” He said quickly.

“Awww,” Elsa chimed in. “You’ll have to send me a link to the baby registry.”

“Oh yeah, have you put up all the baby boy stuff yet?” Emma asked.

Mary Margaret smiled. “I will soon. Wanted to tell everyone first.”

“Too bad shipping is so expensive, I could send you plenty of the boys’ baby clothes. They grew so fast, they are actually in good condition,” Elsa said as she took a bite of the cake. “You made this yourself, didn’t you?”

The brunette smiled. “I did.”

“Delicious.” Elsa then looked to Killian. “Maybe for Christmas, the three of us could all cook together.”

Liam started laughing. “It’s only May, and already making Christmas plans?”

Killian could hear the small question in his brother’s voice. He already knew that his brother and sister-in-law loved Emma, and they knew how he felt about her. But it was still a question put out there, seeing if there was any objection to the idea. Seeing how the others felt. So Killian started. “I can provide the kitchen.”

Elsa clapped her hands together, and Emma chimed in, “I can bring the wine,” which had everyone laughing.

“That is a very good idea; you don’t want her cooking.” David stated.

“Hey! I’m getting...better.”

Killian pulled her close to him, his arm around her shoulder. “She’s right...she doesn’t burn the boiling water anymore.” That got a chuckle from everyone and a light swat to his chest from Emma.

“Okay, settled. Christmas as Killian’s this year.” Elsa said with a smile and wink at him, and everyone nodded their agreement. The meaning of the future plans was not lost on either Killian or Emma.

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Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - *=leading
#71 - Killian Jones - 407*
#8 - Phillip Haven - 401
#36 - Victor Whale - 404
#53 - Sean Herman - 401
#65 - Eric Sirena - 390
#92 - August Booth - 396
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 321
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

Just wanted to thank you all for reading, and a BIG thank you to all those who review. It makes a huge difference, and I read (and grin) each one.

Also, I have between 10 to 12 more chapters of this story to go. :)

Monday morning came with a string of goodbyes to Killian’s family. Liam and Elsa were dropped off at the airport to head back to England and the boys. Emma went into work late herself so that she could be there as well. The couple then parted ways for each of them to head into work. While Liam was in town, he had signed the necessary paperwork to make him a member of the board, and Killian wanted to get it to Regina and her lawyers.

The day itself went rather quickly, and at five fifteen, Killian walked into the coffee shop and ordered two hot chocolates, both with cinnamon. Emma had gotten him addicted. Granted, he was pretty sure he was addicted to anything that had to do with her. Moments after he picked up the drinks from the barista, Emma walked into building. Her smile at seeing him still made his heart flutter. “Hello, love. Good day at work?”

They both took a seat and he handed her a drink, as she replied. “Mmm, thank you. Busy, but good. I was working a bit with Archie and Tink today on organizing the outing to the Track for the kids. We haven’t told them yet, but I think Archie is as excited as the kids will be.”

They both laughed, and Killian could just imagine Emma’s boss jumping around like a cricket in his excitement. “Thanks for helping with that; hopefully when the others start, they can do all the organizing and it won’t cut into your work.”

Emma tilted her head, and put her hand on his arm. “Killian, I like doing it. And now with Ingrid there, work is not nearly as crazy as it used to be. Seriously, I like helping.” She smiled again. “I just can’t wait to see the kids’ faces. They are going to go nuts.” Even if the kids didn’t know anything about racing, or didn’t even like it, it wouldn’t matter. It was a day out and an event with junk food and entertainment—something that they rarely ever saw. Sure, they occasionally were able to take them to a few places—usually businesses donating tickets here and there to the zoo or a museum, and Granny would pack brown bag lunches. But this was going to be special.

They weren’t able to finish the conversation because their interviewee approached them at the table. She was a thin, long-haired brunette, dressed in a nice black skirt suit, along with what Emma liked to call power heels—she was pretty sure they were Louis Vuitton, and at least four inches. Killian and Emma stood to greet her.

“Hello, Mr. Jones. And…” She turned to look at Emma, “I’m sorry…I wasn’t aware of anyone else…I don’t know…”

“Emma Swan,” she replied to the woman.

“Emma, nice to meet you,” She turned back to Killian, “And you, Mr. Jones. I’m Lily Paige.” She reached out a hand and they both shook.
“Please, call me Killian, and let’s sit down.” They all took their seats, and they both started to ask Lily questions.

Part way through the conversation, when those hired for the other roles came up, Lily turned towards Emma. “Oh, I thought you were part of the board for the charity.”

Emma smiled at the girl, a small piece of unease setting in her stomach, but she pushed it away. It was nonsense, the woman just hadn’t been informed or who she was or that she would be at the interview. “No, I work at the local shelter.”

“And she’s my girlfriend.” Killian added, and took Emma’s hand in his. “She’s been graciously helping me with the interviews.”

Lily smiled. “Oh, I see.” She turned back to Emma with a smile. “I bet you’ll be happy when all this gets settled and you can turn it all over to someone else and turn your attention back to your job.”


“Well, hopefully, once we get this all running like a well-oiled machine, we will have volunteers coming out of the woodwork.” She turned back to Killian. “So, do we have a location for operations picked out? If not, I have contacts in the real estate market and for renovations if that is necessary.”

“We are currently at Mills Racing headquarters. But that is only temporary until we get off the ground. First things first will be the announcement of the charity at the Charlotte race coming up soon. Then after that, the move will be the first order of business.”

“Well, if this all works out, I can set up the appointment early to start looking right after the race.” With that they continued talking about the location, and then where they saw the charity going and what Lily thought would be a good course of action.

Soon the interview was over, and the next person was there almost immediately. The man was also very well dressed, but except for the initial greeting, he basically ignored Emma, only addressing his answers to Killian, even those Emma asked. That bothered her greatly, and from the irritation she could almost feel radiating off Killian, it did him as well. Killian attempted to bring her into the conversation a few times, but it didn’t seem to matter.

Only a little more than a half hour later, Killian himself was making an excuse to end the interview, and then told the man, “Thank you for coming; someone from Mills Racing will be in contact soon.”

As soon as he was out the door, he turned to Emma. “I am so sorry for that, my love.”

She smiled at him. “It wasn’t your fault.” She leaned in and kissed his cheek, instantly feeling better that her instincts on what Killian thought had been accurate.

“Well, I can tell you he will not be getting the job.” They both stood, and he took her cup and threw both of them in the trash, while she gathered her belonging, and then he held the door for her as they walked to their cars. “What did you think about the first one?”

“She’s smart. She knows what’s she’s doing. She wasn’t rude.” Per se, she added in her head. She shook it off. “What do you think?”

“Well, I agree with you. Also, Regina knows her mother, and if she is anything like her, she thinks she would be a good candidate.” They reached her bug, and Emma opened the door. He leaned in and kissed her. “We’ll just see about the person tomorrow night, and make a final decision after
that.” Emma nodded, and got into the car. “I’ll see you at home.” He said without thinking and shut her door and then headed to his own.

Tuesday night, they both walked into Killian’s house and Emma dropped the pizza onto the kitchen island while he went to get them drinks. He popped the top off two beers, and with Emma bringing over plates, they piled them with pizza and retreated to the couch.

They both groaned at they sat on the couch. “Well, that guy was a little better than the one yesterday.” Emma said, and then took a bite of pizza.

“Yeah, he at least wasn’t rude. But...was it just me, or was he really, really full of himself.”

Emma started laughing and tried to to choke on her pizza. “I was just waiting for him to start talking in the third person.”

They both laughed harder, and after Killian swallowed a swig of his beer. “Well, I guess it’s settled. Lily will be the Executive Director...unless you think we should look at more candidates.”

She smiled and laid her head on his shoulder. “I know we need to get this decided. The race is coming up soon, and we are already pushing it.”

“Emma...if you have reservations, or don’t think it will work. We will figure out something.”

She knew he wouldn’t go through with hiring Lily, or anyone, if she had any reservations. But she also knew, their time frame was rather short. The woman was really smart and knew what she was talking about. She had connections that the charity needed. Regina knew her mother. “I can’t think of any valid, logical reason why she shouldn’t be.” She answered truthly.

“Alright then, I’ll let Regina know tomorrow.” He took another bite of his pizza, and wrapped his other arm around her shoulder and she snuggled closer as she kept eating. He looked around, seeing various pairs of her shoes right next to his by the door. Her afgan her adoptive mother Ruth made over the arm of the couch. She was flipping through the DVR recordings, and he saw some of the shows she recorded for herself, and some he now watched because she introduced him to them. The feeling of just how perfect it felt, washed over him.

He swallowed hard and tried to summon the courage to broach a subject he had pushed away for far too long. “Emma…” He started, sat his plate and beer on the table, and then moved to face her.

She could hear the seriousness in his voice, and she sat up and turned to look at him, “Yes?”

He bit his lip, and took another breath. “I probably should have said something before. I was just...worried, I guess that’s the right word.”

The hesitation in his voice and uncertainty clearly written over his face, had her worried herself. She reached out for his hand. “Just tell me what’s wrong.”

That produced a smile smile. “Nothing is wrong...actually, that’s kind of the reason…” He shook his head and could see the confused look on her face. “I am not doing this right at all, love.” He took a deep breath, and let it out. “I know you basically already do, but...I want to make it official.”

Emma closed her eyes and shook her own head, “Wait, what?”

“Will you officially move in with me?”

It took a moment for the words to sink in her head that it wasn’t a bad thing, not bad at all. Then the
smile bloomed over her face. She quickly sat her food down on the coffee table and flung herself into his arms, giving him a hard kiss.

He broke away on a small chuckle, the feeling of worry completely evaporating. “So, is that a yes?”

She nodded quickly, and then finally managed to get out a “yes.”

“Perfect.” He leaned in and placed a soft kiss to her lips. “So, what all do you still need to pack, that’s not already here?” he said with a wink.

“Hey, it wasn’t on purpose. I just started needing things, and you didn’t want to me to leave.”

“Mmmm, I do have some rather persuasive ways of convincing you.” He wiggled his eyebrows, and she couldn’t help the blush that washed over her. His hands went to her hips trying to maneuver her closer.

She went willingly, allowing him to situate her in his lap. “Well, I think the only things I really have left are my summer clothes, furniture, and kitchen stuff.” She saw the smirk on his face from the last comment. “Yes, I do have pots and pans. Well, like three. But I meant, dishes and silverware and stuff.”

“Okay, just let me know when and I can schedule the movers to pack and bring it over.”

“Wait, wait.” She stopped him, “I can pack my own stuff. And, where are we going to put all my furnature?”

“Well, that front room is completely empty, so your bedroom furniture could go in there for another guest room.” Emma nodded; it would work in there with ample room. “And there is room in there for some storage as well, until we figure out something else. Also, the guest bedroom up here has room for a couch and other things. I just never got around to it. Unless, you want to put your couch here, and we move this one in there.”

She looked at him like he was nuts. “You want to move my cheap old couch out here?”

He rolled his eyes, “How expensive it is doesn’t matter. If you like it better, we move it here.”

Her hand came up to the side of his face, and smiled back at him, knowing he meant every word. “I love you.”

He grinned back at her, “I love you, too.” His hand drifted to the back of her head and pulled her in for another kiss. “Let me know what you need help with.”

“Okay, I will. There is a lot going on right now. But, I actually need to give my apartment my notice. Which means I have some time to get everything together and move. We can worry about where to place my old couch after the charity event.”

“Sounds good. And those two weeks we don’t have to travel anywhere since the All Star Race and Charlotte are here.”

“Oh, perfect,” she agreed. “Now that it’s decided, how do we celebrate?”

He tapped his finger to his lips in fake thought, “Hmmm, I think I have a few ideas.” With that, he pushed her backwards and tackled her to the couch. She let out a yelp of surprise that turned to a laugh and then moan when his body settled between her thighs, and his mouth found her neck.
The next day, Killian was at home in the middle of making dinner when Regina called him.

“Just wanted to let you know,” she began after their hellos. “Lily has accepted the position. Also, she was able to work it out with her current employer that she didn’t need to give notice, and will be able to start immediately. She knows how much work there is today before we announce.”

He was surprised. “How did she manage to do that?”

“There was another person that she had actually been training to take over for her in the future. She has been looking for a change for a while.”

He nodded, even though no one could see it. “Well, that is really helpful.”

“Agreed. I’ll have her in here tomorrow morning, signing all the paperwork. But I think it would be good for her to come to the Dover race this weekend. I’ll be there as well. During down time, we can all go over everything and make some headway. Do you mind flying her there?”

“Not at all. It will give Emma and myself time to discuss things with her as well.”

“Perfect. Looks like it is all coming together. I’ll see you all in Dover.” With that, they said their goodbyes and Killian continued making dinner.

That Thursday was almost like any other time they got ready to fly out to a track. Emma was actually used to it now. She would get home—yes, she could actually say that now. Even though she still had stuff to move, she was officially living with Killian. She could officially call it home—then she’d quickly change and they’d get themselves and their luggage into the car that was waiting for them. Only this time, the driver had picked up their third passenger first.

Killian helped Emma into the bigger car than usual, and she took her seat across from Lily, then Killian sat beside her, his arm hugging Emma close.

“Thank you for allowing me to ride with you,” Lily told them.

“No problem. Actually, it will be beneficial.” Killian responded.

“I reached out to my contacts, and they are looking for some available space to suit our needs. I told them to send me what they come up with, and we can make appointments to view after Charlotte.”

“Perfect. Hopefully, they can find a place not far from Mills Racing, but also not too expensive. I’d rather pay a little more upfront to remodel than higher ongoing costs.”

Lily nodded, “Agreed. I have already let them know that. Hopefully they can come up with some good options.”

The three continued to talk about their plans and ideas for Charlotte and announcing the charity until they arrived at the airport. Once again, they had picked up food along the way, and as soon as the plane was fully in the air, they were eating as they talked.

“I already reached out to the track and have booked a double suite.” He told her. “Which has more than enough room for all the children and employees at the shelter, with plenty more spaces for press, crew, etc.”

Emma smiled. “Which is good, because they don’t need ear protection inside.” She had been worried about that, and after discussion, they agreed the suite was a much better option than sitting the kids in the stands. Besides, it kept them all in one place.
“It also makes it great for pictures,” Lily commented, “Which we will need lots of. Especially with you in your fire suit,” she said turning to Killian.

“I was planning on being there before the race anyway, along with as many of my team that can be there as well.”

“Good. I’ll make some calls and make sure plenty of press are there. We’ll need to decide on a logo, mission statement, and get materials made to hand out quickly.” She jotted a few more things down on a notepad. “I’ll work with the other directors on the website, setting up accounts for donations to come in, and hmmm....what do you think about T-shirts? For the staff and volunteers.”

“Actually, that would be a great idea,” Emma said and smiled. The ease to which Lily was moving forward with the project seemed to calm the nerves she had before.

“I agree,” Killian chimed in. “Though I doubt we can use Peter Pan or Captain Hook on the logo.” He gave a small pout.

Emma laughed, “Sorry babe. But I don’t think legal would approve.” She patted his leg.

“True; however, we might be able to come up with something that isn’t outright copyrighted, but alludes to the idea,” Lily added, and Emma noticed Killian perk up and smile at that idea. “Actually, let me reach out to the designer that came up with my last company’s new logo.”

They continued chatting, and figured out a pretty good game plan for what needed to be done by the time they landed.

They dropped Lily off at the hotel attached to the track, and then the two of them found their way to their RV to get ready for bed. It was already pretty late. “Well, I think everything is going well, love. She seemed to just pick the ball up and run with it. She knows a lot of people that should help us get the charity off the ground quickly. Which is needed with our tight schedule,” he said as he discarded everything but his boxers and then plopped down in the bed and yawned.

Emma nodded and pulled an old t-shirt over her head, crawled under the covers, and curled up next to him with a smile, ready to fall asleep. “I agree. Lily’s contacts seem almost too good to be true.”

The next morning, just as Emma was turning on her computer to get to work, a knock came from the RV. Killian was scrambling the eggs, so she went to go get it. She opened it to find Lily, hair in a pony tail, a thin navy sweater for the Delaware spring, and jeans. Emma stepped to the side and motioned her in.

“Sorry for the casual dress, but I figured it would be better at the track.”

Killian looked up and waved his hand, “No worries, lass. No need to dress up for me,” he said and then plated the eggs and bacon he had cooked.

Emma went back to her computer, and sipped on her coffee. Killian came up and placed a plate next to her, and kissed her cheek. “Thank you,” she told him and immediately grabbed a piece of bacon to munch on.

He turned back to Lily. “Did you eat already? Are you hungry?”

“Oh, how nice of you. I ate at the hotel, but thank you. I just wanted to get an early start in our discussions, and then I know Regina will also be around.” She turned to Emma, “Will you be joining our discussion while Killian is out practicing?”
Emma hesitated. She wanted to be there, but she really needed to work today. She had already taken too much time off, and Archie was being really good about letting her work from the track. She didn’t want to push it. “No, I’ve got to work today.”

“Okay,” the brunette said and quickly turned back to her boss. “Is there anything you don’t need to be part of, that Regina and myself can handle for you?”

Killian made his breakfast into a sandwich, and wrapped a napkin around it while he thought. He topped off his coffee in the Captain Hook mug that Emma got him, and twisted on the lid. “Let’s talk about it as we walk to the garage.” He turned to Emma, and leaned down and gave her a soft kiss. “We’ll get out of your hair, love. I’ll see you for lunch.”

She smiled up at him. “See you then.”

With that, he turned back to Lily and they both headed out of the RV. Emma watched them go, and turned back to her laptop. She felt a shiver run up her spine, and reached for her coffee to warm her up.

She had put on practice to have in the background as she worked, so she knew Killian had already headed back to the garage and was done for the day, well over an hour ago. Hell, almost two hours ago. She checked the time on her laptop—it was almost two o’clock. Her stomach growled and she sighed. “Guess he forgot about lunch,” she murmured to herself, and decided to finally eat one of the sandwiches she had made.

At almost two thirty, there was a knock on the RV door. She got up and opened it, to find Robin.

“Hey.”

“Hello, Emma. Regina was wondering if you and Killian had time to head out to dinner tonight.”

“That sounds lovely. But he’s not here to find out.”

Robin gave her a confused look, “He left practice hours ago.”

“Yeah, well he’s not here. I don’t have a clue where he is.”

“Did you try texting...wait...he leaves his phone here when practicing.” He sighed and ran a hand through his hair.

“Bingo. He said he would be here for lunch, but he was a no show. Do you know where he went?”

“Not sure, he was talking to Regina and that new girl about the charity, when they walked out. But Regina was at my...err...” Emma rolled her eyes at him, and he grinned. “Right...you know...She was there, when I got there before twelve thirty.”

The unease in Emma’s stomach had gotten bigger, but now it was turning into worry. This wasn’t like Killian. Even if there was a change in plans, he would have told her. But her head quickly turned upon hearing his voice. “Hey, Mate. Hello, love. How is work going?”

Then the worry turned into rage. She turned to look at Robin, and the other man could clearly see the steam coming from her ears. “I don’t think tonight will work Robin.”

Robin nodded. “Understood.” He then turned to Killian and patted him on the shoulder as Emma spun around in a huff and headed back instead. “Good luck, mate.” He told his driver and walked away while shaking his head.
Killian looked at Robin walking away and then to the door that banged behind where Emma went inside. He didn’t have a clue as to what any of this was about so he headed into the RV, and started to walk into the bedroom to change and take a shower, with a quick, “Are you okay, love? Something wrong with work?” He could practically feel the anger radiating off her.

“Work is fine.” She snapped at him, without even looking at him.

He pulled the suit off his shoulders, and let the top hang at his hips as he tilted his head to look at her. He knew she was a little more testy and emotional this week due to her cycle. But this was very excessive from what he had witnessed before. “Do you need a massage? Me to bring out the heating pad?” They kept an extra in the bathroom.

That got her attention, and even more anger. She stood up quickly, “Really!?! That’s why you think I’m angry? Don’t be one of ‘those’ guys, Killian.”

He held up his hands in surrender, “Love, I am seriously at a loss for why you are mad. And from the way you are looking at me, you’re angry at me. What did I do?” He looked at her, and watched her close her eyes trying to take a deep breath. He saw plates on the table, saw the crusts of the sandwich she had eaten, and then another made sandwich on another plate. From the wilted lettuce, he could see it had been there awhile. “Are you angry that you made food and then I had texted you to join us at lunch?”

That got her attention. “Wait? What text?” She went over to his phone on the counter. “How could you text me? Your phone has been here all day.”

Then he understood, and his eyes widened in understanding. “You didn’t get it.”

“Get what?” she wanted to scream but the words barely came out of her lips. She would not cry, dammit.

“Emma, I texted you from Lily’s phone. Asking if you had time to meet us for lunch” He walked closer to her, his hand reaching out to her. “We were in the middle of a discussion about the charity, and didn’t want to stop in the middle, but we also didn’t want to bother you if you couldn’t stop working.” His hand found hers, and pulled it to his chest. “So I used Lily’s phone to text you, where we were, and if you couldn’t make it I would see you later.”

“I didn’t get it.” She said, her anger slowly dissipating.

“I’m so sorry,” he said and gently pulled her to him.

Her face pressed into his chest, her nose slightly tickling from his chest hair. He was still all sweaty from practice, she looked up at him, “You didn’t even come back to take a shower?”

“Like I said, we were in the middle of talking, and I didn’t want to interrupt you…”

She cut him off. “You never interrupt me.”

He kissed the top of her head, “I’m really sorry, Emma. When we see Lily, we can check and see why the message didn’t get sent, and we’ll make sure your number is correctly entered in her phone.”

She gave a small smile. “Or, you could just interrupt me. Or call me, and not text me.”

“I didn’t want to…”
“If you say interrupt one more time,” she said, though the small smile on her face gave away that any anger she had was melting away.

“Is there anyway I can make all this up to you, my love?” he asked with a wiggle to his eyebrows.

“Take that shower with me?” she asked.

His eyes darkened, and he picked her up and carried her back into the bathroom. “Killian!” she squealed. “I can walk.” She giggled again when her shirt and bra were quickly discarded. “And undress myself.”

“But this is more fun,” he said before his mouth latched onto a sensitive nipple. She moaned, and her fingers threaded through his hair, holding him there, as his hands tried to rid himself of the rest of his firesuit, and her of her leggings. He pulled back when they were basically naked, her in just her underwear. “I’ll turn on the water, and you do what you need to.”

She knew exactly what he meant; this wasn’t their first time while it was her time of the month. Far from it, actually. She shed her underwear and tampon, and walked into the shower behind him, wrapped her arms around him, and let out a deep, calming breath. She should have known better—Killian would never deliberately left her hanging like that. She knew part of it was that her gut just didn’t trust Lily. She still wasn’t sure why.

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Practice went well on Saturday: Killian was starting fourth, with Victor, Eric, and unfortunately Jefferson right in front of him. That night, they had the dinner out with Regina and Robin, only Regina had invited Lily, which definitely felt like the fifth wheel. But with how good Regina and Lily, not to mention Killian and Lily, were getting along, Emma wasn’t sure who the fifth wheel was.

Killian was still very attentive—his hand was in hers, or arm around her shoulder, asking how her food was, etc. But Lily was easily steering the conversation back to other things. And what really started to irk Emma was when she was started talking to Killian and Robin about the car. She knew about cars! Oh, come on!

Apparently, a boyfriend in college grew up with a father as mechanic, and all his brothers were, too, so she learned a lot while they were dating. They even went to a few races together, though she admitted, until she took the job, she had a different favorite driver. Her hand had shot out and touched Killian, reassuring him that had now changed, which made everyone laugh but Emma, who was still looking at her hand on Killian’s. She could almost feel a growl start to come out of her throat. Killian had pulled away to take a drink of water, but hadn’t seemed to think anything of it. That fact bothered Emma even more.

Emma closed her eyes and tried to shake the thoughts away. They were just working together. They were just getting to know each other as colleges. It didn’t mean anything. And even if Lily wanted it to be, she trusted Killian. Nothing would happen. When he turned back to Emma, and gave her that smile, reserved for just her, she could feel the tension fade again.

“Want to order dessert, love?”

She smiled at him, and leaned into his ear; she was ready to get out of here, and not be around Lily anymore. “I want dessert alright, but back in the RV.” She left a kiss just under his ear, and saw him sit up straighter.

He looked to the others. “Well, I don’t know about you, but I’m stuffed. I think it’s time to call it a
night."

“What about the designs for the T-shirts? My contact got me a couple initial ideas I thought you would like to see,” Lily asked.

“I think they can wait till tomorrow for a decision.” He signaled for the check from the waitress.

“I’ve got this, Killian,” Regina told him and then turned to Lily. “I would like to see the designs. I’ll give you my imput tonight and you can relay it to Killian.”

“Thank you, Regina.” Killian said and was out of his chair, helping Emma out of her’s. Once she had her arm in his, she said, “We’ll see you all tomorrow.” Whereby, they made their leave, and Emma looked over her shoulder as they walked out smiling at the others. Robin and Regina gave her a friendly nod, but was it just her imagination or did Lily look angry? But in a flash she was smiling back at her, too.

As they got outside and headed back to the RV, she debated if she should tell Killian what she was feeling about Lily. She shook it away. She was being crazy and hormonal. There was nothing to worry about. She just really hoped she was right.

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The next day, Killian and Emma met with Lily to look at the designs. Some of them were okay, others not so much. But none of them captured what they were looking for. Killian gave some more specifics, and Lily made notes to tell the artist. Then Killian was off for press, Lily went back to her room for work, and Emma found the girls. She really needed some girl time.

She thought about telling them about the feeling she was having about Lily, but she just knew they would tell her she was worrying about nothing. She knew what they would say: that Killian loves her, so nothing else matters. So she didn’t say anything, and just let the drink with the girls try to relax her. Which helped, and soon she was standing with Killian and his crew at his car, listening to the national anthem.

The race was actually pretty boring. There was a very long stretch of green, with cars just vying for position, and not much happening. Emma was shocked that she was missing the cautions. Not that she wanted to see any wrecked cars, but cautions helped to break up the race, and start everyone back in a line. Not to mention when everyone was spread out so much, it was really hard to pass. The only cautions coming out were for debris and one blown tire. But Killian had finally made it to the lead, taking it away from Sean, only to lose it again to Eric. With the last ten laps to go, Killian and Eric kept exchanging the lead. Not that they were trying to do so; they were both fighting hard to keep it.

With barely a fender difference, Eric got over the finish line right before Killian. As Eric was doing his burnout, Killian was out of his car on pit lane, and answering reporters questions. As soon as he was done, he found Emma and pulled her in for a quick kiss.

“You almost had it.”

He smiled back at her, and tucked her under his arm as they walked back to the RV to get ready to leave. “Almost. But I’ll take second. Come on, love, let’s go home.”

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That next week, and after more failed attempts to capture what Killian wanted for a logo, Emma had an idea and she talked with Tink.

Her co-worker got a large smile on her face. “Oh, I can help with that. Just giving me a few days.” On Wednesday, she hand delivered her a stack of drawings, Emma looked through them, smiling.
She took out five of her favorites, and gave the rest back to Tink.

She stopped by her apartment after work, picked up a suitcase full of her summer clothes, and packed a few boxes of her pots and pans. She then left with the suitcase and headed home. When she pulled up the drive, she immediately recognized the Lexus sitting in the driveway. “Lily,” she sighed, and opened the garage to park inside. She pulled her suitcase into the house, and dropped it off in the currently empty room. Well, not empty—it had a couple of things Emma had brought from her apartment each day after work.

She then headed into the kitchen, the direction laughter was coming from. She peeked her head around the corner to see Lily and Killian laughing at something on Lily’s computer. “Hello,” she said softly.

Their heads both jumped up, and a bigger smile came over Killian. “Emma, you have to see this.” He motioned her over, and she ducked under his arm to look at the computer. They were watching one of those funny cat videos.

She could admit it was funny, but it begged the question. “So, doing work, I see.”

“Well, the only other choice is no logo, with just the name and then redoing everything. Which will cost money.”

Emma cut her off. “No. We get this right, and we get something he likes.”

Killian’s head darted to Emma’s quickly; was he detecting a bit of venom in her voice? She had a smile, but he could tell it didn’t reach her eyes. Lily continued before he could say anything, “We don’t have a ton of time left. I have all the pamphlets and the website, just holding on that logo. Not to mention the T-shirt order. We may just have to choose…”

“I’m not too worried about it.” Emma told her, knowing that something would be decided quickly, but not tipping her hand.

“No, you don’t have to worry about it. Because that’s my job, and the others that work there.” She turned back to Killian. “I better get going, I’ll be happy when the rest of the staff start tomorrow.”

“Me too,” he said. “I’ll see you all tomorrow. Here, let me show you out.” She followed him out of the house, and Emma leaned against the wall, watching them go. Once the door was closed, Killian quickly came back, and kissed her hard. “God, I missed you.”

That immediately put her in a better mood. “I missed you, too. And I have something to show you.”

He walked over to the stove and stirred the pasta sauce again. Then put the strainer in the sink and poured the boiling water over it, the pasta now done.

“Pick one.”

He looked at all the drawings. Each was a child’s drawing, done with crayons. They were wonderful, and whimsical, and just perfect. He looked up at her with wonder, “Emma...how?”
“I knew you weren’t liking what the artist was coming up with. It was much too modern, and not right. So, I had Tink work with the kids and each was to come up with a picture of what they thought Peter Pan’s lost boys and girls would look like.” He leaned over and kissed the top of her head, and pulled her close. “There are more, but these were the five I thought you would like best.”

“It will be so hard to pick, but I agree. One of these will be it. I love them all.” He thought about it for a minute. “We were going to pay the artist quite a bit to come up with the art. So, can I give each of these kids some scholarship money?”

Emma smiled, and then her eyes widened. “All of them?”

“I think we could use all the art, at some point on the website or somewhere. But, I think…” he pointed to one of them. It was of two trees, that looked to each have a tree house, with a rope bridge between. On the bridge and down on the green grass, were drawings of boys and girls. “This one is perfect.”

She smiled up at him. “I agree.”

With the decision made, Killian sent off a fast text to tell Lily to cancel the artist, and that they had their designs. Emma continued to grin as they ate dinner. Point one Emma, she thought to herself.

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On Friday, Emma stayed at work while Killian did practice for the All-Star Race. He was already in the race, so he didn’t have to worry about performing in the Showdown that was on Saturday. Three of those drivers would be allowed in the All Star Race since they didn’t qualify on their own.

When she got home from work, she noticed that Killian wasn’t home yet. She knew practice ended much earlier, and the track wasn’t that far away from the house. She sent him a text message, and almost immediately she got a text back.

KJ: Sorry love. Time got away from me. I’ll grab something for dinner on the way back. Grilled Cheese?

She smiled; he knew she couldn’t say no to that. But what was he making up for? She shoved the thought away and responded.

ES: Mmmmm sounds good.
KJ: Okay, see you soon.

Killian sighed and put his phone is his pocket. He looked back at Lily. “I can’t believe it’s so late already.”

“Wow, yeah. Sorry to keep you. But we got a lot of headway done today. The staff all seem good so far, and now we have that logo, which is adorable by the way. Did one of your nephews draw it?”

“Oh, no. Emma and Tink at the shelter got the kids to draw them. I’ve already had Belle and Merida take care of the scholarships for the ones we want to use; the main one will get a larger amount, and then some small prizes for the rest who helped.”

She looked a little shocked by that. “Oh. I see. Well, that’s very nice of you. But Killian, I should really be made aware of any money coming out of the budget. You probably spent more than what the artist…”

He cut her off at that. “I don’t care about the money. Also, it won’t hit the budget, I spent the money for the scholarships and the awards myself. I got something that I wanted, something the artist was not going to come up with.”
He could tell he made his point, because she nodded and responded, “Okay. I understand.”

“And with that, I need to go.” He made sure he had everything, and left to stop at the sandwich shop Emma loved before heading home. When he got there, he found her sitting watching TV, a beer in her hands, and one waiting for him on the coffee table. He kicked off his shoes, and sat the take-out next to his beer. “How was your day, love?”

She sat up and pulled him down to her, to capture his mouth for a kiss. “Better now.” she said and then started to untie the bag and take out the food containers. She opened the first one and moaned, “Mmmmm onion rings.”

He plopped down next to her. “I know you.”

She shoved one in her mouth, “You do.” She licked her fingers and then looked at him, “So how was your day?”

He took his own food, and leaned his head back against the couch. “Exhausting.”

She munch another onion ring. “Why?”

“Practice was long, and then I went back to help with the charity. Everyone is luckily working well together, but there were so many questions to answer.”

“Well, soon it will be ‘running like a well oiled machine’, and ‘will have volunteers coming out of the woodwork’ so you can ‘turn your attention back to your job’.” She said quoting Lily during her interview.

Killian immediately picked up on the wording and the slight mocking in Emma’s voice. “You don’t like her,” he said as realization dawned on him. He was obviously very slow in putting it together, but now it started to make sense. His eyes widened. “You, really, don’t like her.”

Emma sighed next to him. “I...I just...I don’t know. She makes me uneasy for some reason.”

He smiled at her. “Emma...you can’t possibly be jealous.” He looked at her. “Bloody hell, you ARE!” He shook his head in disbelief and a little hurt. “Why?”

“I am NOT jealous. I just have this...feeling.”

That stopped him, and he studied her. He trusted her feelings, he trusted HER. But he himself had not picked up anything wrong with Lily. She was headstrong, and gung-ho, and self assured. However, that came with the position and what she needed to do. “What feeling? And since when?”

She shook her head. “Forget it.” She took a big bite of her grilled cheese.

“No. I’m serious. Tell me.”

“Since the interview,” she said with a full mouth.

“I asked you...”

She swallowed, and sighed. “I know, I know. But I didn’t have a valid, logical reason to say no to her. And the other two interviewers were so horrible.”

He reached out for her hand, his thumb rubbing the back of it. “What are you feeling?”

She groaned. “It’s hard to say. She rubbed me wrong during the interview. The way she didn’t know
who I was, which I know wasn’t her fault. But then the way she looked when she found out, was like, ‘Oh, just the girlfriend.’ And then, it seemed like with her comments she wanted to get me out of her hair and send me back to work.”

“Emma, I’ve been worrying that I have requested too much, and I hate taking you away from your job.”

“But you don’t sound like I’m an inconvenience.”

“I agree, she does have a little bit of an abrasive personality. What else though?”

“The missed lunch/text thing didn’t help,” she admitted.

“I’m sorry...you saw the text on her phone though. It just didn’t go through for some reason.”

“Yeah, some reason.” Emma muttered.

His hand came up to her face and had her look at him. “Emma, is this about her not being good at her job? Or you just don’t like her near me?” She looked down, and he had his answer. His fingers brushed over her face. “Emma. She hasn’t tried anything with me, I swear. But, even if she had, I would never...NEVER...do...THAT.” He leaned in and kissed her lips. “I love you. My future is with you.”

She smiled back at him, tears in her eyes. “I love you, too.”

He put his arm around her and pulled her closer. “I swear, if she tries anything with me, she will be out the door. Okay?” She nodded, and snuggled closer. “Good. Now, how about we continue watching that fairytale show you got me to watch. Since we got to the second season, I really like that new character.”

“The pirate?” She started laughing, “I just knew you would.” She kissed the side of his face, and brought up Netflix.

Emma went with Killian on Saturday morning for qualifying. She sat with her friends, and Ruby told her all about the setup of the race for Sunday. It was another non-points race, like at the beginning of the year. So it was basically a no-holds-barred race, with everyone trying to win. The format seemed to change yearly. There would be two fifty-lap segments and then a thirteen-lap final dash to the finish.

Emma immediately saw the difference in qualifying since it included a mandatory green flag pit stop. Ruby exclaimed it then had the pitcrew’s performance added to the equation. She wasn’t worried about that; Killian’s pit crew were one of the fastest. Ruby continued to tell her about the race itself. The break between the first and second set of fifty laps as well as the second set of fifty laps each had a mandatory pit stop as well that required the change of at least two tires.

“It’s kinda like evening the playing field as much as possible,” Ashley said.

“Yeah, but this year’s starting lineup for the last segment is...unusual.” Ariel chimed in.

Emma looked to Ruby, and Ruby explained. “The starting order for the last thirteen laps will be decided by taking nine to eleven cars, number determined by random draw, force them to take a four-tire pit stop, and have those cars start at the back of the back.”

Emma shook her head in confusion. “Wait? What? So, it would be more beneficial to try and stay in twelfth at the end of segment two? Why? WHY?”
The girls laughed and some agreed with her. “They think, and I mean NASCAR, that it will make it more interesting for fans,” Ashley said and took a drink.

“Everyone’s just going to try and stay in that 12th position,” Ariel sighed.

“Yeah, but if the officials can prove your are trying to do that, they can kick you out of race,” Ruby reminded them.

Emma had no idea what to expect with the race tomorrow, but she had a pretty good idea what the plan for Killian’s team was, and it wasn’t staying in the back. They qualified in fifth. Once given the go-ahead, they made it back home, and decided to make use of having the weekend at home and the new summer temperatures.

It was to get to the mid-nineties that day. With the temperatures increasing, Killian had the boat delivered to his dock earlier in the week. But when Emma had seen it, she was pretty certain that something that size should not be called a boat. Granted, Lake Norman was a large lake and could fit bigger watercraft, and the boat had no problem fitting next to the long dock. She hadn’t realized just how long the dock was until the boat was sitting next to it.

They both quickly changed, and Emma found towels, sunscreen, and other necessities and put them in a bag, then headed to the kitchen to find Killian closing a picnic basket.

He swallowed hard at the sight of her. She wore a sheer white shirt over her red bikini top, along with short jean cutoffs. “You look...beautiful.”

With how long it took him to say the last word, she looked down at herself, unsure. “Is something wrong? You didn’t sound like you truly meant that.” He walked over to her, and pulled her against him, having her feel exactly what he thought of her outfit. She swallowed hard, and her eyes dilated slightly. “Ohh…”

He smirked and leaned over, kissing her neck. “‘Ohhh’ is right.” He nuzzled closer, and moved up to lightly bite at her earlobe. “If we don’t get out of here right now, we never will.”

She shuddered against him; his voice sounded like pure sin in her ear. She had to grab hold of her willpower to pull away from him. “Oh no, buddy. You have been talking about taking me out on the lake, and that’s what we are doing.”

“You are right. I promised.” He took a deep breath to steady himself, and grabbed the basket, and then her hand, and they left the house out the back door. They both put on their sunglasses and strolled down the grass to the dock. Once they got to the boat—err yacht, yes that was definitely the word for it, she thought—Killian helped her on board. Then he released the ropes holding it to the dock and jumped on as well. He went inside the boat and started the engines as she looked around.

She swore it was like a smaller version of the RV. The back of the boat was open with seating. But the front had glass windows and doors that could be opened. Inside had a TV, kitchen, and a table with bench seating. Then she saw steps leading down, and she went to go look. There was a master bedroom with a queen bed. There was also a bathroom with a shower. She strode back up the stairs, and leaned over his shoulder as he pulled away from the dock. “Exactly what do you do on this boat that requires full sleeping arrangements?”

He laughed. “So, you already gave yourself the full tour, I see.” He reached back and pulled her around to sit next to him. “When I get free time, I like to spend it on the water. Feel the gentle roll of the waves. I have been known to sleep out here.”
She smiled. “That actually sounds really nice.”

“Well then, there is a week break coming up; maybe we can spend the weekend out here.”

“Mmm, that sounds fantastic,” she agreed, and watched as he steered the ship out into open water. Soon the house was a small spec in the distance. He drove for awhile, and then threw anchor near one of the small, uninhabited islands. She stood and headed out to the back, looking around. It was gorgeous and quiet.

He pulled the basket from inside and one of the blankets from below, and started to walk out to the front of the boat. “Ready for lunch?”

“Oh yeah.” She grabbed the bag she brought and followed him up, then helped him spread out the blanket and then sat down with him as they dug through the picnic basket. She dug in her bag, and brought out the sunscreen. “Need any?”

“I put some on before we left. But maybe after we eat. You?” He asked towards her, a little hope in his eyes.

She laughed. “Same.” They started snacking on the sandwiches and veggie tray as they looked out onto the water. “It’s so quiet.”

“Does it bother you? Would you like me to turn on the radio?”

“No, it’s fine. I’m just not used to it. It’s rather nice.”

“Aye. I’ve always found it relaxing.” Comfortable silence fell between them as they continued to eat, small smiles exchanged as they watched a few ducks land nearby. Soon, they were cleaning up what was left, and Killian returned the basket to the kitchen.

He came back out, and removed his t-shirt, leaving him in his swim trunks.

“Oh no, you have to wait an hour before swimming.” She told him with a wink.


She couldn’t refuse that little smile, and she was sure he was giving those damn puppy dog eyes under the sunglasses; it really wasn’t fair. She grabbed the bottle from him and gave him a half-hearted huff of annoyance, which just made him laugh harder. But once she started to work the lotion into his neck and back, his head started bobbing down, with low moans instead of humor coming from his lips. When she got done with his back, she dropped the bottle in his lap. “All done.”

He could tell from the small curl of her lips that she was teasing him; her touch before was deliberately working him up, and, hell, he had the partial tent in his swim trunks to prove it. He squeezed some more sunscreen into his hand, and then started to rub it into his arms, then pecs, and down his abs. His eyes watched her the whole time, and saw the small lick of her lips. He worked over a few areas more than needed. “Your turn?” he asked, and she didn’t say anything. He smiled and continued. “Emma?”

“What?” She jerked her head up to look at him. “Oh, yeah...sure.” Her mind was hazy from the display he just made. Two could play that game. She stood up, raised her shirt slowly, dropped it to the floor once it was off, and then shimmed her shorts down her hips, giving them a little extra wiggle on purpose. She then turned, sat down in front of him, and lifted her hair out of the way. He started to apply the lotion to her back as his lips leaned forward and kissed down the slope of her
neck.

Emma moaned at the feel of his hands and lips working over her. She damn well knew where this was going to lead, but she didn’t care. She leaned back a little, and after getting her back, his hands started to move up her sides, and around to her front. He pressed her back against his chest, as his hands moved up her abs, and around the fabric of her top, over her breast bone, and then his fingers dipped under the fabric, cupping her breasts under the bikini top. She groaned and arched her back, pressing against his hands.

“So beautiful,” he said into her ear and nibbled at her earlobe. His fingers tweaked her nipples, causing her to moan and close her eyes, resting the back of her head on his shoulder. He moved his left hand out from under the top and down her front. His fingers trailed along the band of her swim bottoms, and then dipped under. “Mmmm, and so wet, and ready for me.” He breathed into her ear. “And all mine.”

She knew that at any moment a boat could come by and see them, and she didn’t care; hell, it made it more exciting. All she cared about was needing his fingers to move lower, to relieve the pressure and want between her legs. “Killian...please...”

He obliged and dipped two fingers into her core, the moan from her lips his reward, as he started to slowly pump them in and out of her, as he pressed his palm against her swollen clit. She gasped and he smiled against the skin of her neck, leaving another kiss, as his other hand kept squeezing her breast and lightly squeezing her nipple.

Her breath hitched as her hips moved against his hand. “That’s it, love,” he said into her ear, increasing the speed of his fingers. “Let go; I’ve got you.”

Her hands gripped his thighs on either side of her, and with a couple more thrusts of his fingers, she was sailing. Her body shuddered and his hand left her breast so his arm could wrap around her, hugging her to him as the pleasure washed over her.

She felt his lips kissing her neck, whispering sweet words between each one as she came back to her senses. She blinked her eyes open, and turned her head to catch his lips with hers.

He pulled his fingers from her and she pouted at the loss, making him smile. “Don’t worry, I think you will like what I want to replace them with.” She looked around, making sure there weren’t any boats around, not that she was thinking about that a few minutes ago. “No worries, love. It’s pretty quiet out here; no one is around...yet.” He gave her a wink, and her heart rate increased. “Lay back on the blanket, for me?”

She smiled and turned around, laid back, throwing her sunglasses to the side. He took off his as well, and gave his own groan when she opened her legs, her hand trailing down and pushing the bikini bottoms to the side, exposing her bare folds, glistening with her desire. “You aren’t playing fair, my love.”

She smirked at him. “What fun would that be?”

He pushed his swim trunks down, had himself in hand, and was on his knees between hers in an instant. And in the next moment he was thrusting home, both groaning in pleasure. His arms came under her back, and his hands gripped her shoulders, as her legs wrapped high on his hips. “God...” he kissed her. “You always feel so damn good around me.”

“You know what feels better?” She asked and shifted her hips making them both moan. “If you move.” She winked at him.
With that, he pulled out and thrust back in hard, making her eyes close and head tilt back. “Like that?” he asked, his hips retreating and then plunging back inside.

Her legs gripped him tighter. “God...yesss.” Her hips rocked up against him and he pushed in again and again, quickening his pace. Her hands gripped at his back, trying to hold on through his powerful thrusts, pleasure-filled sounds coming from her mouth. If the boat was any smaller, she was sure that he would be rocking it with each move. “Mmmm....yes…”

He was so close—hell, she had worked him up the moment he saw her in the bikini. Who was he kidding—she always had him worked up. He moved his hips a little faster and loved hearing the gasp from her lips. He just wanted more; he wanted deeper. He lightly bit at the skin on her neck and then moved his arms to press his palms to the hull of boat, and pushed himself back up to his knees, changing the angle, and shifting a little more in her. They both groaned, and she asked, “What?”

“This,” he said as he unwrapped one leg and slid her leg up and her knee over his shoulder, opening her up to him even more, and allowing him to seat himself deeper. “Fuck…” he growled and closed his eyes at the feeling.

She pulled her other leg tight around his hips. “Yes, me. Fuck me, Killian.”

“With pleasure…” he said and started to buck into her again, his hips working frantically to piston in and out of her in quick succession over and over. Her moans got louder and louder with each thrust. He could feel her inner muscles start to contract. “Fuck, yes...come for me. Let me feel…” But he didn’t have to finish his sentence, because she started to grip him, her mouth screaming his name, and her body flew over the edge. On the next push of his hips he followed her, stilling and coming deep inside of her, as pleasure rushed through him.

He put his weight on his forearms and pressed his forehead against hers as they both tried to catch their breath. She gave him a soft kiss. He looked down into her deep green eyes. “Love you.”

She smiled back up at him. “Love you, too.”

He lowered her leg from his shoulder, and then kissed her nose, making her giggle. He rolled them to the side, slipping from her as they did. He then tugged up his swim trunks, and she straightened her bottoms, making her giggle more. “Well, that’s a first.”

“What is?” he asked.

“Never done that in public before,” she admitted.

He looked at her, then out across the water. “Well, except for some ducks, which I believe you scared off with your scream,” he said with a wink and she lightly swatted his chest, “There is no one here.” He brought up his hand to stroke his chin. “But if you like it, I can think up some ideas.”

She swatted him again. “You are terrible.”

“Okay, let’s get cleaned up,” he said, standing and pulling her to her feet. She was about to head below, but he grabbed and spun her back to him. “I have a better and faster idea.” Before she could ask, he jumped into the water and pulled her with him.

As soon as she got back to the surface she sputtered. “Why you…” She splashed water at him. He laughed and splashed her back, ensuing a water fight, at least until he dove for her and dragged her back under with him, only this time his mouth found hers before they got back to the surface, and they came up kissing. Her arms and legs wrapped around him, and he deepened the kiss. “Why get us all clean if you are just going to get us dirty again?”
He kissed a line down her neck, and shifted her up further in the water so he could kiss down her breastbone. “Because it’s so much fun, and you are just too damn tempting.” His lips then found hers again. They didn’t pull up to the dock until almost midnight, both tired, but with loving smiles on their faces.

The media was out in full force the next day. It reminded Emma of the first race she went to at the start of the year. As soon as Killian got to the track, he was whisked away by Regina and Emma found where the girls were holed up while their men were also out amongst the hordes of reporters.

They day went by quickly. Soon, the opening ceremony was over and she was kissing Killian right before he got in his car and following the crew back to the pit. Killian and Sean were the only two of their group of friends to qualify in the front; the rest were back in the teens. Emma was curious as to whose strategy would work best, and in the end win the one million dollar prize. Killian had told her that it’s always best to stay up front. But with part of the field having to move to the back with thirteen laps to go, was that a good idea?

Emma had her confirmation just a few laps in that the drivers weren’t holding back on this race. They all seemed to have the ‘checkers or wreckers’ view that Ruby told her about since points for the championship weren’t involved. By the time the first segment was over, two cars were already out of the race, one was being worked on, and three others had major damage but were able to go on with quite a bit of Bare Bond. Killian had made it from fifth up to second place right behind Phillip, with Sean not far from him. The others still seemed to be content staying towards the back.

Almost everyone took two tires at the mandatory green flag stop, since most of them took opposite two tires on the last caution, and they were back out on the track. Emma bit her lip a few times, watching as the front three kept trying to take the lead from each other. Some were close calls, and some were actual hits, as the cars traded paint with each other and sparks flew. But at least they were skilled drivers and didn’t cause a wreck.

It was twenty-three laps into the next segment when cars started to make their mandatory green flag two-tire pit stop, most of the teams again opting for the minimum and changing the opposite two from the last pit. Killian’s team saved him time to get him out in first place, just in front of Sean and then Phillip. With only three laps to go in the segment, two cars got into each other mid-pack and crashed into the wall, spinning cars around and causing three others to crash and bring out a caution that effectively lasted the rest of the segment. Those five cars were then put in the back of the pack. Which also meant five cars were pushed up in order, which included Victor and Eric. Emma was sure they weren’t happy about it. For one, it now put them in position to have to make the pit stop and start in the back on the last segment, but it would also be worse because they would start at that back of that as well, unlike those that decided to stay in the lead, like Killian. Maybe Robin and Killian’s strategy would be the best after all.

The random draw was made, and top ten cars would be made to make a mandatory four-tire pit stop, and then start at the back of the pack. After all was said and done, and due to the number of cars being out of the race, or substantial laps down, after the four-tire pit stop, Killian was only back in seventh.

Emma smiled to herself and looked to Robin, who gave her a grin. They both knew they had a good position. They weren’t far back, and unlike the cars in front of them, they had four fresh new tires. With the green flag dropped, the cars were off, and Killian as well as Sean were around the drivers in front of them while Phillip moved up the center, passing two. You could quickly see the benefit of the fresh tires, and those who started in front were quickly falling back.
It wasn’t long before Philip, Sean, and Killian broke free of the rest of the pack, and back to just trying to get ahead of each other. With one lap to go, it was still anyone’s race. With Sean and Killian neck-and-neck, and Phillip behind Sean, it was a last-minute push and slingshot around Sean that got Philip the win, and Killian placing third.

Emma had to take a deep breath once she realized she had been holding it; her heart was beating a mile a minute. She turned to Robin and he raised up thumb and finger signifying just how close it really was. Emma took off her headset and went down the stairs to find Killian finishing up an interview. He was smiling and gesturing wildly, but she could tell he wasn’t upset—just pumped about the exhilarating race.

Once he wrapped up the interviewer, he found her, kissed her, and she then broke away to smile up at him. “Good job.”

“A win would have been better,” he told her as they started walking back to the garage. She rolled her eyes. “But all in all, third is good, and the car isn’t damaged. Now...let’s go home.” And after squaring everything away with the crew, that is exactly what they did.

Point Standings:

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<td>Phillip Haven</td>
<td>439</td>
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<td>#12</td>
<td>Tarrant Jefferson</td>
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That following week leading up to the Charlotte race was hectic to say the least, for both of them, but mainly for Killian. It was the kick-off of the charity and he was meeting with press left and right, making last-minute decisions with the other directors, and the team also needed him for car testing.

He was so busy he was already out the door, answering emails from his phone and on his way into the shop before she even woke up to go to work. Coffee would be waiting for her in the pot, a note telling her where he was going to be for the day. By Wednesday, she was getting tired of it. They had barely seen each other since Monday morning. She told herself multiple times since then that it was only for this week, and then everything would go back to normal.

But she couldn’t help it. She missed him. She missed breakfast and dinner with him. He was gone early, and then not back until almost ten—sometimes later, depending on when the local news was filming a segment with him. Hell, their sex life was currently non-existent.

Emma rolled her eyes at herself. “Get a grip. It’s only been three days.” She could see how tired he was, not getting much sleep, coming in late to only get up early again. He was basically asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow.

She had asked him in some of the brief time they did see each other if there was anything she could do to help. He had told her she was, that she was working with Belle and making sure the shelter and the kids were ready for race day. The shirts had come in, which looked fantastic, and they had more than enough for all the kids and volunteers. She had that all handled, and also had a great time getting to know Belle.

The woman was really smart and extremely nice. She was also great with all the kids, and was turning into an excellent volunteer coordinator. They had made the right decision in hiring her. She still wasn’t so sure about another one of their choices.

She ground her teeth as she filled her travel mug with coffee and headed to her car. Lily had Killian’s schedule completely booked, and for some reason she had a feeling it was on purpose. She had made a comment to him about it in passing. “Boy, she isn’t giving you any room to breath is she?”

“It’s necessary. We want to make sure we get as much press as possible. You know that, love.”

“But killing you isn’t the way to do that. Does she know how grueling this is on you?”

He yawned as he sat down on the bed next to her. “I’m sure she does. She’s there for every interview.”

She didn’t say how much she didn’t like that. “True, but you have the car tests, and then…”

Killian laid down and reached for her hand, another yawn coming from him as his eyes began to close. “Emma, it’s just this week. I can handle it for a little while.”

“I know. I just worry about you. I love you.” She brushed the hair back from his head, but she didn’t get a response at the time because he was already fast asleep.

Emma pushed the thought away. “Just a few more days,” she told herself and headed into work.

Killian pulled the car into the pit and turned off the engine as Robin told him they were good. He took off his helmet and brought the netting down as another yawn came from his mouth, and walked
over to his crew chief.

“I saw that,” Robin told him, giving his friend a concerned look. “You need to get some sleep.”

“I am getting sleep,” he told him, while trying not to yawn again.

“Mate, I know you are stretched really thin right now. But you better get a good night’s sleep before the race, or I’m not letting you drive.”

Killian clenched his jaw; he wanted to argue, but he could see the concern, and at the same time, he heard Emma’s voice in his head. “Fine. I promise I’ll head to bed early on Saturday. Will that do?” With a nod from his friend, he turned back to the monitors. “Are we good here? I need to leave, I have an appointment at…”

“Yes, yes. We got what we needed. Get out of here.” His driver nodded and jogged away to change, as Robin called after him, “Don’t get a speeding ticket!” All he got back was a middle finger in response.

Friday was another early morning and another early exit for Killian, this time leaving for practice at the track. That also meant that the national press was starting to do interviews since reporters were beginning to come into town. Emma checked the progress from her phone to see how his practice was doing since she was at work. She sighed and gave a little frown at seeing that after the first practice, he was back in twelfth. He couldn’t be happy with that, so she sent him a quick message.


She knew she wouldn’t get a response for a while and she turned to her lunch as Tink came walking in with hers. The other blonde sat down across from her and tilted her head. “You don’t look happy.”

“Killian didn’t do well in practice. I’m sure—”

Her friend cut her off. “No, that’s not it. What is wrong?”

Emma sighed; she wasn’t sure how to bring up what she was thinking without sounding like a jealous crazy person. “It’s nothing.”

Tink huffed. “No, it’s not. Tell me. I’m not leaving ‘til you do.”

Emma sighed again; she knew Tink meant it. “Fine. But it sounds crazy.” Tink shrugged and Emma continued. “I think Lily is scheduling all this stuff on purpose.”

Tink nodded. “Well…yeah. I mean, all the press is good for the charity, and it is her job.”

Emma shook her head. “That’s not what I mean. I think she’s trying to keep him busy, and…away from me on purpose.” There, she said it.

“What?”

Emma could see the shock on her friends face. “I know, I know. I sound like a jealous, crazy person.” She took a large bite of her sandwich and chewed hard, trying to take out her aggression.

“Okay. Why do you feel that she is doing that?”

Emma swallowed and took a sip of her water. “I’ve had a bad feeling about her since I met her. I see
these looks from her that I swear are anger directed at me that then vanish. I swear she is trying to spend time alone with Killian on purpose. And this week…”

“Is just compounding the issue because he’s busy and away with her so much.” Tink finished for her and Emma nodded. “Do you trust Killian?”

The pause in Emma’s mind scared her, and Tink noticed. She shook it off. “Of course I do.”

“Emma...you hesitated. Why?”

She swallowed. “I don’t trust Lily...at all. But he does. He says she hasn’t tried anything, but I think he’s just blind to it. I trust Killian...but…” She looked down. “But I also trusted Walsh, and look what happened.” She didn’t want to think about her ex, and she especially didn’t want to remember that day she walked in on him and...she stopped the thought. She had loved Walsh, and what happened with him almost killed her. But it was nothing compared to what she felt for Killian, and if something happened...it would completely destroy her.

“You’re afraid that what happened before will happen again.”

“Well, I wasn’t enough for Walsh. So…” Her voice cracked and tears formed in her eyes.

She didn’t have to finish the sentence for Tink to know what she meant. Her friend was out of her chair, and had her in a hug in an instant. “Emma, sweetie...Walsh was a jerk. It had nothing to do with you. Killian is a whole other ballpark...well, technically race track.” That made them both laugh. She pulled back to look into Emma’s eyes. “He loves you. We all see it. You have to trust him. I don’t believe for one second that he would ever do anything to hurt you.”

“But what if she…”

Tink shook her head. “It doesn’t matter what she tries; if she does or not, it won’t matter. You’re the one he loves. You’re the one that he lives with. You’re the one he comes home to.” Emma squeezed her tight as she continued. “Once all this craziness with the start of his charity is over, it will go back to normal.”

Emma smiled at her friend and wiped away her tears. “You’re right. Thank you.”

Tink smiled and went to sit back down to eat her lunch. “I know.” She winked at her friend, and they continued their lunch break.

Qualifying went a bit better, but not much, and Killian knew why. He was exhausted. He would start the race in eighth place. He had at least moved up from practice, but not far enough to his liking. He couldn’t wait for all of this to be done. He knew why he had to be the one to speak for the charity, but if he had to say the same spiel one more time...he sighed. He knew he would. Hell, he had four more reporters today, just for the charity. That didn’t include the normal reporters for the race itself.

He could already see Robin wanting to talk to him, reminding him about getting sleep. And he just waved him away, as he walked out of the garage. He had to go change, take a shower, and get ready for the interviews. Lily was already there and beginning to prep him on the who’s, what’s, and where’s. All he wanted to do was see Emma, wrap her in his arms, and fall into bed together. But right now, he would even settle for just having lunch with her. He missed her, and he was starving. He raised his hand to Lily. “Do I have five minutes to eat something?”

She looked at the calendar. “I’ll grab you a sandwich while you change so you can eat while we walk over.”
He reminded himself that next time, he would need to put in his own appointments for lunch, and other things, before letting her or anyone make his schedule. But what was done was done, for now. He knew she had the charity’s best interest at heart, and so did he, as he walked into the RV, leaving Lily behind to run and get his lunch.

He stood under the spray for probably longer than he should have, but his thoughts of the last time he and Emma shared the shower flashed through his mind. He took an extra few minutes to take care of the problem those thoughts gave him. It didn’t help matters that he and Emma hadn’t had a moment to have sex in almost a week. It was a good thing he was quick about it, because just as he was leaning against the shower wall, catching his breath, his seed washing down the drain, there was a loud knock on the RV door.

“Killian?! Are you almost ready? We need to be there in fifteen minutes.”

“Bloody hell,” he murmured to himself, and quickly dried off and got dressed. His hair was still partially wet as he exited the trailer less than five minutes later. He grabbed the sandwich, noticing the swiss cheese, which he wasn’t a huge fan of, but he didn’t complain as he wolfed it down. He was too hungry not to eat it.

He should have had Emma come to the track, but he had told her to stay home since he would be busy all day. But at least a quick kiss and hug would have made him feel better. Not to mention she would have made sure he got to eat, and something he actually liked. But his thoughts were immediately changed, as he and Lily had to run to get to the next reporter in time and not throw off the whole schedule.

Killian got home just after nine; he walked in to find Emma watching one of the interviews he had done just a little earlier and smiled. As his shoes hit the tile floor of the kitchen, her head spun to see him, and a smile lit up her face. She quickly paused the TV, and got off the couch to run towards him. He enveloped her in his arms, and closed his eyes, his nose in her hair, taking a deep breath, and allowing her to relax him.

“You’re home,” she said into his chest, and it brought a smile to his face.

“I am.” He said, and pulled her tighter. “I need to make a sandwich or something…”

She looked up at him. “You didn’t eat?” He shook his head no, and she huffed and walked to the fridge. “Go sit down; I got Chinese delivered. Will that work?”

“Sounds fantastic,” he said as he took off his shoes and plopped on the couch, putting his feet up onto the coffee table. “I’ve had a protein bar and a horrible sandwich today.”

Emma shook her head as she scooped out the food in the take-out containers onto a plate for him, “Killian…”

“I know. I know. You, Robin, and even Regina are after me about it. Just one more day, and it will be over.” A few moments later, he heard the ding of the microwave, and then the sound of her feet padding over to him. She gave him the plate, and put a bottle of water on the table. He saw the fork instead of chopsticks and smiled. While he was really good with chopsticks, he was much too hungry to want to bother, and she knew it. “Thank you, love,” he said, and leaned over and kissed her forehead before he started in on his food.

“So, what time do you need to be at the track tomorrow?”

He swallowed his bite, and groaned. “I have to be there about seven-thirty in the morning to get
ready for the press. When will you and the kids get there again?"

“Actually, I’m not coming over with the kids; Tink, Archie, and Granny will be. I’ll be at the shelter just after the kids have breakfast and hand out shirts for everyone. Then I’ll be heading to the track with Belle, so we can setup the suite. The kids will be coming there at four, so you can get pictures with them all before you have to head back out to the track.”

“What do you think of Belle?” he asked as he took another heaping forkful of food.

“She’s great. And wonderful with the kids.”

He nodded in agreement and swallowed, then leaned forward for the bottle of water. “I haven’t been able to talk to her much, but the few meetings we have all had, she seems to hold her own, and show just how bright she is.” He opened the bottle and took a long drink.

She looked at his plate and saw that it was almost empty. “More?”

He gave her a soft smile. “Yes, but I’ll get it.” He started to get up, and she pressed him back down. “Sit. I can get it.” She stole the plate and went back into the kitchen.

He smiled and finished the rest of the water while she heated up another plate and returned with a new bottle of water. “You’re too good to me, love,” he said, taking the plate and chowing down once again.

“I try, and I worry about you.”

He took a minute to rub her shoulder. “I’ll be fine. No need to worry about me.”

They chatted while he ate, and then after the second plate, he sat it on the table, and leaned back against the couch. Now that his stomach was full, his eyes were starting to droop. Emma cuddled into his side, and his arm came around to hold her close.

She heard his yawn, and tilted her head to look up at him. “We should probably get you to bed.”

“Yeah, I promised Robin I would get a good night’s sleep. He threatened to not let me drive if I don’t.”

“Well then, off to bed with you,” she told him and stood, offering her hand, which he took to help him up. They peeled their clothes off as they went. He got down to boxers, she into her panties, and pulling on one of his old shirts. He couldn’t help smile when he saw it.

They each set their own alarm, and turned off their respective lights. She then curled up to his side, and his arm held her close as he kissed the top of her head. “Good night,” he told her as he drifted off to sleep.

She smiled, snuggled closer, and gave a soft kiss to his chest. “Night, Killian.”

The next afternoon, Emma was up on a chair, taping a streamer to the suite wall as Belle twisted the black and red paper together for her. The room looked really good. It had banners with the charity name and logo, along with one of the Storybrooke Shelter. There were a couple lifesize cardboard cutouts of Killian in uniform around the room as well.

The room was also ready for the staff to bring in the food for later, with the chafing dishes and tables all in place. They just had to finish the streamers and put the balloons up. There was a helium tank
green they wouldn’t need to have to blow them up themselves.

She looked to the brunette. “So, how do you like working for the charity so far?” She took another piece of tape from her arm and went to secure the next loop of streamer.

Belle smiled. “It’s great. It’s a lot of work right now, but I knew that. It’s really nice to be in on the ground floor, especially of a worthwhile cause. Killian cares so much about it; I’ve haven’t seen a founder put so much effort in themselves before.”

Emma smiled. “Yeah, it means a lot to him.”

“To both of you, I’m sure.” She smiled at Emma as they moved the chair to continue to place the streamer.

“It does. But I will admit, I can’t wait for it to slow down a bit; he’s running himself ragged.”

Belle agreed. “He is, though I think we all are. Yourself included. I know I would love to sleep for a week. Will has been working through his list of contacts for donations morning, noon, and night.”

That peaked Emma’s ear. “Do you know Will from prior?”

The other woman blushed slightly, and Emma didn’t miss it. “Oh, no. We just meet through this job. But we’ve been working together on the set up, and gotten to talk a little here and there. Merida usually forces us to sit down and take a fifteen minute lunch, and actually dinner lately.”

“Oh, well that’s good. I was worrying that Killian wasn’t getting to eat.”

“Actually, he and Lily haven’t been there much this week.” Belle said as she started to open a new pack of streamers. “They have been working together on the set up, and gotten to talk a little here and there. Merida usually forces us to sit down and take a fifteen minute lunch, and actually dinner lately.”

“So...what do you think of Lily?” Emma asked and then wish she hadn’t. “Sorry, nevermind.”

Belle stopped and smiled at Emma, “No worries. I honestly don’t have much to answer. I don’t know her that well. She keeps to herself, and isn’t around much. She keeps herself busy, is out at the interviews, talking to her contacts, or working. From what I have seen, she seems to know what she is doing. Knows the right people.”

Emma nodded in agreement. “Seems she does.”

“Though I admit, she could be a better people person.” Belle looked down, but Emma could tell she was trying not to smile.

“Isn’t that the truth,” Emma told her and started laughing, which had Belle relax and she started to laugh as well.

Just before four, the kids were ushered into the suite. All of them were so excited to be there, and couldn’t seem to wait. They rushed to the windows to get a look out at the track. A few moments later, Merida, Mulan, and Will came in, all in jeans and the charity t-shirt as well. Granny got all the kids to settle down, and not long after Killian walked into the room, followed by Lily, some press, a photographer, and most of his crew. Emma saw him first, and they shared a smile, as all the kids had their back to him.

“Hello, everyone,” he said, causing the kids to turn, and then run up to him.

Emma watched as he gave high fives, hugs, pats on the back, etc to all the kids. He posed for
pictures with each one of them, and then they got a couple group photos. Some with just the kids, some with the kids and the shelter staff including her, and then a shot with them all and the staff from the charity and his crew.

The reporters talked to each of the charity staff, some of the kids, his crew, and then Killian individually. The crew headed out to get back to the garage as soon as each was done talking to reporters. A while later, once he was done answering questions and the reporters moved on, Killian caught sight of Emma and started to head over to her. His arm was caught by Lily. “Hey, Killian, you need to head out, and get over to introductions.”

His head dropped. “Right. Just one minute.”

He started to walk forward again, and Lily called after him. “You’re already going to have to run.”

Killian didn’t stop and reached around Emma, she leaned back against him, and he smiled. “I have to run. I’m going to be late.” He squeezed her tight, and kissed the top of her head. “I’ll see you later, love.” Then he let go, and rushed out of the room, waving and yelling goodbye to everyone.

Emma watched him leave, glad when Lily had to stay behind. She then turned back to the kids, and answered questions. As soon as the drivers started the engines, Emma’s friends came to the suite as well. The teenage boys were really happy when they saw Ruby. Emma had to muffle her laugh with her hand, but Ruby handled it well, and kept the boys talking as they gave her their utmost attention. Soon, the staff herded the kids to their seats for the race, and reminded them they had to raise their hands if they wanted to get up to use the bathroom.

At lap 102, after only a few flat tire cautions, the field was starting green flag pit stops and Killian was up to sixth place. The shelter staff were taking the kids to the food line, row by row. There were hamburgers, hotdogs, nachos, popcorn, and cookies, among a lot of other things to eat.

Once the boys were in the food line, Ruby headed over to Emma. “Well, they all look happy.”

Emma smiled at her friend. “This is a huge deal for them.”

“And for Killian and you. But for some reason, I don’t see that you are all that happy. What’s wrong?”

Emma tried to grin at her friend. “I’m fine.” Her eyes than raked over the room, but Ruby didn’t miss the daggers that shot from her eyes as they landed on Lily.

“Whoah, girl. Please don’t ever look at me like that.”

Emma laughed lightly, “Well, don’t try to steal Killian from me, and you won’t have to worry.”

Ruby pulled her arm, and got her to look at her, “Wait, what? Back up, what happened?”


“Emma, Killian would never…”

The blonde raised her hand. “I know, I know. That’s what everyone tells me. You, Tink,” she motioned at her friend across the room helping the kids through the food line. “Mary Margaret, and you. I just have this...feeling.”

“Okay. Tell Killian.”
Emma sighed. “I did.”

“And?”

“He says she hasn’t tried anything. That she’s not exactly a people person, but that she is doing her job.”

“You don’t believe him? Emma…”

She could hear the scolding in Ruby’s voice. “It’s not that I don’t believe him. It’s just that he’s…so…”

“Blind? Trusting?” Emma nodded and Ruby laughed. “That’s kinda your fault you know.” The surprised look from the blonde had Ruby laughing harder. “He was a bit more of a cynic before you.”

Emma sighed, and turned to continue watching the race, as she saw Killian move up to fifth place. “So it’s all my fault?”

Ruby shook her head, and wrapped her arms around her, hugging Emma to her side. “If it’s any help, he’s a whole lot happier.”

That made Emma really smile. “A bit.”

They continued watching the race and everyone was surprised when Jefferson came in first, followed by Eric, and then Phillip got third by a hair’s breadth in front of Killian. Her friends said their goodbyes and rushed out of the suite to get back to their own drivers.

A little less than a half hour after the race, they were getting all the kids ready to leave and Killian was back. His hair was still wet from a quick shower, and he said goodbye to each and every kid there, with a pat on the back to Archie and a hug for Tink and Granny as well. When he got to Emma, he hugged her tight, and she nuzzled into his neck. “That went well. The kids had a blast,” she told him.

He grinned, and held her tighter and kissed the top of her head. “I’m glad. I have just a couple more interviews. Meet you at home?”

She nodded. “Yeah. Belle and I will be here a little bit longer; I’m going to help her take all the decorations down, so we can save most of them.”

“Perfect. Thank you for all your help, love.”

She pushed back to look up at him. “Hey, it was a pleasure. You know I like to help with all this.” She was about ready to stand on her toes to kiss him, when a throat cleared behind them.

“Excuse me. Killian, you have an appointment in less than ten minutes.”

Emma closed her eyes and gritted her teeth at the sound of Lily’s voice. Killian leaned in, and whispered in her ear, “Just a few more hours.” He then placed a kiss on her cheek and left with the other woman.

Emma sighed to herself, shook her head, and turned to Belle, who gave her a reassuring smile as the two began to clean up.

Due to late-night news segments, Killian didn’t make it home until after midnight. He found Emma,
asleep in their bed, one of his T-shirts on. He shed his clothes, down to his boxers, and quietly got into bed in the darkened room, trying not to wake her. She had work the next morning, and luckily for him, he was actually going to be able to sleep in. He was looking forward to it after the week he had, but God, did he miss her.

He moved under the covers and slid across the bed to her side. Slowly, he curled up behind her, and gently placed his arm around her and a soft kiss to her neck, and nuzzled his nose into her hair. “Love you,” he told her sleeping form as quietly as possible, before he drifted off into his own dreamland.

Emma woke up just before her alarm, with her head on Killian’s chest, and she gave a smile. She had no clue when he came in, but her body must have known since she had gravitated towards him in sleep. Part of her wished he would have woke her up, but now she needed to get ready for work, and she didn’t want to wake him. She placed a soft kiss to his cheek, turned off her alarm and headed to the bathroom to get ready for work.

Hours later, Killian woke up to find the other half of the bed cold, and his eyes squinted to see the time. It was almost ten o’clock. “Bloody hell,” he sat up, and stretched. “Guess I really was tired.”

He found his way into the kitchen, smiled at the still-warm pot of coffee that Emma left him, and poured himself a cup, then took a look at his phone. He had two missed calls and three texts from Lily. He groaned and looked at the texts.

LP: The realtor is wondering when we want to see the locations they picked. Call me.

LP: I talked with the realtor. Good prices, but might go quick. Call me.

LP: Still time to see a couple tonight. Will that work?

He ran a hand over his face; he forgot all about looking for the charity headquarters and getting out of the Mills racing location. He sent a quick message to her.

KJ: I can be ready and there in an hour.

He didn’t even have to wait a minute for a response, as he took another sip of coffee.

LP: He’ll meet us @ 4 @ Mill’s Racing. Has 3 places lined up to look at.

Well, it gave him a little more time to wind down, but he knew it would cut into his night as well. He debated. On one hand it would mean another late night; On the other hand, it would get it done sooner, and wasn’t something looming over his head. So he texted back his answer.

KJ: Ok. I’ll be there.

He tugged at his hair, and sent a text to Emma.

KJ: Realtor meeting @ 4 to see 3 buildings.

He thought about asking her to see if she wanted to go, but thought better of it. He didn’t want to make her leave work early.

KJ: Late dinner? I’ll pick up something.

He finished his coffee, and put the mug in the dishwasher, as his phone beeped.

ES: Don’t worry. I’ll stop and get pizza. Good Luck.
He smiled, made himself something to eat for brunch, and then headed over to the living room to catch up on some TV he missed that Emma was able to watch while he was busy. That way they would be able to watch the next one together. Then at three, he got ready and headed out.

The first building they went to see was close to the shop and absolutely gorgeous; however, the rent was not. It was one thing if they were a for-profit business, trying to impress clients; it was another matter altogether for a charity. He flat-out told the realtor no, and double checked the parameters that Lily had given the other dark-haired man, who insisted they call him Arthur.

He recalled the price points, which he knew this was outside of, but it fit the location and space requirements, and wouldn’t need any remodeling. So he wanted to show them anyway.

Killian wanted to roll his eyes. “This isn’t the Property Brothers; I already know we will need to do some work. So how about you just show me the ones that we will have to remodel that are in our budget.”

The man looked a little miffed by the comment, but agreed and drove them to the next property on the list. It was still close to the shop; however, it was in horrible condition. He wasn’t even sure if it would pass fire codes. The amount of work to get it up to par would be drastic, and the owner was not willing to make any concessions. With another decisive no, they headed to the last one that night.

This one was not near the shop; it was almost a half hour away, and in the wrong direction for his home or even the shelter. He complained at the location before they even got there. But Arthur wanted him to see the place anyway.

The place was nice; it would only need a little bit of work. The rent was also very reasonable. “If you could get something like this, in the area we want, then it would be perfect. But the location is completely impractical.”

“Well,” the man started, “I can see that for you it might be. But how often will you actually be there?”

“He has a point,” Lily started. “I mean, do you see yourself, after all the initial setup, coming in that often?”

Killian blinked twice. “Yes. I will want to be here, for numerous reasons. As will my crew, Emma, and even Regina.”

“Well, the owner of this building has other buildings. Closer to Mills Racing. Let me see what I can find with them and negotiate. Also, now that I have a better eye for what you are looking for, I’ll make sure to stay in the price range and area. However, I can’t guarantee how much work might be needed.”

“Just as long as it’s not a complete tear down.”

“I actually know someone in construction that can come with us to give an estimate on remodeling costs. Would you like me to have him come with us next time?”

“Percival?” Lily asked Arthur, and on his nod she turned to Killian. “I’ve worked with him prior. He does really good work.”

Killian took a deep breath. “Okay. Let’s have him with us then.”

“Perfect. I’ll get with him, and see what time he has available, and I’ll reach out to…” He looked between them and Lily chimed in.
“Me, and I’ll see what fits best in our calendars.”

They walked back to Arthur's car and got in so he could drive them back to the shop, where they had left their own. Killian looked at the time, and groaned to himself; it was almost nine, and with the long drive back, it would be close to ten before he was home. He shot off a quick text to Emma.

KJ: Sorry. About an hour or so before I get home. Tonight was a bust.

He tuned back into what the other two were talking about. “Let’s try to get this done as soon as possible.”

“Agreed,” Lily responded from the back seat, as a ding on his phone sounded. He looked at the text from Emma.

ES: Sorry to hear that. Pizza in fridge. I’ll probably be asleep. Work was crazy.

He frowned to himself. Another night not seeing each other. This needed to stop.

KJ: Sleep well, love. Good night if I don’t see you in time.

By the time he got home it was after ten, he checked to see if Emma was still awake or not before he even headed into the kitchen. The bedside light was still on, as was the TV, but Emma was fast asleep. He turned off the TV, pulled the covers over her, pushed the hair off her face and behind her ear, and then kissed her forehead. “Night, Emma. Love you.” He said softly, and then turned off the light as he went into the kitchen to grab his late dinner.

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Tuesday was almost a repeat of Monday. Turned out that Percival wouldn’t be able to be there until after five due to another job he was working on. Killian had tried to just go see it without him, during the day, but Lily had told him the experience could save them a lot more money in the long run.

Killian was to the point of just throwing money at it himself; he missed his girlfriend for crying out loud. He could tell that Emma was growing impatient as well, though she was doing her damndest to be supportive. He couldn’t take much more.

Tuesday had been a bit more productive than Monday. All the places were in the desired location, and all of them were within the range of approved rent. But there were various issues with each place. Either the layouts would need to be completely redone for what they needed, or the places were in extreme disrepair, either of which would cost a lot more money than they really wanted to remodel.

Percival did seem to know what he was talking about. However, he took a long time to look at each place, so much so, Killian almost thought it was on purpose. But again, it was no such luck. By the time he got home, he was a mess from all the dirt—and even cobwebs from some of the places—that he insisted he needed to take a shower before he came close to Emma. She had managed to stay awake, even though he got in at almost eleven, but she was fast asleep by the time he got out of the shower.

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On Wednesday, Emma decided to take matters into her own hands and called Belle.

“Good morning. Lost boys and Girls Foundation. This is Belle; how can I help you?”

Emma smiled at the woman’s chipper voicer. “Hey, Belle it’s Emma. Why do they have you answering phones?”

“Just for now, until we get some others, the four of us take turns.”
“Four of you?” Emma’s brows shot up, but there were five.

“Yeah, Lily isn’t around enough to…” She cut herself off. “Anyway, what can I help you with?”

“I have a favor to ask.”

“Okay, shoot.”

“Can you find out what time and what buildings they are going to be seeing tonight? I really miss Killian, and even if it’s just going through commercial buildings, I’d at least like to be together.”

“Aww, of course. Let me see what I can find out. I’ll give you a call back.”

“Perfect! Thank you, Belle.” Emma smiled as she said her goodbyes and got off the phone.

It was about an hour later when Belle called her back. “Hello, Belle.”

“Hi. So, I had to look at her calendar and make a few calls, but I got the details. Are you ready for them?”

Emma grabbed a pen and her notebook, “Ready.” Belle gave her the time they were meeting at Mills Racing, which of course was at 4:30 before Emma got off from work. But, she got the addresses of the three places they were going to look at, she could probably make it to second one before they left. “Thank you so much; you are fantastic.”

“No problem, Emma. Hope that helps. Let me know if you need anything else.” The women said their goodbyes, and Emma got back to work with a smile on her face.

The first location was another bust, for so many reasons, Killian didn’t even want to think about it. As they drove up to the second location, he had to admit he was cautiously optimistic. The place was on the edge of where they wanted it to be, but close enough not to complain, especially with the price. The outside looked in good condition as well; now he just had to see the inside.

It was a two-story building, and their suite would occupy both floors. The bottom floor would be perfect for the volunteers, and the upper floors for operations. The second floor was floor-to-ceiling glass windows and looked really nice. Lily grabbed his arm as they entered to pull him into the large area that could be used for a call center; he had to agree that it looked good. The place looked to be already partially remodeled.

It was her hand on his arm, that lingered today more than usual, that had caught his attention. When she had done it at the prior place, she had tripped and he caught her, and steadied her. Another time she had walked into a large cobweb, and screamed, and fell into his side. He had pushed the thought away that it was just her being scared.

But now that they were are the new place, her touching wasn’t because she was afraid. His thoughts went to what Emma had told him weeks ago, and he started to pay closer attention. If he could get her alone for a second he could request that she stop, but he didn’t want to call her on it in front of the other two men. He tried to tell himself that it was just that they had been around each other a lot and she felt comfortable. He would just need to remind her that he was her boss, and very much unavailable.

His thoughts drifted away as he got to the second floor; it was amazing. The windows gave a pretty nice view. He turned to Arthur. “It looks like someone was in the middle of remodeling it, why did they stop?”
The man smiled. “The rest of the funding they had fell through, and they couldn’t finish the contract. The owners are looking for someone to fill the space quickly, and that’s part of the reason the cost is so good.”

“I see,” he commented as he looked at the offices that were on that level. He turned to Percival. “How much to get everything operational?”

The man looked around. “Let me go over it a bit and I’ll let you know. But from my first observation, I would say very minimal, mostly cosmetic.”

“If you’ll excuse us, I’ll go with him.” Arthur waved at the space. “Feel free to look around.”

Killian sighed, it was actually the perfect time to say something to Lily. He just wasn’t sure how to start.

“Oh, look at this.” She said and grabbed his hand and pulled him into the corner office. “This would be perfect for you.” She said and then dropped his hand and walked towards the window looking outside.

He sighed, and walked towards it, head down as he tried to figure out how to phase what he wanted to say. “Lily, I think we need to talk.” He said finally looking at her.

She turned from looking out the window, and smiled up at him. “I agree. I feel the same,” she said and launched herself at him. Her lips were on his in an instant.

Emma halted in her tracks as she looked up at the big glass windows and her heart dropped to her stomach. Her hand reached out for the bug to steady herself as she saw Killian and Lily together, her arms around his neck, kissing.

She closed her eyes, not wanting to see anymore. She opened her car door, sat down, and did what she does best: run.

Point Standings:

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Chapter 28

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Killian overcame the shock from the kiss, and pushed Lily away, and took a step back. His hand instantly wiping his mouth, as he shouted, “Bloody hell, why did you do that?!?!”

Lily’s eyes widened, and she started sputtering, “I thought…” She looked down, “When you said…I…”

“You thought wrong. You KNOW I have a girlfriend; you KNOW about Emma.” He was over the repulsion, and now he was just angry. “Why would you ever think—”

She cut him off. “I’m so sorry. I read everything wrong. I thought. I heard the rumors about…” She looked back down. “Killian. I’m sorry. I really am.”

He wanted to fire her on the spot, but his anger was out of control, and he didn’t want to say something he shouldn’t. It would be better to talk with Regina, and have her HR department deal with Lily. He took a deep breath, trying to steady himself. “I need to get out of here. We’ll talk about this tomorrow.” He started to head down the stairs, and she called after him.

“Killian, I’m really sorry. What about the building?”

He turned to look at her, the anger in her eyes had her still where she was. “This will not be the location.” There was no way he would work in a building with the memories of that kiss with Lily tainting it. “I’m calling a cab.” With that, he left Lily, Arthur, and Percival behind, and walked out of the building. It didn’t take long for a car to pick him up, and drive him back to Mills Racing, to grab his own car, so he could drive home. He had to tell Emma what happened.

His fist hit his steering wheel, he was furious. Emma had told him she didn’t trust Lily. He trusted Emma, but he had never thought in a million years that Lily would kiss him. He thought he had
made clear to everyone, not just Lily, that he was with Emma. Why would she ever...? His knuckles turned white on the steering wheel. He had to calm down before he got home and talked with Emma.

He had the car call Regina, and he got her voicemail, so he left a message. “Regina. It’s Killian. It’s urgent, and about Lily. She…” He didn’t want to say it, but he had to. “She kissed me tonight. Why, I haven’t a clue. I want her gone. I can’t work with her after that. We’ll talk tomorrow.”

He made it into his garage, and immediately noticed that Emma’s car wasn’t there. He looked to his watch; it was much too late for her to still be at work. He fished out his cell as he walked into the house and dialed her number.

Emma’s apartment door opened, and she walked in with two bags of luggage, her eyes red and face streaked with tears. Just as she closed and locked the door, the sound of “Gimmie Some Lovin” played. It was Killian’s ring tone. She had set it up to tease him after they watched Days of Thunder together, only it backfired because he would sometimes just call her to hear it go off and start kissing her wildly.

Her lip quivered at the memory, and hit the button to stop the music and send him to voicemail. She then slid down her door, and collapsed on the floor. Her body heaved as she started to sob.

After the crying slowed, her curiosity won out and she listened to the message “Emma. I just got home, and you aren’t here. You don’t usually stay out this late on a work night. I’m a bit worried. Please call or text me. Love you.”

Her heart constricted at the last two words, but her mind flashed back to seeing him kiss Lily. She erased the message, and the tears started again. He didn’t sound like there was anything wrong, as if it was just another day. How many nights had he been with Lily, and then came home to her? The thought had her heart breaking even more. It was like Walsh all over again, only this was so, so, so much worse.

After leaving the message, he headed into the bedroom; the need to change clothes and take a shower was extremely prevalent. But once he got to the bathroom, he instantly saw that her sink was bare. All her things were gone. His heart dropped, and he turned around and headed to her closet. It was like a tornado had gone through it. Some of her stuff was still there, but quite a bit gone. Drawers were open, things were on the floor; some hangers were left, others gone. She had packed in a hurry, not even caring how she did so.

He immediately tried to call her again, but it once again went to voicemail. “Emma. I saw your
closest, I know you...left.” He had a hard time saying that last word, and his voice cracked. “Please call me. I love you; please talk to me.”

He disconnected that call, and then called David.

“Hey, Killian, what’s up. It’s a tad late…”

Killian didn’t let him finish. “Do you know where Emma is?”

That got the other man to stop, his voice turning concerned. “What? No? What’s wrong?”

Killian ran a hand over his face. “She packed her bags and she left. She’s not returning my calls.”

“Okay, okay. Let me call her.”

“Thanks, mate.” With that he hung up the phone and sat down on Emma’s side of the bed. He reached for her pillow and hugged it close while willing his phone to ring and have it be her.

Emma somehow managed to change into her pajamas, and was on her couch drinking directly from the open bottle of wine she found in one of the packed boxes in her kitchen. She was already halfway through the bottle when her phone rang.

This time, it was the theme of *Harry Potter*, otherwise known as David’s ringtone. With how late it was and in her drunken state, she immediately answered, worried something might be wrong with Mary Margaret and the baby. “David? What’s wrong?”

He let out a sigh of relief. “I should ask you that. Where are you? Are you okay? Killian is worried sick.”

At the sound of her boyfriend, or was it ex-boyfriend now, the tears started once again, she started sobbing. “It’s over.”

“What? Why?”
“I can’t...I don’t want…” She hiccuped through her tears. “Just...leave me alone.” She disconnected the call, and threw her phone to other side of the couch, and took another long drink of the wine, still attempting and failing to numb the pain.

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Killian’s head jerked up as the phone rang, and he saw it was David. “Anything?” he asked, desperate.

“I got a hold of her. So she’s okay...well, no she’s not. But she’s safe.” David sighed, “She’s drunk, and told me that the two of you were over. Which, I assume is news to you.” Killian wasn’t sure what was happening, but David continued. “Whatever this is between you, you better fix it, Jones.”

“Thanks for your help, Dave. I just...at least I know she’s not hurt.” With that, they ended the call, and he started pacing. As the worry over her well-being settled, his brain caught up with everything that happened. “Bloody fuckin’ hell,” he yelled as he grabs his keys, and ran to his car. He wasn’t sure how, but Emma must have seen the kiss Lily gave him. It was the only explanation.

He drove over to Emma’s apartment, assuming that is where she went. They hadn’t yet moved everything out of it, as she still had some time on the lease. He flew up to the building and tried to ring through. It was too late at night, and no one was coming or going for him to sneak on in like usual.

However, either she really wasn’t there, or—more likely—was not answering the call to allow him in. He sat down on the step and called her again from his phone. At the beep from her message, he began. “Emma, what you saw isn’t...what it looked like. I swear. Lily...kissed me. I pushed her away. I made it clear I wasn’t interested. Emma, you were right about her. Please, talk to me. We can work this out. I love you. Please.” He hung up, and sent her a text message as well, saying the same.

He waited over two hours to get a call, a message, or for someone to come in or leave the building. But it was just after one in the morning, and he knew at this point, it wasn’t going to happen. He finally decided to head home and find her at the shelter tomorrow.

==∞∞∞∞∞==

Killian waited until it was an hour after she would start work; he didn’t want her to leave if she saw his car. But when he pulled up, he didn’t see the yellow bug anywhere. He had a bad feeling, but he went inside anyway. He checked Emma’s office, but the light was off and door was locked. He then found Tink sitting at her desk, and knocked on the door.

The blonde looked up and smiled, “Hey, you. Did Emma send you to get some of her cases to work
on?” She shook her head, and stood up. “She needs to learn not to work when she’s sick.”

His heart sunk at the news. “She called in sick?”

Tink stopped, and then looked him over. “You didn’t know she called in sick. What happened?”

Killian looked down shaking his head. “She left.”

Tink’s eyes widened. “What?”

He looked back up at her, “Tink, please, if you hear from her will you let me know? Emma saw something, and what she thinks it was...it...wasn’t. If she would just talk to me…” He sighed. “Please, Tink.”

“I will, Killian.” He nodded and started to walk out of her office, but she called after him, making him stop. “You know what happened with Walsh, right?” He nodded again, the lump in his stomach growing. “Take that into account. That past hurt I’m sure is playing into this.”

“I know. That’s why I need to talk to her.” With that, he turned and headed out. He had to go talk with Regina and take care of another mess by the name of Lily.

Emma pulled out of the gas station where she had just filled up her car and grabbed some junk food. She wasn’t exactly sure how far away she was from home, but it didn’t feel far enough. With the sound of Killian’s ringtone, she reached over, turned off her phone and flung it into the passenger seat, and then turned the music up as she drove further and further away.

Killian walked straight for Regina’s office and went inside, shutting the door behind him. She finished her phone call and turned to him. “Killian. What happened?” She then held up her hand, “Wait, let me get Kathryn on the phone.” She immediately called Kathryn, and then put her on speaker phone. “Okay, with our legal counsel present, what happened?”

He couldn’t sit, and started to pace as he told them the story of what happened yesterday. When he got done, he turned to Regina. “I want her gone. I promised Emma that if Lily tried anything, I would fire her.”
“Killian…” Regina started, but Kathryn cut her off.

“We can’t fire her.”

“What?” Killian asked. “After what she did? Isn’t there like sexual harassment laws? At-will employment?”

Kathryn sighed over the phone. “Were there witnesses? Besides Emma, who currently won’t talk to you?”

“No. Arthur and the other guy were downstairs. But—” he replied.

“So it’s he said vs. she said. This was the first instance?” Kathryn asked.

“Yes, but she kissed me! She knows about Emma.”

“But she apologized afterwards and implied she thought you felt the same.”

“Obviously she thought wrong!” Killian was steaming angry and looked to Regina for help.

“Killian. She could claim that you came on to her. She could claim so many things. She has apologized. And whether we like it or not, in this case, you are the guy and she is the girl, and well...the courts are more likely to believe a man came onto a woman than the other way around. If we fire her, she could claim wrongful termination. She could claim retaliation, because she didn’t fall for your sexual advances. She could use your past history against you.” Regina gave him a sympathetic look. “She could bring up Milah, and how you had an affair with a married woman.”

He kicked the wastebin over, and clenched his fists. “How can I work with her after this?”

“You won’t.” Katheryn answered. “We’ll have another member of the team work with her and report to you.”

Killian rolled his eyes, and Regina caught it. “I know it’s not ideal, but...Killian she could drag you
and the charity through the mud.” He finally sat down in defeat, and Regina ended the call with Katheryn. “I’m sorry, Killian.” When she sensed he was calm enough, she called in Belle, and they told her she would need to check out the locations with Lily from now on.

Once the meeting was over, Killian and Belle left the office, and continued to talk about the changes. Belle stopped. “I have to tell you something.” She looked down. “I have a feeling this is all my fault.”

“What are you talking about?” he asked.

“Emma called me yesterday and asked for the addresses of the buildings that you were all going to see. She was missing you, and I called Arthur and got the information and gave it to her. If I hadn’t...”

His heart ached even more from Emma trying to find time with him. “Belle, this isn’t your fault. But I need to know, did you ask Lily or just Arthur?”

“I just asked Arthur. I didn’t tell Lily anything.”

He nodded, and left to head back to Emma’s. He waited around, but it didn’t take long to get inside as someone else exited. He tried her door, but with no answer he headed to the garage. Her car wasn’t in her space. He hung his head as he walked to his car and went home.

He had little hope of it happening, but when he saw she wasn’t at the house either, his heart broke a little more. He didn’t want to, but he had to fly out that night for the Pocono race. While packing, he left more messages, but he wasn’t shocked when he didn’t get any responses by the time he was picked up to head to the airport.

Emma walked through the door of the tiny cabin, and dropped her bags by the couch. She turned to look out the windows, at the lake with the mountains behind them. She then went back to the car to grab the bags of groceries she picked up at a small market in the tiny town, and headed back inside. She unloaded the bottles of wine, bars of chocolate, pints of ice cream, pop tarts, and frozen pizzas, and put them away in the small kitchen area.

She had rented the place for the rest of the week and the weekend; she wasn’t sure if it would be enough time. She just had to get away from everything and think. Well, actually not think. She reached for the corkscrew and opened one of the bottles. Once open, she grabbed a bar of chocolate
and headed outside to sit by the water, and try not think about how alone she felt.

The next day, Killian spent every free moment trying to call and text her. He also texted David and Tink. But they hadn’t heard from her. He spent barely any time in the car at practice, and as soon as he could he was out and went to find Ruby and the others.

He found the girls first, since the guys were still in practice. Ruby came up and gave him a hug. “Still no word, huh?”

He shook his head no. “And I guess she hasn’t reached out to any of you either, huh?”

“Nope.” Ruby replied and the others shook their heads. “And we have all tried to call her, but they go straight to voicemail. She has to have turned her phone off.”

He sat down in an open chair, and Ruby sat back down in hers. Ashley patted his shoulder. “Just give her a little time, and when she calms down, you can explain it. Everything will be fine.”

Killian folded his arms on the table, and put his head down on them. “She shouldn’t have to be calming down. We shouldn’t have to go through this. But she won’t even let me talk to her.”

The girls exchanged looks, and they continued to try and cheer him up.

Qualifying the next day went just as bad as practice. No matter what Robin said, or how much he tried to lift his spirits, all Killian could think about was her, and how much he missed her, and how he should be out there looking for her. Of course, he had no idea where she was, but he felt like he had to do something. He qualified in nineteenth place and he didn’t care.

He left the garage before anyone could stop him, headed back the RV, and opened up the bottle of rum. He poured two fingers’ worth, downed it, and went back for more.

The next morning, he went into the garage still wearing his sunglasses and Robin sighed. “Please tell me it’s just a hangover and that you aren’t still drunk.”

“I’m not a bloody idiot,” he said and then took a large drink of his coffee from his travel mug.
Later on as the race started, and all the other drivers hugged their wives and girlfriends, he felt just how alone he was. Prior to Emma, it hadn’t really bothered him, but now...now he knew what he was missing.

Emma clicked through the channels on the cabin’s TV, trying to avoid the race. Her curiosity kept getting to her and she would click over to it, but then she would quickly turn it before she got to see how he was doing. She kept telling herself that she didn’t want to know.

However, she finally caved and watched the last few laps of the race. She was shocked to see him finish the race in twenty-second place. Seeing him get out of the car made her heart hurt. However, when he walked away from reporters, refusing to answering questions, she could see the look on his face—she could clearly see the pain there.

She crept over to her phone sitting on the table and looked at it, debating if she should turn it on and listen to the messages or not. She took a deep breath, picked it up, and her finger hovered over the power button. Her mind replayed the kiss again, and she quickly sat the phone back on the table, clicked off the television, and crawled up in bed, tears already hitting the pillow.

Killian woke up to the sound of his phone and he quickly sat up to answer it, hoping it was Emma. “Hello?”

“Hi, Killian.” Came Tink’s voice.

He groaned, and shut his eyes to the light, her voice too high for his ears and pierced his brain. He shouldn’t have finished the bottle of rum last night on his flight home.

“Good to hear you, too,” she said. “I just thought you should know. Emma called in again. She is using the last two vacation days she has, and taking the rest of the week unpaid.”

“What?” He couldn’t believe that she was doing that. She loved her job, but she was risking it, and her ability to even pay her bills in her attempt to avoid him.

“You heard me. I don’t know where she is, she didn’t call me. She just left a message on Archie’s phone, and when he called back, it went straight to voicemail.”
“Thanks for the update, Tink.”

“No problem.”

Killian ended the call and found his way into the kitchen. He made himself some breakfast and coffee, trying to shake off the hangover. He was home now, and he needed to figure out what to do to try and find Emma. He went over to the couch and opened his laptop. He spent close to two hours crafting an email, and sent it to her personal and work emails. He just hoped she saw it, and soon.

With that done, he headed into the bedroom, looked into her closet, and started to straighten what was left. He refused to believe she wouldn’t be using the space ever again.

On Wednesday afternoon, he answered a call from Belle, who asked to meet him for coffee because she needed to talk to him.

He met her at the coffee shop, and each grabbed a cup before they sat down. “You don’t look so good,” she told him.

“Yeah, well. Not sleeping, cause she’s not there. Drinking too much to try and not feel the pain. But….you know what...nevermind.” He sighed. “What’s going on, Belle? Why did you need to meet me?”

“The more I am around Lily, the more I think that something is going on. Something isn’t right. I can’t put my finger on it. But, these contacts of hers. They are almost too friendly. Also, the prices we paid for those shirts, for web design. They weren’t great deals, they actually seem pretty high.”

“Okay, keep looking, and keep your eyes open. Let Regina or me know of anything that you find that is out of the ordinary. Also, can you get quotes from other vendors that would have been able to produce the same products, and get a price for it? I’d like to have that information.”

“Will do. Also, we looked at a few other buildings, but I truly don’t think you would like them. I just don’t like those two guys she has, something isn’t right with them.”

That got his attention. “Are you not feeling safe? If that is an issue—”
She stopped him. “No, no. It’s not that. I just feel like they’re hiding something from me. And I…” She looked down.

“Belle? What?”

“I may have started looking online for places myself, with the criteria you wanted. I’m not sure why they are having us look at some of these locations, when there are places much closer and cheaper that would work.”

He finally had something to smile about. “Can you send me a list of those places that you found?”

She smiled back. “Will do. Oh, and I better get back to work. Thanks for meeting me here.”

“No, thank you.” He watched her leave, and then picked up his phone and called Regina as he headed to his car. He quickly told her what Belle had told him.

“Interesting. I’ll work with Kathryn and the IT department; we now have reason to tap into her work email and computer. Let’s see what she has up her sleeve.”

Emma was a coward, she knew that; she had called herself that multiple times. She had waited to drive back to her apartment when she knew Killian would be flying to the race in Michigan on Thursday night. She figured she could at least get work done on Friday with him out of the state. It wouldn’t cut into her paycheck so much. It would also be a good test to see if she was emotionally ready to be home. She was pretty sure she wasn’t, but she had to try.

So she was at work not even fifteen minutes when Tink found her. “Emma!” she yelled and basically flew to her and wrapped her in a tight hug. “You’re back,” she said as she squeezed her.

Emma nodded silently, and then Tink pulled back to look at her. “Wait. You’re still upset.”

“Of course I’m still upset. You think I can get over it so quickly?” Emma shook her head. “I just need to be left alone, and try to get through this pile of work,” she said as she ushered her friend out of the office.
“Emma, wait!” She put her foot in the way off the door. “Did you talk with Killian?”

Emma didn’t answer, and tried to push Tink out the door. “There is nothing to talk about.” She said and finally managed to get the door shut, and locked.

Tink pounded on the door. “Emma, it’s all a misunderstanding! You need to talk to him!”

Emma clenched her fists. Yeah, sure it was a misunderstanding. “Go away!” She yelled and then sat at her desk, put her headphones in, turned up the music and started to work.

She started on her emails, fling the ones that had already been taken care of by Ingrid or someone else, and answering some easier ones first. But then she found the one that Killian had sent her. The subject said, “Please Read - I love you.” She swallowed down the lump in her throat hard as the cursor hovered over the email.

Part of her wanted to read the email, see what it was that he could possibly say. But another part of her, the part of her that was abandoned as a child, left by Neal when things went wrong, got cheated on by Walsh, etc. etc., just knew it would be filled with lies. She had fallen for the lies so many times from so many people, and she didn’t want to fall for them anymore, especially from him. And with a determined click, she deleted the email.

Practice went really bad with how distracted he was, his mind on everything but the race; he was just glad he hadn’t hit the wall. Robin had tried to get his mind in the moment, but it wasn’t happening. He was about ready to pull himself from the race. When he saw Regina, he was going to tell her as much, but she came up to him with a smile. “We need to talk.”

He followed her to a quieter location, and she told him what they were finding on Lily. Belle had gotten the costs for some of the things Lily had bought through her contacts, but from other vendors, and those other vendors would have been cheaper, and some for even better quality products.

“However, she is really careful not to use her work email to talk with any of her contacts. Only the invoices go to her email. We are starting to think that she is working with her so-called contacts and getting money on the side when she gives them work. I have Kathryn looking into all these companies and the people that she is dealing with. She is also reaching out to Lily’s old company. If we can prove this is what she is doing, than we’ve got her.”

He breathed a sigh of relief. “Finally, some good news. I really need that.”
“Still nothing from Emma?” she asked.

He shook his head no. “She’s not talking to me, or anyone.”

“I’m sorry, Killian. But she has to surface at some point. Just give her some time.”

He nodded, as Regina patted his shoulder and then headed back to the garage. He shouldn’t have to give her time—she shouldn’t need the time; neither of them should have to feel this way. He tried to focus on what Regina told him, and hopefully, hopefully, he might be able to get a little revenge for what Lily did.

Once he got back to his RV, he noticed a text message on his phone. It was from Tink.

TB: Emma is at work today. She refuses to talk. Good luck.

Even though she was still unwilling to listen to Tink, or call him back, he couldn’t help the smile that came to his face because she was back in town. Though the smile dropped when he realized she was there because he wasn’t.

Emma found herself still in her PJs in the afternoon, eating chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream from the container while flipping through Netflix. She had attempted a *Harry Potter* marathon, but all it made her do was think of the Killian and their trip to the amusement park, and the damn bracelet he got her for Christmas that for some strange reason she was still wearing.

She jumped when she heard the knock on her door and slowly stood up. She knew it couldn’t be Killian, but she still took a look through her peephole to see Mary Margaret. She should have known. “Go away.”

“Nope!” came the chipper reply. “Besides, are you really going to make a pregnant woman stand out here all day, because you know I will. And, can you please open the door, I really need to pee!”

“Damn it,” she said and opened the door for her sister-in-law. The brunette handed over what looked like Chinese food and then ran for her bathroom. Emma sighed, and moved into the kitchen with the food. She stuck her partially eaten ice cream in the freezer, and then opened the take out. The woman certainly knew what she liked to eat and it was all there.
A few moments later as she was plating the food, Mary Margaret walked in. “Much better. I think this little one likes to kick at my bladder,” she said while rubbing her more rounded stomach.

“How far along are you again?”

“About six and half months.”

“Wow. Where does the time go?” Emma said as they both moved into the living room with their food and drinks. She was trying desperately to keep the conversation off herself, but she was also curious. Then the timing came into her mind. “Oh my god, the baby shower is next weekend.”

The brunette nodded. “It is. I’m hoping that you will still be able to make it.”

“Of course I’ll be there! You know that.” Her personal life might have just taken a horrible turn, but she wasn’t going to miss that. Especially since it was next weekend due to Killian’s racing schedule. She forgot that he didn’t have to race next weekend. They ate while Mary Margaret updated her about the sonograms, and what was going on.

“Just you wait ‘til you get to deal with all this.” The woman laughed and Emma instantly got quiet.

“Yeah, I doubt that’s ever going to happen.”

“Emma, I know you want kids, so why—”

“Because!” she yelled, and then stopped herself. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have yelled at you,” she said and stuffed her mouth with an egg roll.

Mary Margaret sighed. “Talk to me.”

She knew her friend wouldn’t stop asking, she was more stubborn than her. “I took a big chance opening my heart to Killian after everything else. I don’t think I’m ever going to be able to do that again. All that happens is I get let down, and I get hurt. I’m just better off by myself.”
“Oh, Emma—”

“Don’t ‘oh Emma’ me.”

Her friend took her hand and squeezed it. “You need to know. Killian has been going crazy trying to find you.” Emma tried to yank her hand away, but she kept a firm hold of it. “No, you HAVE to talk to him. You need to stop running. I don’t know everything that happened, I don’t know exactly what he has to say. But I know he LOVES you. You both deserve to at least talk about this, before you write it off completely.”

“I don’t want to face him. I don’t think I can.” Emma’s voice came out barely audible.

“Have you read his messages, or texts? Or anyone’s?”

“I heard his first one.”

“But not any after? Or anyone else’s?”

She shook her head no. “I know he sent me a lot; I see the number of missed calls, voicemails, and messages when I turn my phone on. I saw the email he sent me. But I can’t...I just can’t bring myself to read it.” She couldn’t bring herself to see him say that it was true, or see the lies, or...she stopped the thoughts. They had already been racing in her head for too long.

Mary Margaret changed the subject, and they started talking about other things, trying to keep Emma’s mind off the issue at hand. But once the plates were in the sink, and she was getting ready to leave, she gave Emma big hug, and while she squeezed tight she said, “You need to read the email, Emma.” She pulled away to look at her. “Before you go further down this path, just read the email. With everything you have both meant to each other, you need to do that.”

She knew if she didn’t agree at least a little, her sister-in-law wouldn’t leave, so she nodded, “Okay, I’ll...think about it.”

It wasn’t until much later that night, and after almost a full bottle of wine, that she finally went to her personal email and opened up the message from Killian.
Emma,

First, please know that I love you. I love you more than anything. You are my world, and without you here, I feel like I’m floating in a meaningless void. I miss you terribly; please, please just talk to me.

Second, what you saw wasn’t real. It was a setup, by Lily, I’m sure of it. I swear to God that I did not kiss her. She bloody hell kissed me. As soon as the shock wore off, I pushed her away. I was disgusted and angry. I have not talked with her or seen her since. I was going to tell you that night, but you were already gone.

Third, I should have fired Lily as soon as you told me you felt something was off with her. I believe your instincts, love. But I had no worries of her making advances with me because I knew they would never work. It just never occurred to me that she would be so bold to try something like she did. I am sorry.

Lastly, please come home. After I write this, I will be tidying up your closet. All you need to do is just bring your bags back and unpack. I’ll help you. You belong here, with me.

We can overcome this, love. Please, just talk to me.

All my love,

Killian

She finished the email with tears streaming down her cheeks. His words, and the wine making her even more emotional. Was it true? Was it all just a mistake? Could she truly believe it?

===∞∞∞∞∞===

Race day was not something Killian wanted to be a part of. He refused to talk to the press, much to Regina’s chagrin. But she didn’t push. The one o’clock race started at the two-mile track. It was 200 laps that only partially took his mind off Emma, with Robin constantly chiming in his ear.

He understood why his crew chief was more talkative than normal—he was trying to keep his head in the race, for which he was grateful, even though it was bloody annoying. However, it was the slight hope that Emma was actually back at work and that they might actually be able to fire Lily that helped his mood enough to move up in the pack and finish in fifteenth.
He was happy for Sean, who won, with Victor and then Jefferson following him, but he didn’t stay after the race. As soon as he was out of the car and had taken a quick shower, he was the first driver out of the track and to the airport flying home.

As soon as he got to the airport back home, a car was waiting for him, and he told the driver to take him directly to Emma’s. Once to her apartment complex, he told the driver to take off. He didn’t care if he had to wait outside all night to have a chance to get inside and see her.

But luckily just as he was getting up to the door, a pizza man left the building and he made it inside. Once at her door, he could hear the television on in her apartment. She was there. He took a deep breath, and then knocked. He listened as the television turned off, or was muted, and he knocked again.

He swore he could hear her steps approach the door, but she was hesitating. “Emma, I know you are there. Please, please open the door and talk to me, love.”

Killian heard the chain being removed, and then the door cracked open. His heart sped up when he saw her face. “Emma—”

Her voice was almost inaudible. “Hi.”

Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - *=leading

#71 - Killian Jones - 543
#8 - Phillip Haven - 562
#36 - Victor Whale - 563
#53 - Sean Herman - 564*
#65 - Eric Sirena - 563
#92 - August Booth - 550
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 496
Chapter 29

He swore he could hear her steps approach the door, but she was hesitating. “Emma, I know you are there. Please, please open the door and talk to me, love.”

Killian heard the chain being removed, and then the door cracked open. His heart sped up when he saw her face. “Emma—”

Her voice was almost inaudible. “Hi.”

Everything he wanted to say just flew out the window at seeing her. She was in her PJs, hair pulled back and messy. She stood quiet and uncertain, but god, did she look beautiful. He stepped towards her, wanting to envelope her in his arms, but she quickly took a step back. The distrust in her eyes hurt him to the core, but he didn’t force it. “Emma.” He swallowed, “Can I come in so we can talk?”

She shifted back and forth on her feet, he could tell that she was trying to decide if she should or not. But she clenched her eyes shut, released a breath, and stepped back along with the door, allowing him entrance into her apartment. He walked in and saw that some of her packed boxes were open, showing that she had needed things out of them, but he clung to the thought that she hadn’t completely unpacked them.

When he got to the center of the living room, he watched as she closed the door, and then came in, but didn’t sit on the couch. He took the opportunity to speak. “I don’t know if you listened to any of my messages or read my texts or emails, but...Emma, what I believe you saw...” His voice caught, his anger flared at the memory and he clenched his fist. “Trust me when I say I did NOT want anything to do with it, with her. I was a completely unwilling participant, and as soon my body could react, I pushed her away.”

Their eyes remained locked the entire time, both trying to read each other’s expressions, as he continued. “I was going to tell you as soon as I got home, but...” He took another breath. “You weren’t there. Then I got worried that something was wrong, because you tell me if you’re going to be late. But then I saw your clothes gone.” His voice cracked at that, he couldn’t help the moisture that started to cloud his vision.

She could tell he was waiting for her to say something, but she couldn’t. Her emotions were all over the place, making it hard for her to try to tell if he was giving her the truth. Part of her just wanted to leap into his arms, and another part just wanted to run away.
She was quiet too long, he could clearly see her indecision, so he decided to keep talking. “I requested that Regina fire her, like we talked about. Like I promised. However, Kathryn spouted some bloody nonsense about how she could file a lawsuit.” He could see her suspicion, and he put up his hands. “I haven’t even seen her or talked with her since it happened. You can ask Regina, you can ask Belle. Belle is working directly with Lily. But, we are getting evidence that Regina believes could lead to Lily’s termination. Your instincts were correct as always, love. Seems she was up to no good.”

She couldn’t help but give a small smile at that. Her gut had been right; she hadn’t been crazy. “What is she doing?” was all she could say. She wanted to roll her eyes at herself. Of course, talk about the easy part of all this. Deflect onto an easier topic.

And he knew exactly what she was doing. Then again, he was pretty good at reading her, but he went with it. At least it had her saying something. “Seems her contacts were too good to be true. We believe she was getting kickbacks from their deals.”

“Let me guess, the so-called deals aren't really deals either,” she responded, her voice still quiet, but she couldn’t hold back the small amount of venom in it due to the other woman.

“Too right you are, love. Right down to the buildings she was trying to get us to lease.” He took a step closer, and reached his hand out for her, but she took a step back, and he sighed.

“Emma...what do I need to say or do? I never wanted her to do that. I never gave her any reason to believe I did. I’ve done everything I can to try and make it right. I’m sorry for not having fired her the moment you said anything. I’m sorry that you had to see it, to witness it, to even for a moment have to believe it was true. What do I need to do for us to move past this...together?”

She looked down, tears forming in her eyes. The problem was, she didn’t know how to move past this. Did she believe him? Yes. But, the feeling of trust, the safe feeling she had before was gone. She wasn’t sure how to just push it all aside, and go back to the feeling she had prior to it all happening. All she felt was uncertainty. She looked back up at him and replied “I don’t know.”

Those three words and the look on her face killed him. The water in his eyes broke free of the dam and ran down his face. He tried to swallow the lump in his throat; he didn’t want to ask the question, but he had to. “Do you still love me?”

He watched her eyes widen, and tears slip down her cheeks as well, but the simple nod of her head had his heart soaring. He breathed a sigh of relief. “I love you so much, Emma.” His hand reached out slowly for her again this time wishing to cup her cheek, but he didn’t force it, he just let it hover,
allowing her decide what to do.

She looked to him and his hand and back, her lip quivering. She wanted to yell at herself for acting like a scared animal, but she couldn’t help it. Her emotions and nerves were a wreck, and to say she was feeling skittish was an understatement. But he waited her out, and slowly she moved forward, and pressed her cheek to his palm, as her other hand came up to the back of his, holding him there.

He needed her in his arms, and he had a feeling she needed it as well, but she was scared. His other arm opened wide, indicating his wish, as his thumb slowly stroked the side of her face. He could tell the moment she made up her mind, the second before she moved into the hug, pressing herself to his chest. Both of their arms wrapped around each other, as she pressed her face to his chest, her tears dampening his shirt as his face nuzzled into the top of her head, smelling her hair.

They stood there for who-knows-how long, just holding onto each other, their arms tight, their fingers gripping as if the other would be pulled away any second. He kissed the top of her head numerous times, whispering how much he loved her repeatedly. It was her that finally broke them apart from her words. “I need to go to the bathroom.”

That caused him to laugh, which also made a giggle erupt from her as well. He smiled, and pulled away just enough to kiss her forehead, “Of course, love. Just don’t lock yourself away from me, please. Being away from you has been...torture.”

“Same here. I just…” She rocked back and forth.

That caused a smile. “Go,” he said, motioning to her bathroom door.

She ran off to the bathroom, and he tried to use the time to calm himself. He took off his shoes, and sat down on the couch. He was angry at the situation; none of this should be needed. Which just made him hate Lily even more, and he couldn’t wait until they could get rid of her from their lives. He was relieved that Emma was at least talking to him, but if he was completely honest, a small amount of that anger was also at Emma. If she had only talked to him, trusted him, confronted him when it happened, they wouldn’t be in this position right now.

He pushed it away as the door opened and she came back out. She was hesitant still, and she moved towards the other end of the couch, “Emma…” he said and opened his arms again, trying to get her to sit next to him. But she didn’t and sat the other end. It felt like the progress of just minutes ago was gone once again. He closed his eyes, and took a breath. “Are you ever going to trust me again?”

With the hesitation from her to say anything, his frustration grew. “This isn’t fair to me, Emma.”
“Excuse me? This isn’t fair to you? Do you have any idea what I have been feeling?”

He took a breath and tried to calm himself. “Emma, I’m not dismissing your feelings. But do YOU have any idea about how I have been feeling? Have you even cared?”

She was caught off guard for a minute by that question. “Well, honestly no. Because, I thought you were the one cheating! I thought you were just upset you got caught!” She stood up on that in a huff.

He forced himself to remain sitting. “Did you ever trust me? Because you were so quick to believe it. Was there ever even a shadow of doubt? You didn’t even let me explain. You didn’t confront me. You just ran, without even talking to me.” He could see her wanting to object but he wouldn’t let her. “Do you have any idea how it felt to know that you left me? That you told your brother we were over? That you wouldn’t listen to me? That I couldn’t get a hold of you? That I knew just how bad you were feeling, and yet I could do nothing about it, because you wouldn’t bloody even talk to me?!” He clenched his fists, and his eyes shut.

“I saw you kissing her! It was pretty damn solid evidence!”

“She kissed me! And if you would have stayed not even a few seconds longer you would have seen me push her away. Or at the least, you could have confronted me, so I could talk to you.” He ran his hands through his hair, tugging on it in frustration. Now that he was talking about it, now that the immediate need to let her know that what she thought was wrong was over, his anger and hurt over her own actions in all of this were taking over. He didn’t want it to, but he wasn’t sure how to stop it either.

“I couldn’t bear talking to you and hearing you confirm it was true. I don’t know what I would do if I heard you tell me you didn’t love me anymore. Hearing you say those words would have killed me!” she yelled back, it immediately quashed his anger.

Those words had him off the couch, his arms around her, and his lips on hers in an instant. Not even a brief second later, she was kissing him back frantically, her arms around his neck pulling him closer. His lips only broke the intensity of the kiss, but with their faces still pressed together, he pledged, “I love you, Emma Swan. That is never going to change.”

Her arms tried to pull him closer, as her lips still tried to kiss and speak at the same time. “Show me,” she pleaded. She needed this, they needed this. It was a desperate attempt to try and erase the whole ordeal from their minds, to find a way to move past the hurt and pain.
He didn’t need any further motivation. He leaned down, his hands moved under her bottom and hoisted her up. Her legs instantly wrapped around his waist as his hands squeezed her cheeks, and pressed her core against his quickly growing arousal as he walked towards her bedroom.

He momentarily pressed her against the door frame to grind his hardness into her. She moaned as her head fell back and his lips found her neck. He sucked and nipped at her skin, leaving his mark. He groaned as her fingers wound through his hair, tugging and pressing him closer as her hips rolled against him. He growled and pulled away from the wall, and walked through her bedroom door and came to the foot of her bed. He hovered over it, and let her drop.

Emma let a small giggle escape as she bounced, and then she was up on her knees, her hands at his pants, trying to get them off quickly. His own hands pulled his shirt over his head, and as she was pulling down his zipper, his hands cupped her face and pulled her lips back up to his. His tongue delved into her mouth, exploring as her own fingers moved into his pants. He hissed as her fingers found their way under his boxer briefs and grasped him tightly.

Killian pulled back from her mouth and then pulled her hands away so he could pull her shirt over her head. As soon as it was off, she then started to remove her pants, and he fiddled with her ponytail holder, which soon found itself on the floor with the rest of their clothes as his fingers ran through her golden tresses. “So damn beautiful.”

She rolled her eyes; she knew she looked like shit, but she just wrapped her arms around him, and kissed him hard. “Clothes off...now,” she said and fell back onto the bed naked, her eyes open, and beckoning him.

He stooped over to push down his pants and underwear in one quick motion, and then stood back up at the foot of the bed. He took his length in his hand and gave it a couple pumps, watching her eyes as he did so. He then leaned over, grabbed her legs, and pulled her down the bed, his one hand on her hip, the other between her legs, letting his fingers trailing over her.

He groaned at finding her wet and ready for him. His eyes looked to hers and he instantly knew foreplay wasn’t needed; hell, it wasn’t wanted by either of them. His hand moved from between her legs to her other hip, as he hoisted her bottom and lined himself up. The head of his cock swiped through her folds, making them both groan. He then looked back up, and when his blue was focused on her green, he started to slide into her hot, tight depths. They both moaned as he moved deeper and deeper inside. Then with one quick thrust, he was buried to the hilt.

Her legs wrapped around his waist, pulling him deeper, making him clench his jaw at the feeling and then he was moving, thrusting in and out in quick, hard strokes. It was as if he was trying to claim
her body with his once again, and she was doing the same. Her back was arching, her legs tightening, trying to get leverage to move against him as well.

Her sounds were getting sharper and closer together as his hips snapped in quick succession. Her hands moved to hold his wrists which were clasping her hips; her fingernails dug into his flesh as she tried to hold on.

He felt her legs start to quiver around him, and with a shove of his hips, he pressed forward, pushing her back up the bed as first one knee and then the other moved onto the bed. She whimpered as he moved her legs back to her chest and then over his shoulders as he leaned over her.

She groaned as the new position changed the angle, allowing him to go deeper. His mouth sucked down the rest of her sounds, as he kissed her again, his hips moving harder and faster into her. Her hands drifted around to his shoulders, allowing her fingers to grip at his back, digging into his shoulder blades as her her body started to shake once again from the buildup.

Their mouths kept connected in open-mouthed kisses, their tongues tasting each other. He continued to plunge in and out of her core, repeatedly, with all he had, until her whole body stilled, shuddering. A scream of his name into his own mouth, the feel of her inner muscles squeezed his own breath from him, and he couldn’t help but fall over the edge with her. He thrust once more, his own body stilling and shuddering as he released himself deep inside of her.

They broke the kiss panting as they tried to come back to themselves. Her legs fell from his shoulders and his face nuzzled into her neck as they lay there, still catching their breath, intimately connected. Minutes passed and then his arms wrapped around her, and pulled her with him as he rolled to his back, with her on top of him. One of his hands was at the small of her back, the other gently combed through her tangled hair as her head rested on his shoulder.

He cleared his throat a little, trying to figure out what to say. “So...need more clarification of how much I love you and want you and no one else? I’d be glad to keep showing—”

She cut him off with a swat to the chest and a small laugh, which was music to his ears. She moved her head to look at him. “Well, it did certainly help move us past that...weird...place...feeling or whatever it was.” She couldn’t describe it, but being with him again, being pressed close to him, hearing his heartbeat in her ear, having his arms around her. It felt...well, it felt like coming home.

He kissed her forehead. “I’ve missed you so much. You belong with me, and I with you. Will you please come back home with me?” He held his breath as he looked down at her. “We’ll move past this...together,” he promised.
She smiled up at him, and it was almost like she could just pretend the last couple weeks never happened. She really did want to just erase them from her memory and move on. She could tell he felt the same. “I wish I could just write off all of ‘that’ has some bad nightmare, but…” She watched as he closed his eyes, his body stiffen, and dread washed over his features. “Hey, hey...Killian.” His eyes popped open, and she could see the worry there. “Just listen to me for a minute.”

She took a breath and continued. “I can’t just forget what happened. And...I don’t want to.” She pressed a calming hand to his chest. “You were right, I should have talked to you. I need to remember what happened, so I remember that when something is wrong, I need to talk about it, not run away from it.” She saw the smile forming on his lips and the hope return to his eyes. “Also, I need to remember it, so it is even sweeter when I see her pay for it.”

He chuckled. “Revenge, love? That’s more my area.”

“Well revenge really. Just, I would love to see the universe dish out some karma and watch her face as she gets fired and can’t do anything about it.”

His smiled got bigger. “I’m pretty sure that will happen very soon, my love.” He swallowed hard. “So, does that mean, you’ll still live with me? That we will...be okay?”

She couldn’t help but smile at the hope in those puppy dog eyes. “Yes. Yes, I’ll still move in with you.” She leaned up and captured his mouth with hers.

When she pulled back to look down at his smiling face, his fingers traveled over her cheek. “So, I know you still have a little time left on your lease, but how about we just move your stuff, and you turn your keys in early?”

She grinned. “Wanting to make sure I can’t run away again?” His other hand came up to scratch behind his ear, and she pulled it away. She knew that was a yes. “I think that’s a wonderful idea.” It was the perfect opportunity for her to try and grasp a future, and stop being scared of it.

Monday and Tuesday, Killian headed to Emma’s apartment after work and they both stayed there to eat dinner and finish packing her apartment. She packed up all the boxes while he cleaned the kitchen and bathroom and then vacuumed. She had insisted she could do it herself, or hire a move-out cleaning company, but he insisted. Just having got her back in his life, he was willing to do just about anything to stay near her; besides, he didn’t really mind.
During the day while Emma was at work, he scheduled the movers to come and pick up her stuff that Sunday, and made sure the space in his house was ready to accommodate her things.

At lunch on Wednesday, they both went with Belle to take a look at one of the buildings that she found. It was vastly better than anything Lily had shown them and in a much better location. But they all agreed to take a look at the other places as well before they made a final decision. Once Emma left to head back to work, Killian went into the shop to check in with Robin when Regina pulled him aside and into her office.

After she shut the door, they both sat down, and she gave him a smile. “First, I’m happy to hear you and Emma have worked things out.”

He grinned and nodded. “Thankfully, we have.” He was trying to forget the whole bloody ordeal, but it was difficult when even the mention of Lily had them both tensing.

“Well, I just wanted to update you. I won’t tell you exactly what, but our IT and HR departments have uncovered more information. Legal is almost ready to pull the plug, and Kathryn is already working on the paperwork.”

He couldn’t contain the joy that washed over him at those words. “How much longer?”

“I’d say less than a week.”

He nodded. “So when do we start looking for a new director?”

Regina held up her hand. “Not yet. We don’t want anything tipping her off. Not until she’s gone. But as soon as she is, I can have my people looking again, unless you have someone in mind?”

“I might, but I need to talk to someone first,” he said and Regina smiled. They both knew exactly who he wanted to talk to. Emma’s gut instinct had been right on the money. That night, after the last box was packed and only the bed linens needed to be pulled from the bed did they talk about it.

“Wait, so they are going to actually fire her?” Emma asked in shock, and then took another bite of her pizza.
He nodded. “Yep. Should be soon. Which, now we have to find a new director, and I have an idea but I wanted to run it past you.”

“Killian...you don’t need to run everything past me.” She didn’t want to make him feel like she had to personally approve of everyone on his staff, though it did make her feel good that he wanted to.

“I trust your instinct, love. I just ask that you tell me what you feel, even if it sounds ‘crazy’.” He said holding up his fingers in quotation marks.

She laughed even though her foot lightly kicked him in the side of the leg for the remark as they sat on the couch. “Fine. Who?”

“Belle,” he said, looking straight at her, wanting to get her first reaction.

The instant smile on her face immediately gave him the answer, and she backed it up. “I think she would be perfect.”

“Me too. Everything that she has been doing lately. She has the right personality for it. Everyone likes her.” Emma nodded in agreement to what he was saying as she continued to munch on her pizza. “So, as soon as Lily is out of the picture, I’ll ask her.”

Emma smiled and laid her head on his shoulder. “Sounds like a good plan.”

Thursday after work, Killian, Emma, and Belle headed to look at the last office building with the realtor. It was maybe a mile from Mills Racing—a slightly older building, but all one floor. There was plenty of parking and it was a standalone building. They wouldn’t have to worry about any other businesses being on the grounds.

After getting out of the car, they took a look at the outside. There was quite a bit of land, with nice green grass and some large trees here and there. “How much of the outside land is for use?” Killian asked.

The man pointed to a far off simple fence on both sides. “Anything in the fence line. So, pretty much everything.”
The three smiled at each other, all of them imagining events they could have with local community kids there, which had Emma speak up. “Can we build outside? Like picnic tables, maybe a small playground?”

The realtor checked his notes. “Per the zoning and the owners, that would be okay. You may want to check with the city just to be sure.”

Belle wrote the notes down in her notebook, as they then headed inside. It was old and probably hadn’t been updated since the late seventies.

“Wow, wood paneling.” Emma mentioned, as they got inside. The walls were covered in it and the cubicles were a similar color, as was the carpet that was also really old and stained. “This will need some updating.”

“True, and the owners know that. Thus why the price is so low, and the first couple of months are free.”

They all took a look around, and Killian spoke first. “The layout it pretty good. It looks like it just needs to get the walls redone, update the breakroom, put in new carpet.”

Emma nodded. “Don’t forget to get rid of the popcorn ceilings.” The four of them laughed at that.

“We were going to have to have different furniture for what the volunteers would do anyway, so all the cubes can go.”

They continued to look through the offices, and each one had large windows looking out onto the property. “So, what do you think?” Killian asked walking up behind Emma and putting his arms around her.

She leaned back into him. “I’m not a contractor, but I have a feeling to fix this place up the way the charity needs it wouldn’t be that much. Coupled with the cheaper rent, it will make the ongoing costs a lot better.”

He nodded in agreement. “I also really like the land outside. Nothing else we have seen has anything like that. And the fact that it would just be the charity here, and not other businesses coming and going.”
She smiled, she liked that, too. “It would make it great, and a whole lot easier for any events you might have planned.”

“Hey, Belle,” he called over to her, and she walked towards them. “Can you check with the city and see about what we can do with the outside? If we can make the improvements, I think this might be the one.”

She grinned. “I’m glad, I think so, too. I’ll give them a call in the morning.”

Belle had told him the good news as soon as she saw him walk into the building. The city would allow them to put in a playground and other things at the office they saw the night before.

“Perfect! Get Lance on the phone, and let him know. I’m sure he’ll be happy to get the sale. Let me know when the paperwork is ready, and I’ll head over to sign it.”

Belle nodded and quickly went back to her office to give the Realtor the good news, as Killian sent a text to Emma also letting her know as well. It was almost lunch time, and after his meeting with Robin, the commotion started.

Two police officers strode up to the receptionist, and instead of asking for someone to come up front, they had her lead them to the back. Killian and Robin moved out of the way for them to pass, and then followed. They weren’t sure what was up, but wanted to be there if they were needed.

The receptionist lead them to an office, and then hightailed it out of the area. Killian couldn’t help the smile that came across his face. Regina came up behind them. “What’s going—”

They both hushed her, and Robin pulled her behind him, as the cops opened the door to Lily’s office. “Lily Paige!” The woman looked up from her desk in shock. “You are under arrest.” the one officer started to read her, her rights, as the other put the cuffs on her.

Killian looked to Regina. “Was this Kathryn?”

Regina shook her head quickly. “No. I don’t know what this is.”
Lily started screaming that she wanted her lawyer and that the police didn’t have a right to do this, though the arrest warrant they had clearly showed otherwise.

Belle and Mulan were also watching from their office doors, and as soon as Lily was out of the building with the two officers, they were over to them. “What happened?” Mulan asked.

Regina was already on her phone calling Kathryn when Killian spoke up. “Karma.”

Belle and Robin started laughing as Mulan looked at all of them, not understanding what was happening. Belle glanced up at Killian in question. “As soon as we get an idea for what all is happening, I will talk with everyone.” But first he had someone else to tell, and motioned to Robin’s office with his phone.

His friend waved his okay, and Killian entered Robin’s office as he speed dialed Emma’s number. At her hello, he quickly told her what they all had just witnessed.

“What? Why?” she said in disbelief over the phone.

“We don’t know yet. But I’m pretty sure she’ll be out of our lives for good.” Killian said and Emma hummed her agreement. “Just wanted to give you some more good news today, my love. Sorry you didn’t get to witness it, though.”

It wasn’t until a few hours later, when Kathryn and Regina had them all come into a conference room for a meeting that he found out. Kathryn started. “I was able to receive some information from the prosecution of Lily’s case. The charges were brought from her prior company. She wasn’t just getting deals from her clients, but she was also doctoring the books and stealing money. Her replacement had started to notice some odd things, but hadn’t put two and two together until we started to inquire about her ourselves.”

“We need to do a thorough investigation of our books and everything that Lily has had a hand in.” Killian told the rest of his team.

Kathryn nodded. “I have already handed over all the evidence that we already had to the prosecution, and we need to hand over anything else we might find. I have also sent her termination letter to her and to her legal council to make sure she is notified while in jail.”
“We will be looking for a replacement immediately,” Regina told everyone.

“I’ll also meet with each of you personally, to see if you have any questions.” Killian told his team. “We would like to move forward from this setback as quickly as possible.”

They all gave him a smile and voiced their willingness. As everyone filed out, Killian spoke up, “Belle, can I talk with you for a second?”

She waited as the rest cleared out. “What can I help with?”

He smiled back at the brunette. “Well, that’s kind of what I wanted to talk to you about. Emma and I discussed this, and we would like to offer you the position of Executive Director.” Her eyes got big and her mouth opened in surprise. “We know you can do it Belle. You’ll be great at it. I wish it was under better circumstances.”

She held up both of her hands. “Wow. That’s, amazing. And I’m honored, truly that you would both trust me with the position. But...I have to say no.”

Killian wasn’t expecting that. “What? But Belle, you would be great at that position. Have I done something that—”

She cut him off. “Oh, no, no, no. It’s nothing like that. I LOVE working here...well, besides the whole Lily thing. I just don’t want that job. It’s why I didn’t apply for it to begin with. I love what I do, working with the kids and the volunteers. I’ll help out in any way I can, and fill in whatever you need while you find a new person. But, Killian, I’m sorry, but I don’t want to do that.”

He gave her a smile. “I get it; I do. What you currently do makes you happy. I can’t hold that against you, even if it makes my job harder.” He gave her a wink and she laughed.

He spent the rest of the day talking with Mulan, Will, and Merida. None of them wanted the position, all liking what they were doing, the same as Belle. However, all of them said they would see if they knew of anybody for the job.

Killian and Emma walked up to the doorstep of a house. He looked to Emma one more time as she knocked on the door. “Are you sure I’m supposed to be here?”
“You’ve asked me that at least five times now. The answer is yes. You are here for my brother. You two get to drink, head out back, play cards, or...you know, hang out with the rest of us.”

He still wasn’t sure about it, but if Emma wanted him there, he was there at her sister-in-law’s baby shower. When the door opened, a older, rounder woman gave them both a huge smile, “Emma!” she said and pulled her into a big hug. She then pulled back to look at her, “It’s been so long.” She then turned to him. “You must be Killian.” Before he could even say a word he was pulled into a hug as well.

Emma laughed. “Johanna this is my boyfriend Killian, Killian this is Johanna, Mary Margaret’s godmother.”

He pulled back, and gave a smile to the older woman. “Nice to meet you.”

She smiled back and waved them in, but not before she lightly elbowed Emma in and side and whispered to her, “Nice job, sweetie. You and Mary Margaret got yourselves some fine men there.”

Emma just shook her head and followed inside. Killian was happy to see Dave. He sat the wrapped gifts he was holding on the table with the others and headed over to him. David smiled and immediately gave Killian a beer as he continued to nosh on the hors d’oeuvres on the counter.

Emma sat down the gift she had as well and went over to say hi to her sister-in-law. “Oh, I’m so glad to see you.” The brunette gave her a big hug and spoke into her ear, “And so happy to see everything is okay with you two.” Before Emma could say anything she was waving Killian over, “Oh, don’t be shy, let me introduce you.”

Killian could tell David was trying not to laugh at him, and he returned an evil look as he headed over a the pregnant woman’s request. She gave him a big smile, as Emma leaned against his side and he put his arm around her that held his beer.

“Some of you already have meet her, but this is my sister-in-law, Emma.” They group said hi, and then she continued. “And this is her boyfriend Killian.”

Killian caught that Belle was there; she had been recommended by Mary Margaret for the position, so he wasn’t all surprised. But the curl of her lips told him she was trying not to laugh at them.

“Killian, as in Killian ‘Hook’ Jones?” the blonde on the couch asked.
“Glinda, I didn’t know you watched NASCAR,” Mary Margaret said.

“A boyfriend a few years ago got me into it, and it stuck.”

Killian smiled at her, and reached out his hand to shake hers. “Nice to meet you, lass.”

Her smile grew and she turned to the dark-haired lady next to her, “Damn, he’s cuter in person.”

That brought a blush to Killian’s cheeks, and Emma couldn’t help the snicker. Mary Margaret ignored the comment and went on with introductions. “Obviously, that is Glinda, she teaches English and American Literature. Next to her is Jasmine and she teaches History. At the end of the couch is one of my best friends from college, Rapunzel. And you already met Johanna and you know Belle.”

Killian said hi to them all, and then turned to Emma. The look of embarrassment was still on his face and she patted his chest. “Okay, you can go back to David.”

“Thank you, love,” he said and kissed her on the cheek and retreated back to the safety of the kitchen.

Once over to the kitchen, David clinked beer bottles with him. “You made it out alive.” Killian just laughed. “I’m also glad that I won’t have to kill you.” Killian raised an eyebrow to Emma’s brother in confusion. “You and Emma made up, and she’s happy again. I would like to keep it that way.”

Killian smiled. “That’s the plan, mate.”

Emma couldn’t help but smile at seeing her boyfriend and brother getting along, and then she turned back to the rest of the guests. She kept seeing Glinda looking over at Killian, and sat down on the arm of the couch next to her. “Don’t get any ideas. He’s taken.”

The other blonde smiled up at her. “Don’t worry. I know. But, can you blame me for looking?”

Emma laughed and shook her head. “I can’t blame you for that at all.”
The ladies sat around talking and eating for awhile, and then Johanna got out some paint and onesies. Each of the ladies decorated one. The guys came over to watch, as each drew something different for the baby. Killian moved behind Emma and watched her paint a few little yellow ducks. His smile widened, “That is quite cute, love. I’m sure the lad will love it.” He kissed the top of her head and then followed David back into the kitchen.

The men talked while they watched the ladies finish up and then start on some other shower game that Johanna had come up with. This one involved some type of balloons; Killian didn’t catch the point of the game since he was listening to David talk about how they were currently looking at houses, but that for some reason there was a lack of houses for sale in Storybrooke.

He took a moment to look over at the ladies as he started to bring his bottle up to drink, and his whole brain stopped at the sight. The ladies now all had the balloons under their shirt, and were trying to do various tasks while Mary Margaret was laughing at the scene. But it wasn’t the ridiculousness or the laughter that caught his attention. It was Emma, with fake balloon pregnant belly that had him stop and just watch her.

His brain flashed forward imagining that it was their baby shower, that they were the ones expecting. They had talked about it before; he knew they both wanted that future. But in that instant, he wanted it desperately. His brain imagined Emma swollen with his child and it made his heart constrict.

He was brought out of the moment by the laugh of the man next to him. “Well, I guess I don’t need to ask your intentions with my sister, since it’s written all over your face.”

A smile bloomed on Killian’s face, and he chuckled. “I think you asked me that a long time ago, mate.”

“True, but you telling me you won’t hurt her is quite different than seeing the look on your face I just did.” David leaned on the counter next to him, and when Killian didn’t say anything—just kept catching glances of Emma—David continued. “I know the look well; I have had it many times with Mary Margaret. But the question is, have you two talked about it?”

“A little personal there, Dave.” The man shrugged, and Killian couldn’t help the smile. “Bloody hell. Okay, yes, we’ve talked about it. We want the same thing.”

And David looked at him, waiting. “And those are…”
“She’s your sister, why not ask her?”

David laughed. “Really? Do you even KNOW Emma?”

Killian tilted his head, he had a point. “No worries, mate. We have both agreed marriage before children. You won’t have to get out the shotgun.”

“Good.” Killian rolled his eyes at the man’s response. “You know you don’t have to ask for my permission, right?”

“What for?”

“I mean, I am her brother, but I’m not her father. Besides, Emma isn’t that old fashioned.” David winked at him, and Killian realized what he meant.

His eyes widened, and he turned directly towards him. “Has Emma said—”

David held up his hands. “Oh, no, no. She hasn’t said anything, at least not to me, and Mary Margaret hasn’t told me anything. So no need to panic.” He laughed and took a drink of his beer.

The thing was, Killian realized, he wasn’t panicked by the thought at all. Him wondering if Emma had said anything had more to do with seeing if she might be open to the idea, that she was ready for that step. He knew that Emma had thought about it, but she kept saying the future. He just wasn’t sure when she wanted that future to start. He didn’t want to push her too fast, especially with the last few weeks.

A cheer from the group of women brought him out of his pondering, as Emma stood their jumping up and down with her hands in the air, having obviously won whatever contest they were having. He couldn’t help the laugh that came from him as the balloon under her shirt bounced with her enthusiasm.

“Okay, now it’s time for presents!” Johanna told the group, as the ladies removed the balloons. “Come on over guys. David, you need to help your wife.”
“On it!” the man said, setting down his beer and running over to sit next to Mary Margaret, giving her a kiss as he did so.

Killian followed suit, and sat down in the empty seat next to Emma and gave her forehead a kiss. She turned, smiled at him, and took his hand in hers as Johanna started to give the expectant couple their gifts.

When he saw that she was giving them the gifts he brought in, he smiled as Mary Margaret read the gift tag.

“Oh my!” Mary Margaret showed the tag to David and they both looked to Killian. “Elsa and Liam sent these?”

He smiled back. “Yes, and she told me to tell you: these were some of the things she wished she would have had with her first.”

The brunette gave him a big smile, and started to tear into the wrapping paper. The first gift was an infant first aid kit.

“Oh, that is a good one,” Johanna said as she started to write down the gifts on her pad of paper.

The next was a small humidifier, and the last was a bunch of pacifiers and straps to go on them. The couple smiled, looking at each one, and Johanna laughed. “She’s right. You can never have too many of those.”

“Will you tell them both thank you? Especially Elsa,” Mary Margaret said and winked at Killian.

“Will do,” he said as he wrote down his brother’s address for Johanna to help with the thank you cards.

A few more gifts were opened, and then they got to the one that Emma brought. David read the tag, and showed his wife. “From Emma AND Killian,” he said, giving the man in question a questioning look, which Emma caught.
“It is actually from both of us,” she told them both as they started to watch them take things out of the bag.

The first had David laughing: it was a onesie with ‘I solemnly swear I am up to no good’ written on it. “Oh, I know this one is from you, Emma.” She laughed and nodded.

Mary Margaret pulled out the second one that had an image of Captain Hook on it, which had them both laugh and look at Killian. “What?” He asked all innocently, which made them roll their eyes.

The next item was a small little hat, in scarlet and gold. “Yes!” David called out, “He’s in Gryffindor!” That got everyone really laughing.

His wife just rolled her eyes, but couldn’t keep the smile off her face, as she pulled out the last thing. It was a NASCAR baby blanket with the 71 on it along with the car and Killian’s signature.

“Got to start the lad off on the right team,” he told them with a wink, which got more chuckling. The soon-to-be parents gave them both a thank you, and were about to turn to the next gift, when he spoke back up. “You missed something there.”

David looked in the bag, and then saw the small envelope at the bottom. Emma turned to Killian with a question in her eyes, but his small shake of his head told her they would talk later as her brother opened the envelope. His eyes widened and then he showed his wife the amount on the gift card, and her eyes grew big as well, and both turned to Killian. “Thank you.” They both said in a heartfelt but shocked tone. David seemed to shake himself out of it, as he said to the group while putting it back in the envelope. “It’s a Babies-R-Us gift card.”

As they turned to the next gift, Emma looked at Killian, but he refused to acknowledge her look, and she couldn’t help the smile. She was curious to exactly how much was on that card. He hadn’t said a thing to her about it, but he also knew she would probably object. He didn’t have to go that grand for her family, but she couldn’t blame him. If she had the kind of money he had, she couldn’t say she wouldn’t have done the same thing.

After the party ended, they stayed so that Killian could help David load the gifts into his car. She stood with Mary Margaret when her sister-in-law spoke up. “You didn’t know about the gift card.”

Emma shook her head. “Nope. Do you mind telling me how much it was for?”
“Before I say, are you angry?”

“You know what. If you would have asked me a few months ago, I would have been. But now, after I’ve really gotten to know him—hell, live with him—know his past. I just...I know he does it because he’s in a position to be able to. And I can’t fault him for that, at all.”

Her friend smiled, “Good. It was for a thousand dollars.”

Emma blinked a few times, and turned to her friend. “What? I was thinking maybe a couple hundred.”

“You aren’t angry now, are you? If you are, then I’ll feel bad.”

Emma just smiled and shook her head. “I’m not mad.”

With the slamming of the trunk, they all said their goodbyes and were all on their way home. As he drove, Killian looked over at Emma. “I assume your sister told you.”

“Yep.”

“Upset?” he questioned.

“Nope,” she said and smiled at him.

“Good,” he said as he reached over and took her hand in his and kissed the back of it.

The next morning, they were up early and over to Emma’s apartment. They put a couple of boxes into his car of stuff she didn’t want the movers to move. They took the sheets off the bed and took the frame apart so it was ready to go.

About an hour later, the movers were there, wrapping her furniture in blankets and then wheeled it and what boxes were left out and into the truck. It didn’t take long for the three men to clear out the apartment. Once it was empty, except for a few things they had left on the kitchen counter on purpose, Emma locked up and they headed out with the truck following Killian to his place.
The drive was short and soon both vehicles pulled through the gate and up to the house. Killian propped the door open as Emma started to direct the guys where to move everything. Some things went into the room right next to the front door, some boxes went into their bedroom, some into her closest, and her couch went into the back guest bedroom.

As she was signing off on the paperwork, Killian tipped the men. Once the movers left in the truck, he turned to her. “I guess you are all mine now.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck. “Already was,” she said, and went up on her tiptoes and kissed him. She pulled back when his hands pulled her body closer. “While I would love to continue with this line of thought, I really need to close out the apartment.”

“Too right, love,” he said as he too stepped back. They grabbed their things and headed back over to the apartment one last time. They took one more look around, making sure nothing was left, and cleaned up any of the stuff that was hiding under the furniture.

She stood in the middle of the now-empty apartment, amazed at where she was in her life. She felt Killian behind her and she smiled as his arms wrapped around her and pulled her back into his chest. “You okay?”

She nodded. She was okay. It was a huge step, almost like getting rid of a security blanket. But she was ready for it—she was ready for the rest of her life to start, to not be alone any longer. “I really am,” she said and turned in his arms. “Let’s get out of here.”

Killian took the small bag of trash and the few things that were left to the car as Emma locked up and then went to the leasing office to turn in her keys. When she was done she got into his car, shut the door, and turned to him. “Now let’s go home.”

The following week, more information came to light about what Lily was being charged with. They also found out that Arthur and Percival were also being sued, and possible charges might be brought against them as well. It seemed that the three of them and a few others owned the building he had been shown. They had cut corners, things were not up to code, and were looking to turn quick profits from their unsuspecting customers.

Belle gathered all the information on the locations he had viewed and turned it over to Kathryn, who in turn gave it to the police for their investigation. After double-checking the building that they had liked was not owned by them, Killian signed off on the paperwork.
Between the investigation of what Lily had done, scheduling the move, and now looking for a new Executive Director, they were quite busy once again. Regina’s HR department was looking for a replacement, but he knew it could take awhile. So while Emma was at work, he was pitching in as much as he could. Whenever they had some new prospects to look at, he and Emma were reviewing them together at night in their home.

Thursday night, after Emma was done with work, they were once again flying to the next track in Sonoma, California. Killian couldn’t help how happy it made him to not be traveling alone, to have Emma once again by his side. Even though she had to work from the RV the next day, and probably every Friday for the rest of the season due to her using all her time off, she was at least there.

As soon as they were at cruising altitude, they were snuggling on the couch, eating dinner, and watching a movie. Both of them were glad to just be together, and with a little down time as well. They got in late and immediately headed to the RV to sleep. It wasn’t until the next day, after practice and after Emma was done working, that she got to see the others. Victor was hosting a BBQ, though she knew it was mainly Killian that would be doing the cooking.

After finishing work, which was just after two in the afternoon due to the time change, she walked over and found Killian doing exactly that. He had tried not to bother her, allowing her to work in peace, and only came back long enough to shower before he was out the door to the BBQ. She walked up to him, and he smiled and gave her a hug before she was noticed by the others.

Ashley and Ariel screamed and came over to pull her into hugs, and tell her how happy they were to see her. The guys said it was nice to have her back. It was Ruby who stood off to the side, with her arms crossed in front of her, staring at her, that had Emma pause.

“So you’re back.” The brunette said, and everyone went quiet. Emma nodded her confirmation. “I called you. Left tons of messages.” She waved at the others. “We all did. We heard nothing.”

“Ruby—” Killian warned.

“No.” She snapped at him, and Victor went over to try to calm her down, but she stepped around him. “Are we your friends, or just someone to entertain you while you are here?” Ruby spat accusingly.

Emma looked at her shocked. “Of course you are all my friends—”

“Then why did we all get the silent treatment? He was the one you were angry at, but you cut us all out. If you two break up, do we never see you again?” Ruby spat accusingly.
Emma left the safety of Killian’s arms, and walked towards her angry friend. “I didn’t talk to anyone. I ignored my brother, my co-workers, everyone. I was…” Emma sighed. “I was hurt, and I was withdrawing from everyone, and I was being...selfish. And I thought...if I talked to any of you, you would just be on his side. You were his friends first. I thought, if I wasn’t with him, then none of you would…” She stopped, as she looked down at the ground, and wrapped her arms around herself.

Killian wanted to rush over to her, but Ashley stopped him shaking her head. He nodded to her in understanding. This had to be worked out between them.

Ruby moved closer and put her hands on Emma’s shoulders, causing Emma to look up, and be surprised at the smile that was starting to appear on her friends face. “If you and that idiot break up...”

“Hey!” Killian called, and everyone else laughed.

With a quick wink over Emma’s head to Killian, Ruby continued. “We are still going to be your friends. We will still be here for you. And, while I probably would have told you what was happening for real...if you had just...you know...talked to me. But I would have still been just calling to talk to you, to check on you, to see what I could do. At worse, I would have drove my ass up to you, and brought ice cream, and we would have watched sad chick flicks.”

Ashley and Ariel walked up to her. “Yep.” They agreed.

Emma could feel the water in her eyes. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know. I…”

Ruby rolled her eyes and sighed dramatically. “Okay, you’re forgiven,” she said, and then pulled Emma into a hug. Ariel and Ashley hugged her as well, and Emma laughed as she tried to hug them all back.

Victor then elbowed Killian lightly in the side. “Hey, don’t burn the meat.”

“Bugger off ya wanker, or cook it yourself.” He brushed off his friend, and smiled at the girls, as the guys all shared a nod with each other. But in the end, he did turn back to the grill and finished cooking.
The girls took plenty of pictures around the table, and agreed it was time to post them twitter. As Ruby told her, Emma wanted to make sure it was still well known he was off the market. She got a good group shot and posted that it was nice to be back at the track. But it was the one that Ruby posted that Emma decided she needed to get printed so could she put it into a frame back home. It was all of them, together, and in it, Killian had his arms wrapped around her, with the happiest smile.

Qualifying was a bit of a shock for Emma. She knew it was a road course, but seeing it was a whole other story. As the girls found a place to sit so they could watch, Emma just shook her head in disbelief. “Well, this is quite different.”

Ariel grinned. “Yep, they aren’t just turning left this time.” The others laughed.

“You shouldn’t worry; Killian does amazing at road courses,” Ashley told her.

“Really?” she asked. He hadn’t told her that.

Ruby nodded. “He was a Formula One driver prior; they are all road courses. There will be a few other F1 drivers in the race who are subbing for some of the non-permanent drivers, but he definitely has the edge to the others who only drive them twice a year.”

She grinned at that, and they started to watch qualifying. And true to what the girls had said, he did quite well, and was actually on the poll. Starting first and hopefully placing well would do some good to replace the point deficit he got from the last two races.

The race day went exactly like Emma remembered: press, fans, hanging out with the girls, intros, invocation, national anthem, and a kiss before Killian got into the car. It felt really good for everything to be back to normal.

The race was very interesting for Emma, but also stressful since she couldn’t see all the of the track from her position. So she was watching it from her phone along with looking at the track, and listening to the radio to hear Killian, his spotter, and Robin all talking. Killian stayed in the lead even though August, and sometimes Victor tried to take it away from him. But at lap 27 of the 110 laps, he had to let go of the lead and come in for a green flag pitstop. But as soon as those leaders had to come in to change tires, he was back in the lead.

A caution came out here and there. One for debris in a corner, another for two cars in the back crashing in the last turn and hitting the wall. They had to get the wreckers to come out and take the cars off the track. At lap 79, a big wreck in turn seven for the middle of the pack brought out another caution, but Jefferson was able to squeeze by without a scratch, as two other cars were out of the race, and three more were in pits for fixes.
Lap after lap, Jefferson was making his way up, trading paint with other cars here and there, diving into the corners and rubbing the cars against the wall. Emma looked to Robin, and he shrugged his shoulders as he warned Killian that the driver was moving up in the pack. With some tire hopping in turn seven, first Victor and then August gave up their positions and Jefferson moved into second place with nine laps to go.

Each lap Jefferson was getting closer and closer and chipping away at the lead that Killian had. With two laps to go, the other driver was nudging Killian’s bumper, and the cursing coming from Killian over the radio had Emma smiling. She didn’t blame him at all.

It was down to the last lap, and Killian was in the lead with Jefferson still right on his tail. August was more than two seconds back; Victor, Sean, Eric, and the rest almost three back, all vying for the rest of the positions. Jefferson was dive bombing the corners as much as he could to catch up to him. It was in turn seven when Jefferson bumped Killian just right in the back corner of the car, and it moved the 71 over enough for him to take the corner and move past Killian.

Emma was off her seat, cussing the other driver’s name as she watched Killian try to catch up in the rest of the turns, his bumper riding Jefferson’s the whole way. They came up to turn eleven, the last turn before the finish line. Killian took it sharp, making his car skid across the track. Jefferson’s car then hit his, and both cars slammed hard into the wall.

Point Standings (same as the last chapter):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Car - Driver</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>#71 - Killian Jones</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8 - Phillip Haven</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#36 - Victor Whale</td>
<td>563</td>
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<tr>
<td>#53 - Sean Herman</td>
<td>564*</td>
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<td>#65 - Eric Sirena</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#92 - August Booth</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12 - Tarrant Jefferson</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Chapter 30

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Emma sucked in her breath and her hands tightened on the rail, but the cars didn’t stop. They bounced off the wall, and kept going, this time with Killian in the front, and he came barrelling across the line in first, followed by Jefferson, then August. Emma let out the breath, and she turned to Robin and they high fived as they heard Killian cheering and yelling for joy in the car. Victor, Sean, and Eric followed the rest of the drivers across the line as Emma made her way down from the pit box.

She ran over to the winner’s circle, watching him take the victory flag and then drive the car there as well with sparks flying from some hanging metal dragging on the track. The car had definitely seen better days but at least it had kept him safe. He pulled up and his crew started cheering, and then he was out of the car and cola was sprayed every which way. As soon as he was off the car, she ran over to him and hugged him tight, not caring that her clothes were now getting wet.

Killian hugged her tightly as his heart still pounded from the hard race and the win. He nuzzled into the top of her head, smelling her hair, just before he was pulled from the feeling by the reporter. “Killian Jones, back in the winner’s circle. How important was this race to win today?”

He kept his arm around Emma, holding her close as he turned to the red-headed reporter. “This win was really important. I needed to make up for the lost points the last two races. I know this one win doesn’t do it, but I’m sure with hard work, I can get back there.”

Emma swallowed hard as she heard him continuing to talk to the reporter. She knew the prior two races he hadn’t done well, but she hadn’t really had a clue as to what that really meant overall. That was until now. Those two weeks apart and his bad finishes had him fall hard in the points, and the reason he had such bad finishes was because of her. Her brain flashed back to the discussion they had at her apartment and him asking if she had any idea how he felt when she left. At the time she really hadn’t thought about it much, too concerned about what she was feeling and blaming him for what she had thought happened. But now——
“Emma?” Killian asked softly into her ear, and she blinked quickly and turned to focus up at him. His fingers pushed her hair behind her ear, and he stared down at her with a worried look. “Are you okay?”

She looked around and noticed the reporter had moved on; the crew was getting ready for pictures, and she had been stuck in her head. She shook her head to clear it. “Sorry. I’m okay.”

“You were far away there for a minute, are you su—”

She moved onto her tiptoes and kissed him to quiet him down, then pulled back. “I love you.”

He broke into a smile. “I love you too, Swan.” His hand moved to the back of her neck and pulled her in for another kiss.

“Alright you two, you can do that later. Now it’s time for pictures,” Robin called over, and the rest of his team laughed.

Emma followed Killian over to take some of the group pictures, her smile big because he looked so happy. Her mind was still thinking of how she could make it up to him, though it wouldn’t be that night because he had lots of interviews and they didn’t fly home until late. Both exhausted, they slept on the way home.

Monday night, when she got home from work, she decided she needed to talk to him. She hadn’t been able to focus all day, the weight of her thoughts still on her. Once inside, her stuff set down, her shoes off, she came up to him and wrapped her arms around him from behind as he stirred something that smelt fantastic on the stove. God she was lucky. She pressed her face into his back between his shoulder blades.

His one hand came up, and clasped her wrist over his heart. “Glad you’re home,” he said, and she tightened her grip. “You okay?” he asked; he could tell that something wasn’t right. Actually, it hadn’t been right since last night after his win, but he was hoping she would open up and tell him on her own.

“I’m sorry,” she said softly into his back.

His brows crinkled; he tried to turn in her arms, but she held tighter. He needed to look at her, now
knowing that something was definitely wrong. He moved the pot off the burner, and then pried her arms from him so he could turn around. His fingers found her chin, and lifted it for her to look at him. “What for, my love?”

She didn’t want to look at him. The more she thought, as the hours went by, the more she stewed in the thoughts. It didn’t help that she had talked to Tink at work and also called Ruby to get her to open up about what really happened. To hear how Killian had dealt with her leaving. She felt horrible. It was obviously showing, because his fingers gently wiped away her tears.

“Emma, you’re scaring me. What’s wrong?”

The catch in his voice got her to look up at him. The last thing she wanted to do was make him feel bad. “Nothing.” The disbelieving look on his face, told her he didn’t buy that for a second. “I’m just sorry. I didn’t realize, I was so...god, I was so stupid.”

He had no clue what she was talking about, but something had upset her. Something she thought she had done wrong. “Just tell me what it is, and we’ll fix it together.”

She shook her head. “I’m totally messing this up.” She tried to pull herself together; he shouldn’t be trying to make her feel better, it was supposed to be the other way around. “I’m sorry I left.” He looked confused for a second, and then his eyes widened as he worked out what she was saying. “I don’t know how to make it up to you. I shouldn’t have done that. I should have known better. I should—”

He cut her off with a kiss. He was relieved that there wasn’t something else wrong. He pulled back and let his forehead rest against hers. “I’m just happy we’re back together. You don’t need—”

She nodded. “Yes I do. I didn’t even think about what it was doing to you. I didn’t even care. What kind of horrible person does that?”

His hands came up to the side of her face and brushed away more tears. “Emma, you thought I was the cause. I mean, if someone steals from you, it’s not like you care how they feel about it.” He did get it, but his anger about his feelings and how she had reacted were gone before he had carried her into her bedroom.

She shook her head. “It’s not the same and you know it. Because of me, you drank all the time, and Robin almost had to bench you. Because I wouldn’t talk to you, you didn’t place well, and this point
deficit is my fault.”

“No, it’s not. All that is on me.”

“But if I had just talked to you. Listened to anyone—”

“What I did and how I reacted was my own fault, Emma. Not yours. I didn’t have to drink. I could have practiced longer. I didn’t have to—”

Her hands went to the side of his face. “You wouldn’t have felt like that if I hadn’t left.”

He wanted to deny her words, but she was right. “You are not to blame for my actions, love.”

She smiled at him. “That may be. But your actions were in direct relation to how I hurt you. And that is my fault. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“Emma...” He wanted to tell her she didn’t need to be sorry, but at the same time he had longed to hear her acknowledge how he had felt. “Thank you.” He kissed the top of her head. “But I do understand, you know.” She gave him a questioning look. “If I had been in your position, I’m not sure what I would have done. Because if I had seen that...it would have killed me. But truth is, love, I forgave you before my lips met yours and I carried you to bed.” He arched his eyebrow at her, and she let out a small hiccuped laugh through her tears.

“How can I make it up to you?”

He shook his head. “There is no need. Besides, I don’t want you feeling like you have to do anything. I want you to do things because you want to.”

“But, Killian—”

He knew she wasn’t going to let this go. “Okay, love, okay. All I ask, is that if you ever, and I mean ever, think something is wrong between us, no matter what it may look like, that you talk to me about it.” He felt her tense, and his hands moved to rub her shoulders. “I know your past with your ex brought a lot of your fears to the surface and that is why you reacted the way you did. Trust
me, I fully understand what past baggage can do to a person; I have plenty as well. But we are not them. Their actions do not define us, or our lives together.”

She smiled up at him. “You’re right.”

“I usually am, if you just listen to me.” He winked at her, and she lightly swatted his chest. He laughed and pulled her to him in a hug that she returned. “Are we okay now?” he asked, wanting to make sure they were once again on the same page before they moved on. She nodded into his chest. “Good, because dinner is almost finished, and Regina has some resumes for us to look over before we work on some of your unpacking.”

“Okay, I’ll get out the plates,” she said and looked up at him, and he smiled back, kissed the tip of her nose, and went back to the stove.

She let out a breath and smiled as she went to get the plates for dinner, wondering for the umpteenth time how she had gotten so lucky.

Tuesday after work, they had a quick dinner and went through a few more resumes. But none of them caught their eyes for the position with the charity. So instead they went to unpack a little more of her stuff. “There are some boxes in the closet, if you don’t mind,” she told him as she started on ones in the bedroom.

He laughed. “You just don’t want to hang up your clothes.”

She stuck her head in the door. “You’re just so much better at it than I am,” she admitted as she batted her eyelashes at him.

“It can’t be that hard to be better, Swan. You don’t hang up anything,” he huffed and motioned to a laundry basket of clean clothes.

“I buy things that don’t wrinkle,” she said and shrugged her shoulders. He rolled his eyes as she walked out and started to cut the tape on one of the boxes, when moments later she heard his voice behind her.

“You’ve been holding out on me love.”
She turned around in confusion and then she saw her black bag, and a bright pink metallic vibrator in his hand. She instantly flushed, and tried to take it and the bag from him. “I told you the boxes.”

He pulled away from her, not letting her get to it. “Now, love. There is no reason to blush.” He looked in the bag at the items she had in there. “Though I am curious as to why I’m just now knowing about this stash of yours.”

She sighed. “Well...I haven’t had reason to need it since…” she let it trail off and his eyebrow arched, and she huffed. “Since we’ve been together.” She already knew that would make him smile, that it would make him smirk, and smirk he did.

“Oh, really?” He moved closer to her. “So, are you saying I’m better than this battery-operated machine?”

“Don’t push it,” she replied, and when he gave a slight pout that she knew he was doing on purpose, she couldn’t help the smile. “Yes, okay. Yes. I don’t need them with you.” She reached for them again. “As proof, how about we just throw them away.”

He pulled them out of her grasp again. “Now, now. Don’t be so rash.” He let his thumb run along the dial and turned on the one in his hand. “I think we could have a little fun, if you are game, love.” Her eyes widened, and she swallowed hard. He noticed and also that her nipples now strained against her top. He leaned in, and trailed the device down between her breasts, over her hip, and settled the tip over the seam of her yoga pants, making her squirm. He dropped the bag to the floor, and let that arm loop around her, pulling her tight to him, while he pressed the device more firmly between her legs.

She moaned at the vibrations, and her eyes closed. His mouth kissed up her neck to her ear. “I think you like the idea, don’t you?” Her eyes rolled back, and she moaned but didn’t reply. He flicked off the vibrator, and her eyes popped back open. “Well?”

“Yes...god, yes.”

“Then take off all your clothes and lay down on the bed for me,” he said and gave a light slap to her ass. She jumped, but quickly did as she was told, and before he could even take off his shirt, she was naked and laying back on the middle of the bed. “Such a good girl.” He carefully watched her, and seeing her lust-filled looks, he knew he was taking this in the direction she wanted. “Shall we continue to use pumpkin as your safe word?”
Her eyes widened, and she bit her lip and nodded quickly, both telling him yes to the question and yes to what she wanted. She wanted him to take control; the thought of him testing her limits excited her. In truth it excited him, too, made obvious by the considerable strain on the zipper of his pants. Which he quickly tried to relieve by shedding his jeans, though he deliberately left on his boxer briefs. He wanted to take his time with this. He picked up the bag and placed it on the side of the bed, and then crawled on. “When I get done with you love, you are going to be begging me to fuck you.” Even though she tried to contain the sound through biting her lip, her moan still came forth, making him smirk.

“Now love, are you going to be good, and do as you are told, or should I just tie you to the bed now?” He watched her breathing increase, and her weigh her options. “Oh, tsk tsk, you took too long to answer me, love. I guess that means you can’t be good.” He stood back up and retreated to his closet and moments later returned with two of his silk neck ties. He went to one side of the bed, and Emma willingly gave him her wrist. “I need the other one too, love.” She gave him a confused look, but did as he requested. He used one tie to bind her wrists together, then made sure that it wasn’t too tight on her wrists. He then used the other tie to secure her to the middle of the headboard.

Once he was satisfied with that, he moved back to the end of the bed, and settled himself. He watched her laid out before him, her hips squirming, her breathing heavier than usual. A light flush over her pale skin, not to mention the deep green lust of her eyes. He had to push down his own desire to just take her. He had too many plans for it to end soon. He turned to the bag next to him and looked at the contents. He checked to make sure the ones that needed batteries were still operational, and decided on which ones he would use. He turned back to her, and debated if he should blindfold her. But in the end he decided against it, at least this time. This time, he wanted to see her eyes as he drove her over the edge, again and again.

He licked his lips at the thought. “You look so beautiful, so delicious,” he said and moved his hands up the inside of her legs to her knees, and then spread them wide. A wolfish grin came over him at seeing her core glistening with arousal. She was already wet and ready for him. His hands moved up, caressing her inner thighs, ghosting close to her core but not quite touching.

She wiggled her hips, but he pulled back. “Ah, ah, ah!” He told her and wagged a finger at her. “Stay still.” He reached into the bag, and pulled out a small silver pocket vibrator and turned it on to a low setting, and then crawled over her body, making sure he didn’t touch her. He leaned in and kissed her hard, his tongue delving inside her mouth, tasting, devouring, only then to quickly pull back, and watch as she tried to follow. “I said, stay still. Last warning, my love.”

He grinned at the whimper she gave in response as she settled back on the bed. He then moved the vibrating device up to the side of her face, and slowly dragged it down her neck, and then between her breasts. His hand diverted to the left, and slowly circled her left nipple, the already hard bud turning even harder, while Emma moaned at the sensation. “Do you like that?” She nodded yes. He pulled it away, “I said, do you like that?” His voice raised at the commanded question.
“Yesss,” she breathed, moaning once again when the vibration returned. He then moved it over to her right bud, as he leaned down and took the left into his mouth. She groaned, and he could tell she was desperately trying not to wither against him, as he sucked hard. He grinned around the peak, and let his teeth nip, and then pull at it. He then moved the device to the other hand as his mouth switched sides, to do the same to the right as the left, as his left hand held the vibrations to her tortured peak.

Though she wasn’t moving like he had commanded, she was moaning and sighing out his name and God’s as he continued. With a hitch to her breath, he pulled back and licked his lips. “Were you about to cum just from me violating your perfect breasts?” With the glassy look to her dilated eyes and her heavy breathing, he knew the answer. He gave her a warning look when she didn’t answer.

“Yes, yes...almost.”

“Mmm, I’ll have to remember that.” He sat back on his haunches, and trailed the vibrator down her sternum, then around her belly button, causing her to giggle. But her laugh trailed off quickly as he traced her pubic bone, and lightly trailed down her inner right thigh. She huffed in frustration at him avoiding where she really wanted it be. “Patience is rewarded, love,” he said, and then slowly brought it up her inner left thigh, and teased over her outer lips.

“Please…” she breathed out.

His hands moved out and pressed her legs open wider, parting her lips, and opening her sex completely to his view. He moved the tip of the device lightly to her opening, going, around and around, allowing the vibrations to move over her. Her breath stuttered, as he allowed just to tip to go inside of her, circling around her opening. He leaned in close, and could see her legs tense from the corner of his eye.

He removed the vibrator and delved in with his mouth, his tongue tasting and lapping up her arousal. “Mmm, so delectable and all mine.” He dove back in and thrust his tongue inside of her. Her hips started to move and his arm came up to rest over hip, to help her stay immobile, as his other hand moved the vibrator up to circle her clit.

“Yes, god yes,” she whimpered as he continued to move the device and his tongue in a constant rhythm. Then his thumb turned the vibration up to max, and she screamed, “Fuck!” Her legs started to quake, and he picked up the pace, moving his tongue deeper, and the the vibrator pressed a little harder, and with a scream her whole body tensed, and her core clenched around his tongue.

He flicked off the vibrator and eased up on the pressure, allowing her to come down from her high
before he pulled back. As he sat back, he smiled at the full blush now over her skin. “Did you like
that, love?”

She nodded, but then remembered the rules and quickly answered, “Yes, I did.”

“Good, because that’s just the start,” he told her, and dug through the bag to find the next item he
wanted. “You know, you have quite a selection in here. Am I the first to see these?”

“Yes. Yes you are,” she said with a blush.

He reached out and caressed her ankle. “I’m honored, Emma. Truly.” And he was—the knowledge
that she trusted him so much meant more than he could express. But hopefully showing her would.
He pulled out what he was looking for: a small, pale blue egg with a cord to the device’s controls.

He took the egg part and slowly pressed it to her opening. With a small press of his fingers it sunk
inside of her, she sucked in a breath and then let out a long moan when her turned the setting to a
slow pulse. He crawled back over her, and leaned down to kiss her again. His tongue was back in
her mouth, letting her taste herself on his lips. As he continued to kiss her, his fingers adjusted the
remote to a faster beat, and she gasped against him.

He smirked and kissed down her neck, leaving hot, opened-mouth kisses to her skin, sucking and
licking at her flesh as the vibrations deep inside her worked her back up. He moved back down to
her breasts and took the right peak between his lips, sucking and nippling once again, his eyes on
hers as her lashes began to flutter. “Come for me like this, Emma. With those vibrations running
through your core, and me sucking on your nipples.”

He changed sides and lapped at her nipple before sucking hard again. Her wrists strained at the
binds, and she battled with herself to keep still. But she couldn’t stop the involuntary twitches of her
body. His free hand found her other nipple, and pinched, and he sucked hard again on the other.
With that, her body shuddered under his and her eyes fluttered closed as she gasped and moaned in
pleasure. He turned the device inside of her back down and came back up to kiss her cheeks,
forehead, and then mouth, softly.

“So damn beautiful when you cum for me.” He trailed soft kisses back down her body, leaving
gentle ones to her tortured breasts, and then down her stomach. He then settled his body on the bed,
allowing him to press his hard length against the bed, to get some relief as his hands moved her legs
over his shoulders, as his mouth descended back to her core.
“Killian…” she whimpered as his tongue darted inside of her, then moved up to flick at her clit a couple times, and then back down to circle her opening, only to repeat the process again and again. He once again sped up the vibrations of the egg nestled inside of her, and she started to keen to the sensory overload.

“Oh God, Killian...please…” she started begging.

He looked up over her body from between her legs, seeing her quick breaths. He stopped for a moment, “If you wish me to stop, you know the word.” Granted, she had yet to ever use it with him. He dove back in, redoubling his efforts, and focusing on her now very sensitive clit. It didn’t take long and her body tensed, her toes curled, and she held her breath, mouth wide in a silent scream as another, harder orgasm ripped through her. “So beautiful,” he told her as he gently kissed her core, and turned off the egg.

He moved her legs back to the bed, and sat back up. He wiped his mouth with the back of his arm, as she tried to catch her breath. His hand stroked her thigh gently as he slowly pulled the egg by the cord out of her. He smiled at it being covered in her essence, and the flood of arousal that came from her after he removed it. “You really liked that one. You came so hard for me, like a good girl.”

He sat the egg aside, and dug through her bag for one more item. While he would love to continue this all night, he also was painfully hard, and was pretty sure this next toy would break his own restraint. He pulled out the largest dildo she had in the bag, though he had to admit to himself he was quite glad that it was still smaller than he was. He picked it up and it caught her eye. He could see her swallow hard when she saw it. “I know how much you loved to be filled, Swan. But this will have to do for now.” He ran the silicone, life-like phallus against her drenched core, rubbing it against her clit. She whimpered at the feeling and he licked his lips at the sight.

Then with a dip to her opening, he pressed the head inside of her, and her head fell back, and her hips jerked. He knew he should punish her for the movement but he was too enthralled watching the fake cock slide into her inch by inch. His free hand found it’s way to his boxers, and pressed against his own, and moaned at the pleasure that ran through him at his touch and the sight before him.

Once it was fully inside of her, he slowly pulled it back out and then thrust it back inside, and her hips bucked back against it. “Yes...fuck yes. More!” She was completely worked up and wanton in front of him as he continued to fuck her with the dildo. “Oh, yes. Harder,” she gasped as her hands pulled at the restraints and her hips thrust against the intrusion. “Please...more.”

“More what, love?” he asked, his eyes trained on her core taking the fake cock over and over, his heart beating in his ears, his breathing almost as fast as hers.
“You...I need you. Not that...you. I...ahhh.” She pressed against it, as her body worked it’s way up higher.

He couldn’t take it anymore, and pulled the dildo from her and dropped it on the bed. Quickly he pulled off his boxer briefs, and with both hands turned her over. The way he tied her to the bed allowed her to move onto her knees, with her hands in front of her and ass in the air. He didn’t even pause, and thrust fully inside her.

“Yes!!!” she screamed as he bottomed out.

“Is that…” He pulled out, and then thrust hard back inside of her, “what you wanted?” He leaned over her and grabbed her shoulders from under her, as he retreated and then slammed back inside of her. “Did you need to be filled?”

“Yes...yes. You...feel so good.”

“Minx,” he growled into her ear and then nuzzled at her neck as he started a brutal pace fucking into her, both of them too far gone for anything else. “All mine.” He sucked at her neck as his hips snapped hard and deep.

“Yes...yours,” she muttered as her hips rocked back into him. His one hand released her shoulder to move between her legs, his two fingers pressing hard swipes against her clit. “Fuck!” she screamed. “Oh, god!” Then her inner muscles squeezed him tight, stealing his breath as her body shuddered.

He was able to thrust a few more times before his body succumbed to hers, and he fell over the edge with her, pressing deep as he released his pleasure inside of her. They both fell to their sides, and he pulled her back close to his front, pressing his face into her hair at the back of her head as they tried to calm their hearts and their breathing.

Once his mind cleared, he reached over, untied her hands, and pulled her closer. “Are you okay?” She nodded and pulled his hand to hers and pressed them over her heart, between her breasts. “Aren’t you glad you didn’t throw them away?” he asked. Emma nodded her head and started to laugh. She was, she really was.

Wednesday night, they were flying down to Daytona due to the Saturday night race instead of Sunday. She had to work from the RV while he practiced and for qualifying, since both were during her work hours. But she made sure to keep the race on the TV so she could watch and make sure everything was alright, and so she would know how he did.
She frowned while she took a moment to watch him during qualifying—he was pushing himself and the car much harder than he had before, she could see it in his hands and arms with how they gripped the wheel. He was desperately trying to gain the point deficit back that he had lost. Luckily, it worked out okay and he was once again on the poll, but the guilt stuck with her and brought her into a funk for the rest of the time she was working.

That night, the gang all went out to eat, once again at their favorite restaurant; she was all smiles at remembering how it was the first time they were there as she started to look at the menu. Back when she was just getting to know everyone and how racing even worked. But Killian could tell that through her happiness, there was something still a little off.

He wrapped his arm around her. “Is everything alright?”

She nodded quickly—a little too quickly. “It’s great. Just remembering the first time I was here, and how much has changed.”

He nodded. “Yeah, a lot has. But that’s not it, what is it?” He asked quietly while the others continued their discussions.

“You were really aggressive out in qualifying today.”

“I always am, love,” he deflected.

She could tell. “You know what I mean.” He sighed, and she didn’t let him chime in. “It’s my fault that—”

“Emma, we talked about this.” He picked up her hand and kissed the back of it. “It wasn’t your fault. It’s over, behind us. And all is forgiven.” His thumb caressed the back of her hand. “Do I have to make up the points? Yes. Will I be more aggressive to do it? Yes. It’s not something you need to worry about.”

He eyes widened. “Yes I do!” She whisper yelled at him. She could see a look from Ruby, who then quickly turned back to the talk with the others, and continued the other conversation. “I don’t want to see you get hurt.” Her brain conjured the images of him being pulled out of his car, months back.
His hand rubbed her back. “Emma. I may be aggressive but I’m not reckless. Trust me.” She nodded, and took a deep breath. “Relax, and just have fun with our friends. There is no need for guilt, or worry. Okay, love?” She nodded again and tried to let it go. She gave him a smile, and one more nod that he reciprocated, and then he leaned in and kissed her forehead before they turned back to the conversation at hand when the waitress came over to get their drink orders.

They went around the table, ordering drinks, but when Ariel ordered iced tea, Ruby halted. “You ain't joining on the drinks? We always have drinks.”

Ariel’s eyes widened, and she looked to Eric, who just couldn’t keep the smile off his face while he responded to his wife. “We might as well tell them, ‘cause you know Ruby won’t let it go.”

The redhead nodded in agreement, and turned back to the group. With a smile on her face, one that reminded Emma of Mary Margret so much in that moment, she knew what her friend was going to say a moment before she did. “Well, I can’t drink because I’m pregnant.”

Cheers rang up through the group and Ashley leaned over to hug her as Ruby and Emma got up to give her a hug. The men all gave their congrats to Eric, as the waitress just stood there with a smile on her face, not knowing what to do. Once they sat back down, they quickly finished their drink order for the poor girl, who then ran off to fill it.

Now it was Ruby’s turn to take the place of Emma in the same situation, asking all kinds of questions. “How far along are you? Do you know if it’s a boy or a girl? Have you come up with names? You know, Ruby is a great name.”

Victor reached over and took his girlfriend’s hand. “Honey, let them try and answer.” He looked at Killian and shook his head.

Ruby swatted Victor away. “Why didn’t you tell me sooner? Oh my god, we have to plan a baby shower.”

Ariel waved both of her hands at her ecstatic friend. “Whoah, whoah. I’m only eight weeks, we weren’t going to say anything until twelve. But…”

“You kinda called her out on it, Rubes,” Ashley said and laughed.
Ruby just rolled her eyes. “No, this is good. I have time to plan!”

“And here we go again,” Victor sighed.

Emma looked around the table. “I’m missing something.”

“Ruby goes crazy over planning things,” Ashley explained.

“I do not!” Ruby denied.

“Yes you do!” rang back as a chorus of her friends.

“Well...maybe if I had something of my own to plan…” Ruby replied giving a meaningful look at Victor.

The rest of the group snickered. “Seriously, man,” Eric chimed in. “With the way it’s going, Ruby will have planned Killian and Emma’s wedding and their baby showers before she gets to plan—”

“Enough!” Victor shouted. Ruby looked down, not wanting to say anything. This was obviously an issue between them. But Killian was also scratching behind his ear, and Emma was turning bright red as well due to the implication of what their friends already assumed was going to happen.

Ruby stood up and said she was headed for the ladies room. The girls, immediately all got up and followed her. Emma gave a meaningful look to Killian, before she followed.

“Thanks a lot,” Victor huffed looking at Eric.

Eric held up his hands. “Dude, this is on you. What’s the deal, anyway?”

“Seriously, man. You and Ruby have been together awhile,” Sean chimed in.
Victor looked to Killian for help. “Don’t look at me like that, mate. I’m with them.” He scratched at the back of his ear. “Besides, do you want to make what Eric said true.”

“Wait...are you and Emma...?” Sean asked.

Killian hesitated. “No, not...yet.”

The guys caught the hesitation. “But...you are thinking about it. You’ve talked about it,” Eric said knowingly.

Killian nodded. “Yes. And, I want to. I’m just looking for the right time. But...this isn’t about Emma and I.” He turned back to Victor. “What is going on?”

Victor ran a hand through his hair, “We’re happy—”

“Clearly,” Sean deadpanned.

Victor glared. “I don’t want to mess it up. You know me. This is the longest relationship I’ve ever had, what if...” He sighed.

Killian folded his hands in front of him. “Do you love her?”

Victor scrunched up his eyebrows. “What kind of question is that?” Killian raised his eyebrow, and Victor sighed. “Of course I love her.”

“Are you going to let your fear get the best of you and lose her over it?” Killian asked his friend, and with wide eyes that stared back at him, he continued. “I’m not telling you what you should do. But I will tell you what will eventually happen if you don’t. Ruby won’t wait forever.”

Sean nodded. “There are plenty of other men out there...and women...that would be more than willing to give her what she obviously wants.”

“So, what? I should just get down on one knee, because I don’t want her to leave?” Victor asked,
though you could see the fear in his eyes of her doing just that.

“No,” Killian replied. “But you do have to talk to her about it. You have to both come clean about what you want and what your expectations are. What your fear is. Get her to understand.” The other guys nodded. “And if you find out that you want something different, or you can’t live with what the other wants, at least you know. Or, you find out that you don’t have anything to worry about.”

“What he said,” Eric added and Sean nodded.

Victor lowered his head. “I’ve royally screwed up, haven’t I?”

“Aye.” “Oh, yeah.” “Good luck, buddy,” came the responses from each in succession.

Killian heard his phone beep and saw the message from Emma that they were headed back out. He smiled at the information and looked back to Victor. “Okay, they are on their way back.”

The girls came back out, and Killian could tell Ruby had been crying. All her eye makeup was completely gone, but at least the girls had helped to remove it and not have it streak down her face. He grasped Emma’s hand, and she gave him a small smile. They both watched as Victor took Ruby’s hand, told her he was sorry, and that they would talk about it tonight. With the nod of her head, Ashley took the lead and turned the conversation back to Ariel and Eric, and their good news.

The next day, Killian was off doing press when the girls met back up, this time at Ruby’s. As the girls sat down, Emma looked at her friend and broached the subject first. “So, how did it go?”

“We talked a lot last night. I mean, a lot. I know this sounds horrible, but I think it was the first time in our relationship we were totally open and honest about what we both wanted, and what we both worried about.” She took a drink of her ice tea, as he friends just let her talk. “I realized we aren’t ready just yet for the next step.” When Ashley was about to chime in, she waved her away. “That was me, not Victor. I swear. Funny thing is, after the conversation, I think he was more open to the idea than I am now. Don’t get me wrong, I love Victor, and at some point I want to marry him. Just...not...yet. I want more of what we had last night first.” Ruby looked to Emma. “You and Killian talk like that, don’t you?”

Emma smiled. “We do, a lot. Sometimes not when we should. Sometimes it’s after things go wrong. But I think we are doing pretty well with speaking about what we want. For a while, we were both too scared to say things, to say what we want. But we are getting better. I’m trying to get as good at it as he is.” She smiled and then looked down at her drink.
Ruby started to laugh, and then laughed harder. The other girls looked at each other in question, then Ashley asked, “What’s so funny?”

Ruby smiled. “I think that Eric’s prediction, or at least part of that prediction will be true. And you know what...I’m okay with that.” She turned to look at Emma, “But you two seriously need to work on timing. Let’s get through Ariel’s baby before you two get married, okay?”

Emma rolled her eyes as Ariel smiled. “So just wait like seven months.”

They all laughed, and Emma shook her head. “I doubt that will be a problem.” She was pretty sure it was way too soon for Killian to be thinking of seriously doing that anytime soon.

Killian was once again aggressive in his driving, pairing up with just about anyone to keep him in the front of the pack at the superspeedway. The race was wracked with cautions, most due to middle- or back-of-the-pack issues. Cars getting turned into the wall, tire blow outs, and debris were quite common. There wasn’t a need for a green flag pitstop the whole race due to all the cautions. Killian maintained his lead for most of the race, only losing a few laps here or there when another group of cars tried to use their combined draft to push back him and his current ‘dance’ partner.

Towards the end of the race, there were three sets of cars poised to take the win. Killian had Eric pushing him, Victor had August, and Phillip and Sean were right behind, hoping the two other groups would slow each other down enough with their moves for them to be able to pass them.

When the cars went across the finish line, it was too close to call from the pit box, but the official call was that Victor had won by not even a bumper. Emma felt disappointment for Killian—he had led the whole race—but she was also happy for Victor and Ruby as she watched her friend run over to victory circle.

Emma threw herself into Killian’s arms after he was done with reporters, glad to see that he was still all smiles after the race. “So close,” she said into his neck. “You did great.”

He hugged her close and pressed his face into her hair. “Thanks, love. I can handle a two-point difference.”

She pulled back and looked up at him. “Still, I think I have a pretty good consolation prize in mind.” She gave him a wink and he pulled her closer.
“Mmm, I like the sound of that.” With that they quickly headed back to the RV, and Emma certainly pushed the loss completely out of his mind.

They were back home prior to noon on Sunday, and were welcomed with a pack of resumes that Belle had dropped off while they were in Daytona. Emma made sandwiches while Killian went through them, telling her key points of each one.

Once she was done, she sat a plate next to him as they leaned over the counter. He took a bite as she read over another one. “Seriously, where does Regina find these people? The range in qualifications is all over the place.” She took a bite of her own sandwich. “Like this one has no volunteer experience at all.” She pointed to another one. “And this one,” she shook her head, “I don’t even know where to start.”

Killian laughed as she pointed out the things he also had thought. “I should just hire you and be done with it,” he said with a smile, his voice half-joking because he knew she would never go for it. But the change in the look on her face, had him wondering.

Her shocked expression turned into contemplation for a second, as gears started turning, but she shook her head. He was just joking, he didn’t mean it. “Hilarious,” she said and continued looking at the resumes in front of her.

But he didn’t turn to the resumes, as he kept looking at her. He was still in a sense of shock that she hadn’t refused, that she had seriously thought about it for a minute. He cleared his throat. “Emma, would you want to?”

She refused to look at him. “Killian, don’t be silly. I’ve never done that before. I don’t need you to just choose me because I’m your girlfriend. You need to choose the best person for the job.” She would be lying if she said she she wouldn’t like to. Just thinking about it for a moment, it held a lot of appeal. Of course, she loved her current job—she got to help out a lot of kids. But the charity work would be able to help so many more. But it was just a crazy thought. She had never done anything like that before, never organized something so complex. She didn’t want him handing over the reins because of who she was to him.

“What, Emma,” he said and reached for her hand to get her to look at him. “I’m quite serious, love. The only reason I never asked prior to this was because I thought you would say no.”

She looked at him confused. “Why would you think that? Any of it?”
“I know how much you love your job at the shelter. I know how much it means to you to help those kids. I never wanted to pull you away from that, or make you think you had to choose. That’s the only reason I hadn’t brought it up the first time around.”

She sighed. “Killian, I don’t have the experience—”

“Bollocks. I remember someone with a clipboard who organized the Christmas sock and gift distribution to make sure every child on that list had a good Christmas. I remember how you completely planned my birthday party—without me having a clue, by the way—and got Regina and the others to help out. You got my brother and Elsa here for it, all on your own. You knew Lily wasn’t good from the start; your gut has that instinct needed for this role.” His other hand came up, and cupped the side of her face. “There isn’t anyone, and I mean anyone, who I trust more than you. I know you can do this, Emma. I have no question and no reservation about it. But the question is, and I don’t want you to base it on what I want, love: what do you want?”

She swallowed hard at the complete honesty in his eyes. He truly believed what he said; the question was, did she? Did she believe that she could do it? What if she didn’t have what it took? What if she would fail? “Killian...I...”

His fingers pushed a strand of hair behind her ear. “Think about it. I don’t need an answer right now. But really think about it.”

She took a deep breath and nodded. “Okay, I’ll think about it.”

The next day, Monday, was also the 4th of July, which meant Emma didn’t have to go into work and instead, they packed up another picnic and headed out on the boat. This time, the lake was a lot busier due to the holiday. Boats were all over the place. People were skiing, tubing, swimming, fishing, and sunning all around them.

Killian knew exactly where he wanted to go, and anchored the boat in another cove. This one already had a few boats around. Emma turned to him, “Guess we don’t have the area to ourselves this time.”

He laughed. “Sorry, love. You won’t be able to have your wicked way with me, at least not outdoors.” He gave her a wink as he went around to secure the yacht right where he wanted it.

“So, why here?” she asked, looking around.
“Because right here is the perfect spot for the fireworks they will cast over the lake tonight.”

She laid out a blanket on the front of the boat again and sat down, looking out over the water. He sat down next to her, took out two beers from the cooler, and handed one to her. “So…” she began. “Why does a Brit like you celebrate the 4th of July?”

He sputtered on his beer and coughed. “Well, love I don’t hold you responsible for what your ancestors did centuries ago, so you can’t hold it against me either.” He winked at her. “Besides I’m doing very well in this country, and I should be happy for everyone else. And, most importantly,” he grabbed her hand and squeezed her fingers, “this year, I get to celebrate with you. And I can’t wait to see your face light up when you see the display later.” She leaned over and kissed him.

The spent the rest of the daylight hours picking at their picnic, taking a swim, listening to the radio, and talking. It was nice just to relax and take the day off. Both having a day off at the same time was quite rare for them. It could be more often, part of her brain told her. But the other part pushed it away; she still wasn’t sure if she should take on such a big task. Though she would no longer have to worry about traveling with him—she could work on the charity from wherever, and whenever. She shoved it back down; that wasn’t enough reason to do it.

She shook the thoughts out of her head; she would think about it later. Right now, she just wanted to enjoy her day, well...the rest of the twilight. Because it was starting to get dark.

The finished up their dinner and Killian brought out dessert and poured her a glass of wine as they snuggled together under a light blanket. After a couple test fireworks, Killian turned the radio over to a local station that was playing more Americana music, which made Emma giggle. Killian smiled. “Just don’t tell Liam.” That made her laugh harder, but it was quickly silenced as the fireworks started to go off.

Big white ones exploded with gold streamers, then ones that were half blue and red. Quick pops of red then white and blue lit up the sky, followed by white circles that looked to contain red hearts. She snuggled closer to him, and he kissed the top of her head as they continued to watch the fireworks go on above them. He definitely picked a good spot.

He had been here to witness the fireworks the years before, but this was the first time he was truly happy and didn’t feel so alone. He wrapped his arms around her as another and another pop went off, followed by a bang and the dark sky lit up by various colors.

“Those are my favorite,” Emma said just as a big white one filled the sky and then the sparks for them had little other explosions that seemed to glitter down from above.
“They are quite beautiful, love, but they don’t compare to you.”

She just rolled her eyes. “Killian...just watch the fireworks.”

“As you wish,” he told her and kissed the side of her face. He didn’t miss the smile she gave him, and later after the fireworks were over, they headed below and created some of their own.

On Tuesday, Killian headed into work and stopped by Regina’s office. “So, how were those resumes?” she asked after she hung up her phone.

He shook his head. “Nothing either of us liked, let alone both of us.”

“I’ll keep having them look,” she told him, and made a note.

“You may not have to, at least I hope you won’t.” Regina raised an eyebrow at him in question. “I asked Emma if she would take the job.”

Regina’s eyes went big, “I thought…”

“I never thought she would want to, that’s why I never said anything. But she might. I’ve given her time to think it over.” He looked down at his hands, “And before you say anything, Liam is also in agreement, and this is my—”

“Killian, stop. I’m not against it at all. She’s been helping you this whole time. And, selfishly, for the sake of the team, I think that if she is in control of the charity, you’ll be able to relax and let her take over. It will allow you to concentrate on racing once again.”

She had a point. That was part of it. He trusted her and her instincts completely; he knew it would be in good hands. “Okay, good. That is settled...as long as she accepts.”

“Belle and her get along well, don’t they?” Regina asked a little too slyly.
“Aye. Why?”

“Does she know that Emma is considering it?”

“Regina, I’m not going to have someone push Emma into making a decision.”

“Killian, we both know Emma.” She waved her hand at him. “You way more than me, obviously. But maybe she needs to talk to someone who is part of it all that isn’t you.”

He groaned. “God, I hate it when you have a point.” She grinned in triumph, as he stood and left her office heading towards Belle’s. Killian knocked lightly on the door frame and Belle turned to him with a smile and waved him in. He came in, shut the door, and took a seat.

“Perfect, I wanted to see you. The estimate for the renovations came back, and they look really good. Can you sign off?” she said as she handed him the quote.

“Nice work. It’s about what we thought,” he said as he signed his name and gave it back to her.

“Splendid, I’ll get this over to them, and they’ll start work soon. Since it’s just cosmetic, they don’t think it will be more than a month. It will probably be ready before the furniture order is done. Which you still have to pick.” She pointed her finger at him.

“I’ll take a look at the site later tonight, I swear. You can put in the order tomorrow morning,” he told her and she made a note. “But that’s not why I’m here.”

She sat down her pen and looked up at him. “Okay, then why?”

He nibbled on his bottom lip as he thought. “I offered the executive director position to Emma.”

Her eyes lit up. “That’s great! She’ll be perfect. When does she start?”

Killian smiled at her exuberance; she clearly liked the idea. “Well, she has to say yes first.”
“What? Why hasn’t she?” That seemed to deflate her sails a bit. “Oh, does she not want to leave the shelter?”

He sighed. “I don’t think that’s it. I believe she thinks that she’s not qualified, or at least that was her first reaction. I just don’t know. I don’t want to pressure her, but at the same time…”

“You really want her to, and you know she will be good at it. Which she will be. So let me guess, you want to see if I’ll talk to her?”

“I don’t want to force you, lass. Only if you think it’s a good idea. And you can be upfront and let her know I talked to you. I don’t want to keep secrets. But maybe she’ll be more willing to talk to you than me about her reasons.” He shook his head. “That sounds bad, doesn’t it?”

She just smiled. “No, it doesn’t. It might be easier for her to talk to another woman, and not the love of her life.” She winked at him, and he chuckled.

“Especially since I’m the one offering her the job.” He had been worried about that actually. Was she worried that in a way he would be her boss?

“I’ll try to talk to her, if she’s willing. But I will be completely honest with her, and give her how I really feel about whatever she tells me. I’m not going to talk with her just to tell her to take the job, even though I think she would be great.”

“That’s exactly what I’m looking for, Belle. You know her happiness is what I want. I just don’t want her selling herself short.”

They both agreed, and Belle set up a lunch date with Emma for the next day. Emma didn’t mention anything that night when they looked over the furniture choices, but he could tell that she was still contemplating her decision, so he didn’t say anything.

When Emma got to the diner, Belle was already there in a booth, and Emma sat down in front of her. “Emma! So good to see you, glad you could join me.”

“So, how much sweet talking is Killian having you do to try to get me to say yes?” she asked the
Belle just smiled bigger. “We both knew you would figure it out. But, I’ll be honest with you. He didn’t force me. He wants you to make the best choice for you, and I do, too, if that is this job or not.” She took a sip of her water. “But, since I work at the charity, and do the day to day, I am probably in a better position to talk to. There may be questions you have or worries that Killian can’t answer or that you don’t want to talk to him about. And anything you tell me, I swear Emma, won’t go back to him, if you don’t want it to.” Emma smiled at her; she had liked the woman from the start, and this just confirmed the feeling even more. “But, I personally think you would do an amazing job. Just my two cents.”

They both ordered their lunch, and Emma took a deep breath. “I am constantly going back and forth in my head. There are a lot of good reasons to take it. But there are bad reasons, reasons why I shouldn’t.”

“Oh, well, let’s look at the good reasons; those are easy. You’ll be able to help out a lot more kids than you do now, which I know is important to you.” Emma nodded. “You’ll get to be with Killian wherever he is all over the US without an issue.” Emma nodded again. “I don’t know what you make at the shelter, but I’m pretty sure this pays more. And before you say it, it was the going rate for what Lily was getting, so you can’t say that Killian did that for just you.”

Emma huffed at that one; she had a point with that. It wouldn’t make her question the salary. “But I’m not qualified.”

“Oh please. Yes, you are. I know how much work you have been doing with Killian. I know how much work you do at the shelter. I know, and he knows what you are capable of. Besides, you aren’t alone in this. You have me, Will, Mulan, and Merida. You don’t have to be an expert in everything, you just have to get us to work together and see the big picture.”

“Okay, let’s say I can do all that.” She still didn’t believe she could, but that wasn’t the only issue. “Killian will be my boss. How is that going to work? Everyone is just going to assume that I have the job because I’m his girlfriend. Not to mention, what if I do something wrong? What if we disagree about something with the job, how is that going to affect our personal life? What if we…?” She didn’t want to think about it, let alone say it. But she had to get it out. “Break up? Then what? I’m out a boyfriend, a place to live, and my job?”

Belle reached over and squeezed Emma’s hand getting her to look at her. “Emma, Killian would never do that.”
“Which part?”

“Well, all of it really. I doubt that man is going anywhere; he loves you. But I get what you are saying; that is a worry. But it’s a worry you can address. You could even add it in the contract.”

“What?” Emma asked not understanding.

“It is very common for the significant other to work for the charity that their partner sets up. Especially in sports. You can get a clause in your contract. Whatever you both agree on. Maybe it’s a minimum payout, or length of time that you get to stay with the company. But I can tell you, Killian would never just throw you out. It’s just not him.”

Emma of course knew that deep down, but try telling that to the child orphan that was still inside of her worrying about the prospect. Just then, the food came, and she took a big bite of her grilled cheese and sighed, allowing the slight crunch and the cheesy goodness to relax her a bit.

“As for him being your boss, well you are already in a relationship, and...you never know...it could spice things up.” The woman gave a tilt of her head, and then dug into her salad.

“Belle!” Emma said in disbelief, and then they both started laughing as they continued their lunch. When it was over, she still wasn’t clear on what her decision would be. But at least she did have a lot more information. And hearing from Belle that she thought Emma would be good for the position, too, did make her believe that she might have what it takes. It was getting through her other worries that she still wasn’t so sure about.

Wednesday night, they left to fly to Kentucky for another Saturday night race. Emma felt guilty for asking to be able to work away from the shelter two days last week and this week in a row. Archie had said it was okay, but Emma couldn’t help but feel bad about it. They deserved someone there all the time, which had her mind thinking about the position at the charity.

But every time she started thinking about it, thinking about all the positives, then her brain would switch over and start worrying about all that could go wrong. Everything was so great between her and Killian right now; did she want to add this into the mix? It could ruin everything. It could also make everything better. Part of her was saying a ‘bird in the hand is better than two in the bush’ as Ruth would say, and that the ‘devil you know is better than the devil you don’t.’ But Killian, the shelter, nor the charity were a devil. Devil in bed maybe, but anything but outside of it.

She sighed to herself; how was she ever going to make a decision? She couldn’t hold out forever; the charity needed someone soon. Killian reached over and took her hand, holding it. “If there is
anything you want to ask me, you can, you know?”

She smiled; it was just like him to know exactly what she was thinking about but also not push her. She knew he wanted her to make the choice based on what she wanted. But that wasn’t really the problem. Could she overcome her fears of the what if’s to take what she wanted? That was the real question, she realized. She just wasn’t sure. She squeezed his hand back, and just told him, “I know,” as they both continued watching the movie on their late-night flight.

The time in Kentucky flew by for Emma; it was as if she was almost in a whirlwind. It wasn’t because of a crazy schedule, or a ton of press, or them trying to do too much—it was because she was stuck in her head most of the time.

Ruby and the girls helped here and there, though they had found out about the offer as well and had attempted to try and sway her, but she quickly let them know that she didn’t want to talk about it and they changed the subject.

Killian was also being extremely patient with her, but she still caught his worried glances here and there, along with his reassuring smiles.

It was during the drivers meeting when Ruby cornered her. “Okay, no more avoidance. Talk to me.”

“No, no ‘Ruby’ me. I can see the conflict on your face, and you are freaking yourself out over this choice. As your friend—not Killian’s, not anyone else’s, yours—what has you so worried about taking the offer?”

Emma looked around and, seeing it was just them, closed her eyes and let out a deep breath. “What if something goes wrong?” When she didn’t get an answer she looked up at Ruby, who looked confused.

“Like what?” Ruby inquired, needing her to expand the statement.

“Anything!” She said too loudly, and then hushed the rest of her statement. “What if I do something wrong? Will he fire me? Will he not, just ‘cause I’m his girlfriend? What if we break-up, then what? What if we break-up because I take the job? What if it changes everything? What if—”
That’s when Ruby cut her off and put her hands on her shoulders. “Emma! Stop.” Emma took a deep breath and realized she was physically shaking from her hysterics. “You are coming up with tons of horrible scenarios that probably won’t even happen.”

“But what if they do?” She looked down. “I don’t want to loose him.”

“Emma, look at me.” Slowly Emma raised her eyes to her friend. “It’s not going to happen.” Ruby saw that her friend was about to interrupt. “No. It’s NOT going to happen. That man LOVES you. You have already overcome a lot together; this is nothing in comparison.”

“I’m worried that—”

Ruby squeezed her shoulders, “Have you talked to Killian about what worries you?” When Emma looked down, Ruby laughed. “Wasn’t it just last week that our friends, you and Killian included, told me and Victor we needed to talk?” Emma couldn’t deny that and nodded. “I think the two of you need to do the same. I’m sure most, if not all, of your worries, could be overcome just by talking to him.”

Emma groaned, her friend had a point. “Ahhh! Fine. I’m just wor—”

“He loves you.”

“But—”

Ruby shook her head. “He loves you. And you love him. It will be okay. Just talk to him...after the race.”

That made Emma smile. “Yeah, I don’t think it would be good to bring it up right before he goes on the track.”

With that, Ruby flung her arm over Emma’s shoulder and they walked to pit lane to get ready for the start of the race. Once the opening ceremonies were over, and with a kiss to the lips, Killian got into his car with a smile. He wasn’t sure exactly what happened, but he could tell that Emma was in a much better mood, which let him relax and his mind stopped worrying about what was going through her head, and he turned his attention solely onto the race that was about to start.
Emma retreated to the pit box and posted a picture of the track to twitter, with her encouraging words to Killian and the team. Her twitter account following was growing every day, and she knew that following could also help the charity. She had already made a post about it, back when it started at the Charleston race, but had let the others that actually worked for the charity do the rest of the promotion.

Killian was able to maintain his lead until a green-flag pitstop, but was able to gain it back a few laps later when those lead cars had to pit as well. There were a few cautions from a blown-out tire, another car running into the wall, and of course debris.

Killian was making his way back onto the track, along with Eric and August behind him. The three had just stopped for a green flag pitstop when Victor tried to move around Jefferson. However, Jefferson refused to budge and bumped him up the track into Sean. Both cars hit the wall and spun back down the track, collecting Jefferson and Phillip with them. The other cars tried to avoid the pile up; some of them smacked into each other as a result, but were able to drive away.

Yellow lights rang out around the track and Emma could hear cursing coming from Killian, both from worry for the other drivers and because now he was down a lap since the ones in front of him hadn’t made their way into the pits and now would get to on a caution.

It took almost five caution laps to clean up the track enough to allow the drivers who wanted to to come into the pits. Killian stayed out, allowing him to make up some of the spots lost to the horrible timing of the crash to when he pitted. The cars involved in the wreck were luckily able to limp into the pits and didn’t need to be removed by wrecker.

Emma wasn’t sure how that was possible with some of them. Bumpers were hanging, side panels were missing. Victor’s poor car looked to have received most of the damage, having cars him bang into him from both sides. The drivers’ crews went to work immediately, trying to fix or patch the cars as much as possible during the caution.

With Victor and Jefferson still in the pits, and the other cars at the back of the pack, the race started back up. Killian was back in sixteenth place, but at least he wasn’t as far back as the rest that were in the wreck, and he wasn’t laps down now. Emma clung to that idea as she watched him try with a vengeance to make his way back to the front.

With eight laps to go, Killian moved around the front car to take the lead. Emma unclenched her fists, and took a deep breath. He wasn’t going to have to push it so hard anymore. She wasn’t sure if she could take him going three wide and barely squeezing between two cars or a car and the wall anymore. Not to mention the quick dives in front of other cars.
But he still had to keep driving aggressively, because Eric and August were right behind him. They were looking to take the lead away. However, it was Killian who came across the line first, with Eric and August in quick succession. Sean managed to get to 14th, Jefferson in 17th, and Victor was at least able to rally to 20th.

Robin and Emma gave each other huge smiles, and he helped her back down to the ground as they took off to the Winner’s circle once more. But this time, the whirlwind was due to the happiness of Killian and his team, since the win had catapulted him in the points and he was now in second place.

Emma waited until they got on the plane the next morning to talk to Killian like Ruby urged her to. She didn’t want to possibly spoil any of their celebration from his win the night before. So after they got to cruising altitude, she came to set over on the couch next to him. “I’m ready to talk,” she told him, and he gave her a smile, took her hand, and faced her. She took a deep breath. “I’m worried about what will happen to us if I take the job.”

He was confused. “What do you mean?”

She bit at her lip and then started. “I’m worried that you might give me preferential treatment. I’m worried if I do something wrong, you won’t do what you do to other employees, or that it will come between us. I’m worried that work disagreements will turn personal. I’m worried that if we break up, then I’ll not only lose you…” She closed her eyes, “Which would be horrible, but also my job and where I live, too. I’m worried—”

“Emma.” He stopped her, and leaned in to give her a soft kiss. “First, if you believe I would fire you and throw you out onto the street if by some crazy slim chance we break up…” He shook his head, the fact that she thought that...well, it hurt.

“Killian, a large part of me believes that you wouldn’t do that. But I can’t help the small part of me, the part of me that was orphaned and abandoned by people over and over again, that believes that it’s possible.”

He pulled her closer and tucked her against him. He understood her worry; what happened with his father had left similar issues with him as well. “Then we’ll put it in your contract. We’ll have Kathryn draw something up that we are both comfortable with. A housing clause, and a continuing employment clause. I’m sure she’ll be able to come up with something.” His fingers went under her chin. “And, that way, if for some reason...you wish to leave me…” It was extremely hard for him to continue, but he needed to, “you won’t feel tied down and made to feel like you’ll lose your security if you do so.”
Her hand came up to the side of his face as her heart swelled. She could see how much it pained him
to even mention it, but that he was willing to go so far to make her feel comfortable...god, she loved
this man. His eyes found hers and she found her voice. “Thank you.”

He nodded and attempted a smile. “Now, I can’t say I won’t give you preferential treatment.” He
saw she was about to object. “You’re my girlfriend, I love you! How can I not be prejudiced?” He
kissed her forehead. “But I can work it out, if you wish, that some your pay, benefits, etc are
determined by the rest of the board, or nationwide averages, or whatever Regina and/or Kathryn can
think of.” She smiled at that. “Though I’m not sure why I’m not allowed to spoil you if I want,” he
said grumpily.

She laughed. “What if I say you can spoil me outside of work? Just not in the job?”

He grinned and raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure about that? You have been very hesitant in the
past to let me truly spoil you.”

He wiggled his eyebrows, and she could see his tongue flicking behind his teeth. She lightly swatted
his chest. “I may be getting over my aversion to it a tad bit.” The smile that lit up his face had her
giggle. “But...what about work flowing into our personal lives? I don’t want to upset the balance we
have right now.”

He took a breath, and slowly let it out. “I understand, my love. I worry about upsetting the life we
currently have, too. But, while not attempting to move backward, we also won’t move forward.” His
fingers played with a strand of her golden hair. “I don’t want to just stay still forever, do you?”

He had a point. “No,” she admitted.

“I know it’s scary. I’m scared, too. I don’t want to lose the best thing that has ever happened to me.”
He watched her eyes mist over, and she leaned in and gave him a soft kiss. His fingers trailed over
her cheek.

She smiled back at him, as the tear ran down her face. “You’re mine, too.”

He pulled her back in for another kiss, this one more demanding and passionate. Slowly, he pulled
away and rested his forehead on hers. “I can’t promise we’ll never fight. I can’t promise that work
won’t intrude into our personal lives or vice versa. But I can promise to try to work through it
together.”
“I can promise that, too,” she agreed.

“So, does this mean…”

She laughed. “Yes, yes! I’ll take the job.” She barely got the words out before he pulled her towards him and sealed the deal with a kiss.

Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - *=leading

#71 - Killian Jones - 682
#8 - Phillip Haven - 675
#36 - Victor Whale - 676
#53 - Sean Herman - 674
#65 - Eric Sirena - 688*
#92 - August Booth - 675
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 600
Chapter 31

Emma was really nervous as she paced her office. She opened up the folded piece of paper again, and read the words once more. She wanted to make sure they were perfect. She had heard his keys opening his office almost twenty minutes ago. But here she was, still pacing. She told herself she was just letting him get himself settled, but really she was procrastinating. She was extremely excited about the change and what it meant, but how exactly was she supposed to tell her boss—her friend—that she was leaving?

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, left the safety of her office, and walked over to Archie’s. He was seated as his desk, reading through his emails while drinking his morning coffee. She lightly knocked on the door frame and he looked up at her and smiled. “Good morning, Emma. Come on in.”

She came in, shut the door behind her and sat down in the chair across from him. She swallowed hard and saw the questioning look on his face. “Emma, are you okay?”

She nodded and took another breath. “Archie, you have to know, you and everyone here mean the world to me. I can’t thank you enough for this job, and the experience—” She looked down, and took another breath.

“But you are leaving us,” he said calmly, and her head shot up to look at him. Shock was written all over her features. He laughed. “Emma, to be honest, I—well we—have been just waiting for this moment.”

Her mouth gaped open, and she was sure she looked like a fish while she tried to grasp the information. “What? How?”

His smile widened. “Killian is a very lucky man. As soon as I heard about the charity, and saw how much you were throwing your heart into it as well...well, let's just say this isn’t a surprise.”

“Did he tell—”

Archie waved her off. “No, no, not at all. What job are you taking?”

She smiled at her boss, he was always so understanding, she was going to miss him. “Executive
His smile grew. “You’ll be perfect.”

“You think so?” she asked, his approval meaning a lot.

“Absolutely. They will be lucky to have you, and we will miss you greatly. But Emma, I’m so happy for you. For both of you.”

“I’m just taking a job...you sound as if—” He gave her a more pointed look, and she rolled her eyes at herself. She knew what it meant. What the last barrier, the last complication to their relationship removed meant. So she settled with a “Thank you.”

“So, I’m assuming we get you for two more weeks?” Archie asked hopefully. Emma nodded. “Good, it gives us time to look for a replacement, and for you to transfer anything you haven’t yet shown Ingrid how to do.” They continued their talk and how they were going to proceed in her last days at the shelter; before she left his office, she gave him the resignation letter so he could add it to her employee folder, making it one hundred percent official.

As she left Archie’s office, she walked back to her own to find Tink waiting for her, already sitting down. She wasn’t sure how her friend had heard, but she knew, she just knew that was why she was here. She shut the door behind her and walked over. “Morning,” she said and sat down as she reached for her coffee mug and took a sip.

Tink sat there, just watching her, not saying anything. Emma played the waiting game as well, not saying anything, just drinking her coffee. Finally Tink threw her hands up in the air. “Really? Aren’t you going to tell me? Give me the details?”

“How do you even know?” Emma asked, genuinely curious.

“I saw you pacing, I saw you enter Archie’s office and close the door. The two of you talked for awhile. It’s not hard to piece together. The only thing I don’t know is exactly what that means.”

“Killian offered me the Executive Director position at the charity, and I’ve decided to take it. I gave Archie my two weeks notice,” Emma admitted, and waited for her friends reaction. She hadn’t counted on Tink screeching and running around the desk hugging her. “Wait, you’re happy? Do you
Tink pulled back, and grabbed her by her shoulders. “Are you kidding me? You know I love ya. But, this is so exciting for you! You are going to be amazing. Wonderful. Fantastic. Which of course Killian knows, it’s why he asked. Of course, we’ll all miss you. But this is so perfect for you. And —” Tink stood up, a big smile on her face. “I’m so proud of you.”

“Proud? Why?”

“Because I know what a huge step this was for you. And I don’t mean about getting a new job. It was huge step for you to trust him like that. To take that leap.”

Emma rolled her eyes. “Stop psychoanalyzing me.” Tink just laughed, but Emma knew she was right. It was one of the reasons it took her so long to say yes. By saying yes, it was like she was at a poker match, and saying all in, betting that her hand (their future) was going to win. It made her nervous as hell, but also really damn excited.

Tink headed to the door to get back to work, but looked over her shoulder before she stepped out. “Emma, just don’t forget all of us.”

Emma smiled. “I won’t, I promise.”

Tink grinned and continued, “Just remember to invite us to the wedding, okay?” Before Emma had a chance to respond, her friend was out the door and laughing on the way to her office. Emma just sat there stunned for a minute, but she couldn’t help the smile that came over her as she turned to read through her own work emails.

That Friday, Emma left the RV, done with work for the day, and headed over to Ariel’s, where the group was hanging out together before dinner. Eric let her in and she found a seat on Killian’s lap.

“Hello, love,” he told her and gave her a kiss to the cheek as his arms wrapped around her and he pulled her side to his chest.

“Hi, yourself,” she responded, then turned to see everyone just staring at her.

“Well?” Ruby finally prompted.
She turned to Killian. “You didn’t tell them?”

He shook his head. “No, that’s your news.”

She just rolled her eyes and turned back to everyone. “I accepted the job at the charity.” Everyone cheered, making her laugh. “I don’t know what you all are excited about.”

“It means no more of this working on Friday out of the RV,” Ashley said.

Ariel agreed. “And no more worrying if you will be able to make the races.”

“Not to mention,” Killian chimed in from behind her, his arms holding her tighter, “That I will have the best possible person looking over the charity for me.” She was about to object, and he continued. “The board and the other charity members are in agreement, Emma.”

“Okay, okay. But this doesn’t mean I won’t have work to do at the track. Actually, I’ll probably have more,” she told them all. She had already been thinking about it, and knew her traveling on the weekend and being all over the country with him was the best way to reach out to the fans and sponsors. To help get the word out, get donations, and even meet with organizations in those areas that needed help. She caught the small frowns on her friends faces. “Though I could use some volunteers to help me.”

That got the three girls talking, all chiming in about their contacts and what they could help with. The guys also commented in with information as well. Killian just smiled as he watched Emma already mastering the role she had been so afraid she couldn’t do. But then again, he already knew she could do anything if she just put her mind to it.

Qualifying went well and Killian came out of it with a fourth-place start. The race itself was pretty calm—only a handful of cautions and those were due to blown tires or debris. With 20 laps to go, it got a bit more exciting: August and Eric were going back and forth in the lead; Eric tried to cut down too soon and August hit his back bumper, making both cars wobble. Eric went up towards the wall and August went down into the grass. The other cars tried to avoid them.

But before the yellow could come out, August was back up onto the track, some grass sticking out of his radiator, and had only lost a handful of spots. Eric wasn’t so lucky, with a scraped up car on the passenger side, but his car was still going, only now back in seventeenth place. The race was able to keep going under green.
The race finished with Phillip coming over the line first, followed closely by Killian and then Sean. Victor, Jefferson, and August came in shortly after, with Eric limping in at fifteenth. By the time Emma got to pit lane, a reporter was already interviewing Killian.

“First off, great race. But, I have good news for you. How does it feel to be back in the lead in the points?” the man asked Killian.

His grin grew bright. “It feels bloody fantastic.” His eyes scanned the crowd around him and when they landed on Emma, they shone even brighter. He continued his interview, and as soon as they turned the camera away, he pulled her into his arms.

She smiled into his neck. “You did it.”

“We did it,” he told her, and she pulled back to look at him in confusion. “Me, and my team. And you are part of that team now.” He leaned in and kissed her gently, stopping her words. When he pulled back he continued, “Do you have any idea how much your support, care, and love mean to me? It keeps me grounded out there, love. We are in this together.”

She just shook her head at him, but couldn’t help the grin on her face. “I love you,” she said with fake exasperation.

“And I you.” He said leaning in once more to capture her lips in another kiss. “Let’s go home.”

The last week at the shelter was crazy, but strangely not in a bad way. It was really busy, but everyone was so happy for her. They were genuinely going to miss her and wished her the best. She had to make sure, multiple times, to tell them that they, yes, she and Killian would stop in from time to time.

They were still looking for her replacement, but by Wednesday, Ingrid had been trained on the last things needed. They just had to transfer the last remaining files over, and Emma was hoping she could get quite a bit done before then. That was why she was worried when she came home on Wednesday night.

She decided to spring her request over dinner. “So, this last week, I have so much going on. And, Friday is my last day there.”
He nodded, as he sat down his glass and then smiled at her. “I am aware. If you can’t come with me to the race this weekend, I understand, love.”

“Oh, no, it’s not that.” She was for sure going to be at his race. It was the one thing she still had a hangup about: her fear that something would happen and she wouldn’t be there...again. “It’s just that I really need to be at the shelter on my last day, which is Friday. I can’t fly out on Thursday night like usual.”

“I had a feeling that would happen.”

She smiled. “Good.” She let out a long breath, “I was looking at flights out of Charlotte to Indianapolis and it’s only about an hour and half. The airport is near the track, and I can take a taxi. I know it’s only two days away, but the price isn’t too bad, and I’ll book it after dinner.”

He shook his head. “No, no you won’t,” he said seriously, though the smile and smirk on his face had her hesitate. Her confused look, had him smile more. “I seem to remember a negotiation with your new job. That if I couldn’t spoil you at work, I could spoil you in our personal life.” She raised her eyebrows at that. “So I will send the plane to get you Friday night, and I’ll send a car for you.” He could see her about to object. “That was the deal, love.”

She huffed. “I didn’t mean to needlessly waste time and money—”

“Swan, your comfort is not a needless waste of anything. Not to me.” His smirk grew as he took another drink.

“Well, that deal only starts once I start working for you.” She sat straighter in her chair, and gave him a victorious smile.

He laughed. “Actually, that’s not accurate, love. You see, that deal had to do with your contract and starting pay, which was negotiated prior to today. Which you signed prior to today. So thus, that deal was in effect prior to your start date with the charity.” He wiggled his eyebrows at her, knowing he had her.

“You’ve been working too closely with Kathryn,” she pouted.

“Now, my love. As you said, it’s an hour and half flight; it’s not like I’m sending the plane from
California. Also, I know how crazy taxis drive; they are worse than Jefferson out on the track.” She couldn’t help but laugh in agreement at that. He reached over for her hand. “Emma, please. Let me do this. At least, do it for me. It will make me feel better and not have to worry about you.”

“Fine,” she huffed even though the corners of her mouth were curling up. “For you.”

He laughed at that. “Thank you.”

By the time she got out of work on Friday, she was a wreck. Her mascara was running from the tears and her emotions were all over the place. She had hugged everyone. Literally, everyone. She had received hugs from the kids, from Archie, Tink, and Granny. With Granny’s hug, she really lost it, as the older lady hugged her even tighter, then after wiping away her own tears, she handed Emma a box of snickerdoodles.

It felt unreal to be leaving, with the box of her few personal possessions in her arms as she got to her car. Tink was with her and opened the back seat to the bug for her so she could set down her box, and Tink put the cookies in the passenger seat. Tink then came back around and gave Emma a quick hug. “Don’t be a stranger. You aren’t far away; come by, let’s have lunch.”

“I will, I promise,” she said as she wiped her eyes with a laugh. With that, they said their goodbyes and she drove home. She had just enough time to wash her face, change, and grab her bag when the car that was ordered rang the intercom. She beeped it in, headed outside, and then she was off to the small airport.

The flight was short—very short, thank goodness. It wasn’t long before she was walking out of the airport and Killian was standing there waiting for her. She ran over to him and he hugged her close as his lips claimed hers. She pulled back to look at him. “I thought you were sending a car.”

He looked over his shoulder towards a black car, a driver waiting next to the back door. “I did. I just came with it.” He took her hand and led her to the car. The driver opened the door for them and they slid in, and then he took her bags to the trunk. Once in the car and all secured, he pulled her to his side. “So, how did it go?”

She rested her head on his shoulder. “It was hard, really hard. I’m going to miss them all so much.”

His hand came up to play with her hair. “Love, they are only a few minutes away. You can see them whenever you want.” She nodded, and he kissed the top of her head as the driver got into the car, started the engine, and pulled away from the curb to head back to the track. “Did you eat dinner?” She shook her head lightly against his shoulder at his question. He turned his attention to the driver.
“Change of plans. Can you take us to Dawson’s on Main for a pick-up first?” The driver nodded, and then Killian took out his phone, pulling up the restaurant's website and menu, and handed it to Emma. “They have just about anything.”

She smiled at him, decided what she wanted, and Killian called in the order, adding a dish for himself, and then pocketed the phone. She looked up at him. “I told you to eat, and not to wait for me.”

He shrugged. “I had a feeling you weren’t going to eat, and it’s not that late.” When they got there, the food was ready to go, and then they were off quickly to the track nearby. They enjoyed their dinner and topped it off with some of Granny’s snickerdoodles Emma had brought with her.

The girls helped her celebrate on Saturday as they all except Ariel grabbed drinks during qualifying. Ruby told her about the traditional kiss of the bricks by the winner and the team, including the significant other of the driver, while she pointed to the small stretch of the the finish line. Emma made a face, just imagine having to kiss that after so many tires and cars went over it. The others all laughed.

The race itself was fast-paced, and the multiple cautions seemed to drive up the excitement and the stakes. By the end of it, almost all the cars had been touched in some way. Killian’s back bumper was bashed in, he had tire rubs on his side panels, and something was dragging and creating sparks.

It was Eric that crossed the finish line first, closely followed by Sean. Jefferson was next, followed by Killian barely in front of Victor, then August. Phillip was lucky to place tenth with all the damage to his car.

When she ran up to Killian for a hug after his interview, she smiled into his neck and whispered into his ear. “I really didn’t want to kiss the bricks anyway.”

Killian chuckled hard at that, and picked her off the ground before claiming her lips with his. Slowly he set her back on her feet. “Come on, let’s get out of here so we can get home. There are plenty of other things I’d like to kiss.” He winked at her, and then they quickly made their way back to the RV to get ready for the flight out.

Monday morning, Emma was up early and in her closet looking through clothes when Killian woke up. He stood in the doorway for a minute, then leaned against it in his boxer briefs and bedhead. She wasn’t paying attention as she tried to decide what outfit to wear for work. She wasn’t sure if she should go business casual or business formal.

His smile grew as he watched her. “Relax, love.” She jumped and quickly turned to him, and he raised his hands at her. “Calm down, it’s just me.” He walked up behind her, and sat his hands on
her shoulders. “It’s a very casual workplace, Swan. Remember, it’s currently held at the same place the team puts together my car.”

She grinned and leaned back against him. The bare skin of her back above the towel wrapped around her pressed to his bare chest felt relaxing to her. Well, it did, until his lips decided to descend to her neck, and his hand worked its way under the towel to her breast. “Killian…” she warned.

“I’m trying to relax you,” he said between kisses, as his warm breath moved up her neck to her ear.

“If you keep that up, I’m going to be late for my first day of work,” she scolded.

He lightly bit at her earlobe as his hand grasped her breast, making her moan in his arms. “Well, good news. Your boss says you can come in late. Or should I say, arrive late. Because if I have my say, you will be coming very soon, love.”

She leaned back into him as his other hand untied the towel. As it fell to the floor, the same hand trailed down her stomach to the apex of her thighs. His lips continued to nip and kiss her neck while his hand at her breast tweaked the nipple. His fingers below parted her folds, and he growled into her neck, finding her getting wetter by the second. “Spread your legs for me,” he told her and she instantly obeyed, whimpering, as his fingertips glided over her clit.

“Killian…please,” she begged, as her hands gripped as his arm around her.

He drove two fingers inside her, making her buck her hips in response and moan his name. “Is that what you need?” Her hips pressed against his hand, his palm grinding against her clit, as his fingers stroked in and out of her. “Or do you need more?” he asked, pulling his fingers back out. She whined in his arms, and he dragged his tongue up her neck back to her ear. “Of course you need more; you always want more, don’t you?”

She nodded, and he plunged three fingers back inside, and slid his hand against her now engorged bundle of nerves. She rested the back of her head against his chest as she rode his thrusting fingers, grinding her pelvis against his hand. “That’s it, love; take what you need.”

He could feel her getting close, feel her body shaking in his grasp, and he curled his fingers slightly, knowing exactly where...she let out a gasp, and her whole body tensed in his arms as her core clamped down hard on his fingers.
He held her to him tightly so she wouldn’t fall to floor as she slowly came back to him. His lips leaving now gentle kisses to her shoulder. When he felt it pass, he removed his fingers, and allowed her to stand back on her feet, but kept his arm around her. “Feel better?”

“Mmmhmmm,” she hummed back at him.

He sucked his fingers into his mouth, tasting her, and groaned. “So delicious.”

She turned around his arms and pressed her hips to his boxer brief-covered erection. “I think it’s your turn.” Her hands moved to push down his underwear.

He reached out and took her hands. “That was for you, love. I’ll be fine. I know you are worried about being late.” He brought her hands to his mouth and kissed the back of each one. “Get dressed and I’ll see you in the kitchen.”

“Killian…” She waved at the issue that was still very visible.

“I wouldn’t say no to payback later,” he told her with a wink before he went to his own closet to change and try to think of something extremely unpleasant to get his problem to go down.

Luckily, due to Emma waking up so early and a bit of a lead foot from Killian, who insisted on driving, they were only fifteen minutes later than she had intended and no one said a thing. Though Killian was pretty sure the twinkle in Belle’s eyes told him that she knew exactly what they had been up to; it was always the quiet ones you had to watch out for, he thought as he gave her a smile and a wink. She had to turn away to try and muffle her giggle as he lead Emma to her temporary office.

Everything was set up for her and ready to go. Her phone, laptop, and even a #71 coffee cup. She picked it up and turned to him. “Really?”

“Only the best,” he smirked, and she just shook her head at him as she took a short lap around her new home (well, until the new location was ready). He watched her wring her hands together. He walked up to her and took her hands into his own. “Nervous again already? I thought I helped with that.” He turned to the desk. “That desk looks pretty sturdy, if you need—”

She swatted his chest, her eyes wide. “We both work here.”
He took a step closer. “Trust me, I am well aware.” His head leaned in, his mouth at her ear. “Kind of exciting, don’t you think?” He pulled back in time to see her lick her lips before she shook the thought away. He took a full step back. “Tell you what, I won’t try anything under this roof.” He caught the small look of disappointment, and he smirked. “However, if you try something...well, I can’t be held accountable.”

“Enough,” she told him. “Some of us have work to do.” She took a deep breath. “If you really want to help me right now, you will show me where the conference room is, since I have a meeting in less than five minutes with the staff.”

He held out his arm for her, and with a roll of her eyes, she took it, and he escorted her to the room in question. The other staff was already there when they got there. He took a seat towards the back as she sat down at the empty seat at the head of the table.

She looked around and smiled at each person. “Good morning. I’m very happy to be here. How about we do some short introductions to get to know each other a bit.” The others turned to each other and tried to contain their smiles. Lily hadn’t even attempted to get to know them. “I don’t need to know what you do, or where you came from. We already know that. Tell me, your favorite food, dessert, and a hobby.” She then locked eyes with Killian. “And try to keep the answers PG.”

Everyone around the table snickered and Killian smiled. “Where’s the fun in that?” Everyone laughed again, and then Mulan started to answer Emma’s questions.

They took the time to open up and get to know each other, their new work family. They then discussed where they were in all their projects and what the next step was. They learned that the main part of the renovation of the new location will be done in five weeks. Then it was just paint choices and flooring. The new furniture would be ready and delivered in eight weeks.

“Perfect, the next Charlotte race is in eleven weeks. I think we should do a grand opening then. Invite the press, do a fundraiser of some type. Mulan, I’ll defer to your knowledge on the fundraiser, just tell me what you need.” The woman nodded with a smile. “Will, I’ll need your help with getting the word out, and making sure the press is here.”

“Will do, boss,” he replied, making notes on his legal pad.

“Belle, Merida, I’ll need you to make sure we have enough people to help out with everything, and make sure the new location is ready to go.” She turned back to everyone. “Alright, let’s get to it. Meeting over.” Everyone stood, and all but Emma and Killian exited.
He couldn’t help the proud smile as he walked up to her. “See, nothing to worry about, love. You were brilliant, just like I knew you would be.”

Emma rolled her eyes. “It was one meeting, Killian.”

He pulled her into his arms. “First impressions and all that. You’ll be fantastic.”

“Okay, how about you head over and see Robin and do your job, and let me get back to mine.”

“Aye, I shall.” He leaned in and gave her a soft kiss. “But I have to admit, it’s nice to be able to see you during the day.”

She smiled back. “It is.” She then pulled out of his grasp, and left the room, calling over her shoulder. “See you around.”

He watched her go, his heart full and happy for a moment, and then he headed to the garage to find Robin.

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This time, when Emma flew out with Killian, she had no guilt about working away from the office. It also helped that Will and Mulan were able to get her meetings with various sponsors and local shelters in the area of the Pocono track.

She spent Friday talking to and visiting the shelters in the area, and on Saturday, she talked with various sponsors, getting all of them to write checks for the charities in exchange for getting their logo on the volunteer shirts, websites, etc. in various sizes based on the donation.

Killian was out of the shower, towel around his waist, drying his hair with another one, when she told him the good news. “So, the the sponsors I met with were willing to donate a half million for the charity.”

His body stilled and he stared at her for a minute, and then he got that smiling smirk. “Please tell me you only negotiated for ad space and not…” His eyes traveled over her, “Anything else.”

She threw a couch pillow at him. “Killian! Who do you think I am? I would nev—”
He took her hand, pulled her to her feet, and kissed her deeply. “I’m just teasing, love. The amount, though, is quite impressive, especially at your first attempt.”

Her eyes lit up and she smiled. “Thank you.” She wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned into another kiss. “Good job on qualifying. Second place, and you were so close to the poll.” She tugged on his towel with both hands, opening the front. “I think you deserve a prize.”

His hand slid behind her head, tangling with her hair. “I think with your own performance today, we both deserve one, love.”

She shook her head, moved around him, and pushed on his chest, shoving him to sit on her place on the couch. “I seem to remember needing to pay you back.”

“Emma, I was joking. You know you never need—”

“I know I don’t need to, but I WANT to.” She slid down to her knees between his legs and licked her lips as she watched him get harder and longer under her gaze. His hands moved her hair behind her ears as her own slid up his thighs.

She didn’t waste any time or try to tease him. As soon as her hands were to his hips, she wrapped both hands around him. “Emma…” he groaned at her grasp, and slid further to the edge of the couch, opening his legs wider.

She smiled up at him, as she lowered her head. Her tongue snaked out and licked the bead of pre-cum from his slit, and then she closed her mouth around the head. Her tongue flicked at the underside, causing him to curse and his muscles tense. She smiled around him and pulled back, leaving a trail of saliva that her hands picked up to stroke over his length. He groaned as her grip became more firm, and she lowered her mouth down further on his length. Together, her one hand and mouth then worked in tandem, up and down his length. His hands migrated to her hair, his fingers tangling in it, and she could feel the tension in his arms as he willed himself not to pull her further down onto him. When her free hand came to fondle his balls, his hips involuntarily bucked up. “Bloody hell,” he moaned, and she took him deeper, swallowing around his tip. “Fuck…Emma…” She smiled around him and tried moving faster. “Love…if you don’t stop…”
She knew he was trying to warn her, but she didn’t stop, and took him even deeper. The only thing she hadn’t counted on was him stopping her. His hands in her hair, quickly went under her arms, and he pulled her off him, and then he was standing with her. “Killian! Wha—”

She didn’t get to finish the question as he was turning her to face the couch, he pressed on her shoulders to bend over. Her hands instantly braced herself on the the arm of the couch, as he quickly pushed her pants and underwear down to her knees. She felt the tip of his hard length probe her folds, quickly verifying she was ready for him, and in the next moment he was sliding into her in one swift thrust of his hips.

“Fuck!” she screamed; god; that felt good. She had already turned herself on by going down on him, and this was what she wanted, needed.

“Yes, that’s exactly what I plan to do to you, love,” he said, and pulled out to slam himself in once again. His hands held onto her hips to pull her onto him as he thrust inside her. “You have a delectable, talented mouth, Swan. But…” He pressed deep and leaned over her back, to talk into her ear. “But I prefer coming deep inside of you. Making you all mine.”

She moaned at his words and the full stretch of him inside of her. She looked over her shoulder at him, a challenge in her eye. “Then do it already.”

“As you wish,” he said and pulled almost all the way out, only to slam back inside, hard and deep just like he knew she loved. He piston in and out of her in rapid succession, pressing her hips against the couch, grinding her pubic bone into the leather. Her legs were bound together by her half removed pants, allowing her little movement but to arch her back and press her hips back into him, accepting and encouraging each thrust.

“Yes...fuck...yes...like that,” she told him as he ground his hips against her ass at every deep thrust into her, hitting all the places that had her going crazy and her legs quaking. Between him taking her hard and deep, the angle he had her hips in, and that fucking talented grind into her that not only hit those spots that had her seeing stars but also pressed her clit to the leather, she was on already on the precipice.

He was right with her, by the sound of his grunts and curses, not to mention the hard press of his fingers into her hips. “Bloody...fuck...Emma, come for me. Now,” he pleaded through clenched teeth as he tried to hold on.
With another thrust and her clit grinding hard against the leather, she was flying. Her back arched even further, and her mouth opened in a silent scream, as her inner muscles clamped down, spasming all around him. He thrust hard, burying himself inside of her one more time and stilled as came deep inside her, just as he wanted. Then his upper body slumped to her back, as they returned to themselves. He kissed her shirt-covered shoulder and then pulled them both to sit back on the couch, with her in his lap.

He cradled her to his chest as their breathing started to calm, his fingers trailing over her back. He could feel her start to laugh. “What is it love?”

She motioned to her legs, partially covered in her pants, and then her shirt still on. “I’m basically still dressed.”

He smiled. “I was just really efficient.” She laughed and then so did he. He rested his hand against the arm of the couch, and then his fingers trailed over the still wet leather. “And I guess you really liked it.”

She blushed, and then pulled his hand away from the couch. “We seriously need to clean that.”

He wrapped his arms around her, pulled her close and stood. “We can later, I’m not through with you yet.” He told her as he carried her back into the bedroom.

The race was all over the place. Long stretches of green followed by multiple cautions in a row, back to green, and then more cautions. The lead kept changing between Killian, Jefferson, and August. The others drivers would get to the front during green flag pit stops, but the other three drivers would just get back in the lead, their cars configured just right for the track and moving the fastest.

Killian’s team was doing their best, with constantly giving him the fastest pit stops they could and making sure he would get out first, and he in turn was driving his hardest out on the track. It was three wide coming up to the finish line, but Killian had it by a third of a car length, then Jefferson and August. Victor in fourth followed almost a full second later.

Emma and the team quickly found their way to Victory circle as Killian finished his burnout. Acola spray, interview, and passionate kiss later, they were once again taking hundreds of photographs. Only this time, Emma already had the charity’s own hats waiting, to make sure they got a photo as well.

The enormous smile Killian got on his face at seeing the hat gave her a sense of pride. Maybe she really could do this job after all.
After she reached to turn off her alarm Monday morning, Killian groaned and pulled her closer. “Emma, what are you doing?”

She tried to pry his arms from around her, but he held her tighter. “I have to go to work.”

He shook his head. “No, you need to stay right here.” He buried his face in her neck, and kissed the skin he found there.

“Killian, I have a job to do. You can’t just say I don’t have to go, we talked about this. You can’t spoil me…”

He groaned again, but didn’t release her. “Emma, answer me this. Did you or did you not work on Saturday?”

“But...it was the weekend,” she protested. “It was the only time I had to talk to them.”

“I understand that, but I don’t expect you to work Monday through Friday and also the weekend. You are already checking your emails all the time; I saw you do that multiple times yesterday, including last night.”

She huffed in his arms. “There is a lot to do, and the staff is all there right now, and they expect me to—”

“They don’t expect you to work yourself to death. They know you were working the weekend, and they weren’t. I would propose that, you shouldn’t work Monday’s, actually I would say Monday’s and Tuesdays.”

“I didn’t work yesterday.”

“You had the hats ready yesterday, and got the team’s pictures with them. That is work.”

“Killian—”
He turned her in his arms, and she willingly went, so he could look into her eyes. “Emma, think about it this for a minute. You can spend Sunday on emails and work if you want. You can text and tweet at the race. Then Monday and Tuesday is your weekend...and it will be my weekend.” He tilted her chin up. “This new job doesn’t have a specific weekly calendar. The job you are doing, even the rest of the staff is doing, is based on what days that you are needed to work, and most of those, just like mine, will be weekends.” He trailed his fingers up the side of her cheek, “Think of how nice it will be just to have two days each week, where neither of us are working.”

She couldn’t help but smile at that. It was extremely rare for that to happen; except for the rare NASCAR week off or the time during winter break, they hardly even had one day where both of them weren’t working in some capacity. “It would be nice.” She gave a long dramatic sigh. “I suppose you have a point. I will be working most weekends, too.”

“Perfect. I am glad you were able to see reason, my love. Now, since it seems we are both awake, and not going anywhere, I have some ideas of what we can do in bed with this new found time.”

She laughed and pulled away. “Just ‘cause I see you’re point, it doesn’t mean I’m not going into work today.” She stood up naked and started to walk to the bathroom; she could feel his eyes staring, so she stopped and turned back to him. His eyes roamed over her nude form. “I can’t just make a change without giving them notice. Besides, I have meetings scheduled today.” He rolled onto his back and groaned. “But, I will let the crew know not to expect me after this week, deal?”

He turned his head to her with a smile. “On one condition.” She tilted her head, and waited for it. He stood and walked over to her, his length harding by the step and bobbing as he sauntered over. “I get to take this shower with you.”

She knew it wasn’t a good idea. She knew she would be really late for work. But her eyes couldn’t help but want what he was offering. “Deal,” she finally said, sprinting for the bathroom, and he quickly followed.

Emma again met with more shelters and sponsors that weekend at or around the Watkins Glen road course. She was also able to meet with their friends, and the girls and the drivers each agreed to reach out their contacts and own sponsors to see about donations.

Due to his proficiency at the road courses, Killian was able to get the poll and start in first. He led most of the race, with August and Sean not that far behind him. The other cars kept mixing things up, and brought out the cautions here and there during the race. It was once again Jefferson that had Robin on edge, and he let Killian know that he was pushing his way up through the pack.
With five laps to go, Jefferson bumped Sean out of the way and took third place. With less than three laps to go, Jefferson pushed August into the wall and was able to squeeze by and take second. Robin warned Killian that Jefferson was catching up, and just like the prior road course, Emma watched as the crazy driver tried to dive bomb the corners and edge his way in. Killian’s mostly unharmed car was truly bumped and battered now that Jefferson had caught up.

This time, on the last lap, Killian was able to prevent him getting by on the outer loop, and he was able to maintain the lead into the last corner. Emma and his team were on their feet watching, as was the crowd. Jefferson didn’t slow and turned sharp into the corner and rear ended Killian hard, turning the 71 into a spin.

Emma gasped as she watched the car turn, while other cars tried to avoid him. Jefferson got across the line, followed by August and Sean, before Killian was able to right the car and gas the engine again to make it across the line in 7th.

She knew before she even seen him that he was angry, and by the look on his face when he took of his helmet, angry was saying it lightly. He threw his helmet into his car, and was marching towards victory circle when Robin grabbed him.

“Don’t go there, mate,” his crew chief warned as he pulled out of his grip. “It won’t do you any good, and just have NASCAR penalize you.”

“That bloody arse!” he yelled, along with a lot of other profanities, his face red with anger and his jaw ticking. The crew had already placed themselves in a circle around him to try and shield his rightful outbursts from the camera.

Emma caught Robin’s look and she approached slowly. She knew the testosterone was pumping through him, fueling his justified anger. She came to stand in front of him. “Killian…” His eyes burned to hers, his breathing erratic. She moved into his space, and wrapped her arms around his neck, her mouth to his ear. “I have a much better way to use that pent up frustration. What do you say?”

She could tell he was thinking it over, but the low growl let her know his choice. He took her hand in his, and quickly walked to the wall of his men. He turned back to look at each of them. “You all worked hard and deserved a win today.”

Robin gave him a small smile. “So did you. Not, get out of here while we take care of the rest.” With a nod, Killian was pulling her behind him back to the RV.
Once he got the door closed behind him, he was on her, and pushed her back against the kitchen wall. “That was very brave of you,” he told her, and then leaned in and bit at her earlobe. “To turn all of my attention, adrenaline…” He pressed his body fully against hers. “Towards you. Are you sure that was wise, love? Do you think you can handle it?”

She swallowed hard at the pop of the T and the look in his eyes. Slightly out of breath, she replied, “I’m sure I can, but can you?” A feral smile was all that greeted her as his mouth claimed hers.

Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - *=leading

#71 - Killian Jones - 853*
#8 - Phillip Haven - 839
#36 - Victor Whale - 838
#53 - Sean Herman - 839
#65 - Eric Sirena - 840
#92 - August Booth - 838
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 771
Once he got the door closed behind him, he was on her, and pushed her back against the kitchen wall. “That was very brave of you,” he told her, and then leaned in and bit at her earlobe. “To turn all of my attention, adrenaline…” He pressed his body fully against hers. “Towards you. Are you sure that was wise, love? Do you think you can handle it?”

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Killian’s hands were quick. He pulled Emma’s shirt over her head, had her bra unclasped and pulled down, dangling from one of her arms in an instant, and then his mouth was latched onto her breast. He sucked the peak hard as his hands moved to her pants. Her jeans were down, along with her underwear, as his mouth sucked harder.

She moaned in pleasure, a flood of wetness rushing between her legs in the excitement. Her fingers laced through his hair, holding on for dear life, as he then picked her up from the floor enough that she could kick her shoes off along with the rest of her garments.

Once her feet hit the floor, his mouth switched to the other breast, continuing its assault. Her fingers tugged at his hair, making him bite the skin, and a free hand came up to squeeze at the abandoned breast, his thumb swiped over the hard, tortured peak, and she mewled against him. His other hand shot straight to her core, and feeling her drenched, he didn’t even wait and plowed his three fingers in deep. She keened against him, her back arching. “Fuck!”

“Aye,” he growled as his fingers continued to moved fast and hard into her and his thumb curled up to to swipe against her clit. “Come on my fingers, and then I’ll fuck you nice and deep, love.” He curled his fingers inside her, stroking that spot she craved at every thrust of his fingers. “I know you want to be filled.” He plunged his fingers deep again. “Stretched with my cock.” He felt her body tensing, her walls fluttering around his questing fingers. With a hard grind of his thumb her to clit, she screamed his name, her fingers pulling tight on his hair as she came hard in his arms.
As her body quaked, he pressed her back to the wall to support her. His hand on her breast came up to unzip his firesuit, letting it fall down his legs. He stooped and brought the same arm under her rear and lifted her body up to the right height. He quickly removed his fingers from her still-quivering quim, and slammed his rock-hard cock inside her.

Her eyes popped open in surprise while her mouth moaned at the needed intrusion. He stopped fully seated inside of her. Eyes connected, he brought his fingers coated in her pleasure to his lips and sucked on all three at once. Her eyes fluttered at the sight, and he smirked as brought both of his hands came to her hips. He licked his lips still tasting her, and then with a slow pull out. With a snarl of “Mine!” he slammed back into her.

Her one hand moved to his shoulder as the other stayed in his hair, clenching and pulling at his sweat-soaked tresses. “Yes!” she screamed back as he started a fast, hard pace. His hands used her hips for leverage, and she wrapped her legs around him. “Yours...all yours.” She knew it was true—she was his. “More...more,” she pleaded as she felt her next peak already approaching.

He pulled her legs up higher on his waist and with another growl, he plunged back in, his new angle getting him deeper, making her gasp in a silent, pleasure-filled moan. He gritted his teeth; he was much too close to his release for his liking. His need to claim, to take still stirred within him. His mouth latched onto her neck, trying to leave his mark, as his hips somehow picked up the pace, hammering back into her.

When her body started to shake, he knew he couldn’t hold out anymore, and with one more thrust, her body contracted around his and he let it take him. For as much as she was his, he was fully and completely hers as well. With a grunt, he pressed deep and let the pleasure consume him. Their hands gripped each other tight as the bliss washed through them.

He caught his breath first, and leaned in to kiss her. The soft kiss turned passionate once again, his tongue plunging into her mouth once more. She moaned against him as he pulled back from the wall with her still wrapped around him. He broke the kiss to trail his lips down her neck, his tongue licking at the hickey she had blooming on her neck from his mouth just minutes earlier. She pulled his hair and had him turn to look at her; his eyes were still dilated, and she could already feel his deflated length twitching inside of her. “More?” she asked breathlessly.

His lips curled into a smirk. “I thought you said you could handle it.”

She swallowed hard. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Good, because I’m not done with you yet, love.” He walked into the bedroom and lowered her to
the bed, slipping from her, and then pulled back, hovering over her. She could tell he was trying desperately to calm himself. “If you don’t want this, you need to tell me. But… I want…”

She pulled him back down to her mouth and kissed him deeply, only to barely pull back to whisper against his lips, “I’m yours. I trust you, completely.”

He kissed her hard once more, and then stood up. “On your hands and knees,” he commanded as he turned to the nightstand beside the bed, pulling out a tube of lube as he tried to take calming breaths to reign back his need. He could still feel the adrenaline and testosterone cascading through him, the need to claim her, make her his. But he also needed to slow down—he didn’t want to hurt her.

He opened the tube and put a generous amount on his fingers as he turned back to her. “Rest your head on the pillows, and put that beautiful arse in the air.” She did as he told her, and he grinned as he set the lube on the bed within easy reach. He climbed onto the bed behind her, resting on his knees. “Spread your legs wider.”

As soon as she did, he groaned at the sight. Her cheeks and lips parted, allowing him to see all of her. To see his seed running from her core, and down her thighs. He clenched his jaw, reigning in his libido, as his fingers came up to her cheeks, spreading the lube on her puckered hole.

He massaged the the opening in a circle, eliciting a moan from her, and he smiled as he pressed the digit slowly inside. This part at least wasn’t new to her, so her body was relaxed, and he was able to slip the second finger inside, slowly pushing them in and out of her body. She groaned and pressed her hips back against him. “You like that, don’t you?”

She moaned at the small smack to her cheek when she didn’t answer at first. “Yesss…” she said, pressing back once again.

“Want another?” He needed to know she wanted it, both for her permission, and the knowledge that she wanted it turned him on even more, thought he wasn’t sure how that was possible since he was already hard as steel once again.

“Yes… please…” she groaned.

He reached for the tube, and on pulling out his two fingers, he applied some more liquid, and then slowly he pressed three into her. With a gasp, she tightened on him, and his free hand moved around her to circle her clit. “Relax.”
She moaned as he manipulated her bundle of nerves, and when her muscles did as he requested, her pressed the three digits all the way inside. She whimpered and her hips pressed back against him, and he groaned at the sight. “Fuck...Emma. You are so damn tight.” He pulled them out a little and pressed them back inside, making her keen loudly. His fingers kept playing with her clit, as his others slowly thrust in and out of her back passage.

When her moaning grew louder and her hips pushed back onto him, fucking herself harder on his fingers, he knew she was ready. He was more than ready, as his cock was straining for attention. His fingers left her clit and squeezed more lube directly onto his length. He pumped into his hand, making him moan at the contacted while also spreading it over him.

His hand went to her hip, and on his next pull back of his fingers out of her ass, he used them to line up his cock. He pressed the head to the hole, and slowly pressed inside of her. When the head popped inside, they both moaned. He gritted his teeth, urging himself to go slow, as he slowly sunk inch by inch into her tight ass.

About halfway in, she tensed, her muscles tightening, and he stopped. “Want me...to stop?” he asked through gritted teeth. She shook her head no, and his free, clean hand moved under her, and caressed her breasts, lightly tweaking the nipples. She sighed, and he leaned over her, letting another inch press inside, making them both groan at the feeling. He kissed her shoulders, and the back of her neck, as his hand trailed from her breasts back to between her legs, circling her clit once again.

She whimpered in pleasure, and her body opened for him, allowing him to slide all the way inside. He groaned at the feeling. “So bloody fucking tight.” His fingers continued to move over clit as he straightened back up, and his other hand grabbed her hip. He bit his lip at the sight before him: her tight hole stretched around his cock. His fingers moving through the wetness of her arousal and his own seed, the knowledge almost too much for him to take.

With a press of her hips once against back onto him, he growled, and taking her hint and readiness he pulled out a bit, and pressed back in, making them both moan at the pleasure. Each pull out and thrust back in, he went a little faster, a little harder, testing her. But her moans and the rocking of her hips told him she was right there with him.

“Harder...harder…” she pleaded, and with that, he lost all restraint as his hips slammed into her, pressing her further up the bed; sounds of pleasure from them both filled the room.

“Bloody fucking hell,” he groaned as he plowed back inside, the pleasure intense, too intense. He wanted her to come around him, needed to feel the sensation, hear her sounds, and he was so close. His fingers on her clit dipped lower, and two sunk into her core.
“Fuck! Yes...oh yes,” she moaned as he pressed them in further, feeling himself thrusting through the thin wall between his fingers and cock. He growled at her bucking her hips back, seeking the feeling, going wild on him, and the feel of her even tighter with his fingers inside of her.

“Oh, fuck...you love it, don’t you?” he asked; she only was able to moan her answer. “Love me fucking your tight ass.” He was bucking wildly into her, on the verge himself, his fingers questing and massaging that spot inside of her again.

“Oh god...yesss...yesss...” With that, her body tensed and she screamed, and he felt the ripples of her contractions over his fingers and cock, and he thrust twice more, and then followed her into the storm of pleasure as he erupted and emptied himself inside of her.

They fell to their sides and he slid out of her, both whimpering and trying to calm their racing hearts. He kissed the back of her shoulder, his adrenaline now quenched. “Love you.”

She smiled softly, and managed, “I love...you...too.”

“Are you...okay?” he asked with a worried tone.

She let out a small giggle. “Wonderful.”

He let out a small laugh of relief. “Good.” He sat up. “Stay there; I’ll go get some wash cloths.”

He trotted into the bathroom, and washed his hands and himself with some soap and water. He then grabbed two hand towels and prepared them, one with soapy water and the other with plain, and went back into the bedroom. He groaned at the sight of her. She turned at the sound to look at him, as his eyes were focused on her rear.

He bit his lip at the sight, seeing his seed now dripping out of both of her orifices. “Like what you see?” came her words and his eyes darted to hers, and he saw the knowing smirk on her face.

“Can’t help it, love. It stirs something very primal in me.”
She carefully moved up onto her hands and knees. “Oh, really?” He nodded and swallowed hard at the look in her eyes. “Does that primal side want the tri-fecta?” He raised an eyebrow at her, but she knew that he knew exactly what she was referring to. Her eyes darted to his cock, and the twitching she saw indicated just how much he would like that; now it was her turn to take some control. “Sit on the bed, with your back against the headboard.”

He grinned at her, and the determination in her eyes. There wasn’t a chance in hell that he would refuse the gift that she was willing to give him at that point, and his body was in agreement, already half hard at the prospect. He moved into position quickly and she crawled toward him, her hair dragging over his thighs, her ass high in the air, and that’s when he noticed that he could see her in the mirror across from the foot of the bed.

She caught his eyes and grinned. “Like the view?” she asked just as her hands gripped his length.

“Fuckkk…” he replied to the touch, and then to her question, “Yes.”

She gave him a smile and then lowered her mouth to the head of his quickly growing erection. Sucking on the tip had him moaning, so she added flicking her tongue to the underside, which got the intended reaction of his hands into her hair. She moaned around him as his fingers tightened in her hair and his hips bucked up slightly at the vibrations.

Fully hard in her hand, she lowered her mouth further, taking him deeper, only to pull back off. She smiled and took a quick breath until his hands pressed her back onto him and she moaned again.

“Bloody...fuck,” he groaned again, his eyes moving between her mouth taking him down, the view over her backside in the mirror, both of her thoroughly screwed holes, and thighs coated with his pleasure. He can see the pleasure on her face, feel it in her moans around him, raising his as well, knowing that she was aroused by what she was doing to him. His hips bucked up again at a particularly gratifying swirl of her tongue. “Play with yourself…while you suck me, love,” he groaned out as her throat swallowed around him, taking him deep.

She pulled off of him, licked her lips, adjusted her stance to rest on one hand, and trailed the other under her to between her legs. His eyes watched the mirror; as her fingers dipped inside her, she then took him back into her mouth, taking him to the base. He moaned loudly and his eyes drifted shut, head flying back a second, only for her to pull off. “No, watch the mirror,” she commanded.

His eyes instantly reopened to look at her and her smirk. “Yes, ma’am,” he replied and looked back to the mirror. She then took him deep once more, as her fingers pressed inside her at the same time. She moaned around him against, and the groaned, struggling to keep his eyes opened.
She pulled her mouth back off as her fingers retreated, and he could see them glistening. “Emma…” he whined, “You’re killing me.” He felt the smile on her lips as she took him deep in again, sucking hard as she thrust her fingers back inside. His hands tightened in her hair again, and he pressed her back down.

Their movements started to speed up, her fingers and mouth working in tandem, fucking herself as she sucked him deep, his hands clutched the back of her head as his hips fucked her willing mouth as she got deep. Both their movements became frantic, his body tensed first, and she pushed her mouth fully onto him, swallowing around him as he erupted with a grunt of her name down her throat.

She swallowed what he gave, and then pulled off to breathe as her fingers continued to plunge inside, trying to find her own release. With a few deep breaths, he pulled her up into his lap, her knees on either side of him. His own fingers replaced hers, and she wrapped her arms around his neck as she rode his fingers, harder, pressing her clit against his softening length. His mouth found hers, and he moaned at tasting himself on her lips.

With another rock of her hips, her back arched, her head flew back and she screamed her pleasure as he held her tight, his eyes watching the bliss wash over her face. As her body stilled, his hand caressed her cheek. “So beautiful.”

Her eyes fluttered open slowly, and she smiled at him, a content look on her face. He smiled back, and gave her a soft kiss. She pulled back to look at the now-cool towels, and went to reach for one.

Killian shook his head, “At this point, I think we should just take a shower.”

She turned to look at the clock. “We are so late, your driver—”

He wrapped his arms around her and stood from the bed, carrying her with him to the shower. “Since there hasn’t been a knock on the door, I have a feeling Robin told him to not bother us.” She blushed at that, and he laughed. “With all we just did, you blush at that?”

She laughed as he slowly set her still-shaking legs down, but kept an arm around her as he turned on the water. “But this is just us, you and me.”

He growled at that, and nipped lightly at her earlobe. “It better be. Or do I need to stake my claim again?”
She wrapped her arms around his neck. “You know, I’m all yours.”

He leaned in and kissed her. “And I am yours, as well, my love.”

She kissed him again, and then pulled back, a small smirk on her face. “But by all means, claim me as much as you want.” She pressed her hips into his and kissed him hard again.

“Minx,” he growled and pressed her back against the shower wall, claiming her mouth once again. It was much later before they left the RV, and headed to the airport to go home. Both exhausted, they slept the entire plane ride home.

It was a good thing that Emma had agreed to take Mondays and Tuesdays off, because they slept in until almost noon the following day. They lazed around the bedroom watching movies, or tried to watch movies, only to get tangled up with each other multiples times. On Tuesday, they took the opportunity to head out onto the water, and attempted to figure out something for them to do the upcoming weekend since it was a NASCAR break week.

On Wednesday, Emma went back to working on the upcoming grand opening party, and strategizing with each of the staff on various other aspects. Belle had already gathered some regular volunteers, including a dark-haired woman, Dorothy, and her Aunt Em. Emma had a feeling the woman’s aunt was happy to find something to do during the days of her retirement. Dorothy, on the other hand, Emma had a sneaking suspicion had more to do with a certain someone that worked there. The more she saw Dorothy and Mulan talking and laughing with each other, the more her suspicion grew. Mulan laughing...that was her biggest tipoff.

Killian wasn’t at the shop today—he was out at the racetrack, testing some changes to the car, but she would see him back at the house later that night. And that was where she found him, once again getting dinner ready. “How was the car test?” she asked after she sat down her things and came over to take the glass of wine he already had sitting out for her.

“Good, really good. Robin says they’ll make the adjustments for the next race.” He stirred the stew on the stove and then walked over to her, giving her a soft kiss. “Missed you.”

She smiled. “Me too.”

He then went back to the stove. “I also made a formal complaint to NASCAR about how Jefferson raced. He was either overly aggressive and tried to crash me deliberately or was completely
She smiled. “Good. When will we find out what they decide?”

He tilted his head back and forth, and with a shrug, said, “Maybe next week.” He stirred the stew again and sighed. “I highly doubt anything meaningful will come of it.”

“But that was—how did Ruby put it—‘detrimental to racing’.”

He grinned at her use of the well-known rule phrase. “Yes, that would be true. I’m sure they will rule something. But a small penalty won’t mean much to him. I don’t see them putting him back on probation or docking him points. He’ll probably have some excuse.”

Emma was angry for him. “But that’s not fair. Everyone knows he is crazy out on that track. A loose cannon. He could seriously hurt someone...” She let herself drift off, her thoughts remembering the other time where he had seriously hurt someone. She looked up into his eyes, and he walked over to her and wrapped his arms around her.

“It’s okay, Emma. I’m okay.” He hugged her tight, and she pressed her face into his chest. “So, have we decided? Since you want to work Saturday, we’ll take the Sunday to Tuesday and go out on the boat for a long weekend?”

She knew he was changing the topic deliberately, but she was more than willing. “Yes. I just need to work with the sponsors and charities here for the grand opening.”

With the plan in place, that was what they did. The stocked the yacht with food, took a couple changes of clothes, and made their way out onto the water. There wasn’t anything like laying in each other’s arms after making love on the boat, with the waves rocking them back and forth to sleep.

They got the news the morning after they got to the Bristol track: Jefferson was penalized for ‘actions detrimental to racing’ but was only fined thirty thousand dollars, and no points reduction. While it sounded like a lot of money, Emma also knew that it was a minor slap on the wrist, not to mention how much Jefferson won from being the winner of the race.

The girls had just sighed and told her to get used to it—that unless it was something major, nothing but small fines and penalties happened. With that, they changed the topic, and Ruby gave her some names and numbers to contact for the charity.
Killian qualified in fourth for the short track, and the next day, on Saturday night, when the race started under the light, he quickly made his way to the front of the pack. Just like last time at the half-mile track, there were many cautions, no car left untouched, as the leaders had to navigate back through the lap-down cars. There were so many cautions for debris, blown tires, and cars getting into each other and the wall, that none of the cars had to come in for fuel or tires while it was green.

With ten laps to go, Killian would for sure finish with the most laps led. But what made Emma nervous was that Jefferson and Victor were closing in. Killian would go to block one, and the other would start charging forward, and vice versa. Emma was going to give Victor hell later for helping Jefferson, especially since due to the maneuver from Jefferson, Killian had to slow to not rear end him and have them both end up in the wall. But because of that, Victor took the lead and Jefferson took second place, with Killian finishing in third.

Only this time when Emma got down to pit lane, Killian wasn’t at his car, he was storming over to Jefferson’s pits. Killian’s crew was following him, Robin trying to get him to calm down. Anton, his jackman, clasped a hand over her shoulder. “Emma, wait here.”

“But—”

He shook his head. “If this get’s ugly, he wouldn’t want you in that mess. I need to be there with him, but you must stay here. Understand?” She nodded in defeat, and Anton ran after the rest of his crew as she watched the big TV monitor, which was now focusing on the commotion.

Killian ignored Robin, and shrugged off his crew’s hands trying to pull him back. “Back off!” he yelled at them as he stormed up to Jefferson, who was in the middle of an interview. The reporter instantly stopped and backed away, but motioned for the camera to get whatever was going to happen.

Jefferson looked surprised for an instant, but then slowly headed over to Killian, his hands raised. “Look, man.”

“Dont. Look. Man. Me,” Killian yelled. “If I hadn’t slowed down, we would have BOTH crashed! What the bloody hell is wrong with you?”

“But we didn’t,” The man said, too calmly for Killian’s liking.
Killian grabbed the other man by the front of his firesuit, and Robin and Leroy each grabbed an arm, trying to pull him off. But Killian didn’t budge as he got right into the man’s face. “Fancy a game of chicken, do you? Trust me, mate. Next time, I won’t flinch.” With that he shoved the man away from him, shook his crew’s arms off, and stormed back to the RV, not stopping for reporters.

She was much too quiet for his liking on the late night car ride to the airplane, and he had a feeling he knew why. Once they got into the air and the plane steadied, he was proven right.

She took off her belt and started pacing. “What the hell was that?”

He turned towards her, undoing his own seatbelt, not really wanting to ask, “About?”

She rounded on him. “You know exactly what I’m talking about? Why would you challenge him like that? Him of all people? He is insane!”

He sighed. “Because no one else has stood up to him.”

“So you think you need to?”

“If someone doesn’t, he will think he can get away with it.”

“So, it’s revenge then?”

“Yes! I am already guaranteed a place in the Chase; right now, before it starts, I have to make my point! If he does it during the Chase, he could end things for me or someone else way too early.”

“But it’s not worth your safety!” she screamed.

That was her real worry. He stood and enveloped her in his arms. “I promise I won’t do anything...too reckless.”

She looked up at him, an incredulous look on her face. “Is that supposed to make me feel better?”
“Uhhh...yes?”

She shook her head and buried her face in his chest. “I don’t like this.”

He kissed the top of her head. “I know. I’ll be careful.” She didn’t answer, but just hugged him back harder.

On Wednesday, Killian, Emma, and Belle took a look at the new office space. The contractors were gone, the walls were opened up, the wood paneling was gone, and lighting was changed. Just some paint and new flooring was needed. They looked through the space and Belle held up the narrowed-down list of paint colors and flooring samples.

After taking a look at it all, they decided on a light gray for most walls, white trim, and a maroon red for accent walls—the same red that Killian had for his car. For the floors, they decided on a black heavy-duty tile for the main open area, and a short pile multi-colored carpet that ranged from light gray to black. It was similar to the carpet Emma had at the shelter, just in different colors; the multiple colors helped to hide dirt and stains, which was very much needed around so many children.

Belle called in their order as they both explored the rest of the building. He walked into the big corner office that looked out to the back and side of the lot. The big windows let in a ton of light and a great view, But the reflective, one-way surface reflected the sun so that it wouldn’t heat up the room, and gave all the offices a sense of privacy, not allowing anyone to spy inside.

“So, you found your office?” Emma asked, walking up behind him.

“Oh, no, Swan. I was thinking this was perfect for you.” He turned to her and pulled her into his arms.

She shook her head. “This is the nicest office in here; you should have it. It’s your charity, after all.”

He kissed the top of her head. “But, I won’t be here as much as you will. I have other things to do. Besides, I already brought it up with the board and they agreed.”

She groaned, and laid her head back against his chest. “You keep pre-empting me by going to them, and you know I can’t say no.”
He chuckled. “It’s too much fun, love.” He kissed her head and then looked around. “Besides, if I’m here, I’ll probably be in here with you. Annoying you.” That caused her to smile. “And I’m taking the one next door.”

“Oh, alright. If you insist, I’ll take it.” She sighed and rolled her eyes. He just chuckled louder, and hugged her tighter.

When she woke up on Friday, both of them getting ready for work just felt right—Him for practice, her for meeting with the local charities. She was getting used to it and felt more confident each time. The next day, with the sponsors, she was able to bring in even more donations. Soon, they would have the funds to help each of the charities she was meeting with, If they needed additions to the building, more staff, clothes, new books, or whatever it was that they were looking for.

The late August weather in Michigan was still hot, but luckily there was a light breeze when the race on Sunday started. Emma watched Killian in fourth come up to the starting line as the green flag waved. She also kept an eye on Jefferson, who was back in tenth, unable to forget the challenge that Killian had issued to the man. The only question was if Jefferson would back down or not.

By the way he was moving through the pack, Emma was pretty certain he was going to keep doing what he had before. She just hoped that Killian made it to the front and Jefferson didn’t.

By lap 23, Killian made it to the lead, but at lap 47, Jefferson had made it to second right behind him, and that was when the battle began. Emma’s knuckles were white as Killian was true to his word and didn’t give an inch to the crazy man. She held her breath so many times as they fought out on the track, bumpers clipping, tires rubbing, and cars running against the wall.

What she also noticed was that the other drivers were staying out of their way as the two feuded. No one wanted to get near them. She could hear Robin attempting to calm him down, but Killian was having none of it. “I’m going to bang some sense into that bloody wanker one way or another, mate.”

Though she did have to give it to Killian—he didn’t pull the same things on Jefferson that the crazy driver was pulling on him. He just didn’t slow down or take drastic actions to avoid him, and both their cars showed that.

At the last lap, just after the last corner, Jefferson was trying to get in front of him, just like the last race, trying to get Killian to slow down. Only this time, he didn’t, and Emma was on her feet as she watched Jefferson try to come down too early, and Killian just kept going. But when Jefferson’s car started turning into the 71, Killian moved up the track, pressing Jefferson into the wall right before the line. Both cars bounced off the wall and then spun around to find their way over the finish line backwards, Killian a half car length in front of Jefferson.
The two cars broke apart with Jefferson’s running into the grass and Killian’s limping down the track but still running. She could hear him cheering over the com link, with a “Take that, you cheeky bastard,” thrown in.

She looked over to Robin. “Does that count?” she asked as they took off their headphones.

He shook his head and sighed. “It does...for now. Depends on what officials want to say.”

She shelved the information away for later and quickly made her way down the ladder and over to victory lane to watch Killian drive his battered car inside. After the victory splash of cola, and a deep kiss from him, he had to turn from her to talk to the reporter.

The redhead was smiling at him. “That was some show out there on the track today, not to mention one amazing finish. After the last race, you vowed not to back down from Jefferson, and you certainly showed that. Do you have anything to say?”

“Just to remind everyone that while I did not slow my race car down or move out of the way for the reckless way he was driving. I did not do the same to him or anyone else on that track. Besides that, I want to thank my team, Mills Racing…” He then continued on thanking his sponsors, the line of dialogue that Emma now knew very well.

After the stream of pictures and press, they were finally on the plane heading home when Emma got to ask him the question that Robin had lodged in her head. “So, what are the officials going to do to you?”

He sighed as he stood up, and pulled her out of her chair and over to the couch with him. As they snuggled together, he finally answered. “I don’t know.”

Killian didn’t get to relax much on Monday as he was called in for questioning in the race. Emma wanted to go with him, but since he wasn’t sure how long it would be, he had her stay home. He wasn’t shocked by the questions, but he was shocked by how calm he stayed during them, something that would not have happened prior to meeting Emma. But after one specific question, he knew he was going to get some type of penalty, because he answered it truthfully, and questioned them in return.

“Mr. Jones, will you continue this behavior the track?” asked one of the officials.
“I will until he either stops his reckless behavior, or until NASCAR does something about him.” He could see that his comment angered some of them, but he had at least said it directly to them and not the press.

He returned not much later to have Emma rush into his arms and ask, “So? How did it go?”

“I don’t know, love. We’ll find out, but I wouldn’t worry about it.” And he wasn’t going to; he had other things on his mind anyway.

That Wednesday afternoon, he sat at the diner that he and Emma went to for their first date in Storybrooke. He sipped on the iced tea that the waitress had brought over for him, his mind a jumble of what he wanted to say, so many thoughts in his head, and the favor he would ask.

He was brought out of his thoughts by his lunch date sitting down across from him. “Well, this was a surprise invitation.” David smiled and motioned to the waitress to bring him the same drink Killian had.

“Thanks for meeting me for lunch, mate. I’m not stealing too much time from policing the town, am I?”

David laughed. “Well, I don’t have anybody going over a hundred miles an hour anymore.”

“Oi, that was one time...and…” He shrugged. “I have to admit that I am quite glad how it turned out.”

The other man shook his head. “I can’t believe that I actually agree with that.” Both men chuckled.

“I’m glad you feel that way, because I actually wanted to ask you a favor.” David just raised his eyebrow waiting for Killian to continue. Killian took a deep breath and asked.

On Thursday, the RV driver picked them up when Emma got home from work to take them down to Darlington, South Carolina. It was only a two-hour drive, so it didn’t make much sense to take the plane. Due to the chaperone, they ate dinner while watching a movie.

The next day, it was announced what penalties NASCAR issued for the Michigan race. Like Killian had thought, he did receive a penalty, but luckily it was no where what it could have been. Both
himself and Jefferson were penalized fifty thousand, and no points docked. He was happy to see that Robin hadn’t been penalized for it either, since crew chiefs were sometimes as well. Granted, if he had been, Killian was ready to pay his friend's portion since it was his own actions.

But what it really told Killian was that NASCAR really didn’t mind what he was doing. As a matter of fact, the news outlets were going nuts over it and driving up buzz over the ‘rivalry.’ The only reason the penalties were probably issued was to make it look like the officials were doing ‘something’ about it. He wanted to laugh that they were throwing up their hands and basically letting him deal with the Jefferson issue himself.

This time, Killian started in third, behind Victor and August, with Jefferson in fifth. Emma watched with apprehension to see if the crazy driver would try to get back at Killian for the prior race, but she didn’t have to wait long for him to get up to fourth, and try to push him up the track. Luckily, Killian was prepared for it and countered, sending Jefferson down the track to the grass. The ding to the 71’s side panel worth seeing Jefferson’s 12 eat some grass before righting himself and getting back on the track, though it did loose Killian a couple positions but not as many as the other driver.

About thirty laps later, when Killian was in second behind Victor, the 12 caught up and gave a thump to the 71’s back bumper. Emma smiled and agreed with the stream of cuss words that came from the com link, but she watched him stay calm and tap on the break just enough to smash in Jefferson’s own front bumper.

“Ease up, mate. Don’t get him to crush your rear too much so we can’t get the fuel in.” Killian did ease up then, but when Jefferson attempted to get around him, Killian would just move up or come down on him, their side panels hitting, and made Jefferson wobble the first few times when he didn’t expect it. Emma had to hand it to Jefferson, he was damn persistent and learned quickly and adjusted technique. Now if only he could learn that quickly about what he shouldn’t be doing, Emma thought with a sigh.

Due to all the bumps, rubs, and hits into the wall by both of them, both cars wore quite a bit of Barebond, which also led to more time in the pits, which put them further back in the pack on restarts, but they kept catching back up to the top five. With two laps to go, Jefferson seemed to have had enough of Killian’s tactics, and all out shoved him into the wall to get past him.

Killian had no choice but to let him go so he could get off the wall. His spotter rattled off the damage but told him he could make it to the end. The 71 attempted to try to make it back up to at least the top five after losing spots against the wall. Jefferson, however, was all over the track attempting to get to the front, as he cut off drivers left and right. He clipped Phillip’s fender and ran the middle in too tight of a space between Sean and Eric, causing Sean to scrape the wall and Eric to skirt the edge by the grass.
Emma sat there with wide eyes, not believing what she was seeing, and since the fans were almost all on their feet as the cars came out of third turn of the last lap, she was sure they were, too. Jefferson, with Eric right on his tail, was now just behind Victor and August. She watched the two lanes of cars go into the fourth turn, and Jefferson went low to take first and then came back up too soon, forcing Victor to slow so they wouldn’t collide, while August and then Eric flew past him.

She couldn’t believe that the crazy driver made it across the line first, followed by August, Eric, and then poor Victor, who had led most of the race until the last lap. Killian managed to bring his busted up car in sixth, followed by Sean.

When Emma got to pit lane, Eric, Sean, and Phillip were already at Killian’s car. All four drivers were talking loudly, clearly all very angry, but as she got closer, she was relieved that they were all angry at the right person: the driver of the 12 car.

“I told you, he’s a bloody menace,” Killian said, and then saw Emma approaching. He stretched out his arm, and she leaned into him as his arm came around her.

Eric continued, “I can’t believe they aren’t doing anything!”

“Maybe after this race they will,” Sean sounded hopeful. Emma hoped that as well, but from all the reporters’ questions, she could see them salivating at the war that was waging going into the Chase. NASCAR was seeing the dollar signs this could mean for the end of the season; she just really hoped no one got hurt.

It was really early Monday morning when Emma’s phone rang. It took them both a minute to register that it was her phone and not the alarm clock before she reached over to pick it up from the nightstand, answering it and bring it to her ear. “Hello?” she asked with a yawn.

“Emma…” it was David and she was immediately wide awake.

“What’s wrong?” was her worried response that got Killian’s attention and he sat and turned on the bedside lamp, as worry lined his features.

“Mary Margaret is in labor; we are at Storybrooke General.”

Emma did a quick calculation. “She’s not due for two more weeks!”
At that, Killian was up and out of bed and headed for the closet as David answered. “Well, he wants out now. I need to get back to her.”

Emma looked up to see Killian lay out a pair of jeans, shoes, and a shirt on the bed for her. She gave him a smile before she responded to her brother, “We’ll be there shortly.” They said their goodbyes and she was out of bed and changing into the clothes Killian had given her. “Thank you,” she told him as she met him in the bathroom, both doing a quick brushing of their teeth and hair.

“No problem, love. I had a feeling we would be going.” With a quick rinse, he grabbed his keys and wallet and she her purse, and then they were in his car on their way to the hospital.

At just after three thirty in the morning, there was no one on the roads, and it took almost no time to get to the hospital. Once they were in the waiting room, she texted her brother they were there. About ten minutes later, he came out, and ushered them back to the room.

“Emma!” Mary Margaret smiled at her, and then at Killian. “So glad you could both make it.” The last word was a grimace, as her hands gripped the bed’s railings, and David rushed to her side, trying to coach her breathing.

Killian pulled Emma close, his arms around her middle as she leaned back against him, both unsure what to do, but once the contraction passed, her sister-in-law was all smiles once again. “Sorry about that,” she said.

Emma laughed. “Are you kidding me? You do NOT need to be sorry.” They both approached the bed, and Emma’s left hand reached for Mary Margaret’s. “So the kid is coming today, huh?”

“Oh yeah.” David smiled. “She’s already dilated to 7 centimeters.”

Killian smiled at them both. “Not much longer then, mate.”

Emma looked at him with a questioning look as to how he knew that, he shrugged his shoulders, “My nephews.” She smiled at them and took his hand her right.

“Oh, Emma, can you do me a favor?” Mary Margaret asked.
“Sure? What do you need?” At the moment, there wasn’t much she wouldn’t do for her friend.

Her sister-in-law twisted off her wedding ring, with a look of pain on her face. “Swollen fingers...there!” she said as the ring finally came off. “They don’t want me wearing it in the delivery room; do you mind?”

“Oh, okay. Wouldn’t you rather David—”

He stopped her. “I’m going to be a bit pre-occupied Emma, just watch it for us.”

With a nod from Emma, Mary Margaret took the ring and shoved it on Emma’s ring finger. The brunette laughed. “Perfect, one less thing I have to worry about.”

Emma smiled down at the ring. “I’ll keep it safe,” she vowed.

Killian and David looked at the band on Emma’s finger and then shared a look; a smile bloomed on Killian’s face, and David gave him a wink before they were pulled out of their silent conversation by a squeal from Emma. “I can’t believe I’m going to be an aunt!” They all laughed, and once Mary Margaret got close to ten centimeters, Killian and Emma were sent back to the waiting room.

Five hours, three cups of coffee, and a breakfast sandwich from the cafeteria later, they were both still sitting in the waiting room, watching the local news, while Emma spun the ring on her finger. As time ticked by, she got more and more nervous, which he could feel. He hugged her closer. “These things take time. Elsa was in labor for twenty two hours for the first lad.”

She turned to him with big eyes. “What?”

He gave a soft chuckle. “Though the second was much easier at eleven.” Her eyes widened even at that number. “What I am trying to say, love, is that she is fine. Just relax.”

It was about an hour later that David came out with a huge grin on his face. “I have a son.” They both jumped up from their chairs and Emma hugged her brother tight. “Mary Margaret is fine, and resting. He’s so perfect. Ten fingers, ten toes. Eight pounds and 7 ounces. Twenty-one inches. Perfect.”
Killian clapped him on the shoulder. “Congratulations, mate.”

Later, once Mary Margaret was moved into her room, the couple were able to visit. They stood over the new mother and son while the proud papa stood on the other side of the bed. “He’s so beautiful,” Emma said with tears in her eyes.

“Here,” Mary Margaret said, and shifted the bundle in her arms to Emma.

She took him, holding him close, and kissed the top of his head, “Hi, Leo. I’m your Aunt Emma.”

Killian’s heart constricted at the sight. When he looked up to Dave, the man had a knowing smile on his face as did his wife. He gave them both a smile and turned back to the small bundle in Emma’s arms.

“Oh, before I forget!” Emma said, and turned towards Killian. “Do you mind for a moment?”

His eyes widened and he looked at the two parents for permission, they both nodded, and he took the baby into his arms, his free hand coming up to run his fingers gentling over the wee lad’s head and his soft wisps of blonde hair.

Emma pulled off the ring and handed it back to Mary Margaret. “Don’t want you to forget this.” The new mother smiled back, and managed to slowly put the ring back on her finger.

Emma then turned back to Killian, ready to take her nephew back, but stopped with a small gasp at the view. The baby had his eyes open, looking up at Killian with wonder, his little fingers grasping one of Killian’s. But it was Killian’s own look of joy that brought a smile to her face. It was the snap of a flash that brought the two back to reality as they looked back to see Mary Margaret with her phone, having took a picture. “I want one with you, too, Emma.”

They spent a little more time with the new parents, taking pictures, talking, and passing around the little one. It was late afternoon before Killian and Emma got home and dragged themselves back to bed for a long nap wrapped in each other’s arms. The events of the day still brought smiles to their faces.

They were back on a plane Wednesday night due to the Saturday night race in Richmond. On Thursday after practice, Killian got a text message right before he, Emma, and the others were heading out to dinner. He smiled at Dave’s message.
DN: FYI - it’s a size 5.5

He responded back quickly.

KJ: Thanks, Mate.

There was an almost immediate beep.

DN: ;)

Killian laughed and Emma gave him a questioning look. He pulled her to him, as he pocketed his phone and kissed her. “I love you.”

Her eyes narrowed, studying him, but she couldn’t help but return the smile and the sentiment. “I love you, too. Now hurry up or we’ll be late.” He just nodded and let her pull him out of the RV.

Friday, right before qualifying, NASCAR issued penalties. This time, the one for Jefferson was more severe at a hundred thousand dollars, and his crew chief also faced a fifty thousand dollar fine. Robin was lucky, and no fine was issued, though Killian got one as well. But, at only twenty thousand, he knew exactly what they were telling him.

On Saturday night, Killian was starting the race second, right behind Sean and in front of Victor. Jefferson was back in tenth. This time, it wasn’t just Killian not letting Jefferson pass—it was all of their friends. They were all fed up with his tactics, and since they all knew they were getting into the Chase, they weren’t worried about making a statement during this race.

One would think that so many drivers giving him a hard time would clue Jefferson in, but it didn’t. If anything, it seemed to egg him on, and with a battered race car, he was able to still finish the race in fifth. The other cars had damage, but since this time they shared the experience, they were not nearly as bad off. Victor was able to pull off the win, and Killian managed to come in third even with a last minute swipe by the 12 to his car that had fender of the 71 car dragging over the finish line.

When Emma got down to pit lane, Killian pulled her in for a quick hug and deep kiss before he turned to the reporter. “Killian, how does it feel to get back into the Chase this year? And not only
that, but right now as the points leader, with the most wins, going into it?”

His smile was huge and he pulled Emma close to his side. “It feels bloody fantastic.”

Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - ^=leading

#71 - Killian Jones - 1025*
#8 - Phillip Haven - 999
#36 - Victor Whale - 1014
#53 - Sean Herman - 999
#65 - Eric Sirena - 999
#92 - August Booth - 1000
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 944
Chapter 33

When Emma and Killian went back to work at the charity, it was buzzing with activity. Everyone was packing up their stuff when Belle found them. “Emma,” she said, handing her a sheet of labels, “Here are the stickers for your boxes that will be moved. The movers will use them to put the boxes in your new office.”

Emma smiled. “Perfect. Thank you Belle. Do we know how the furniture delivery is going?”

“Merida is over at the new location and she is directing where everything is to be set up. But…” Belle smiled at both of them. “I’m sure she would love some help.”

Killian nodded. “We’ll head over as soon as we get the boxes taken care of.” He turned to Emma. “Shall we get to it, love?”

She agreed and they headed back to her temporary office. “Killian, you don’t need to help me. Besides, I don’t have much in my office anyway. One box of personal stuff, and just one or two of work stuff. I haven’t been here that long.”

“No worries, Swan. Besides, then we can get over to the new office and see how it looks.”

“Ahhh...so that’s the real motivator,” she said, seeing the joy on his face and knowing just how much he was looking forward to see everything done—to have the charity in its own space, not reliant on Regina or the race team.

It didn’t even take a half hour until her boxes were packed and they were pulling up at the new office. They both smiled when they saw the logo and name of the charity on a sign by the road and then over the door. They locked hands and walked past the delivery trucks and workers to get inside the building.

The floors and paint looked great in the space, and even better with the furniture. The redhead grinned when she saw the two of them. “Oh thank god. Belle told me you both were coming over. I could use the help. I can’t be in five places at once.”

“Alright, Merida, just tell us where you need us,” Emma replied.
The woman handed them both copies of the layout and furniture plan. Emma took the offices, Kilian the break and supply rooms, and Merida stayed in the center where the volunteer area was. A couple hours later, all the furniture was delivered, placed where it should go, and the workers were leaving.

Merida walked over to the couple. “We’re all done here. I’m heading back to finish my packing. Are you two staying awhile?”

“I’d like to just look around a bit. We’ll lock up when we leave,” Killian assured her.

She nodded and headed out, leaving them alone. “So, how does it feel?” Emma asked him.

He grinned, as his hand traveled over the long center table, the volunteers will use for various projects. “I’m still in a bit of shock, love.”

They headed back to look in the offices; the nice mahogany desks looked great with the color choices. They wandered into her new office, with the large desk in the center, her new chair behind it, and two guest chairs in front. There were a couple book cases, and a credenza as well. She leaned against the desk and he came over and did the same next to her. “This is a really big desk,” she said. “A really nice, very expensive desk.” She gave him a knowing look.

He smiled. “It’s a desk fitting the position, and you know it.” He could tell she was about to object, so he continued. “And it’s fitting for when you meet with sponsors and other VIPs.” That seemed to quell her objections. He took her hand, and their fingers intertwined. “I can’t believe that it’s all done. Now that we are here, we have this space, the name is out front...it makes it all real.”

“Feels good, doesn’t it?”

He kissed her temple. “It feels amazing.”

They flew into Chicago a day early, as did the other drivers that were in the Chase, because they had video and photo shoots for the promotion of the race. They had shots as a group and by themselves. They then had videotaped question and answer periods for fan questions, and general questions each driver answered.

Once the drivers were all done, their group decided to grab dinner together. They headed about a half hour away from the track to go to their favorite sit-down Chicago-style pizza joint. They ordered
four different large pizzas, a couple pitchers of beer, and an iced tea for Ariel. After she took a sip of her tea, she sighed. “Well, at least we find out if it’s a boy or a girl next week.”

Cheers went up around the table and Eric smiled, pulling her close to kiss his wife’s cheek.

“Okay, so I read some things online trying to explain this whole Chase thing to me, and...well...I think I’m now more confused than I was before,” Emma admitted and then took a sip of her beer.

“Why didn’t you say anything, love?” Killian asked, pulling her closer.

“Well, we’ve been so busy, and I thought I could just easily find the rules,” Emma answered.

“To be honest, it changes all the time, so it would depend on how new the article is anyway,” Ashley said with a roll of her eyes.

Sean laughed. “Isn’t that the truth. The drivers have to keep trying to come up with new strategies every time they change it as well.”

“This set of rules was enacted in ‘14?” Victor questioned, looking at Ruby.

She nodded. “Yep. So basically, sixteen drivers are in the Chase. The top fifteen are decided by the number of wins in the year, the last one is the highest in points that didn’t already make the chase, and other spots if there aren’t fifteen winning drivers.”

“Okay, that part I get.” Emma responded. “But the point system and racers being dropped after…” It all seemed so confusing to her.

“The remaining races are divided into four parts. The first three parts have three races each, and the last part is the final race of the year,” Victor explained.

Killian continued. “And after each part, four drivers are eliminated, and the points reset. So right now there are sixteen drivers; after the first three races, the bottom four will be eliminated.”
She swallowed. “How are the bottom four determined?”

Ruby and Killian started to speak at the same time, and everyone laughed. “Go ahead, lass.”

Ruby grinned and then continued. “Well, any driver that wins one of the three races, automatically goes on to the next round. The others are by points, the points itself are the same as normal. So for the first sixteen, each of the drivers receive 2000 points, setting them far ahead of the rest of the drivers.” She took a sip of her beer, and then kept going. “Each win the driver had during the year is worth three points.”

Killian smiled, “Putting me in the lead.” Emma smiled while the rest gave him playful boo’s.

“Anyways…” Ruby went on, “Then the normal points system picks up, the drivers with the least amount of points, besides the winners of those races, are eliminated. The next round, the points are set to 3000, the next round 4000, and the last round 5000.”

Emma ran her hand over her forehead, “Oh...kay.” Everyone laughed, they understood the confusion.

“Basically,” Victor told her, “Win a race of the three rounds or stay up in points. Then in the last race finish higher than the other three drivers that are left.”

“That pretty much sums it up,” Eric agreed before he took a drink of his beer. The friends laughed and Emma smiled. A few moments later, the waitstaff brought out the pizza and everyone dug in.

Chicago race day was insane, and the amount of press was intense. Not to mention the fact that Will had managed to arrange a small interview on a national platform for the charity with Killian and her. As she waited for him to be announced and walk across the stage, she was still in shock that she was able to do the interview, and do it well. It certainly helped when you were passionate about the cause.

Killian hugged her tight the moment he got to his car, and she went on her tiptoes to give him a kiss. After the invocation, national anthem and planes flew overhead, she gave a him one more kiss, wished him luck, and then followed the team back to the pits while he got into the car.

Killian was starting in third, Jefferson was back in eighth, and their friends were placed all over the front of the pack of cars. As soon as the cars were past the starting line, cars were changing lanes.
Killian moved from the bottom to the top of the track in front of Eric in fourth, while Jefferson attempted to move through the center of the two cars in front of him.

Emma tried to keep her focus on Killian, but she couldn’t help looking back at Jefferson. The wild card was a distraction, and she was hoping he would drop further back, but with the way he was driving, she knew that wouldn’t be the case.

The other drivers weren’t willing to hurt their cars and instead moved out of the way or slowed down so they wouldn’t hit the crazy driver—doing exactly what he wanted them to, Emma realized. That was his MO, his game of chicken that he knew he would win. It was lap 37 when he found the one person that wasn’t backing down: Killian.

Killian refused to get out of the way, refused to slow down just like before, and both of their cars were paying for it. By lap 52, Robin had enough. “Mate...let him go.”

“Like hell I will,” Killian responded, just as Jefferson tried to go past him on the wall.

“You need to have a race car left to finish the race. You winning this year will make a bigger point to him than you being out in the first round. Make a win this round, guarantee your spot and then by all means...give him hell.”

Emma gave a smile to the crew chief, and she could hear the curse on the line that told her Killian regretfully agreed. He pulled down the track enough and let Jefferson get in front of him, but he did give him a nice swift bump in the rear fender to make a point.

“Thanks, mate,” Robin told his driver, and grinned at Emma.

But their deal just spurred Killian into trying harder. Not going after Jefferson, but after the win. Just after the halfway mark of the race, they had both made it around Eric, as the two battled for second behind Sean, who had led all the laps until then. It was almost dizzying as she watched the two cars dance around each other. First Killian in the lead, then Jefferson, and back. Their battle was the main thing going on in the race.

With 8 laps to go, there was a caution due to a blown tire and it brought them all into the pits. The top ten cars only took fuel and two tires. Killian, with the help of his team, was out of the pits first, followed by Jefferson and then Sean.
Emma was on the edge of her seat, and she was pretty certain most of the fans were as well since they were now down to the final three laps. She wasn’t exactly the religious sort, but she briefly closed her eyes and prayed to whoever was listening that he would be safe as the cars came up to the green flag once again.

They were neck-and-neck each lap, just like they had been for most of the race. The other drivers attempted to get around them as well since they were all vying for a win to secure their chances. However, with an overzealous dive into the fourth corner, Jefferson’s car wobbled just a bit, and Killian was able to pull ahead, crossing the finish line by a car length. Jefferson and then Sean were right behind him.

Robin and Emma’s grin’s were wide, hearing the hooping and hollering from Kilian over the line. Once they took off the headsets, Robin turned to her. “See, just had to give him extra incentive.”

She laughed and they climbed out of the pit box and jogged over to Victory circle while Killian took the checkered flag and finished his winning burnout.

He was completely covered in cola and his team was still screaming by the time she got to him. He pulled her close and gave her a long, hard kiss that she was sure the cameras were catching, but she didn’t care as she held on tight and kissed him back. When he came back for air, he and his teammates screamed their excitement again, which had her chuckling.

The camera and red-headed reporter then came into the scene. “Killian Jones, congratulations on being the first win in the Chase!”

“Thank you!” he responded, pulling Emma closer to his side.

“For a good portion of the race, you and Jefferson seemed to be battling each other, but at a point you allowed him to pass. Why is that?”

Killian laughed, and pointed to Robin. “My crew chief. He reminded me of a few things, of what I was really here for.”

The reporter smiled. “Anything that you have to say to Jefferson?”

He licked and then lightly bit his lower lip in thought, then responded with all the cockyness he
could muster, “Yeah. I’m locked into the next round. I won’t be backing down next time.”

While Emma was at work at the charity in its new location, getting things all cleaned up and ready for the grand opening in two weeks, Killian took advantage of the short team meeting and went into Charlotte.

He had done some research and knew exactly where he wanted to go. Some of his friends and other drivers had gone there, when the time came. It was one of the best places in the region for exactly what he was looking for.

The door chimed when he walked in and a male voice called out, “Welcome, I’ll be with you in a second.” Killian could see the older gentleman, his long grey hair and beard talking to another customer, so he started to look around at the display cases.

This is where he was going to have an issue: making the decision of exactly what he wanted. He couldn’t do what he did for Christmas. While he was sure somewhere there were Harry Potter designs for what he wanted, he was pretty sure that wouldn’t be welcome in this case.

As he perused the display cases, he saw many of the same standard designs that he had seen online. But he wasn’t looking for standard, because there was nothing standard about Emma. He was lost in thought when the voice spoke again, just as the bell for the door sounded. “May I help you?”

Killian looked up at the older gentleman and gave him a smile. “I have a feeling, I’m going to need your design services.”

The old man smiled, reached under the display for a pencil and paper. “What are you looking for.” As Killian looked around, lost for words as to what he wanted, the man continued, “Or better yet, tell me about her.”

The two of them spent the better part of the day talking about Emma, about their relationship, looking at different possibilities, and what he liked and didn’t. By the time he left the shop he had narrowed his decision to two possible designs, both of which were perfect in their own way. Now he just needed to choose.

Killian smiled as he waved goodbye to Emma. She was on her way to work, and he was staying home on the guise of packing and getting ready to fly out. He should have said something else, because she immediately knew that wasn’t right. But his mind was only focused on one thing. It of course hadn’t been that long, not even twenty-four hours, but he knew that Emma could tell he was preoccupied all last night and this morning. More than once asking him what was wrong.
So, he knew while she was at work, he would have to finalize his decision. But he was no closer at two in the afternoon than he was that morning, or the night before. He needed help, and there was only one person he could turn to that couldn’t easily spill the beans. He opened up an app on his phone, and seeing their side active, he sent the request for Skype.

Moments later: “Little Brother! Nice to hear from you.”

Killian rolled his eyes. “Bloody...it’s younger brother, and you…” He sighed. “I wasn’t calling you anyway. Is Elsa there?”

That got a raised eyebrow from his brother, and he called over his shoulder. “Honey, Killian called to talk to you. Are you two having that affair again?”

Killian rolled his eyes, and then Elsa came into view patting her husband’s shoulder. “Again, dear? It never stopped,” she told him and laughed as she looked into the screen. “Killian, my love, what can I do for you?”

Killian shook his head at his brother and sister-in-law’s antics. “While I would love to keep contributing to whatever type of game you're playing, I actually called because I need your advice, Elsa.”

“Oh, I need to hear this,” Liam stated, and propped his chin on his fist, clearly showing he was going nowhere and making Killian sigh.

Elsa was trying not to laugh at the both of them. Instead, she sat on her husbands knee so she could see Killian on the screen. “What’s the problem?”

Killian, attached the two images from his phone, and took a breath. “I need your opinion, from a woman’s point of view, of which one you like better.” He took a breath, and sent the images. He could tell the minute they viewed them, because there was a small gasp and look of shock on both their faces.

It was Elsa that cracked first with an excited “YES!”

Liam’s face turned into a slow smile, that got bigger by the second until he spoke. “‘Bout time little brother.”
“Oh my god, Killian!” Elsa was still screeching.

“So, I guess you both think it’s a good idea.” Killian chuckled; their contagious excitement was making him grin like an idiot as well.

“Yes!” They both said in unison, then Elsa finished, “When are you going to ask?!!”

“Well, I have to pick a design first, and that’s why I need your help. I can’t do any asking until I have anything to ask with, now can I?”

That quieted them both down, and they looked at each design. “They look great; no matter what you pick I’m sure she will like.” Liam told him.

Elsa rolled her eyes. “Very helpful,” she told her husband sarcastically. “But, I have to agree. I see why you are having a hard time. They are both beautiful, each representing Emma in their own way.”

“Could the designer combine them?” Liam responded.

Elsa lightly slapped her husband’s shoulder, “How would that even work? The first one, is structured with very intricate details. The other is delicate but graceful. I know Emma is both, but in this instance, that won’t work.” She turned to Killian. “I can’t speak for Emma, and I won’t tell you which one to choose. That’s up to you. You need to decide which one you want to represent.”

He gave a soft smile to Elsa. “Thank you. Actually, that was very helpful. I think I have it figured out.”

Elsa clapped. “Which one is it?”

Killian shook his head with a mischievous smile. “You’ll just have to wait and see.” Elsa huffed and the two brothers laughed, but then Killian turned serious again. “Do you think she will say yes?”
They both stopped, their faces turning tender, sensing his anxiety, and Liam answered first, “Absolutely.”

Then Elsa: “She’d be crazy not to.”

The next day, in Loudon, New Hampshire, the group headed out for an early dinner after practice. Emma wasn’t sure what had happened by the time she got home from work the day before, but Killian was back to himself. She still hadn’t pieced together what was wrong in the first place, but she let it go and tucked into his side at the restaurant.

After everyone ordered their food, they turned to Ariel and Eric, who had all told everyone they weren’t going to say anything until dinner. It was now dinner, and everyone had their eyes on them. Ariel laughed, and Eric grinned. “I think they want to know something,” he said.

“I wonder what that could be?” Ariel asked trying to not crack up.

“Oh, for the love of god, tell us!” Ruby screamed, and everyone laughed.

The couple looked at each other and then at the same time, “It’s a boy.”

Cheers and screams came from the table, making everyone else in the restaurant look towards them as they all congratulated the couple. Ariel preempted Ruby, “No, we haven’t decided on a name yet. And no...it will not be Ruby or any male derivative of it.”

Ruby pouted and took a drink of her water as Victor tried to contain his smile and rubbed his girlfriend's shoulder. They continued talking about the baby until their food was brought out, and then the conversation turned to the next race. “So, are you really going to go back after Jefferson?” Victor asked Killian.

Killian nodded. “I won’t do anything crazy, but he needs to be taught a lesson.”

Sean sighed. “I agree with you man. But, I don’t know if now is the time to prove that.”

With a shrug, Killian continued, “Well, at least now, I’m locked into the next segment.”
“Yeah, but no matter what happens, he’ll still be around in the next segment whether he is in the Chase still or not. Do you really want him gunning for you?” Eric asked.

Emma looked down at her plate; that was her worry, among other things. Killian reached out and rubbed her back as he went on. “He’s been gunning for me, actually all of us, every time he races. Honestly, by letting him know that I’m not backing down, I’m in some ways hoping he won’t try some of the things he normally does.”

Victor gave him a tight-lipped smile. “I wish you luck. I sure as hell wouldn’t attempt it unless my chances for the championship were over.”

Killian smiled at his friend. “Then now is your time to attempt it.” At Victor’s questioning look, he continued with a smirk. “Because you have no chance. I’m winning this year.”

The other drivers groaned and threw their napkins at him, while the girls just laughed.

In the race on Sunday, Killian was true to his word once Jefferson caught up to him. With Killian having started in fourth and Jefferson in eighth, it took a quite a few laps before they were near each other. But once they were, the battle was on once again.

While Emma could tell Killian was still trying to win like he always did, his secondary focus was just on Jefferson, and if that meant the other drivers got around the two of them so he didn’t back down from the crazy driver, than that was what he did.

Each of their cars had quite a bit of damage, though she was proud to see Jefferson had a bit more from scraping the wall and other drivers bumping and rubbing against him, too. She was sure that some of the debris that caused a couple cautions were in fact from the insane driver’s car.

There were numerous lead changes during the race, since so many of the Chase drivers were vying for their first win. Jefferson was constantly attempting to get to first. But due to the fact that Killian was actively trying to keep the man behind him, the 71 was leading the race more often than not.

Emma wanted to laugh at that—who would think not caring about winning would actually put him out front? She wasn't going to complain though, and from the look on Robin’s face he wasn't either, though he was probably not happy with the fixes the car would need once the race was over.

With three laps to go, it seemed like all-out war amongst everyone. Victor and Phillip were taking the
inside and gaining, while Killian tried to hold Jefferson behind him on the outside. August, Eric, and Sean were a not even a half second back and were desperate to catch up.

Two laps to go, Victor and Phillip were able to take the lead. Then on the last lap, coming out of the second turn, Jefferson nudged Killian enough to make him wobble and skim the wall, allowing the 12 to go around him. Luckily, Killian had the 71 back under control, only allowing Jefferson and August to get past him.

Though he tried valiantly to get back to the other cars, the damage to his car had taken its toll. Victor came in first, followed by Phillip. Jefferson managed to place third, quickly followed by August and then Killian in fifth.

As Emma approached pit lane, she could see the reporter practically salivating over asking questions about the rivalry. But it was the driver of the 12 that had Emma shouting over the crowd, “Killian, watch out!”

Killian turned just in time to avoid the punch that Jefferson swung. In the next instant all hell broke loose. Anton ushered Emma over the pit wall, as both teams seemed to merge. She climbed up on the wall attempting to get a good look and to see if Killian was okay.

She stood on the wall, and peered into the frenzy just in time to see Killian duck from another of the crazy driver’s swings, while shouting something that she couldn't hear over the commotion. Luckily, Jefferson’s own teammates seemed to be trying to hold him back, as Killian’s were trying to pull their driver to safety. If both teams had given into the rage, it could have been much, much worse.

While cameras kept filming, NASCAR officials rushed onto the scene and tried to get in the middle and break up the altercation. Jefferson’s team was finally able to get control over their driver and dragged their teammate away as the crew chief stayed to talk to officials. Robin patted his own driver's shoulder and went over to talk to the other crew chief and looked back, letting them know he would answer the officials as Killian’s crew walked him back to the pit.

Emma jumped off the wall and rushed over to him. Killian attempted to give her a comforting smile but grimaced, and turned his head to the side as he spit some blood onto the pavement. Her eyes widened as she took in his appearance. He had a small cut to the side of his lip, and his cheek and jaw were already starting to bruise. He obviously hadn’t missed every punch that Jefferson gave. His crew made way for her to come into the group, and she wrapped her arms around him. “Are you okay?” she asked quietly into his ear.

He squeezed her back, and then pulled back to look at her. “I’ll be fine, love. I’ve had much worse.”
Her fingers came up and hovered over his face. “You should go to the care center.”

“No, I’ll be fine. Let’s just head back to the RV so I can clean up.”

She sighed, but agreed. A few of the crew walked with them just to make sure no one tried anything, and once inside, she locked the door behind him and followed him into the bedroom. She then went to the bathroom for a wet towel and the first aid kit as he unzipped his firesuit, letting it hang down his body and sat down on the bed bare chested.

She came back out and sat next to him. “We’ll need to get some ice on that after we clean you up.” He nodded. Luckily, the split in his lip had already stopped bleeding, so she used the towel to clean it and his chin. “He must have got you when I was climbing onto the wall,” she said absentmindedly as she moved onto putting the antiseptic on a cotton ball.

“He didn’t get me; I allowed it.”

Her eyes widened. “What?” Her task halted, waiting for an answer.

“I didn’t lay a hand on him, but I allowed him to get one punch in.” He motioned to the bruise on his face. “Now I have proof.”

She smiled and shook her head. “Clever, clever. The officials will have to do something, right?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “We’ll see. But since I didn’t do anything and he did, I at least saved my hide.” She brought the cotton ball to his lip and he sucked in a breath. “Bloody hell, love!”

She pulled the cotton back and blew on his lip taking the sting away, “Awhh, is that better?”

“I can think of something better,” he said and tapped his lips with a suggestive grin. She laughed and leaned in giving him a kiss.

He hissed and she pulled back. “Did that hurt?”
“Yeah, but worth it. Wouldn’t mind another.”

“Oh, you wouldn’t, huh?” she asked. “I guess I’ll just have to kiss it and make it better.” She leaned in and kissed the corner of his mouth so as not to hurt him and he sighed into it. She then let her lips lightly ghost over the bruise forming on his jaw. He let out another satisfied sigh and placed his hand on her upper thigh. She smiled as she kissed his cheek and up to the corner of his eye, and then back to his ear. “Better?”

“I think you missed a few places.” he breathed as his hand traveled up her leg and then dipping in between then, pressing at the seam of her jeans.

She groaned, “Oh, really? Where?”

“Lower, much lower.” His voice was huskier and she swallowed hard at the intense look in his eyes.

“If that’s the case, then I’ll need to see the patient with much less on,” she teased.

They both knew he should be taking a shower, changing, and getting ready for their flight out. But neither cared as he kicked off his suit, and she quickly undressed. With a small shove to his chest she pushed him back onto the bed and crawled over him. “So, tell me your symptoms?”

His grin radiated as his eyes darkened. “Quickening heartbeat,” he said and closed his eyes as she kissed his chest over his heart. “Parched lips.” She let her lips softly drag over his, not to hurt him. “Stiff limbs,” he arched his eyebrow at her and she bit her lip, as her eyes traveled down his body, and true to his word, his erection was standing firm.

“I think that will need some care,” she said with a smile.

“Most definitely,” he agreed and then groaned as her hand grasped his hard flesh firmly. She started to move back down his body, but his hand reached out and took her free hand. “Doctor,” he winked, “We only have so long for this...appointment. And I still very much have those parched lips, and also a...dry mouth.” She raised her eyebrow, and he sighed, “Oh, bloody hell.” Done with the role play, he continued, “Turn around, love.”
She immediately got his intention and did as he asked, turning around and straddled his chest facing away from him. His hands came up to her hips and pulled her core back to his face, as her hands came back to his hard flesh. He groaned as his mouth delved into her wet folds, both from the sensation of her hands and at the taste of her.

Emma moaned as his tongue darted into her and then out to flick and swirl around her clit. How he expected her to concentrate on him when he did that, was beyond her, but she tried. She licked his leaking tip, and then sucked the head into her mouth, as his tongue delved back inside her. They both groaned and then from those vibrations both pressed their hips towards the sensation.

Both encouraged, they kept going, focusing on each others pleasure the best they could while still climbing the cliff to their own release. His one hand left her hip, and his fingers came into play, and plunged two inside of her, as his tongue focused on her clit. He wasn’t sure what sound she made around his cock but whatever it was he felt to the base of his spine. She seemed to like his own sounds in response as well, each response ricocheting their pleasure between them, back and forth, higher and higher.

His fingers moved faster, curling, as she felt him approaching the edge. “Emma…” he warned, but she didn’t heed it, and sucked him down hard, her throat taking him deeper, and he cried out his release, his body stilling for a second, and he pumped his release down her waiting throat as she swallowed around him.

The moment he was back to his senses, he dove back into her, his fingers thrusting, mouth sucking and swirling around her clit. Her mouth came off of him in a gasp, as her hips pressed back into his face. With another flick of his tongue and curl of his fingers she was screaming out his name and shuddering on top of him.

Once her inner muscles stopped clenching his fingers, he slowly withdrew and she slid to the side of the bed, resting her head on his thigh. He sucked the two fingers into his mouth, and then smiled at her, her flushed cheeks, hard breathing, and he was pretty sure her heart was racing. “I guess it was contagious.”

She started laughing and he joined in. She gave a light slap to his leg. “We should both take a shower, and get out of here. I’m sure Dusty is waiting at the airport for us.” He agreed and followed her into the bathroom.

When Emma went back into work that week, the office was in tip-top shape. She congratulated her staff and the volunteers for doing such a good job. Everything was where it should be and the place looked fabulous. Killian didn’t accompany her that morning, saying he had business that he had to take care of, but that he would see her at lunch.
She then had a meeting with the staff to go over all the plans for next week’s celebration. “We are getting in pictures of each of the other shelter’s staff and kids with the checks from all the other locations.” Mulan told everyone. “We have the local charities who will receive a check coming to the function so that we can present the checks live to them.”

Will then chimed in, “I also have local and Killian’s own national sponsors coming in for the opening as well. They will be presenting the charity with their own checks.”

Emma smiled. “Perfect.” She turned to Merida. “And the party?”

“Catering, DJ, tables, chairs and the like are taken care of. We also have some face painters and balloon artists coming for the kids,” the redhead replied. “The weather so far looks good, so that we can have everything but the office tour outside.”

“Let’s hope it stays that way.” She looked to Belle. “Volunteers?”

“We are pretty well staffed up. They have been making phone calls, stuffing envelopes, anything that we need to have done. They are really looking forward to the party as well.”

“I think we all are. I know Killian really is.” With that, they continued to talk business and made sure everything else was ready for the following week.

They arrived in Dover on Thursday night, and as her new normal, she met with shelters in the area once again while Killian practiced, followed on Saturday by time with sponsors, though she was getting better, and had Will try to schedule the time around qualifying. That way she could sit with her friends, make girl talk, and they could watch their significant others on the track.

Before qualifying happened, NASCAR issued penalties from the prior race. Killian and his crew did not garner a penalty, and neither did the 12’s crew. Jefferson, however, received a hundred thousand dollar fine and was docked the twelve chase points for his prior wins in the season. While it was more than they had prior, the penalty was still minor, and the ladies just rolled their eyes.

“They just want the rivalry to keep the fans tuning in,” Ruby grumbled. None of the women were happy that Jefferson was basically getting away with it. Not only for Killian, but also because he was a danger to their own drivers.

Ariel rubbed her stomach that was now just really starting to show. “I just hope no one gets hurt just
because they want ratings.” They all agreed and finished watching qualifying. Before they broke away to head back to their own RVs, Emma confirmed with each of them that they would be stopping by the grand opening.

Sean had won the poll, Victor came in second, and Killian was starting in sixth after qualifying. Jefferson didn’t have a good qualifying; Emma was pretty sure the announcement of the penalty weighed on the driver and he was starting back in fifteenth. Due to the 12’s starting position, Emma was able to breath easier for the first half of the race. Killian had made his way up to the front, running most of it to that point in second behind Victor. She swore she could make out childlike smiles on their faces as they danced around each other. She knew her brain was making it up, but the laughter over the comlink, and the minor cussing from Killian pretty much confirmed her suspicion.

This race actually had a couple green-flag pit stops, and only a few cautions due to a few over-zealous Chase drivers and blown tires. Emma was a bit shocked that none of the cautions were caused by Jefferson; in fact, the normally crazy driver was rather subdued. Emma was trying not to get her hopes up that maybe, just maybe he had learned his lesson.

That hope was dashed when he seemed to come back to himself with fifteen laps to go. He tried to gain position and cut down on August too early. The drive hadn’t seen him coming, and neither did his spotter, because he hit Jefferson’s back bumper and both cars started to turn towards the wall. Jefferson skidded across it and August just missed it, but trying to keep the car steady and not hit anything lost him about five places as the 12 continued to move up the track.

Emma and Robin shared a look and he told his driver to be on lookout. Jefferson was only three places back and closing. Thankfully, due to a caution coming out for a lapped car’s blown tire, he wasn’t able to catch up. All the cars came down pit lane for fuel and two tires, and they pretty much started in the same position they came in with five laps to go.

While Jefferson kept pace, and was eagerly trying to get to the front, his car wasn’t as fast as the other leaders’ cars. Sean’s car seemed to be calibrated perfectly for the end of race, and he was able to get across the line first, followed by Eric, with Killian on his heels and then Victor. Jefferson finished the race in sixth. Emma couldn’t tell if his late-race behavior changed helped or hindered his performance.

She got to Killian in the pits before the reporters did. She went to her toes and gave a soft kiss to the now-yellowish bruise on his jaw. “Was it nice not to have to deal with him today?”

Killian immediately knew who the ‘he’ was. “I must admit, it was much more fun and relaxing.” She giggled and he pulled her in for a kiss. “Now it’s on to round two of the chase.” He could feel the win in his grasp, but if he had his say, it wasn’t the only thing he wanted to win before the end of the season. He smiled down at her, brought her hand to his lips, and kissed the back of it. “Let’s go
home.

Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - ^=leading ^= Win in round
(These are now ‘The Chase’ points system)

#71 - Killian Jones - 2151^*
#8 - Phillip Haven - 2131
#36 - Victor Whale - 2144^*
#53 - Sean Herman - 2134^*
#65 - Eric Sirena - 2132
#92 - August Booth - 2117
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 2136
Chapter 34

The guests had all arrived. The interviews were over. The speeches were done. The checks were given, and pictures taken. The party was in full swing. Children were running through the yard playing games with various animals painted on their faces. Their friends and her family were mingling with shelter staff and various sponsors. The charity crew were schmoozing sponsors or corralling the kids. All Killian could do was smile as he watched Emma on the other side of the yard, talking to the representative from his main sponsor, and probably finagling even more money from them.

To say he was proud of her was a vast understatement. He had known she was perfect for the job, and every day, she kept proving him right. But he could also see her blooming in the role and as she did more and more, her confidence in her abilities growing as well. The smile on her face as she talked passionately to the rep told him just how much she loved her new job. He was so focused on watching her that he didn’t notice the person that stepped up to his side.

“She did an amazing job.”

The words broke Killian from his trance and he looked toward his boss. He gave Regina a smile and bobbed his head. “Yes, she did.”

She turned to him. “I wasn’t just talking about the charity.” She gave him a sly grin, and his got even bigger as he nodded in agreement at her meaning. She took a drink of her champagne, adding “You’re good for each other, and you’re happy.”

“I am,” he admitted. He was beyond happy.

Regina took another sip. “You should look into a way to keep that happiness.”

He could tell by the significant look and brow raise exactly what she was telling him, and he laughed. “Plan is already in the works.”

Regina’s shocked but happily surprised smile was worth letting her in on the secret. But her only answer was to clink champagne glasses with him, give him a nod, and walk off towards Robin and his son Roland.

Looking back to Emma, he noticed her conversation had ended and she was walking towards another group. He decided to cut her off before she got there, hurried over to her, and wrapped an arm around her from behind. She jumped for a second, and then relaxed back into him. “Jesus, you scared me.”

“Sorry, love,” he whispered into her ear, and then left a small kiss behind it. “I need a few moments of your time. Can I drag you away for a minute?”

She looked around and noticed that everything seemed to be handled. “Okay. What is it?”

He took her hand and led her back into the building and then to her office. She walked inside and he followed. “I’ve already had to share your time with everyone else here today, and I just needed some time with you one on one.”

He locked the door behind him, and she raised her eyebrow, the idea of one-on-one time now taking a bigger meaning, “And that needs the door locked?”
The heated look he gave her almost had her knees buckle as he walked towards her, and she leaned back on her desk. He came right up to her, placed his hands on her hips, and slid her up further to sit on the desk as he moved closer. Her long, flowing dress allowed him to stand between her legs. His hand came up to the back of her head and tilted it back to look up at him as his thumb caressed her cheek. “For what I have in mind, that door will need to be locked, and you will need to try to not scream.”

His mouth descended on hers and his tongue immediately delved inside. She moaned against his lips as her arms wrapped around him and moved up his back. When they broke to breathe, she warned, “All the people outside.” They could see them milling around the lawn through the windows.

He smirked and then leaned in to kiss up her neck to her ear. “One-way glass, remember, love?” His teeth pulled gently at her earlobe. “Just think of me having you on this big desk, with all those people not even ten feet away.”

She shuddered, the forbidden thought exciting her. Her eyes closed as his lips trailed down her neck and throat, and she moaned out, “We shouldn’t.”

His tongue dipped into her cleavage and she gasped. He then left a kiss there as his hand traveled down her back lowering the zipper to her strapless dress. “Oh, I believe we should.” He stood in front of her and lightly pushed her back onto the desk; she went willingly and rested on her elbows. His hands came up and pulled the top of her dress down, and he bit his lip to see she had no bra underneath.

He leaned over and sucked one nipple into his mouth, as his one hand found the other. She groaned and her head tilted back. Her eyes saw the people outside chatting. It was so wrong, but the excitement of it enticed her, turned her on more, and damn it, he knew it. “Watch all those people out there, standing so close. If you are too loud, they’ll hear you—they’ll know what we are doing.”

His mouth sucked hard making her moan louder and then he switched breasts. As his free hand came up to squeeze the flesh he just left, the other hand started to pull up her flowing skirt. “It excites you doesn’t it, love? Almost being in public. The possibility of getting caught.” His hand found under the skirt and trailed up her inner thigh, then pressed at her underwear—a small silk thong that had him groaning at the thought, and then even more so when his fingers caught just how wet she was. “Well, I have my answer.”

He went to his knees and pressed the fabric of the skirt farther up her body as he pulled her hips to the edge of the desk and removed her underwear. She let out a sharp squeak at the quick movement only to let out a long moan as his tongue delved into her folds and swirled over her swollen clit. “Tell me, love.” He flicked his tongue against her clit. “Have you been wanting me all day?” He thrust his tongue deep inside of her a few times. “Or did the idea of doing this here get you this excited…” He twirled his tongue around her clit again making her legs shake. “...And oh so wet, so quickly?”

Her legs pressed his face closer to her core. “Both...God...don’t stop,” she pleaded as her one hand came down to grasp his hair, pulling slightly, as the other hung onto the edge of the desk. Her head rolled back, eyes open to the unsuspecting crowd outside.

He smiled against her as her sounds of pleasure got louder. He should warn her again, but honestly, the thought of getting caught turned him on, too. He was rock hard and he loved hearing her pleasure. He brought his fingers up and plunged two deep inside of her as his mouth refocused on her bundle of nerves. Her legs quaked, her sounds got closer together, and at the last minute, she must have remembered because as she came around his fingers her hand came over her mouth, muffling her screams.
Normally he’d wait, but he couldn’t. He removed his fingers, sucked them into his mouth as his other hand undid his pants as he stood. He pushed down his pants and underwear, and then brought his hands to her waist, pushing her the top of her dress further down her hips. She came back to her senses enough to understand what his intention was, and she braced her feet still in her heels on the desk and lifted her hips. He pulled the dress to her knees, and she rested her hips back down and released her feet. He removed the dress carefully while leaving her heels on and sat it in the chair next to him.

He pulled her hips up from the desk, and let the head of his cock brush her folds. He spread her legs a little wider, opening her more fully to his view, and brushed the head again over her clit. “Stop teasing,” she begged. With the next press of his hips, he slowly pressed inside of her, taking her fully in one long, slow, deep thrust. “Fuck yes.”

“God...Emma.” He stilled and she wrapped her legs around him. When she squeezed her legs tight, one of her heels pressed against his ass, and he groaned and started to thrust hard and fast. “Bloody...hell...” he ground out as her body was already trying to grip him tight. He watched as her breasts bounced from the impact of his thrusts. Her biting her lip as she tried in vain to contain the sounds of pleasure, along with the own bite of painful pleasure of her heels into his skin, was pushing him further. His eyes darted between the people outside, the look of bliss on her face, the movement of her glorious breasts, and the obscene view of his length glistening in her pleasure as he drove into her again and again.

When her gasps got closer together and the flutterings of her inner muscles got stronger, he sped up his movements. Her back arched and her hand came up again to contain her scream as her body let go but tightened around him. He gritted his teeth and rode through her pleasure, slowing enough to allow her a minute to come down.

When she came back to her senses, her eyes widened in realization that he was still fully hard inside of her, but the smile that followed let him know she was looking forward to whatever he had planned. He regretfully pulled out of her, and they both moaned. “Roll over, my love.”

She shakily got to her feet with his help and turned around and leaned over the desk onto her elbows. Her high heels putting her at the perfect height. His hands came under her to caresses her breasts, and then traveled down to her hips. He lined himself back up and plunged back inside of her, making her back arch and another moan come from both of them. He leaned over her, his chest pressing her into the desk as his hips started to thrust slow and deep. “Keep your eyes on the window. See all those people—our co-workers, friends, your family—only feet away as I make you mine.” He bit at her lobe as he thrust hard, and she shuddered at the feel and his words.

He stood back straight, and then pistoned back into her in long, hard, fast strokes. His body was no longer willing to wait, wanting it’s own completion. His one hand left her hip to move under her, and stroke her clit as his hips continued to pound into her from behind. “Ohhh...Killian...yesss...” she groaned as her hands gripped the other end of the desk, her own hips pressing back against him. This time her quivering inner muscles were enough to set him off. He leaned over her and pressed his chest to her back and his mouth to her shoulder as his hips thrust hard three more times, hoping to extend the pleasure, and when she came around him, he grunted hard at the extra stimuli.

She managed to muffle his own sounds into her shoulder, as she did so into her arm. Both were breathing heavy, when he placed a soft kiss on her shoulder. “I guess that took more than a minute of your time.” He said and they both started laughing. “Stay right there for a moment.” He told her and then stood and pulled out. He found her underwear and cleaned her up the best he could. He pulled up and fastened his pants. She turned over and raised an eyebrow when she saw him pocket her underwear. “Well I don’t believe you would want to wear them now, or keep them at work, would
She shook her head no. “But now what am I supposed to wear?” she said getting to her feet.

He picked up her dress, and helped her into it. “Well, I have to admit I quite like the idea of knowing you aren’t wearing anything under this dress.” He gave her deep kiss as he pulled up the zipper, and then moved his lips to her neck to kiss back to her ear. “I also love the idea that my release will be dripping down your thighs for the rest of the night.”

She blushed at the comment, but he didn’t miss the spark of heat in them. “You are so bad.”

He smirked back her, “But you love me for it.”

She smiled and pulled him close. “I love you for a lot of reasons.”

“I love you, too,” he said and caressed the side of her face. That’s when he noticed it, or noticed the lack of it. He looked to the other side. “I think we might have dislodged an earring.”

Her hands came up and felt the lack of the dangling gemstone. “Yep. Sure did. I wonder who’s fault that was?”

Killian grinned. “True, but you enjoyed it. Here, let me.” He started to get to the floor to start searching and she stopped him.

“Killian, don’t worry about it.” She took the other earring out and opened her desk drawer and pulled out two diamond studs, and started to put them in. “It’s not a big deal.”

“You keep diamonds in your desk drawer?”

She laughed at the look on his face and his question, “Are you kidding me? No. I keep fake diamonds that I got for ten bucks in my drawer. And that..” she said pointing at the one earring left of the pair she had been wearing, “With the necklace was maybe fifteen. Now if you had done something to this…” She said holding up the bracelet she still wore that he got her for Christmas, “Then we would be on our hands and knees looking for it. Because not only is it probably the most expensive piece of jewelry I own, but probably also the most sentimental.” He smiled at that, and reached for her hand to kissed her wrist with the bracelet, while he thought he would need to rectify the situation. “We should really get back to the party before they know what happened. Does my hair look okay?”

He gave her quick look over. “You look beautiful.” She tilted her head in annoyance, and he raised his hands in surrender. “Truly. Your hair doesn’t have a curl out of place.” With that he offered her his arm and they went back out into the party. The rest of the party goers were completely unaware of what occurred just feet away from them a little earlier.

It was always nice when the race was at the home track in Charlotte. It meant they did not need to travel, and they could stay at their own home. However, that also meant except for practice, qualifying, and the race, they weren’t with their friends because they were also relishing being at home. This time, however, the possibility of Hurricane Matthew hitting was making everyone ansty.

Practice and qualifying went well for Killian despite the upcoming weather problems and he would start fourth. Victor wasn’t as lucky and was starting in fifteenth. Emma wanted to jump for joy when she found out Jefferson was starting back in twenty-third. She hoped it meant that he wouldn’t be anywhere near Killian for the race.

NASCAR decided to postpone the race night race until Sunday afternoon as on Friday night, the
track was being pelted with rain. But that Sunday, after the weather cleared out, the race went off without a hitch, and it was a green flag until lap 107 when a car blew a tire and ran into another, both hitting the wall towards the back of the pack. By then, Killian had made it to first and had led all the laps since then, while Phillip, Eric, and Sean traded spots behind him. The restart mainly helped Victor and unfortunately Jefferson by bringing the pack of cars all back together again instead of being spread out. On the restart, both of them were able to pass some more cars within the first few laps.

But Jefferson was being himself once again, the aggressive driver playing chicken. The only problem was sometimes the other drivers, especially those not as experienced, didn’t know how to handle the situations he would put them in. And on his one attempt to get in front of a car, the side draft pushed the other car into the other lane. That car along with the one it crashed into hit the wall and brought out another caution, all without a ding to the 12 car.

Emma gave Robin a look, who shrugged and shook his head. She could hear Killian over the line not liking it either and saying exactly what he thought about it. He might not have been involved, but that didn’t calm his anger any. Robin sighed, “He’s still back in sixteenth, mate; don’t let him get to you. Stay in the lead.”

That is what Killian did, at least until the last restart with four laps to go. It was he and Phillip at the starting line with August behind Killian and Sean behind Phillip. Phillip was able to keep up with Killian, as they both battled for the lead for the remaining laps. One in the lead and then the other, with the cars behind them right on their tails. But somehow, Phillip must have been saving some power in that car somewhere because coming out of the fourth turn, he was like a freight train and held a good car length lead on Killian.

Phillip made it past the finish line first, then Killian with Sean right at his quarter panel. August, Eric, and Victor, who had made his way through the pack, came in soon afterwards. Jefferson finished in twelfth.

While it wasn’t a win, second place kept him high in the points, so Emma was happy. She quickly headed over to pit lane, but slowed when she saw a reporter already talking to Killian as Phillip was doing his burnout.

“You lead most of the race, second’s got to hurt.” The reporter told him.

He smiled, “Every driver wants to finish first. That’s what you want, but second is pretty good and I’ll take it. However, I’m going to have to ask Phillip where he got that extra bloody boost from. I wonder if he slowed down at all in that corner.” Killian laughed, and so did the reporter. “There is always the next race. I’d like to thank my team, without them I wouldn’t have done as well as I did. I’d also like to thank…” Emma smiled to herself already knowing the speech for for word by now. Once the reporter left, Killian was pulling her into a hug and then a long kiss. “How about we go home?”

“That sounds like a great idea,” she replied and they walked back to the garage hand in hand.

“I can’t wait to see her face,” Killian said into the phone. On Wednesday, he didn’t go into the charity after his team meeting. Not that he even needed to go to that anymore, since the crew had everything well within hand without him, but he liked being there and liked working with Emma. But today, he had much more important things to do. He nodded in answer to Victor’s question on the phone as he walked back and forth in his living room, “Yeah, mate. She has no idea. Also, I need to keep it that way, okay? Please don’t tell Ruby until the last minute.” With an agreement from the other driver, they said their goodbyes and hung up.
“Okay, that’s covered,” he said to himself and then went through his mental checklist. He snapped his fingers and called another number. An older gentlemen answered. “Hello, this is Killian Jones…” The man instantly recognized him, and greeted him. “I’m just checking to see the status of what I ordered last week. Will it be ready in time?”

Killian smiled at the man’s reply, and let out a large breath of relief. “Perfect. Just let me know when the order is ready for pickup.” The man agreed, and they ended the call.

He grinned and wandered into the kitchen, and then his brain remembered what else he needed to do. He plopped down on the sofa in the family room, and pulled up the browser on his phone. Food wasn’t an issue, but he needed to find a bakery in the area of the track. He knew Emma’s penchant of sweets, and wanted it to be perfect.

After a lot of searching and looking at yelp reviews, he found the perfect place, and called them and put in his order. Everything was all set. Now he just had to figure out a way to not spoil the surprise in the meantime.

The race at Kansas Speedway on Sunday had Killian starting in sixth, Jefferson in ninth, and Eric won the poll. It took almost 57 laps for Jefferson to catch up to Killian, who by then was in third place. Eric was still in the lead, with August behind him, while the rest of the pack stayed back. None of them wanted to get in the way of the feud between the two drivers.

Killian refused to back down, but at the same time, he wasn’t going all out against him. He had yet to win a race in this round and wasn’t yet guaranteed a place in the next round. So a few times he actually let the bastard go around him while he grumbled and cursed over the comlink, only to then later take the lead back on a restart or through one of the corners.

Phillip, on the other hand, seemed to be happy in the middle of the pack, he would make passes that were easy, but he wasn’t straining himself or his car. Having won the last race, and his way into the next round, meant he didn’t worry about his finish.

Emma knew that Killian wished he was in a similar position, but in a way she was glad he wasn’t. If he wasn’t worried about his place in this race, he would be in all out war with the insane driver. And each of those battles had her gut twisted in worry. No matter how many other crashes she had witnessed from other drivers who got out and walked away, all she could see was the image of Killian’s crash.

Each corner, each restart was a battle. Other cars tried to give them a wide berth and get around them, but the two were all over the track in their fight, which lasted all the way till the end. August was able to get around Eric just before the finish for the win. Then came Killian and Jefferson, neck and neck to the line, with Killian just inches ahead of the 12 car, to make it fourth. Victor and Sean were next with Phillip over the line in 10th.

After his interview, and on their walk back to the RV, Killian wrapped his arm around Emma as they walked. “I’m still leading the points; as long as I stay up, I’ll be in the next round.” He leaned over and kissed her temple.

She laughed. “But you really want the win.”

He grinned. “I always want the win.”

She bit her lip and then took his hand to pull him back to the RV faster, “Well, until then, how about something we can both win at?”
All she heard was the small growl from him, and soon she found herself over his shoulder as he ran back to the trailer. She smacked his ass from her position which made her laugh, but it soon turned into a small moan as he gave her one in return, with his hand lingering there. It didn’t take long for her to find herself on her back on their bed, with him leaning over her, and their mouths joined in a hungry kiss.

Emma finished up her staff meeting and watched as Belle and Will headed out of the conference room together, heads tilted to talk to each other quietly with smiles on their faces. Emma attempted to hide her smile behind her coffee cup. She followed Merida out the door, and then walked back to her own office to see Mulan leaning against the volunteer’s table as she and Dorothy were chatting animatedly. Both were grinning and laughing at their discussion.

She glanced at the lingering eye contact between Belle and Will as he went into his office and then the woman took a deep breath and turned to her own. Emma walked over to Belle’s office, and leaned against the doorframe as she watched her get settled at her desk, the large smile still on her face.

Emma knocked on the door and the other woman’s head shot up. “Oh, Emma. Can I help you?”

“May I?” Belle told her, and then Emma took a seat.

“You know,” Emma started and then bit her lip thinking how to say what she wanted to say. “Umm, we don’t have a...uhh...” She smiled, and shook her head. “Belle, we don’t have an anti-fraternization policy here.”

Belle’s eyes widened and her mouth dropped open. “What?”

Emma held up her hands. “All I’m saying is you and Will don’t have to keep things a secret...unless you want to.”

A blush quickly bloomed over her friend and co-worker’s cheeks. It took a moment for her to speak. “It’s not that we are trying to keep it secret, it’s just...we just started seeing each other. It’s still so new. We aren’t even sure what it is yet.”

Emma nodded. “No worries. I just wanted to tell you that there is no issue.”

“Thank you,” Belle told her. “We’re that obvious, huh?”

Emma stood and gave a small snort. “Ohh, yeah. But, it’s quite adorable, really.” She was almost out the door when she turned back around. “You are Mulan are close friends, right? I know you go to lunch.” Belle nodded. “Maybe at one of those lunches, you might want to let her know we also have nothing wrong with the staff and volunteers together, too.”

Belle chuckled. “I have a feeling she will be glad to know that.”

Emma gave her a wink and then headed back to her office. Her fingers traveled over her desk, and the memories of just what she and Killian did on that desk not too long ago came to mind. Her own cheeks flushed at the thought, and she sighed as she sat down. She missed him here, but lately he kept saying he had team meetings and other things he had to take care of. She wasn’t worried at all, but she was curious as to what he was doing with his days.

At almost that exact moment, Killian was in downtown Charlotte, his eyes gazing at the contents of a velvet box. He smiled up at the older man across the display case. “Perfect. Thank you for the quick
turn around.” The old man closed the box, put it into a small bag, and rang him up. Soon Killian was out the door and driving back home. Now he just had to hide the box so she couldn’t find it until it was time to give it to her.

Practice and qualifying at Talladega was a victory for Killian; he got the poll. Eric would start second, Victor in third, and Jefferson would be back in eighth. They went out for a nice celebratory dinner then headed back to the RV to watch a movie, though they got preoccupied prior to watching the movie. So instead, after their bedroom activities, she shrugged on one of his t-shirts and he put on his pajama bottoms as they snuggled together and he turned on one of her favorites, ‘The Princess Bride.’

She eventually took a look at the time. “There is still close to an hour left of the movie and it’s almost midnight. We should probably just finish it another time. Besides, I know it by heart.”

He laughed, because he knew just how true that statement was. Not to mention with how many times they watched it together, he probably did, too. Killian looked at the clock and saw that she was right—it was two minutes to midnight. He sighed, “I guess you are right. How about your turn off the TV, and I’ll be right back.”

He went into the kitchen, and took out the opaque tupperware container with the false food label, popped the lid and slid the contents onto a plate. He then opened one of the drawers in the kitchen, took out the box from it’s hiding place, and put it in his pj’s pocket. He got everything ready and then made his way back to the bedroom with his hands behind his back.

She was already laying down, with the covers up, on her side away from him. “Emma?”

He turned around to look at him. “Yeah?”

He brought the dish out from behind his back, revealing A chocolate cupcake with a single lit candle on top. The look on her face was priceless: absolute shock that turned into complete joy and happy surprise. Then he started to sing, ‘Happy Birthday.’

Her hand went to her mouth as she sat up on the bed, and he crawled over it to her, as he finished the song. “Happy Birthday…toooo…youuuuu.” He leaned in and kissed her forehead. “Now make a wish, love.”

She closed her eyes, the smile unable to leave her lips, and thought about what she could possibly wish for. She was already so happy; she didn’t need anything else. So she just wished that she would be able to keep her happiness safe. To keep the people she loved safe. With that wish, she opened her eyes and blew out the candle. Then she looked up at him, amazed. “How did you know?”

“Well, you didn’t make it easy,” he teased her.

She laughed. “Well, I guess we both have that in common.”

He grinned. It was true; he hadn’t told her about his birthday either. “Well, I may have received a heads up much like you did. Dave told me.”

“Oh course he did.” Part of her thought she would need to give her brother a talking to, another, larger part of her thought she would really need to give him a big hug.

“Before you dig into that cupcake, you first need to open your present.” Her eyes lit up even more at his words. He sat the plate on the bed, reached into his pocket, and pulled out the small wrapped gift and handed it to her.
She dug into the little wrapping, and her eyes turned into saucers when she saw the small velvet box. She looked up at him in question, and he immediately regretted using that type of box. He waved his hand at her. “Calm down, love. I’m not proposing.” He could see her relax but luckily there was a bit of disappointment as well. He reached for her hand. “All I’m saying, Emma...is when I propose,” he caught the subtle grin and happiness as his choice of words, “It will be it’s own event. Not as a gift. Not during your birthday. Your birthday is your own special day.” He leaned in and gave her a soft kiss. “I’ll also remember to be more selective on my choice of boxes.”

They both laughed at that. “Okay, what are you waiting for? Open it.”

At his words, she nodded, took a breath, and then opened the box. Inside was a pair of gorgeous diamond earrings: a large square-cut diamond sat in the middle with marquis cut on the side, in white gold, all made to look like the bloom of a rose. This wasn’t her normal costume jewelry, she knew that. Her fingertip reached out and traced them; words were hard to find, and finally, “They’re beautiful.”

“They don’t hold a candle to you, my love.” His hand reached out and caressed the side of her face. She looked up at him, her eyes filled with happy tears. His thumb wiped away a stray one that ran down her cheek. “We’ll just have to be careful not to lose one of these the next time we have fun in your office.”

“Next time?” She asked incredulous and lightly slapped his shoulder. He pulled her to him, and she hugged him back hard. “Thank you so much. For the earrings, for the cupcake, for just finding out and...”

She hid her face in his neck, and he hugged her tight, while his hand stroked her hair. “Happy Birthday, my love.”

Emma didn’t really like the big super tracks. Because of the restrictor plates, drivers typically had to work in pairs to push each other around the track. That pushing could easily result in accidents, so to say she was on edge was an understatement. She wasn’t the only one that felt that way—a lot of the drivers also didn’t like this type of track being in the chase as well, but for different reasons. The chase was all about getting a winner, not about working as team. But at least it was now and not further on in the series.

The only problem was that this was the last race of this segment, and Killian hadn’t won a race yet. He wasn’t guaranteed a place moving forward. Of course, the team had done all the numbers and ran all the calculations and possibilities. Since he had done well in the other two races, and based on how the others had done, as long as he placed nineteenth or better, he was in.

Emma knew he should be able to do that without issue, but there was a wild card out on that track. A wild card who had to place much higher in order to get in than Killian did. She was worried about what Jefferson would do; hell, they all were. The crazy driver needed at least a seventh place finish to make into the next round.

With Killian starting third and Victor right behind him, they took the early lead; the two worked well together even if they liked to bust each other’s chops. She knew that the two of them wouldn’t go after each other, well, until the last lap. Then it was no holds barred.

Victor and Killian led until the first pit stop under the green flag, when they got into a bit of traffic, so Eric and Sean were able to take the lead. While Victor pushed Killian, they were not able to catch up and only keep pace. When they switched off to give Victor’s car a chance to breath, Killian’s car was able to push them a bit more and they were starting to make headway.
They had almost caught up when a caution came. Jefferson and August had a scuffle back to sixth and seventh places, and each skidded against the wall. Debris from their cars flew across the track. The good news was it saved gas and allowed Killian’s car to cool back down and breathe, not to mention an easy pitstop. The drivers timed it perfectly to get lined back up with their dancing partner.

After the restart and those that followed, Eric and Sean stayed in the lead mostly, but Victor and Killian were able to take it back here and there. Emma swore she could tell they were all having fun out there. Of course, their competitive spirit was running and they all wanted the win, but it was a race between friends. The rest of the pack was another story. Everyone seemed to be gunning for each other and bringing out cautions left and right. She was pretty sure that there wasn’t a car in tenth and back that didn’t have a spot on it.

Killian had to have been saving some power in his car, because breaking out of the fourth turn, he was able to gun it and push him and Victor in front of Eric and Sean. She could see the moment that he tried to get around Victor for the win, but he wasn’t able to pull it off and Victor came in first just ahead of him. But it didn’t matter—second place was way more than enough to ensure Killian’s place into the next segment of the race.

However, when Jefferson came over the line in fifteenth, her stomach dropped. The 12 car was out of the chase. There was no reason for him to even attempt to hold back, if he even had before.

Emma walked with Robin over to the pits and saw Killian already talking to the reporter, who must have asked him a question similar to her own concern. “He’s always a concern for everyone on the track; every time we get out there on the race. I’m not really sure how much worse he could actually be. However if he is, I’m hoping the officials will call him on it. This behavior and driving are already bloody atrocious and dangerous.”

He finished answering questions while Victor drove his car to victory lane. Once they wrapped up, she came up and gave him a big hug. “Do you really think he can’t get any worse?”

Killian sighed. “I really hope so. But honestly, I don’t know.” They began walking back towards the RV. His arm wrapped around her and he pulled her closer. “I promise to be careful.”

She leaned her head on his shoulder as they walked. “Thank you.” When they got inside, she pulled him close, and kissed him as her hands went to the front of his firesuit.

“Whoa,” he said pulling back.

“What? It’s still my birthday. I have one more present I want to unwrap.”

Her eyes and the biting of her bottom lip almost had him give in, but he had other plans. “How about I make sure the ‘gift’ is all nice and clean before you get it?”

“Oh, come on,” she said pulling him closer, as her lips dragged up his neck. “It’s not like I haven’t had you all sweaty after a race before.” To make her point her tongue darted out tasting his skin, and he couldn’t help the small moan that came from his lips.

It took all his willpower to pull back. “Emma, please. Just let me take a shower, and I promise, I’ll more than make it up to you.”

She pouted but let him go. “Fine.”

He took a breath and headed towards the bathroom, and then had a thought and turned around. “Don’t change.” At the question on her face, he quickly added with a smirk for good measure. “I want to peel you out of that.”
She rolled her eyes and he smiled as he grabbed his phone and headed into the bathroom. He turned on the water as he checked his phone. He knew he wouldn’t have a message yet; Victor winning had put a small delay in his plans. However, he was happy to see another text message from the store in Charlotte. “Your order is ready,” was all it said, but he knew exactly what it meant. He couldn’t contain his smile as he stripped off his firesuit and got into the shower.

He took a relatively quick shower, but left it running as he checked his phone. Still no texts or calls. He knew how long it took for the reporters and the pictures, but it shouldn’t be too much longer. As he dug out his change of clothes he had put in the bathroom, a text from Ruby came in. He read it quick and smiled. He dried his hair, gave it a quick brush, and then left the bathroom.

The puzzled look she gave him as she shut off the TV, had him almost laugh. “Why are you dressed?” She stood up from the bed, and walked over to him, her hands on his shirt ready to pull it off him. “I mean, I know I said I wanted to unwrap my present, but a towel would have sufficed.”

He chuckled and held her hands still, not allowing her remove his shirt. “Ruby sent me a message that everyone was coming over to celebrate all of us making it to the next round.” As she eyed him, he was hoping his stretch of the truth wouldn’t give him away too much.

“Killian...is something wrong. Do you not want—”

He refused to let her even think that, and leaned in and pulled her to him for a passionate kiss. He only broke it when they were both breathless, “I always want you. Trust me.” He gave her another soft kiss. “Let’s just go see our friends. Have a quick celebration. Then we can come back and do whatever you wish. I’ll let the driver and Dusty know we won’t leave till tomorrow morning. Will that work, love?” He hoped she would say yes, since the RV’s driver and Dusty already thought that was what was happening anyway.

She knew he wasn’t telling her everything, but she agreed with a sigh anyway. “Okay, let’s get this over with.”

He shook his head with a smile as he led her out of the RV. “I will admit, it’s nice to know you want me so bad.”

She gave him a glare. “Yeah, well...we’ll see how I feel when we get back. You may be sleeping on the couch.”

He wasn’t worried by her thinly veiled threat at all. He could see everyone in Victor’s RV when they got there, but that wasn’t a shock to Emma; what was a shock was when they got inside and she saw the banner, balloons, and every screamed, “Happy Birthday!”

She was once again in shock; her mouth hung open as she spun around, and then looked towards Killian. “I thought you already...what?”

He pulled her into a hug. “You thought I had already celebrated your birthday so you weren’t expecting anything else?” When she nodded he looked up at the others. “Well, I guess my plan worked perfectly then.”

She shook her head with a smile and playfully swatted his chest. She then got hugs from everyone else and then a round chocolate cake from the bakery he found was placed in front of her, as they all once again sang Happy Birthday to her. Emma just smiled, and wished that this would be what each of her birthdays would be like: happy.

Killian then leaned in and whispered into her ear. “So, am I still sleeping on the couch?”
She pulled him into a kiss by the collar of his shirt. “I’m not sure.” At his questioning look she smiled. “I don’t know where we will finally pass out.” He chuckled and pulled her back in for a kiss as their friends laughed. It was Victor throwing a pillow at the two of them that finally broke them apart, and got Emma to start opening her presents.

They got back to the RV much, much later, and oddly enough they both fell asleep on the couch, naked, sated, and smiling in each other’s arms.

Point Standings:

*Car - Driver - Points - *=leading ^= Win in round
(These are now ‘The Chase’ points system)

#71 - Killian Jones - 3129*
#8 - Phillip Haven - 3119^
#36 - Victor Whale - 3127^
#53 - Sean Herman - 3122
#65 - Eric Sirena - 3126
#92 - August Booth - 3122^
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 3104
Chapter 35

After making another excuse as to why he wasn’t going to be at the charity again that day, Killian knew that Emma was starting to wonder what was going on. She gave him an inquiring look, and he gave her a smile, kissed her forehead, and just told her, “You don’t need me there anyways, love. You have it all handled. But, if you need me for any reason, you know I’ll be right there.”

She gave him a smile, and wrapped her arms around his neck. “I know.” She went to her tiptoes and gave him a kiss. “Love you, I’ll see you later.” She then pulled away to grab her stuff for work.

“And I you, Emma. How does steak sound tonight?” he inquired.

She turned around, one hand leaning on the wall for balance as she put on her heels. “Good. Want to use the grill as much as you can before the weather changes, don’t you?” He nodded; it was late October, and it may be North Carolina, but it was already getting chilly—well, mid sixties, but that was chilly for them. He walked up to her, and once she was ready to head out the door, she kissed his cheek. “I don’t foresee myself working late, so I’ll be home at the regular time.”

“See you later, love. Have a good day.” He watched her leave and then shut the door behind him. He quickly returned to the bedroom and got dressed, and filled his Hook travel mug with coffee, and was out the door on his way to Charlotte.

He didn’t care that he could have left later and not had to deal with commuters or as much traffic. He had already waited for Emma to go back to work; he couldn’t wait one more minute. He arrived to the shop just as the owner turned over the sign from closed to open.

With the ringing of the store’s bell indicating the door opening, the older gentleman smiled as he saw Killian come in. “Good morning. Let me go get your purchase, and I’ll be right back.” He retreated into the back room, and Killian looked at the display cases while he waited. His head immediately popped back up at hearing the man enter the room again. “And here it is,” he said as he held out the small velvet box, similar to the one Emma’s earrings were in.

He was struck speechless as he looked inside for a minute, emotions running through him. This was it. He reached out and plucked the ring from the box and looked it over intently, the smile grew on his face. “It’s perfect.”

The man grinned in return, glad that is customer was happy with his work. “Since you already made the payment for it, it is yours to take with you.”

He reached for a bag, but Killian waved him away. “I’ll take it just like this.” He put the ring back in the box and closed the lid. “Thank you.”

The man nodded. “Good luck.”

Killian smiled again, gave a nod to the man, and made his way home. He hid the box in a place he was pretty sure Emma would never look, and then started pacing. The only question he had left to answer was when was he going to actually pop the question. He thought she was to the point now in their relationship that she would feel comfortable saying yes. Their conversation over her gift during her birthday seemed to confirm that. But with the race season almost at an end, should he do it now with everything going on, or should he wait till the pressure was off, and be able to take her somewhere romantic? Him winning the championship had nothing to do with if he was going to ask her to marry him. If he waited, would she think it did? Ugh...he needed help; someone else to talk
this through with.

He waited long enough to ensure they would be home, and sent out the Skype request. This time it was Elsa that answered, “Hello, Killian!” She answered cheerfully.

“Hello, Elsa. Is Liam home yet?”

She have him a playful pout. “So you didn’t want to talk to me?”

“I actually wanted to talk to both of you.” he admitted.

She nodded and called over her shoulder for her husband, he came up to the screen moments later. “Killian, nice to see you. To what do we owe the pleasure?”

Killian could already hear the teasing in his brother's voice, “I need someone to talk over the plans for…” he took a breath, “the proposal.” He then cringed at Elsa’s shrieking.

Liam rung his ear with his finger. “Be glad you only heard that through the computer.” He looked at his wife. “I think I’m deaf in this ear now.”

She just rolled her eyes at her husband and turned back to Killian, and then rubbed her hands together. “Go on!”

He told them about picking up the ring, and what happened on Emma’s birthday. He explained that he was trying to decide whether to do the proposal soon, or wait until after the race season was over. But he also told them of his worry with waiting. “See, I don’t want her to think that I waited until after I won or…” he cringed at the possibility, “didn’t win to ask her.”

Elsa shook her head at that. “I don’t think that will be a problem. You’ve had the ring being designed for ages. If, and that’s a big if, she is worried about that, you can show her the dates you had the designs made. I’m sure the jeweler could tell her when you picked the ring up.”

Liam nodded. “We could tell when you talked to us about it. And didn’t you say that you already talked to David about it?”

Killian nodded; they had a point. “That is all true.”

Elsa tilted her head. “But you’re still hesitant about something. What is the real conundrum for you?”

He sighed and ran his hand through his hair. “Part of me wants to take her someplace really nice, really special, and I can’t do that with the racing going on. The other part of me is just selfish and wants to ask her right now!” He shook his head, “But there is also a part of me that’s worried she’ll say no. That she’s not ready.” He looked down at the last admission.

“Brother, you just told us she looked disappointed it wasn’t a ring on her birthday.”

He agreed with Liam. “True, but the shocked look on her face when for a moment she thought it was...I haven’t been able to tell if that was good or bad shock.”

Elsa gave him a soft smile. “I think you are worrying yourself over nothing. When your brother proposed to me, I had no idea he was going to ask me. Had we talked about it? Yes. Was I ready for it? Yes. But...in that moment, there is a lot of emotion. No matter how much you want to say yes, there is still a bit of fear. It’s a lifetime commitment and change. It’s never to be taken lightly.”

Killian swallowed hard. “Not helping.”
She laughed. “All I’m trying to say, is you can’t let one initial reaction of shock make you fear something you both have talked about, and both want.”

“What she said.” Liam nodded, while Killian and Elsa rolled their eyes at him.

She continued. “Okay...so you are caught between wanting to ask sooner than later but also wanting to make it special. I know this may seem obvious, but can’t you do both?” With the confused look on the brothers faces, she sighed. “Isn’t there a nice place either at home or on the road where you could ask?”

Killian stopped and thought about her question. Someplace he could take her without letting her onto the plan. Dinner at their first date restaurant was too casual, but dinner at the fondue place was too formal and she would know something was up. He was taking the yacht into the marina for storage the week after next. The lake would be very quiet, private and she wouldn’t have a clue. He smiled back at the two of them on the screen. “I knew you would help.”

“We are always here for you little brother,” Liam said with a smile.

“I was talking to Elsa,” he glared at Liam, “And it’s younger brother!” Elsa just laughed at the two of them. They said their goodbyes, and Killian sat there with a grin. He now had a plan.

The girls sat in Ariel’s trailer with the TV on to qualifying while they chatted at the Martinsville track. It was too loud at the small track for them to sit outside and still hold a conversation. “It’s just weird,” Emma told them in relation to Killian making up excuses for not heading into the charity. “Maybe he just likes being home,” Ashley commented and Ariel pointed at her in agreement with a head nod as she rubbed her ever growing belly.

Emma tilted her head. “Maybe. I just feel…”

“You can’t be thinking there is anything wrong, can you?” Ruby asked.

Emma shook her head. “No. I’m not getting that reading at all. He’s definitely not telling me something, and he is for sure lying in part. It’s not in a bad way…” She huffed at herself. “I’m not explaining this right.”

“Maybe he just likes not having to go into the charity, because you have it handled. But he doesn’t want to tell you that and make you feel bad,” Ariel suggested and then took a sip of her water. “I mean, you have to remember. Before he started up the charity, his week days between races were his own.”

Ruby agreed. “Yep, except for the team meetings or test drives.”

Emma sighed; that could be it. “He does like to putter around the house.” They all laughed at that but agreed she was right. “And who am I to complain that I come home to a home cooked meal?” With that she earned a groan from the other women, a pillow thrown at her, and a few choice words.

Victor was on the pole, with August in second, Phillip in third, and Killian starting fourth. To Emma’s chigrin, Jefferson, who was out of the chase, was still starting in eleventh. Though in all honesty, it didn’t much matter. Due to the small size of the track, most of the leaders would be weaving in and around most of the the further back drivers anyway. Those lap-down drivers were always a challenge and threw a wildcard into the race; well another one besides Jefferson, anyways.

Victor took the lead quickly, especially when August spun his tires. Unfortunately, it also held up
Killian, as Phillip quickly took second and Eric third. Though as soon as he could after the starting line, Killian quickly changed lanes to the bottom, and August followed.

Just like most short tracks, there was quite a bit of rubbing, which was probably intensified by those still left in the chase and eager to get to the front, all looking for their win. After this next set of races, only four would go on, and the fastest and most direct way in was a win. But with rubbing also comes debris, and with debris comes cautions due to it on the track or it creating blown tires.

The lead kept switching at every caution, though Victor was doing his damndest to stay there. Killian had caught the lead a few times, but unlucky timing in cautions was taking it away. Fortunately, his car was doing well and he was able to drive back to the lead or close to it every time, and didn’t allow Jefferson a chance to get close to him.

By the last lap, it was still anyone’s race, Especially as the lead cars moved in and out of the lapped cars. It was those lapped cars that in the end slowed down Victor and Killian enough for Sean to get by them for the win, with Victor and then Killian right after him.

Robin and Emma gave each other a small smile, but she knew that a third-place finish wasn’t a win, and was preparing herself for whatever anxiety-filled Killian she might find at pit lane. But she got a bit of a shock when she saw him laughing with the reporter. She watched his interview and was trying to understand his good humor. She was extremely glad for it, but it was curious.

Once the reporter was done, he pulled her in for his customary kiss, and gave her a smile. “Ready to go home, beautiful?”
She agreed, and they started to walk, but her curiosity got the better of her. “Are you really okay?”

He stopped and gave her a questioning look, “Why wouldn’t I be?”
She didn’t want to make him worry if he wasn’t. So she shook her head, “No reason. I’m glad.”
He caught on quick, “Ahhh, I see. Did the ladies tell you I was going to be all worried?”

“The girls, Robin, the team, the television, the…” she trailed off.

He picked up her hand and kissed the back of it. “I still have two more races. There are three more places to fill, and if you don’t count Sean who got the first seat, then I’m second in the points. Did I want to win this one? Yes. Abso-bloody-lutely. But if I focus on the fact that I didn’t win, it won’t help me win the next one.”

She smiled at that. “Positive attitude. I like it.” He grinned back, and then they started walking back to the RV to get ready to head home. Besides, he told himself, even if he lost the chase, he still had Emma. They still had a future together, and that was most important anyway.

The next night, they were invited over for dinner by Mary Margaret. She told Emma that if she didn’t have some grown-ups to talk to besides David, she was going to murder someone. It took a lot of effort for Emma not to laugh at the comment. She could tell by the tone of her sister-in-law’s voice that she meant it. Maternity leave, while being nice to be able to stay home and bond with her baby, was not Mary Margaret’s style—she liked to stay busy. Thus Emma readily agreed, and asked if they could bring anything.

Even though they were told they didn’t need to bring anything, Killian still opted to bring flowers. They had agreed bringing wine, something that Mary Margaret still couldn’t drink, was not a wise option, and the new mom might like some fresh blooms.
When the door opened, she couldn’t help but smile at the relief on her brother’s face. He hugged her tight and whispered in her ear. “Please talk to my wife,” he pleaded.

She squeezed him back. “I’m on it,” she whispered back.

She took the bouquet with her and greeted her friend with a hug, and Mary Margaret whispered in excitement, and then held her finger to her lips and motioned to the cradle. “I just got him to sleep like fifteen minutes ago. He was having fits all day.”

“Well, Aunt Emma is here, so if he wakes up, I’ll take care of him.” Emma said grinning at the sleeping infant. “Oh, these are for you.”

The woman’s smile somehow got bigger, and she smelled the bouquet and went to find a vase to put them in. “Thank you, Killian.”

Emma looked back and forth between her boyfriend and her friend. “I handed them to you.”

As Mary Margaret poured water in the vase, she replied, “And who made the suggestion and picked them out?”

Killian scratched behind his ear, and Emma’s mouth opened and closed. “How did you...you know what...nevermind.” She shook the thought away. “Well, can I help you with anything? Or do you want Killian in the kitchen, too?”

Her friend rolled her eyes and grabbed her hand. “Oh, Emma. I want you here; we need to catch up.” She stirred a pan on the stove. “Besides, everything is almost done; you shouldn’t need to do anything.”

She looked to Killian for help, but he was avidly avoiding her gaze, and she sighed. “So...” she started and finally found a question she could ask to strike up a conversation.

David just shook his head, as the two men walked over to look over Leo. “Beautiful family you have, mate.”

David nodded. “Thanks. About that...when will you…” He motioned to Emma.

Killian took a quick look at the ladies, making sure they weren’t listening, and then turned back to Dave. “If all goes according to plan, this time next week.”

David clapped him on the back, his smile growing. Then he tilted his head to look at Leo. “And what about one of these?”

Killian laughed. “Jumping the gun a bit, aren’t you?” But when all he got was a serious look back, he continued with a sigh. “That’s up to Emma. I’d be happy starting right away, or waiting a couple years. Whatever she wants.”

“Good answer,” David told him as they both then went to set the table.

The meal was over, and they were all lounging around talking. Leo had woken up hungry, and Emma asked if she could feed him. Now she sat on the couch, holding her nephew while giving him his bottle. Killian sat next her, and didn’t even bother trying to stop the grin that was on his face. This future with Emma was so close he could almost taste it; the week could not happen fast enough in his opinion.

The next thing either of them knew there was a flash and they both looked up to Mary Margaret
holding her camera. “I couldn’t help it. You three just look so cute together. I’ll email you the picture later Emma.”

As she went to put the camera down, David chuckled. “She keeps the camera close by her at all times. I have so many pictures texted to me while I’m at work. Not that I’m complaining,” he said quickly at a look from his wife.

“I just want to document everything. I got his first smile...okay maybe his second. I couldn’t grab the camera or my phone fast enough. I can’t believe he’ll be almost two months; time flies and I want to remember it all.”

Emma held Leo closer, and leaned down to smell his little head. That baby smell that just makes ovaries flip was very present. She also didn’t miss the way Killian’s eyes were constantly lit up while he watched her hold the baby either. They had of course talked about kids; it was for sure on the table. But talking about wanting them and seeing the look on his face were two different things. And that look made her heart ache with want.

Her birthday, and his quick denial that it was a ring in the velvet box, told her an engagement wasn’t anytime soon. Which at first she had to admit stung, but she understood it. He was very busy with the race season, and she was really busy with the new charity. They hadn’t even been together a full year yet. But moments like this made her wish that future was sooner than later. She looked towards Killian. “Bottle’s just about done; want to burp him?”

“Oh, giving me the dirty job, huh?” He stopped himself from teasing if that would be the way it was when they had one. It was getting harder and harder not to give anything away. But with her smile and nod, he agreed. “Sure.”

He took the burp cloth and put it over his shoulder, and then carefully she gave him the baby. This wasn’t the first time he had done this of course, he had a bit of practice with his nephews here and there so he knew what to do. Elsa was a great teacher. He put the lad to his chest, and soothingly patted the babe’s back. He got another flash in his eyes as he looked to the culprit.

Emma whined, “I thought you put that thing away?”

Mary Margaret grinned. “I put it to the side, but I can easily grab it. And look,” she said motioning to Killian and the baby. “That’s just precious.”

Emma had to admit the sight was just that. Ugh, she didn’t need this pulling on her heartstrings. She leaned over to get a better look, and Killian looked back at her. “You’re so good with him.”

“Practice,” he told her. “I remember when my own nephews were this small.” With another small pat to the lad’s back, the baby let out a large burp. “There you go, lad.” He said with a chuckle.

“Thank you, Killian,” Mary Margaret told him as she then scooped up the little one to lay him back down and took the burp cloth as well.

“You are both hired for babysitting duty,” David told the both of them.

The two looked at each other, and Emma shrugged her shoulders at Killian. “Well, mate. Once this season is over, I wouldn’t mind here and there.”

“Really?” Mary Margaret said looking up quickly from the crib. “You wouldn’t mind?”

Emma bit her lip to contain the smile at the eagerness of her friend. Killian winked at Emma and continued, “Not at all.”
The new parents looked extremely happy with the prospect of a bit of alone time in the near future. Emma did not want to think about why. With a yawn from the new mother, they all decided to call it a night. They said their goodbyes and were out the door and on their way home.

Once they got home, Emma headed to the bedroom to change. She stripped off her top and turned to throw it in the hamper and almost jumped seeing Killian there, leaning in the door frame. “What are you doing?”

He smiled at her, pushed off from the wall and sauntered over. “This.” Was all he said as he pulled her in for a kiss, claiming her lips with his own.

She responded by going to her toes and wrapped her arms around his neck. She pulled back slightly, “What’s all this for?” She knew it didn’t take much to set him down this route, but because they had just gotten back from being with a small infant and her family, it made her curious.

His hands pushed the hair back behind her ears. “Have I told you lately, just how beautiful, wonderful, brilliant, and amazing your are?” He leaned in and kissed the corners of the smile blooming on her lips. “Or how much I am absolutely, completely, utterly in love with you?”

She didn’t know what to say at his heartfelt statement, or the completely honest truth of it in his eyes, so she kissed him back, threading her fingers in his hair. Only to pull away slightly, to tell him, “I love you,” and then her lips were back on his.

He lifted her, and her legs instinctively wrapped around his waist as he backed out of the closet and turned towards the bed. He laid her down, and then pulled her legs from him. He quickly divested her of her shoes and jeans. She didn’t lay idle and removed her bra, and threw it at him. He raised an eyebrow at her. “Eager are we?”

Her hands were at the waist of her underwear, and already lifting her hips to push them off as she responded, “Get undressed. Now.”

“Aye, aye, love,” he told her and quickly, his shirt was over his head as he kicked off his shoes and then pulled down his pants and boxers in one go. “Quick enough?”

She pulled herself into the middle of the bed, licked her lips at the sight, and curled her finger at him. “Get over here.”

He crawled up onto the bed. His lips left kisses on her ankle, calf, thigh, hip bones, sternum, and then captured her lips in a deep kiss as he hovered over her. His one hand traveled down her side lightly, almost like a tickle, and she giggled. “So beautiful…” his hand cupped her breast and gave a light squeeze. “And all mine.”

She moaned and arched her back into the touch, wanting more. “All yours,” she told him while her hands went up to his chest and her fingernails dragged through his chest hair. He closed his eyes to savor the feel, and then with a small push to his chest he took the cue and fell to his back. She settled over him, her bottom resting against his quickly hardening length. He groaned as she pressed against it. “Mine,” she said as she leaned down and pressed her front to his, her breasts dragging against his chest hair.

Killian moaned, and his hips pressed up against her. “All yours, Emma.” His hands tangled in the hair at the back of her head and pulled her down for a kiss. Their mouths were open, tongues tangling together, tasting one another, as their hips ground together. His now very hard length found its way through her wet folds, and glided over her clit. The feel made them both groan and grind against one another.
She broke the kiss and started to nip and lick down his neck and collarbone, as her fingertips played in the hair at his chest and then moved lower to his abs making the muscles their contract under her touch. Her mouth started to follow the line of hair down his stomach, but his hands reached out for her and pulled her up into his lap as he sat up. His knees bent behind her, and his head lowered to her breasts. His tongue licked around her nipple and then sucked it into his mouth as his other hand squeezed the opposite, this thumb strummed the other tight peak.

Emma tilted her head back, pressing her chest to his mouth as her hands came up to the back of his head to thread her fingers in his hair. Her hips pressed against his cock resting between them, pressing against her stomach, making her core ache with need. “Killian…”

His lips detached from her and his other hand took its place, as his mouth found hers, “Patience,” he requested breathlessly. The feel of her against him, all wet and warm, was torture to him, too, but it also felt so good to have her like this in his arms, needy against him. His lips went to the other breast as his hand went between them, opening her folds just right that his length pressed against her core and swollen clit as her hips moved and pressed together. He moaned at the next press of their hips as his mouth sucked hard on her nipple, producing even more delicious sounds from her throat.

His hand then moved to her hip, guiding her movements. She leaned back against his knees as her hips moved, sliding her core over his length. Her core was beyond needy, aching for something to fill her, to clutch onto as the sensations they were producing drove her further and further to the edge. With another hard press of her hips, Killian’s own jumped. His mouth left her and he cussed, “Fuck.” They were both desperate now, and his other hand came to her hip, and she went up on her knees. One of her hands left his hair to move between them, and grasp his now-slick, hard flesh and poised him at her opening. His hands gripped her hips tight and pulled her down onto him slowly, much slower than she had planned. Her head fell from the feel of him slowly filling her, her legs twitching at the pleasure. He gritted his teeth as he forced himself to take her slow, but there was nothing like dragging out the exquisite feel of pressing into her, the feel of her body opening for him, taking him, making her all his.

Then with the final push, he was fully seated inside of her; she could take no more, he could give no more, and his hands held her there as his mouth caught hers in another kiss that she eagerly returned. He flexed his hips and she broke the kiss on a gasp; he did it again, and her eyes closed in pleasure and her head tilted back, as his lips found her neck while her core fluttered around him. He moved his head down and nuzzled his face between her breasts as he just basked in the feel of them completely joined as one.

Her core fluttered again and her legs quivered as she pleaded, “Killian…” He knew exactly what she was asking; it was what both their bodies craved: movement. Even though he wanted to stay like this, his body’s craving won. His hands moved out to the sides of her hips and he pushed her up a little and then pulled her back down. Emma gasped and he pressed his face back to her chest and nipped at the side of her breast.

He pressed her up a little further and then back down faster, and this time her hips and legs worked with him. “Fuck, yes…” He groaned as her hips tilted just right on the way back down onto him. They worked in tandem, moving further out and then faster back in. The pace became quicker, faster on each push off and plunge back down. Emma’s hands traveled to his shoulders for leverage, as her legs started to betray her, her body too close to the edge. “That’s it…take what you need…just…like…that,” he groaned into her chest.

She continued to bob up and down on him, her pelvis grinding against his on every descent, sendings sparks of pleasure from her clit to her already-shivering core. She was so close, her oblivion
was right in front of her. When his hand snaked between them and pressed against her clit, moving in that way he knew she craved, it was like the spark to the fuse, setting off a chain reaction. He legs tensed, her back arched, toes curled, and her inner muscles contracted hard as she screamed out his name in pleasure.

He growled into her chest at the feel of her body tightening around him. His arms came up and pulled her tight to him as he laid back on the bed, bringing her with him. With his legs still bent, his hips began to thrust up into her quivering core. The sensation dragged out her pleasure as he searched for his. With a couple more hard thrust he was there, and his body held her tightly to him as he joined her in bliss.

They laid there, still entwined with her on his chest, while their breathing and heart rates returned to normal. Neither of them ready to move. She placed a soft kiss to his chest, and his arms held her tighter as he placed a kiss to her head. His fingers then started to run through her hair, and down her back as her found his voice. “The boat has to go back to drydock soon. Was thinking that next week, we could take her out on one more trip for the year then take her over to the Marina. What do you think?” He hoped his voice sounded more casual that how he actually felt about the question.

She smiled against him. “I think that sounds great.” She looked up at him, resting her chin on his chest. “You sure you’ll have time with everything going on?”

He nodded. “Yeah. Monday should be good. I have to take the boat in anyway, so might as well make the best of it.” He tried to play it off the best he could.

“Okay then. As long as it’s not a problem, sounds like fun.”

He hugged her closer. “It’s a date then.” Now he just had to get through the week.

==∞∞∞∞∞==

Killian was doing everything he could for the win, that was for sure. He had won the poll at Texas and was starting in first. August was starting second, with Victor in third. Jefferson had qualified in seventh, and that had Emma nervous; she had been hoping he would be much further back in the pack this time. Since it was a larger track than the prior race it meant that the lead cars wouldn’t have to wade through a ton of lapped car. But her wish had not been granted.

When the green flag rose, Killian was off like a shot, keeping the lead and starting to make a sizeable gap. He was able to keep that lead in almost all the restarts after cautions due to blown tires, a small wreck back in the pack, and debris. And even the two that he wasn’t able to keep, he was able to work his way back to the lead. His team had given him an excellently tuned car, and time and again gave him some of the fastest pit stops of any of the drivers.

The part that worried her—and Robin, too, she could tell—was that Jefferson was also making his way up. With less than five laps to go, he had made his way up to third place. Killian was in the lead with Victor right behind him, but now Jefferson was less than a half second back. Sean, Eric, Phillip, and August were in a small pack not far from his tail, and all of them were trying to catch up and get their own win as well.

Each lap, the 12 car was gaining speed, and Robin finally had to warn his driver, “Just keep it going, get it home. But he’s coming. He almost on Victor’s tail, and Victor is right on yours.”

It was the last lap that had Emma on her feet. The 12 had caught up and was working his way around Victor. Her stomach told her he was gunning for Killian, and she could barely breathe. Killian was listening to his spotter and trying to evade the approaching car. It was into the fourth turn when all hell broke loose. It looked like the 12 aimed for the 71 and there was nowhere for Killian to go as the two cars smashed into the wall. The rest of the cars tried to avoid it. Victor went
low getting around, but as the 12 and the 71 ricocheted back down the track, they collected Phillip and Eric. August went high and narrowly avoided the crash. Other cars tried to get out of the way, but ended up pulling in front of others, causing an even bigger crash that wrecked most of the other cars that had been in the top ten. All this had happened in seconds.

The caution light came out and the race was called, but at that moment, Emma, Robin, and most of the other pits didn’t care as they watched the wrecked cars all finally come to a stop on the track. “Mate?” Robin asked, the worry evident in his voice.

There was a sharp intake of air, and then finally, “I’m okay,” Killian radioed back, and Emma sat down quickly as she felt her legs want to give out in relief. “That bloody idiot!” he roared.

“We’ll deal with him later. Lower your net, and let’s get you to the care center,” Robin told his driver, as he gave Emma a relieved smile.

She watched as his net lowered, and then when officials and medics came over, he got out of the car. She took a deep breath and allowed herself to calm down when she saw him get out of the car without help and walk to the back of one of the ambulances.

However, when Jefferson walked to that one as well, she could see Killian start yelling at the man, and then officials were holding them both back from each other. The ones holding Killian put he and Eric into one of the ambulances and told the driver to go, and then they put Jefferson into another. Emma didn’t wait any longer and was off the pit box and running towards the care center. She had to wait while the doctors checked him over. But soon, he was cleared and she was allowed back. She hugged him tight, and then looked at him. “Are you okay?”

“Physically? I’m fine. I might be a tad sore tomorrow, but other than that, fine, love.” He didn’t even have to continue for how he felt emotionally. Once ready, they headed out to find reporters waiting. He answered their questions, but the entire time, his jaw was ticking, and he was asking the NASCAR officials to stop Jefferson from racing. Once he was done, they walked back to the garage to find Robin.

It wasn’t till then that Emma noticed that based on the timing of the caution and thus the end of the race on the last lap, Victor was the winner, and August and placed second. Other than the two of them, the rest of the chase drivers had been in the wreck, and Killian placed tenth. She didn’t know what that meant for him continuing into the chase, but right now, that wasn’t her main concern. They headed over to Robin, and the man nodded once he saw them. “News?” Killian asked.

“First, I’m glad you’re okay.” Robin told him, but Killian just made the gesture to just keep going. “I’ve talked to officials, and they said there will be a full investigation, blah blah blah. They want to see you at headquarters tomorrow for questions.”

Emma didn’t understand why, but that statement seemed to make Killian even more angry, “I’m going to kill him. How dare—”

Robin placed his hands on his friend’s shoulders. “You need to calm down.”

“Calm? Calm? He just probably ruined the chance I had in the chase, and he ruined,” He quickly took a glance at Emma and then stopped himself as he turned back to his crew chief. “That man needs to be out of racing. If he’s in the next race, and I’m out because of him…”

He didn’t need to finish the sentence because Emma and Robin both knew exactly what he was going to say. Robin cut him off. “You still have the ability to make it. Regina and I have run the numbers. You have to get second or of course a win.”
“Is that all?” he asked and rolled his eyes.

Emma came up. “Hey, where was the positive attitude?”

“It left when that maniac ran me into the wall!” he snapped and then closed his eyes in regret, “I’m sorry, love. I’m just...I’m sorry.” He opened his eyes and gave her an apologetic smile.

“It’s okay.” She hugged him, he wrapped his arms around her, and hugged her back tight.

“Well, your chances are better than others. The only option a few of them have is to win.” Robin told him.

He shook his head. “That doesn’t make me feel that much better.” He sighed again, and then looked down at Emma. “Let’s get home. Sounds like I have an early and long day tomorrow with officials.” She nodded in agreement and they headed back to the RV. The worst thing was that he couldn’t even tell them what he was most angry about. The plans he had in the works for tomorrow were dashed. They wouldn’t be able to head out on the lake, and thus he wouldn’t be able to propose. Honestly, the whole week was probably shot to even attempt it.

He could be called into questioning at any time, Emma had work, and they had to make plans for the next race. The tension and stress this week did not make the situation ideal. He leaned over and kissed the top of her head. He would just have to get through this week, and then figure out another plan.

==∞∞∞∞∞==

Killian went into the NASCAR headquarters as planned Monday morning. The line of questioning was pretty direct and to the point. He also saw Victor, Sean, and Eric there, as well. Even though Victor wasn’t in the wreck, he had a really good vantage point of exactly what happened.

His friends were all in agreement with him: that act was intentional—there was no other way to look at it. No matter what angle they viewed the incident on the video screens, it still said the same thing: Jefferson deliberately crashed Killian into the wall, and without a care to any of the other drivers’ safety as well. The drivers were calling for the man to be kicked out of NASCAR.

Killian wanted to believe that they would do it this time—the evidence was too strong, and it involved too many of the chase contenders not to. But he worried that they would still allow him to race anyway like they had each time before. He arrived home with pizza and wanted to laugh at how differently this day went than what it should have, especially when Emma came over and plopped beside him on the couch, and curled into his side. “That bad?” she asked.

He rubbed at his eyes, “Just a long day. I would have much rather been here with you.” His eyes gazed out at the yacht and sighed.

“We could take the boat in tomorrow like we had planned today,” she offered.

He sighed and shook his head. “They want me back in the morning for possible additional questions, and then afterwards, Regina wants a team meeting to go over our approach for the next race.”

“What about Wednesday? I could take the day off…” she offered and he reached out and took her hand and kissed the back of it.

“Car test since my favorite is, well, wrecked.” He grimaced. “Then on Thursday, we fly out. It’s scheduled to be in dry dock by the end of the week. I’ve already called someone to pick it up tomorrow.” He pulled her closer and kissed the top of her head, and allowed himself a moment just to breath her in and help relax him. “How about we just watch a movie, eat pizza, and forget about
all this for a little while?”

She gave him a soft smile. “That sounds great.”

He tried to do just that, only his brain kept trying to think of a contingency plan because he didn’t have the ability to wait much longer to ask her. All he knew is he wanted this next race over. The determination of what would happen to Jefferson over. The rankings of whether he would be in the chase still or not over. He couldn’t have all that hanging over his head. Because when he did ask her, that was all he wanted to think about and fully enjoy the moment.

It was Thursday morning, before they flew out to Phoenix, when the news came in. He had gone in with her to the charity that day to try and take his mind off everything. It had helped somewhat. They were in a meeting when his phone started buzzing in his pocket. He ignored it and let it go to voicemail, but when the phone started buzzing again, he finally pulled it out of his pocket. He went to leave the meeting, but Emma shook her head. “Answer it. We can wait.”

He answered the phone and then had to stop his crew chief. “Whoah, slow down, mate. What?” He started to smile. “Wait, Robin, can I put you on speakerphone?” A moment later, with his friend’s agreeance, Killian placed his phone on the table and told the man, “Okay, Emma and the charity staff are here; can you start over?”

Robin chuckled, and Killian’s smile kept getting bigger as he sat back and watched Emma take in the news. “NASCAR has given a preliminary ruling. Jefferson is suspended for the remaining races of the year. He is fined two hundred thousand dollars. Fines for the team and crew chief have not been issued yet, pending future findings. Also, they are still looking into this crash and the prior ones, and are talking with Jefferson’s legal counsel, but there is the likelihood that he could be suspended for a number of races next year, if not all of them or indefinitely.”

Everyone around the table whooped and hollered while Emma ran around the desk as Killian stood, and she hugged him tight. Joy was evident on hers as well as everyone’s faces.

“Just thought you might want to know,” Robin said over the line.

“That’s a huge relief right there. Thank you. I’ll see you tomorrow.” Killian told him and then he hung up the phone, and put it in his pocket. He then looked down at Emma.

She smiled back up at him. “Thank God!” He didn’t even hesitate and leaned down to kiss her. The staff was already used to their public displays of affection, and all grinned at each other about the good news and their bosses’ happiness.

In Phoenix, to say everyone was tense was an understatement. Okay, not everyone was tense. Victor and Sean were in the Chase. Eric and Killian, though, were tense, as were the other Chase drivers. The only good news was that they didn’t have to deal with Jefferson in this race.

Killian qualified in second while a non-Chase driver got the poll. Eric was in third, Phillip in fourth, and August was in fifth. Victor and Sean, who were guaranteed to go on, were back somewhere in the low teens. Emma had felt the tension in Killian the entire week; it only lessened somewhat when Jefferson was suspended. She knew how much winning this season meant to him, and he was so close. Granted, so were a lot of other drivers, but she just hoped he had his chance to continue. It wasn’t fair that the crazy man took it away from him.

When the race started, Killian shot out like a dart, as did the other drivers. He easily got past the non-Chase driver in less than half a lap, and Philip, Eric, and August were right behind them. The three cars battled each other trying to get in front of one another, but their battle was helping Killian out
and he gained a good lead by over a second on them.

The race first had a green flag pitstop, and due to Killian’s quick crew, he only lost the one lap while he came in for a really quick stop. The rest of the pit stops were under caution, since the Chase contenders were pulling out all the stops. Killian lost the lead for a few laps here and there, but he was able to get it back each time. With three-quarters of the laps down, Killian was for sure going to get the extra point for most laps led, so that helped his chances, but there was still a possibility of two of the other drivers taking his place if he didn’t win or get second.

A late-race caution due to a blown tire had Emma on the edge of her seat. When they went back to green, there were four laps to go. Killian was in first with Eric behind him, August was in second with Phillip behind him. Emma wasn’t sure how they did it—Philip must have given him a push or something, but August was able to take the lead, though Killian and the others were right behind him. August bobbed up and down the track as he tried to shake Killian and the other drivers. Philip and Eric were coming up on either side of Killian, and thus slowed down his speed as August got further and further away.

He just had to stay in front of the other two, and he valiantly tried his absolute best, while still attempting to get back to August. The laps wound down quickly, and at the last lap, Emma was on her feet. She knew August was going to win it—there was no way around that—but the question was if Killian would be able to hold onto second or not.

The three cars shot out of the fourth corner and came barrelling to the finish, all fighting to make it across first. It was neck and neck, each fighting to get their front bumper in front of the other. When they crossed the finish line, it was too far away for her to be able to tell who crossed first. She quickly looked over at Robin, and he shrugged his shoulders and called to his spotter for an answer. Emma held her breath and looked to the scoreboard, waiting for them to say who came in second…

Point Standings:

Car - Driver - Points - *=leading ^= Win in round
(These are now ‘The Chase’ points system)

#71 - Killian Jones - 4078
#8 - Phillip Haven - 4077
#36 - Victor Whale - 4091^
#53 - Sean Herman - 4080^
#65 - Eric Sirena - 4075
#92 - August Booth - 4084
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - OUT
Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

**FINAL NOTE:** I still can’t believe it is over. But I want to thank you all for the amazing support. I have bounced for joy at each review and smiled like an idiot at each like. And now I present you the final chapter, I hope you like it!

_The three cars shot out of the fourth corner and came barrelling to the finish, all fighting to make it across first. It was neck and neck, each fighting to get their front bumper in front of the other. When they crossed the finish line, it was too far away for her to be able to tell who crossed first. She quickly looked over at Robin, and he shrugged his shoulders and called to his spotter for an answer. Emma held her breath and looked to the scoreboard, waiting for them to say who came in second._

But she didn’t need to wait for the scoreboard, the excited screams and hollering coming from Killian and his spotter off the com told her what she needed to know. Emma hugged Robin tight, as the crew in the pits cheered. Seconds later, the 71 was on the scoreboard in second, and Killian was in the next round of the Chase. She quickly descended the ladder of the pit box and rushed through to the crew, who were all still excitedly celebrating. She gave Anton a big hug and then found Killian as he got out of the car.

She didn’t even wait for the reporters—she was too excited and he didn’t seem to mind when they each reached out for the other and crushed themselves together in a frantic kiss. Their happiness, relief, and excitement was all wrapped into one. It took them a moment to remember that everyone else was there. Slowly, they came apart and he rested his forehead against hers, breathing her in, with large smiles on both their faces. With a deep breath, he pulled away, and turned to the camera, but he kept his arm around her.

“This was a rough couple of weeks, especially with the crash last week, but you pulled it off. You are in the final four going into Homestead. I don’t think I have to ask how that feels after that display.” Emma blushed and Killian laughed at the reporter’s statement. “But what do you have to say?”

He smiled at the reporter. “Thank you. To my team, who refused to give up and gave their all. To Mills Racing, who put a lot of money into the cars, even when I busted them up pretty good.” The crowd and reporter laughed at that. He turned to look at Emma, “To Emma who has been such a strength to me. She helped me get my head on straight.” He pulled her tighter to his side. “To the NASCAR officials that took a dangerous driver finally out of the race.” His crew cheered in the background at that statement. He then went on to thank his sponsors etc.

“Do you have anything else to say before we have to head over to Victory circle?” the reporter asked.

“Yeah, that’s where you’ll be interviewing me next week in Homestead.” He winked at the camera. The reporter chuckled and his team cheered at his statement.

Once the camera was off him, he turned to Emma, and she shook her head. “Being all cocky again, huh?”
He pulled her tight to his front, and leaned into her ear. “I thought you liked me cocky.”

She lightly swatted his chest. “You know what I mean. I’m glad the positivity is back though.”

Killian smiled. “Everything’s back on track. What’s not to be positive about?” His hand caressed the side of her face and she leaned into it. “In fact, I believe we should celebrate.”

“Oh, should we now?” she replied, her voice catching a little at the thought.

He grabbed her hand and pulled her with him as they quickly headed back to the trailer. By the time they got into the bedroom, his fire suit was unzipped, her shoes and shirt were off, and he was backing her up to the bed, mouths fused together. “We have to pack to go home…” She whined against his lips.

“True, and I need to take a shower…” He kissed her hard again, as his fingers unclasped her bra. “He then changed directions and backed her into the bathroom, until she was pressed against the wall next to the shower. “I guess we’ll just have to take care of two things at once.” He reached in with one hand to turn on the water, while his other brought down her bra, and then palmed her breast.

“Sounds like a plan,” she said breathlessly, and arched her back into the touch, even though her hands were eagerly trying to get the fire suit off him.

Getting the water the way he wanted it, he pulled away, “I’ll remove mine, you take care of yours.” While he usually loved undressing her, it was just easier and much faster for them to remove their own. With his suit and clothes off and kicked to a corner, he turned to her and found her already in the shower. The water rained down her hair and back. He slid in behind her and shut the door. He poured some shampoo into his hands, quickly lathered it into his own, and then worked the rest of it through her hair.

Emma leaned back against him, moaning from the contact of his hands massaging her tresses, and the hard evidence of his arousal pressed into her backside. He turned her around in his arms, and reached for the detachable shower head to the side. He used it to gently remove the suds from her hair, and she smiled up at him.

When he went to rinse his own, she applied conditioner to her own hair, and then took a handful of bodywash. She loved doing this part to him. She rubbed her hands together and then brought them to his chest, lathering up his chest hair as she ran her fingers through it. He groaned at the touch and his free arm wrapped around her, pressing her to his front. His erection pressed hard to her stomach as her breasts rubbed against his soaped-up chest. She brought her hands up to his shoulders and he leaned down for a kiss.

Their soapy hands ran over each other’s flesh as their kiss intensified. He backed her up to the shower wall as his hand moved over her hips and then between them. His fingertips ran through her folds, and he groaned into her mouth at finding her slick and ready for him. He pulled back, and her lips tried to follow his.

Killian gave her a smirk and then went to his knees in front of her. He brought one of her legs up, and put her foot on his shoulder. He watched her bite her lip; her breasts were excited and her eyes dilated with want in front of him, and couldn’t help to think about how much he loved her, wanted her. He leaned in ran his tongue along her folds, and then pressed it inside. Her hands came up to his head and held onto his hair. She moaned louder when he plunged his tongue deep, tasting her. He pulled away, and smiled at her whimper of regret. He reached over for the showerhead, and adjusted the setting to a powerful pulse—well, as powerful as the RV shower could go, but it would do for his purposes.
His other hand came up to spread her folds with his thumb and outer fingers, while his middle two plunged inside her. “Fuuuuuuuuu…” she whined as her hips bucked towards him and her head pressed against the shower wall.

“Soon, love, soon,” he told her and then brought the pulsating stream of water up to her exposed clit. Her body jumped, and then more sounds of pleasure fell from her mouth. He watched her face contort in bliss as her drove his fingers in and out of her, curling them to the front each time as he agitated the stream of water against her.

Her hips fucked his fingers as the water vibrated over her exposed button of nerves. Her legs quaked and tensed while her fingers gripped his hair tight and her mouth hung open in continuous sounds of pleasure. “Killian…” She was so close; she was going to fall, fall hard.

“Let go, love. I have you,” he told her and she knew he did. He always did, he always would. With a final thrust of his fingers, her whole body tensed and then shuddered as pleasure gripped her and her muscles tightened around his fingers. He let the shower head drop and wrapped his arm around her waist to keep her upright through her blissful storm. He then gently removed his fingers and stood. His lips kissed her body on the way up to her mouth.

Her hands dropped from his head to wrap around his shoulders as their mouths joined again in a passionate kiss. Tongues slowly moved against each other as her grip tightened, her senses returning. “I need you,” was all she had to say. His hands grabbed her ass and lifted her up to then press her against the wall as her legs wrapped around his hips. He pressed his length against her core, rubbed the head against her, and her fingers clutched to his shoulders. “Killian…stop teasing.”

He smiled in return, and on the next hip thrust, he pressed inside of her in one long, slow stroke. They moaned into each others mouths and their tongues started to dance once again while he began to plunge in and out of her as the water poured down over them. Her legs tightened around him again as she rocked her hips on him. “Bloody hell, love. You’re going to push…me over…too soon.”

“I don’t care. Harder,” she demanded as she used the wall for leverage to rock back against him. He growled against her lips and then moved his face to her neck as she picked up the pace. His hips drove into her harder and faster as she commanded, his release already tingling in his spine. He adjusted his hold and moved his pelvis to grind against hers on every press of his hips and she gasped into his ear. He smiled into her neck, and bucked into her even harder as she commanded, his own orgasm so close he couldn’t push it away any longer.

“So close…” He groaned into her flesh as his hips started to shudder, and thrust deep. It was the start of her inner walls fluttering that triggered him and pushed him over the edge. He grunted her name against her skin, as his hips plunged deep a few more times, and then her own cry hit his ears as her muscles contracted around him and tried to suck every last drop of his satisfaction from him.

His body pressed her harder against the wall as he tried to regain his senses, but neither of them seemed to care. When his racing heart had slowed, Killian took a much needed deep breath. He left a kiss on her neck, then cheek, and finally her lips. “I love you.”

She smiled in return, and her hand came to the side of his face. “And I love you.” She gave him one more soft kiss. “Now, help me down, and get this conditioner out of my hair so we can go home.”

“Sounds like a plan, love…in a minute, I just need one more thing.” She gave him a questioning look and he just smiled as he leaned in for another kiss.

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On Monday morning, Killian woke early with Emma curled up to his side, their naked limbs
entangled from their continued celebration from when they got back home. He leaned forward and pressed a soft kiss to her forehead and then slowly extracted himself from her, and put his pillow in his place for her to curl up to. He headed for his closet and pulled on a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt and then headed into the kitchen to make some coffee.

While the pot brewed, he quickly sent off an email to Will and Belle and told them to cancel everything on Emma’s calendar for Wednesday and Thursday, but not to let her know. He had just started to drink his cup of coffee when he got a message back from Belle.

“Will do! Have fun. ;)”

Killian smiled and shook his head at the wink Belle had sent. He wondered what his perceptive friend had figured out on her own. He then quickly pulled up google maps and looked at the area where the next track was at. His smile grew as it wasn’t too far from Miami and small islands or Keys. He switched apps and looked at the weather in the area. The forecast looked clear and his idea quickly took a life of its own.

He went back to the map and zoomed in on the Keys next to Miami, and found exactly what he was looking for. He didn’t bother booking a room online; he called the hotel instead. He took a seat at the kitchen island, his line of sight on the hallway so he could tell if Emma was up. The booking was done to his liking and specifications, along with the hotel restaurant preparing for him exactly what he wanted.

He then sent a text to Dusty that there was a change of plans and that he would need to fly him and Emma to Miami on Wednesday, late in the morning. Killian just finished his coffee when he got a text back from the pilot that he would be able to accommodate and he would send a driver over to pick them up at ten. Just as he sent his thank you back, his ears picked up the soft sounds of Emma walking towards him in her bare feet. He smiled at the sight of her in one of his shirts. “Morning, beautiful.” He got up and went over to fix a cup of coffee exactly the way she liked and handed it to her while she took a seat on the island stool.

Her eyes were still sleepy, as she gave him a smile, took the cup and then a deep whiff of the hot beverage. “Mmmm, thank you.”

He sat back down next to her with his own new cup of coffee, and she pressed her shoulder to his and leaned her head against him. “So, was thinking we could head out for breakfast this morning and then decide what we would like to do for the rest of the day.” He told her.

“There is that new crepe place that we saw the other week. Probably not too busy today.” That was one of the nice things of having Monday and Tuesday off: places weren’t nearly as busy then as on the weekend. “If they are open today.” She then added, remembering the one time they had went to go eat somewhere and found Monday was the only day they weren’t open.

He chuckled remembering that time, too, and looked up the restaurant on his phone. “They are open seven days a week, and open now.” They both grinned at one another and quickly got dressed so they could head out and get breakfast.

It was Tuesday afternoon when they were eating lunch—just a couple of sandwiches while catching up on some of their shows—when she brought up them leaving for the race. “It’s still warm in Florida right?”

“Last I looked, it was mid-seventies during the day to mid-sixties at night.” He took a sip of his tea and then took a breath. He was still impressed he had kept his plans secret until now. “Actually, I have a surprise.” She tilted her head at that, and waited for him to continue. “You mentioned last
week about taking Wednesday off, and my mind thought about it. So I may have had Belle move everything on your schedule so you can take Wednesday and Thursday off…” Her eyes widened but she didn’t say anything so he continued. “We can head down to Miami early. I got a hotel on the beach, so we can get there early and relax. Take some of the pressure off before the last race.” He said the last part for her benefit.

Emma grinned back at him. “I love that idea. I think taking a mental and physical break away even for a day or two would be good for you.”

Killian patted himself on the back for throwing her off track. “Good, it’s all set. We’ll leave tomorrow. The car will pick us up at ten.”

Her eyes bugged out. “Killian! Why didn’t you tell me sooner? I have to pack!”

“I’m telling you now,” he said with a shrug.

She sighed and rolled her eyes. “I don’t have to pack much when we just go to the races because I keep things in the RV now. But a hotel is different.” She quickly finished her meal, stopped the DVR, and jumped up from the couch to head to the bedroom. “I need to pack and so do you!”

He was almost already packed anyway. The most important thing was packed first into his bag. The black velvet box was encased in a pair of his socks and at the bottom of his suitcase. But he followed her to the bedroom anyway and took the time to finish packing for her benefit. No matter how much he tried, he couldn’t shake the smile from his face.

On Wednesday morning, the car came to get them as predicted and Dusty was at the airport waiting for them. The flight to Miami was only a little over two hours, so they ate lunch while flying and arrived at the airport around one o’clock. Another car picked them up and took them to the hotel.

The drive was gorgeous. Her eyes were plastered to the window and her hand in Killian’s as they drove past all the water, and out onto the bridges that connected the Keys to the mainland. The sun was out, but due to it being the end of the week and November, there were not that many people out on the beach. She wasn’t sure why—the weather was beautiful. She didn’t want to go swimming, but to just sitting on the beach, getting some sun, and looking out onto the ocean sounded like a great idea.

Emma bit her lip and laughed to herself when she saw the sign of the hotel the car turned into. Of course, he had picked a Ritz-Carlton right on the beach. The bellhop was instantly to the car, and opened their door when the driver stopped. Their bags were taken from the trunk and Killian tipped the driver as they made their way to the front desk. The keys were already waiting for him, and he quietly talked to the person at the desk while Emma looked out the big windows out onto the ocean.

She barely heard Killian come up beside her. “Ready, love?”

She nodded and took his offered arm as the bellhop brought their bags with them. The man escorted them to the elevator, and pressed the button for the top floor. Emma couldn’t contain her smile and leaned her head on Killian’s shoulder. Soon the elevator dinged and they walked down the hallway a bit to their room. The man opened the door and they walked in as he sat down their bags. Emma instantly went to check out the view. She opened the doors and stepped out onto the balcony to take it all in.

Killian tipped the bellhop, and once the man was out of the room, locked the door, and then followed Emma out onto the balcony. His arms wrapped around her, and she leaned back against him. A soft wind blew through their hair as the sun warmed their skin. He leaned in and pressed his face to the back of her neck as her hands came up to intertwine with his around her. “Happy?” he asked.
She let go of his hand and moved hers up behind her to the back of his head. “I am when I’m with you.”

He hugged her even tighter and kissed her behind her ear. “So am I.” They stood there looking out onto the waves for a while, just happy and content in the peaceful beauty that surrounded them.

Killian then remembered his plans. “How about we change. I’ll see what the restaurant can wrangle up for a picnic and we head to the beach?”

She turned in his arms with a large grin. “That sounds amazing.”

He followed her back into the room. While she grabbed a change of clothes and hopped into the bathroom, he called downstairs to ask for them to send up the picnic basket he had reserved on Monday. He then went into the bedroom, changed as well, and took the pair of rolled up socks from the bottom of his suitcase.

The hotel staff luckily delivered the basket before Emma was done changing, and he took the velvet box out of the socks, wrapped it in a napkin, and maneuvered it to the bottom, under the food. He heard Emma open the main bathroom door and smiled at himself for his perfect timing.

Killian turned towards her and took a deep breath. She was in a long flowing sundress with a light cardigan, sandals, and her hair back in a french braid. “Georgeous,” he said as he picked up the basket and came towards her. His hand instantly moved to the side of her face to caress her cheek as he leaned into her for a soft kiss.

Once he pulled back, Emma smiled at him and looked down at what he was holding. “Not too shabby for last minute.” He nodded and tilted her head. “Though, being on the beach I guess they probably are used to the request.” Especially at this nice of hotel, she thought.

He laughed. “Yeah, I bet.” He grabbed the room key, and gave her his arm which she gladly accepted. They left the room and traveled out onto the beach. No one was swimming, the seventy-three degrees not hot enough to really be in the ocean except for a wet suit. A few people on boards dotted the ocean, and some were playing frisbee and volleyball. But mostly, the beach was quiet.

They found a spot a good distance from everyone and Killian laid out the blanket that the hotel provided and then sat down the basket. Emma sat down and took off her sandals, as Killian did the same, only leaving him in his cargo pants and a black t-shirt. His long-sleeved white shirt and her cardigan were set to the side for later, if it cooled down.

Now that they were to this point, he was getting a bit nervous. He tried to push the feeling away, and went on with the plan. He opened the basket, and took out the red rose and gave it to her, “For the lady.”

Her face lit up as she took it and brought it to her nose to smell. “Thank you.”

He looked into the basket. “Hungry yet?” She shook her head no. “Can I offer you a beverage?”

“Yes, what do they have in there?” she asked lifting her head to take a look.

He wagged his finger at her, “Ahh, ahh ahh.” She laughed and leaned back onto the blanket. Killian pulled out a bottle of white wine, not showing her the label. “Will this work? Otherwise, there are bottles of water.”

“Wine sounds wonderful,” and it did. They were there to relax, after all. He uncorked the bottle and poured each of them a glass of wine. He laid down, and propped his head up on one arm and held
his wine glass in the other. She scooted closer and leaned back against him, her free arm lying along his side.

“Using me as your own personal backrest?” he asked with a grin.

She nodded, and shifted against him, making him groan a bit at the friction to a specific area. She winked back him, letting him know she did it on purpose. “You are very comfy.” She took a drink of wine and then looked at him, shocked. “This is my favorite. How did they know?” He shrugged his shoulders, but couldn’t help but notice the smile it put on her face.

They stayed like that as they finished their glass of wine while they made small talk and looked out over the water. She then sat their glasses aside, and they both laid out on the blanket, soaking in the sun and the warmth of each other.

Her face nuzzled into his neck, as his hand played with her hair. “This feels so nice,” she said and crept closer, tangling her leg with his.

His other arm came over and hugged her closer. “I could stay like this with you forever.” She hummed in agreement, and then her stomach let out a small growl, making him chuckle against her. “Hungry?”

She snuggled closer. “Yes, but I don’t want to move.”

Killian squeezed her tight. “We can always go back to this after I feed you.”

Emma placed another soft kiss on his neck and then sighed. “Okay, fine. Feed me.”

He snickered and they both sat back up. He laid out the food inside the basket—the same food they had back on the beach in Daytona, where they told each other they loved each other for the first time. He watched her out of the corner of his eye, and saw her eyes grow in realization. Then her eyes squinted at him. “This is not something the hotel just put together.”

He looked down, bit his lip and then looked up at her knowing he had to admit the truth. “You got me there, Emma. I set it up when I reserved the room. I remembered how much you enjoyed the last picnic. How much, we both enjoyed it, and…”

She leaned forward and captured his mouth in a kiss, her fingers lingered on the side of his face when she pulled back. “It’s perfect.” She looked at the food. “And looks delicious, and now I’m starving.”

He gave her a plate and had her take what she wanted first. He removed his phone from his pocket, and propped it up on the basket while it played soft music. She grinned at the melody as she took some crackers, meat, and cheese. When she started to eat, he piled up his own plate, and then offered her a grape. She opened her mouth with a sultry look, and he bit his lip again. “Swan…” He warned. She took the offered grape with her lips touching his fingers. “You tease,” he responded, his eyes slightly dilated from the gesture.

She giggled and then turned back to eating. He poured them some more wine to drink while they ate. They continued to feed each other the grapes and some of the other finger foods as they listened to the music while giving each other heated glances. He had to keep shaking the thoughts away; she couldn’t steer him from the course he had laid out, no matter how tempting she was being.

When she waved off any more food and finished her wine, he started putting everything back in the basket, while discreetly taking out the folded napkin and sat it down on the other side of basket so she couldn’t see. He left the music going, and somehow the timing of when they finished eating was
perfect. It seemed the universe was finally working with him instead of against. The sun was going down, turning the sky a light pink. While they were facing east, they couldn't enjoy a true sunset, but the water with the pink to blue skies was quite beautiful.

“Do you need your sweater?” he asked, as the temperature had dropped a little.

“No, I’m good for now.” she replied, and he settled next to her.

Her eyes focused on the water while he couldn’t stop looking at her, as he ingrained this moment into his memory. “Emma…” he started, and stopped as the moment overwhelmed him. She turned to look at him, with a tilt of her head and a scrunch of her eyebrows in question. He had practiced this in his head numerous times, and now that it was time, the words were harder. His hand reached out and caressed the side of her face. “You’ll never realize how much you mean to me. How much better my life is...just because you are in it.”

She was speechless from his confession, and smiled at him. “Killian…”

He brought her left hand to his lips and kissed the back of it. “You make me so happy. Just by being your normal, incredible, brilliant, loving, amazing self.” She could see all his feelings in his eyes, the truth to his words, and her free hand went to the side of his face, herself in awe over how much he cared about her. “This has been the best year of my life, and all because I met you.”

Now he could see tears in her eyes, and he knew he had some of his own, as he pushed on. His free hand reached behind him to grab the box. He swallowed. “Emma Swan, I love you with every bloody fiber of my being from now until eternity.” He shifted to one knee in front of her and she sucked in a deep breath, her mouth opening in shock as a tear ran down her cheek. “Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife? Will you marry me?”

She sucked in another quavering breath, as her heart thudded in her chest, the moment too unbelievable but also completely real. She could barely breathe, let alone speak, but the look on his face as he waited had her push through the shock and she finally gasped out, “Yes.” More tears tracked down her face, as one did on his as a smile overtook him. Then the damn burst and she said it again. “Yes. Absolutely, yes.” She lunged herself at him and they gripped each other tightly as their lips found each other. Her hands wrapped around his neck as his wrapped around her, pulling her close.

He leaned back to look at her, his free hand came up to her face so his thumb could brush back her tears. “I love you.”

Her own smile somehow got even larger. “I love you, Killian.” They leaned in and kissed again.

When he pulled back this time, he brought up her left hand and took the ring out of box and slid it up her finger. That’s when Emma finally took a look at it, and gasped at how beautiful it was. Her mind was in shock at numerous things. For one, it fit perfectly, and second, it matched the earrings he had bought her. The beautiful princess-cut diamond was matched with a couple marquis-cut diamonds that then trailed to more small princess-cut diamonds down a slightly curved band to look like a rose. “How? When?”

He already knew what questions she had, and he answered with a smile on his face which he was sure wasn’t going to be removed for a long time. She had said yes! He was probably the happiest man on the planet at the moment. “David and Mary Margaret helped me with the ring size.”

She was in awe. “Leo’s birth! Wait...they knew? That was over two months ago.” She sat their shocked, then her voice came out soft. “You’ve been planning this that long.”
It was a statement, not a question, and he slowly nodded yes. His hand came back to caress her face. “I’ve known for a long time that I wanted you as a permanent fixture in the rest of my life.” His other hand took her left hand again so his thumb could run along the ring. The sight of it on her finger just felt so right. “It was bloody difficult to choose a design. I had it down between this and another one.” He swallowed, “I can show you the other design, if you would rather…”

She shook her head quickly. “Killian, it’s gorgeous. I would never want to replace it.”

He scratched behind his ear. “I went to Elsa and my brother for help trying to decide.”

She laughed. “How many people knew about this before me?”

Killian sighed, worried she might not like the answer. “Dave, Mary Margaret, Liam, Elsa, myself, and the ring maker. That’s it, I swear, love.” She shook her head in disbelief of it all but nodded with a smile. “It was Elsa that helped me make the decision. She told me to pick which one represented you, the one that I loved.” Her heart was bursting as she waited for him to continue. “They both were. One was strong, powerful, gorgeous. The other was beautiful, sweet, and delicate. Emma, you are both; I love both equally. But with me, you let those strong, powerful walls down, and let me see the delicate, beautiful person underneath. You let me see the side that no one else does.”

She was crying again, her emotions overflowing. “God, I love you.” She said and kissed him hard again. He kissed her back just as fiercely until she shuddered from the cool breeze against him, and he brook apart to look at her and then around them. It was almost fully dark, and the wind had picked back up. “I think it’s time to retire to our room. What do you think, my future wife?”

Her smile grew even bigger at his words, and she laughed. “I think that’s a great idea. Besides, I think we need to celebrate away from prying eyes, my future husband.” He quickly packed up and then pulled her too her feet so they could head back inside to their hotel room.

Once inside, they took turns slowly removing each other’s clothes. They kissed between each removed article and then finally stood together at the foot of the bed completely naked. His hand moved from the side of her face, down her neck, over the side of her breast, and settled on her hip. “So beautiful.”

Emma smiled back at him as her hand moved up to cup him behind his head and brought his mouth back down to hers. Her nipples brushed against his chest as his other arm pulled her closer to him so he could deepen the kiss. His hardening length pressed between their bodies and he groaned into her mouth. He leaned over and scooped her up into his arms; she let out a little squeal that had him smile as they broke the kiss. He placed her in the middle of bed, and then hovered over her.

He kissed her once more, and then stared into her eyes. She smiled back up at him, and her arms came up to his neck as her leg started to wrap around him. He shook his head, “No. I want to worship my fiancee,” he told her, then leaned down to kiss her cheek and chin. His lips traveled down her neck and over her collarbone. “There is no rush, my love. We have all night.” He kissed down her sternum, and then looked back up at her. “I plan on taking my time.”

Her fingertips ran through his hair. “Promise I’ll be able to do the same to you.”

He arched his eyebrow at her, darted his mouth over to a taut peak, and sucked the nipple into his mouth, teeth lightly bit the flesh and then he released it. “As much as you wish.” His head then went back to her breast as his tongue moved out to flick at the hardened nipple while his hand came up to caress the other breast.

“Good,” she said and with a push of her hips he found himself on his back with her now hovering
over him. “Then I want to start.” She leaned in and kissed him deeply, her tongue darting into his mouth to taste and stroke against his. He groaned at the sensation of that along with her breasts teasing the skin of his chest, her hips dragging over the now swollen head of his erection.

She broke the kiss and let her lips follow over his strong jaw, and then over his neck. Her tongue flicking over the known freckles there and then down his throat and Adam's apple. His hands ran along her sides, and she took his wrists into her hands and pressed them down to the bed. She looked up at him. “Stay.” She wanted to take her time and not have his hands distract her, or stir her up any more than she was already by doing this. The tension in his wrists lessened and she took that as her answer, and she released him, so her hands could move back to his chest.

Her nose nuzzled though his chest hair as her fingers raked through it. She loved this and so did he from the moan he gave. Her tongue licked around one nipple and then the other, making them pucker, so she could then flick her tongue against the peaks, alternating each time. She could see his fists clench on the bed as he fought the urge to move from the sensation. Her hands came into play and tweaked his nipples as her mouth took to the trail of dark hair that led south.

She left kisses, went left and right a bit to nibble at his abs, or used her tongue to lick around the indent of the muscles. When her tongue darted into his belly button, his hips bucked off the bed, and his stomach muscles tightened and she smiled into his skin. “Emmmaaa…” he groaned as he used most of his willpower not to touch her.

She looked up at him to see his blue eyes dark and stormy, the want in them blatant. “You’ve been so good; I think you deserve a reward,” she said and scooted down his legs so that his hard length bobbed in front of her. She licked her lips with his eyes trained on her, his breathing becoming more rapid. She made a show of licking the palms of both of her hands and clasped his length with them, one over the other. He groaned loud and his hips thrust up into her hands. She lightly squeezed him with both hands, and then her tongue came out to lick the the head and taste the small pearl of precum leaking from the tip.

“Fuck…” he groaned, and his hands fist ed into the sheets as her mouth took in the head, sucking hard, then stopping to swirl her tongue around it, only to suck hard once again, not keeping one type of sensation going too long. She then removed one hand, and started to take more of him into her mouth as the hand on him worked in tandem.

His hips couldn’t stay idle and pressed into her hand and mouth, on every swipe over him. Each time she took him deeper and deeper, a groan of curses falling from him as she took him down her throat and swallowed around him. She continued to do the same as her other hand roamed over him—over his abs, thighs, and hips to touch and stroke him. “Emma…so close...you need to stop,” he tried to warn her.

But as he had said, they had all night. She wasn’t going to stop. On the next press down onto him, she took him deep and her other hand came under to lightly fondle his balls, tease the seam. Her throat closed around him as she took him in, and he moaned out her name as his body tensed and he erupted down her throat. She swallowed hard, taking down every last drop, and he shuddered under her. She slowly backed off, and kissed his tip, and then kissed her way up his body, allowing him to slowly come down from his high. She curled up to his side and rested her head on his shoulder.

A few moments later, his arms came up and held her close as he took a deep breath. He kissed her forehead, and then tilted her chin up to look at him so he could claim her mouth. The taste of himself on her lips just turned him on and spurred him into action. “Up, love.” She gave him a questioning look. “Onto your knees.” She did what he said, and then he picked up one of her legs as his other arm came around her waist and pulled her exactly how he wanted her, with her core hovering over
his mouth. “Mmm, perfect. You may want to grab the headboard, love,” he warned, before his mouth dove in.

He sucked her folds into her mouth as his tongue probed. Her head fell back and her long hair tickled his chest as her hips pressed back at his mouth. Her one hand held onto the headboard while the other gripped onto his hair. His hands caressed the globes of her ass as he pulled her down closer to his mouth. He moved his arms apart under her, making her legs spread wider for him and opening her folds for his mouth and tongue.

His lips latched onto her clit and sucked it in; he smiled against her wet flesh at the sounds she made, and then groaned as her hand tightened in his hair. He could already feel his body readying itself once again for her, his blood flowing south. His mouth then moved lower, and he snaked his tongue as deep as it would go into her, tasting and moaning against her. He didn’t think he would ever get enough of her. One of his hands left her ass and moved under her, the thumb rubbing over her clit as his tongue continued to plunge inside of her.

Her hips continue to rock against him, her back arching as the pleasure coiled tighter and tighter inside of her, her core muscles starting to tense and flutter around his tongue. “Killian...please...” She wasn’t exactly sure what she was asking for; she was so close, and she wanted more.

Part of him wanted to keep her on the edge, but he needed to see her fall before his body took her, and it was now very much ready to do so. His hips pressed up in the air, as hers pressed down into his mouth. His fingers and mouth traded places, and as his tongue flicked against her clit his two fingers plunged inside of her. On the second press inside, he added a third, and she whimpered as her body moved with his thrusting fingers, chasing her release, as his mouth doubled the effort against her nerve endings.

Her hand left the headboard and came to join the other one in his hair as she rode his face and fingers right over the edge. Her back arched and she screamed her pleasure as her body tightened around his thrusting digits. He pressed them deep as his mouth slowed and became more gentle, but didn’t stop so he could prolong her pleasure.

She slumped, and leaned her head against the wall, but in a quick rush of motion she found herself on her back, and his glistening face hovered over her. She giggled at the sight of him, and he wiggled his eyebrows, just making her giggle even harder. He reached for the edge for the sheet and wiped his face. He then leaned down and pressed his hard length against her, and she moaned and wrapped her legs around him. He braced his arms under hers, cupped her shoulders from underneath, and then leaned down and captured her mouth with his once again.

She pressed up against him and smiled at the look of rapture that ran over his face. “Killian...”

He placed a kiss to her lips, her cheek, and her forehead, and she reveled in the feel of her body pressed against his. “Yes, my love?”

Her fingers played with the hair at the nape of his neck. “Make love to me.”

He gave her another soft kiss and whispered against her lips, “As you wish.” He then pressed forward into her slowly as they gripped each other tight. Once fully seated, he gave her another kiss and then started to move his hips in a slow rhythm. They both knew making love didn’t have to be slow. Every time their bodies came together, they were making love. But this time felt a bit more monumental, their bodies just acting out the joining of their souls and hearts. Their emotions played an even bigger role in their pleasure than usual, as the bliss of each movement together had them grip each other tighter.
Her legs gripped him harder as she tried to bring him as close as possible. His hands held her shoulders tight as their hips moved in a well-practiced slow dance. Blue eyes locked on green, love shining for each other in both, as their pleasure climbed higher and higher. Each press inside was punctuated by a gasp or moan; each retreat was met with a whimper or whine at the loss. Both of them got closer and closer to their release, their bodies shaking against one another, but neither asked to speed up—neither wanted to rush any of it.

The shaking of her breath told him just how close she was. “Emma…” he started, wanting to know what she wanted.

She shook her head. “Just like this,” she told him and fused her mouth with his. With the next press inside her, he felt her tighten around him, and he groaned against her lips. Her legs tightened and her body tensed, holding him closer as she gasped out his name. He pressed his hips forward once more and stilled, letting her body carry him over the edge with her. The pleasure rippled through them both in a long wave of a gentle storm. They clung to each other like a lifeline through the last shudder and pulse of bliss. Their lips found each other’s again in soft and slow kisses. His hand only broke away from her shoulder to cup the side of her face, and he pulled back to look at her as his thumb wiped away the lone tear.

She grinned back at him with her hands back in his hair, which was now in complete disarray. “God, I love you.”

His eyes danced back at her in happiness. “The feeling is quite mutual, my love.” He leaned in and kissed her nose. He rolled onto his back and brought her with him to his side. His fingers combed through her hair as his other hand held her left, and brought it up to look at the ring. “It looks so perfect on your finger.” She smiled into his chest as he kissed the ring. “Then again, you are perfect, so I shouldn’t be surprised.”

She shook her head. “I am not.”

“You are to me,” he said simply and pulled her closer.

She left a kiss on his chest. “Well, you’re perfect to me, too. And I’m honestly still in shock.”

“Did you really think I wasn’t going to ask?” he wondered, genuinely curious.

“No. I just didn’t think it would be anytime soon,” she admitted.

“Emma…if it was too soon, or you—”

She rolled on top of him, sat up, and placed her finger over his lips. “It’s not. I’m happy. Should I show you again just how happy I am?”

His worried expression instantly turned into a grin as he raised an eyebrow at her. “Well…I may need a lot of convincing of that, love.”

She giggled, and leaned down to capture his lips once again. Neither of them got to sleep until early morning. Thank goodness he had already planned a late checkout time.

====∞∞∞∞∞====

Killian and Emma arrived at the track before any of the other drivers, even though they had taken their time with a late lunch and some sight seeing. Once they got in, they retreated to their RV, and upon their agreement, Killian brought out the grill. Emma set up the folding table and chairs and then got the food together for a small, impromptu party. They had both sent texts to their friends to tell them about the BBQ, though neither of them had said why. The why was going to be a surprise.
While the food was cooking, they went back inside and Killian pulled out his phone and sent the Skype request. He gave Emma a smile next to him as they sat on the couch, and she kept herself out of the video. “Little brother!” Emma tried to keep in her laughter at Killian’s groan from his brother’s nickname.

“Liam…” His voice held a warning, but he was too damn happy to keep the smile off his face. “Is Elsa around? I’d like to talk to both of you.”

“Needing some more advice?” Liam asked with a smirk but didn’t wait for an answer as he called over his shoulder into the house. “Elsa, it’s Killian.”

She came onto the screen a few moments later, with a smile on her face. “Please tell me you have good news.”

He tilted his head back and forth. “I guess it depends on what you think is good news.”

“Killian…” The warning tone in Elsa’s voice was quite adorable.

He reached over and pulled Emma into the picture and she held up her left hand with the ring. Elsa shrieked “Finally!” while Liam cheered. Emma and Killian smiled at their reactions, and leaned in for a kiss while the pair expressed their excitement. “When? How? I want all the details!”

They both answered his sister-in-law’s questions. Killian had to leave for a moment to attend to the food, and Elsa continued. “Any idea when?”

Emma shook her head. “I’m still in the stage of just being happy we’re engaged. We haven’t thought of anything further.”

“Leave them alone, Elsa,” Liam told his wife.

“I’m just asking!” Elsa swatted her husband on the shoulder. “Well, if you need anything, just let me know. I know I’m over the pond, but I’ll do whatever I can.” Emma smiled at the other woman as Killian came back and sat next to her again. They talked a little while longer and then said their goodbyes.

Killian went to check the food once more, and when he came back in he told her, “We have time for another phone call if you want, love.”

Emma checked the clock, and it was the time that her brother should be home from work. She took a breath and then nodded her head. She wasn’t sure why she was nervous. Her family already knew he was going to propose. Hell, they had helped him! She shook the butterflies away and took out her own phone as he sat down next to her. She called Mary Margaret, who answered on the second ring. “Emma, is everything alright?”

“Yeah, everything’s...great. Is this a good time? Is David there?” She asked hoping her voice didn’t sound too weird.

“Yesss…” Mary Margaret answered in a somewhat funny voice. “This is a perfect time, and David is right here. Do you just want him, or both of us?”

Dammit! Emma thought, she already knew. She could just tell, but it didn’t matter. “Both of you, would be great.”

There was some rustling and then David spoke. “We’re both here. I’m assuming Killian is there too, huh?”
Killian laughed and Emma just shook her head. “Yes, mate. I’m here as well.”

“My nerves can’t take this, just tell us!” Mary Margaret screamed.

“We’re engaged!” Emma said, even though it wasn’t necessary.

The couple cheered over the phone, and Emma hid her face in Killian’s chest while he just laughed, holding her close. “About time. I was hoping to have this phone call a week ago,” David said, an obvious smile in his voice. “I’m happy for both of you.”

Emma gave Killian a look in reference to the week ago comment. He just mouthed to her, ‘later,’ and she let it go. Emma turned back to the conversation. “Mary Margaret, how did you not tell me?” Her sister-in-law was horrible with secrets.

David chuckled and they could both hear a swat over the line. “It was very difficult. Every time I talked to you or saw you, I had to try so hard not to ask you. God, I’m so relieved that’s over! Emma, when you are home, you are going to have to come over and tell me all about it. But, it’s time for Leo’s bottle.”

“No worries; we have some plans as well,” she told her. “I just wanted to let you know...about something you guys already knew about, I guess.” She rolled her eyes at herself this time.

Killian pulled her closer to him, and kissed her forehead. “Thanks again to both of your for the help. The ring fits perfectly.” They quickly said their goodbyes and then Emma turned to Killian with that questioning look once more. He scratched behind his ear. “Remember when we were going to take the boat into dry dock?”

She nodded, and then he mouth opened as the realization hit her. “You were going to propose then.” Then his actions, words, and everything made sense. “You weren’t just angry at Jefferson for crashing you...the plans you had...” She closed her eyes, the memory of just how upset he had been made more sense. She then opened her eyes and focused back on him, leaned in and kissed him. Her hand caressed the side of his face. “Killian, how it happened was perfect. But I can tell you this: if you asked me on the boat, I would have said yes, just like I did on the beach. I would have said yes if you asked me in the kitchen back home. I would have said yes if you asked me in the RV. Just the fact that you want to marry me...” her thumb ran over his cheek, “makes me unbelievably happy.”

“I wanted it to be special for you, for us. But I have to say, it was torture waiting even longer to ask.”

She gave him a light kiss. “Was the ring burning a hole in your pocket?”

He grinned. “You have no idea.”

She hugged him tight, and with a sigh, they got up and finished getting ready for the party. It wouldn’t be long before their friends were to show up. Now she just had to keep her hand hidden until they were all there, so Emma used her long-sleeve shirt to not only keep the nighttime chill away but also to cover her hands.

It wasn’t until their friends were there, food piled on their plates and all sitting down, that Killian lightly bumped into Emma’s shoulder next to him. She turned to look at him, and he raised his eyebrow. She smiled back, knowing exactly what he wanted.

She looked down at her plate, then across the table. A plan forming, she turned back to Killian and winked. “Hey, Rubes, can you pass the ketchup?”
Ruby picked up the bottle and handed it over the table to Emma, Emma pushed back her sleeves and reached out for the bottle with her left hand. It did exactly what she knew it would. Ruby screamed, and everyone jumped. “OH MY GOD!” The bottle was forgotten as Emma sat it down on the table, and Ruby rushed over to hug Emma and Killian.

The others just looked around, and Victor asked confused. “Ruby, what’s wrong?”

Ruby continued to hug her two friends tight. “I’m so happy for you two.” Then from the questioning looks, Ruby lifted Emma’s hand up for everyone else to see. The girls caught on first and all yelled. They abandoned their plates and made it to the couple, Ariel a bit slower than Ashley since it took her longer to get out of the chair.

Killian slowly pushed himself out of the girls’ group hug, and the guys cheered. “Way to go!” Eric said, reaching out to shake his hand.

“About time,” Sean told him with a wink, and Killian just shook his head with a chuckle.

Victor gave him an evil eye. “Just had to put me on the spot like this, huh?”

“You did that on your own,” Killian replied.

Victor stood and shook his head with a sigh, but admitted, “I’m happy for ya, man.” He pulled Killian in for a manly hug with a hard pat on the back.

“Ahhh, let me breathe!” Emma begged her friends. “If you all sit down I can answer your questions,” she told them so they would stop asking all at one time. Once everyone settled, both her and Killian told them how the proposal happened while they ate dinner.

It was later, after dinner and drinks were flowing (except for poor Ariel, but she took it pretty well), when Ruby looked at the two of them and shook her head. “You two were supposed to wait till Ariel’s baby was here!” Everyone lost it at that comment and started laughing. Ruby huffed, but the laughter was contagious and she started laughing as well.

The next morning, Killian headed off to the garage to see his team early. When they heard the news, they all congratulated him. Robin clapped him on the back, and even Regina gave him a happy smile and hug. Then he was in the car, ready for practice and to see how the setup of his car handled.

Emma started up her computer and took out her phone. She sent a text over to Tink.

ES: Killian proposed...I said yes. :)

It didn’t even take her friend a minute to respond, in rapid succession.

TG: !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
TG: Warn a girl!!!!
TG: OMG
TG: YESSSSSSSSS
TG: When? How? Where?

Emma laughed at her friend’s reaction.

ES: Let’s have lunch to talk. Wednesday?

She didn’t know how her Monday or Tuesday was looking, but they could meet on their lunch break on Wednesday.
TG: Sounds good. Sooooo HAPPY for you!
TG: Can I tell the others?
TG: Archie and Granny will freak!

Emma couldn’t help how happy her friends reaction was making her.

ES: Yeah you can tell them. I’ll stop by on Wednesday to say hi and pick you up for lunch.

TG: They will love that! See you then...Mrs. Jones ;)

Emma smiled at the title; she was still in a bit of shock by it. She looked down at the ring again, her heart almost ready to burst once more from the happiness. She pushed the emotions away as she tried to focus on work. She opened her work email to see what was going on, but once she got online, she received an instant message from Belle asking if Emma had a moment to chat. Emma didn’t even answer the message and gave Belle a call.

“Morning, Emma. I guess that answers my question,” Belle answered.

“Yep, just checking my emails. What’s up?” Emma asked.

“Just wanted to see if you had fun on your impromptu trip.”

Emma squinted her eyes, even though the other woman couldn’t see them. “What do you know?”

“Nothing. I was just...being friendly,” Belle said quickly. Too quickly.

Emma sighed and shook her head. “You can tell everyone that Killian asked me to marry him, and I said yes.”

“I knew it!” With that, there was a shuffle over the line, and she could hear Belle clearly say, “Pay up.”

Emma giggled at the implication. “Was there a bet going on about this?”

“Umm…” Belle started, unsure of what to say.

But Will finished. “Sorry boss. It’s my fault. Belle told me last night...err…”

“You know what, I don’t even want to know.”

With that, they ended the call and she shook her head with a smile as she again tried to read her work emails.

August got the pole in qualifying, but Killian would be starting right next to him in second. Victor and Sean were back a few cars, but not far, meaning that it was still any of the final four’s chance to
win the championship. After the national anthem and the planes flew overhead, Emma gave Killian
the last kiss for good luck of the season, told him to be safe, and they exchanged I love yous before
he got into his car and she went back to the pit box with Robin and Regina.

After Emma put on her headset, she took a deep breath to try to calm her nerves while her fingers
twisted her engagement ring on her finger. She didn’t know how the others were able to function—
the nerves and stress of the situation was driving her crazy. It didn’t matter to Emma if Killian won
the championship or not—only that he was safe. But it did matter to her that Killian was happy, and
winning would make him very happy.

He had told her last night that as long as he had her, he was happy. She was all he needed. And
while Emma knew he was telling the truth, she also knew how much it would mean to him and his
crew to win this. As the cars pulled out of the pit lane and started onto the track following the pace
car, she took more deep breaths, and once again prayed to whoever was listening to keep her future
husband safe.

She was beginning to wonder if anyone had heard her request when not even twenty laps in, a driver
almost ran the 71 into the wall, but from Killian’s quick reaction, he missed it, and the other car hit
the wall, bringing out the first caution. All the cars came in for their first pit stop, and his crew got
him out of the pits in almost record time, allowing Killian to take the lead in front of August. Sean
and Victor’s teams also helped their teammates get into the top five.

It was a battle between the final four from there on out on the one-and-a-half-mile track. They kept
trading the lead, and it had nothing to do with the friends having fun with each other—it had all to do
with each of them doing their damned best to win. Killian was about to take the lead back from Sean
once again when a car towards the back switched lanes, cutting off another driver and thus causing
them to hit the wall at lap sixty-seven.

Another great pit stop put Kilian back to first, with Sean in second followed by August and then
Victor. The restart was bumpy, with the drivers scraping and rubbing against one another as they
vied for position. Killian was barely able to keep the lead in front of Sean. But when August tried to
come up the middle, it slowed Sean down enough that Killian broke free. Sean wobbled from the
change of air flow, and to steady the car, had to drop back to fifth.

Killian had a half-second lead, but August was gaining on him and Victor was right on his heels,
while Sean worked his way back up to fourth and was leading the rest of the pack to the front when
another caution was called at lap 103 for debris. Emma wondered if it was from one of the prior cars
that hit the wall or the continued hard racing and trading of paint going on. It didn’t much matter as
Killian led the cars into the pits.

He was back out first, with August next to him and Victor and Sean right behind them when the race
went green again. This time, August was able to take the lead, and even though he fought it as hard
as he could, Killian had to give it up and fall back in second to come up with another strategy. He
and Robin talked over the radio and Killian told him the car was a little tight. Robin told him to hang
in there and on the next pitstop, they would make an adjustment. Emma still didn’t get all the
particulars of what tightened or loosened the car, but she trusted the team.

A blown tire ran a middle-of-the-pack car into another and both into a wall at lap 124, allowing
Killian to come in for the pit stop and the much-needed adjustment to his car. The adjustment took
the crew just a fraction of time longer to complete, and Killian lost one spot and restarted next to
Eric, who was now up in fourth. While Eric wasn’t in the Chase any longer, he still of course wanted
a win.

The battle between August and Victor allowed Killian to drop to the inside and run under the both of
them to take the lead. Emma smiled to herself at the maneuver and then at the two drivers who had to try to catch back up to the new leader. But the advantage only stayed for a few laps when another caution came out. This time, on the restart, Victor took the lead, as Sean and Killian fought each other for second, while August and Eric battled for fourth.

Emma’s stomach was in knots and the race was only just half over when another middle-of-the-pack wreck brought out a caution. This time, August got the lead on green with Killian on his tail, as Eric and Sean battled for third place. Killian was able to catch up in the corners but August was able to gain in the straightaways. There was more car talk between Robin and Killian as they discussed the needed adjustments for the next pitstop. Once in agreement, Robin gave direction to his team to be ready to make the changes on the next stop.

Of course, when Killian needed a caution for a pitstop, there wouldn’t be one. This time, the cars needed to make their stops under green. Once the cars started to come in, he pitted and allowed the others to go around him. The sooner she got the car the way he wanted, the better he would perform. The crew again had to take a little longer to make the adjustment while they also added fuel and changed tires, but he was quickly out of the pits.

Emma really didn’t like green flag pit stops. It made it difficult for her to determine where all the drivers would shake out after they finally came in for their own. About three laps after Killian came in, August finally made his own way into the pits. The rest of the cars that hadn’t yet pitted followed him in, and to Emma’s relief, it looked like Killian would be in the lead. At least, he was as he came around the last corner, But August and Sean were coming out of the pits as well. The cars met up at almost the same time, but due to Killian’s extra speed on the straightaway, he was able to hold the lead through turn one.

“Thanks, guys!” Killian called over the line. The adjustments were exactly what he needed, and the car now was running how he liked it. Emma let out a big breath of air, as he was able to stay in the lead for quite a few more laps. With 58 laps to go, a tire rub around twelfth place had two cars brush together and another one run into the wall. The car door ripped open against the wall and the internal foam sprayed across the track, bringing out another caution.

Victor and Killian battled for the lead on the restart, and Victor was able to take it until the first corner, when Killian’s superior-tuned car was able to keep his speed better through the corner and came out of it back in first. Victor then had to deal with to keep second. The race kept going back and forth, the cautions driving Emma crazy—especially when they came out when Killian was in the lead as the laps ran down. The last one came out with five laps to go, and she knew exactly what that would mean: by the time the caution laps were over, they would be left with only three laps to go.

Killian came into the pits first, and like most drivers, he took right side tires and gas. The only thing they didn’t take into account was August and Eric only taking gas. They were playing to get a better position, while Killian went the safer route and would now start in third, with Victor next to him and Sean behind.

This was it: the last three laps would determine the winner of the season. Emma was on the edge of her seat at the restart. August took off like a bolt and got out in front of everyone. Eric tried to catch up but his worn tires weren’t able to hold, so Killian was able to make his way around him into second. Victor and Sean were pressing forward and trying desperately to get around Eric.

As they came around the track with one lap down and two to go, August was in first and Killian was not even a half second back. Emma looked over to Robin, who was looking at the timing, and then told his driver, “You are gaining on him. Keep it up, he’s losing speed.” When they came back to the
line again, with one lap to go, Killian was up to August’s bumper. Victor had managed to get around Eric, but he was now over a second back. There was no way any of the other cars could reach them. The race, and the championship, was down to Killian and August.

Emma was on her feet, as were all the other fans, as they watched the two dance around the pack. August was now pulling out all the stops, trying to block Killian; he knew that his car was losing speed and his only chance was to keep Killian behind him.

Killian tried to go high through the second corner, but August cut him off. He tried again on the third corner, with the same result. Emma was shaking as she saw them go into the fourth corner, Killian’s car once again moving up, and August went to block him. But Killian pulled down hard and went low. August’s car wasn’t able to quickly adjust to the shift and Killian was able to get past him as they came out of the first turn. His crew were already cheering as he came towards the finish line a good car length in front of August. Emma squeezed the railing, and screamed out her joy as he drove over the finish line in first. August then came in second, with Victor, Eric, and then Sean right behind him.

She turned to the others and got a big hug from Regina and then Robin. They took off their headsets and Robin helped the women out of the pit box, and they and the team ran out to the wall, still cheering. She watched as the other cars slowed down around him, giving him waves and thumbs up in congratulations. Once the other cars were out of the way, he started his burnout.

Tears streamed down her face in happiness as she watched him; her heart was overflowing with happiness. Killian got out of the car and then took the flag—the NASCAR champion flag. He waved it and the fans cheered. He then got back in the car and drove to Victory circle, waving the flag as he went with the fans all standing and cheering in the stands. She followed the team over and watched as Killian drove the 71 into the circle.

She could see him take of his helmet inside, take a few long breaths, and then crawl out. She didn’t care one bit to be covered in the soda that the team sprayed out onto everyone, or the confetti that dropped from above and stuck to her along with the wet soda. All she could see was the radiant smile on Killian’s face.

When he hopped down from the car, there was only one thing he wanted. He reached for Emma the moment he saw her and pulled her in for a huge kiss. His hand came up to the side of her face, as his other arm moved around her holding her tight. Her arms wrapped around his neck, and he kissed her even harder.

His team and the crowd cheered as the reporter laughed at the display. Even when he broke the kiss, he just looked into her eyes, and rested his forehead against hers. “I love you.” He told her.

She smiled back. “I love you, too.”

With another small kiss, he pulled back, but kept her close to him, as he finally turned to the female reporter. “Well, just last week you told my colleague that we would be interviewing you here, and...well...you were right. How does it feel to be the 2016 NASCAR Sprint Cup Champion?”

“It feels bloody fantastic!” he yelled and his crew cheered again. “I couldn’t have done it without an amazing team, a great and understanding manager.” Everyone laughed and Regina just smiled. She was too happy not to, especially with Robin’s arm around her. “Fantastic sponsors, that I was finally able to do this for.” He then turned to Emma, “And a brilliant woman who I just can’t live without.” He leaned in and kissed her cheek.

“Well it looks like you already let her know that,” The redhead report pointed to the ring on
Emma’s finger. “Is that what it looks like? Has NASCAR’s bad boy finally been taken off the market, and won the Championship at the same time?”

Killian smiled while Emma blushed. “What a difference a year makes, though I have to admit I was off the market once I met her.” He pulled her even closer. “And yes, we are getting married.”

“Congratulations on the engagement, congratulations on the win at Homestead, and congratulations at winning the Championship!” The reporter told him, and he thanked her. Then went on to thank his sponsors.

As they got everything ready for all the pictures and media that he would need to wade through, he held Emma close, and brushed the hair from her face along with some of the confetti. “I couldn’t have done it without you.”

She shook her head. “Yes, you could have.”

“No, I don’t think so. You changed me. You changed me for the better. That and I’m happy. I don’t think I understood true happiness before you. This win means so much more because I get to share it with you.” He leaned his forehead against hers once again.

She smiled back at him. “And now we get to share the rest of our lives together.” She then pulled him back in for another kiss, as they forgot the rest of the world around them for another moment.

*ONE AND A HALF YEARS LATER*

Emma sat with the girls while they watched the guys in qualifying at the May Charlotte race. Ariel was feeding her son and Ashley braided Alexandra’s hair while Alexandra was painting Ruby’s toes. Their focus was on watching their men driving while they chatted. Though Emma wasn’t really paying attention to the conversation, as her hands fiddled with her wedding rings.

“Earth to Emma! Mrs. Jones come in!” Ruby yelled at her, and Emma shook her head out of the trance she was in.

“Sorry, what?” Emma finally asked and looked around to see her three friends stare at her.

“We were wondering,” Ashley started, “If you and Killian wanted to head out to dinner later? Around six?”

Emma looked at the clock and realized that would give her a couple of hours after qualifying back at the house with Killian before they would meet up again for dinner. “That sounds good. I’ll have to check with him, but it should be fine.”

“What’s wrong?” Ariel asked, “You’ve been a bit out of it all day.”

“Nothing, nothing at all. Just thinking about stuff.” She answered, and turned back to watch the cars on the screen.

Ruby stared at her and tilted her head, “What kind of...stuff?”

“Do you really want me to talk about work?” She asked them, hoping to drive them off track.

The three groaned, and she smiled to herself at the win. It wasn’t too much later when qualifying was done, and Killian had come to find her, happy about his placement on the pole. The others gave him
a bit of ribbing for it, but they weren’t too upset either as they would be starting in the top five as well. He liked the idea of meeting at the restaurant at six with the others. He then left to quickly shower and change, and she met him at the car so they could drive home.

The closer she got, the more nervous and excited she got. He reached over and took her hand, “Are you okay? You are really quiet.”

“I’m perfectly fine. I’m good, really good,” she told him with a smile.

He raised his eyebrow but didn’t say anything else as he finished the drive home. When they got inside they dropped their stuff off, and headed to the bedroom so they could lay out a change of clothes. He sat down on the edge of bed as he took of his shoes when Emma came over and sat next to him. “So, ummm…” She started and stopped.

He looked over to her. The range of emotions on her face was hard to read, just like it had been in the car. “Emma, what’s going on love. You know you can tell me anything.”

“Oh, okay,” she said and took a breath and then handed him a wrapped present.

“What is this for? Emma, my birthday was a few weeks ago, and you outdid yourself...again.”

She grinned. “Well, you could say that I probably had this for your birthday, I just didn’t know it at the time.” The confusion on his face was priceless, and she just laughed. “Open it.”

He tore into the paper, and then opened the box. As soon as recognized what was inside, his hand started to shake as brought the box up closer to read the result. At seeing the positive, he sat the box down and turned towards her. “You’re...we’re...really?” She nodded yes to his question, her smile grew as did the tears in her eyes.

His eyes watered as well from the happiness and he pulled her into a hug as his lips claimed hers. He couldn’t believe it. He was going to be a father! He pulled back to look at her, as his hand moved to rest against her stomach. “We haven’t been trying that long…” It was the truth, they had only started trying for a baby at the start of the year, after his second Championship win. “How far along?”

She laughed, “I don’t know yet. I just took the test this morning. Well, actually three tests. All were positive. I made an appointment with the doctor for Monday.”

He leaned in and kissed her again, as his hand stayed on her currently flat stomach. He couldn’t wait for it grow, her body to become become swollen with their child. He couldn’t contain his smile.

“You are so amazing, my love.”

She rolled her eyes. “We’ll see how you feel when I become all hormonal, and big as a whale.”

“You’ll be beautiful and brilliant, always.” He rebutted and punctuated with another kiss. He then leaned down to her stomach and Emma giggled as she laid back on the bed so Killian could put his mouth to her stomach. He placed a kiss there. “Right little one? You’re momma is the most amazing woman in the world.” He looked up at her. “She agrees.”

“Oh, does she? You can hear her, huh? Are you sure it’s a her? It could be a he,” she said with a roll of her eyes.

He gasped and looked back at her stomach, “Did you hear that, lass—your mother doubts me.”

Emma couldn’t but help to giggle at his antics. He was going to make such an amazing father. He then looked back up at her, a serious but happy face. “Honestly, Emma, I’ll be so happy either way.” He crawled up to her side, and held her close. She hid her face in his neck, as his hands smoothed
out her hair. “Now I’m reluctant to head out to dinner.”

She nodded. “True, but we should go.”

He kissed her forehead, still unable to believe how happy he was—that they were having a child—when he had a thought. “Do the girls already know?”

“No,” she told him. “Only the two of us. But it was a challenge to keep it from them today.”

“Why didn’t you tell me this morning?” he asked.

She pulled back to look him in the eye. “Well, you had already left this morning when I took the test. And when I saw you later, you were getting ready for qualifying. I didn’t want that on your mind while...”

She didn’t even have to finish, he understood, and he brought her in for another kiss. “I’m going to be a father!” He yelled into the room making her giggle with happiness.

They arrived at the restaurant just before six, and Ariel and Eric were already there as they got the group’s table together. Killian was a tad disappointed to not see the little one, but he knew the kids were staying at home with a babysitter since the dinner would probably run late. He had always loved kids, his nephews being his first real exposure to them. He couldn’t wait to tell them they were going to have a little cousin.

When the table was ready, he guided Emma with his hand to the small of her back towards the table. Just as they were sitting, the others showed up, and everyone took a seat. The waitress came up and started taking drink orders. When Emma ordered an iced tea, it wasn’t anything unusual. She had been doing so after the first of the year. She had told the group she had a new year's resolution, but really since they were trying for a baby she had decided not to drink.

It was Killian’s hesitation on what to order that started to get the table’s attention. He hummed as he looked over the menu and then back to Emma. She had told him repeatedly that he could have a drink, that she didn’t mind, and then she would just drive home. But, now, everything just seemed different. “That actually sounds good, I’ll have an iced tea too.”

Everyone looked at each other, and then finished their drink orders with the waitress. Once she left to fill them, they all stared back at Killian. Victor was the first to question it. “Something wrong, old man?”

Killian shook his head, the smile on his face probably saying too much, but he hadn’t been able to turn it off since he found out the news. “Nothing’s wrong at all. Just didn’t feel like drinking tonight.”

It was Ariel’s head tilt and look at the both of them, that told him she had put it together. “You were acting very weird today, Emma, when Killian was acting normal. Now after going home, Kilian is acting...weird.”

Ashley was catching on to what Ariel had, and she nodded. “You are right. He seems...very happy.”

Sean rolled his eyes, “Ashley, you don’t need to bring up what they did at home between the race and here. We all know how...amorous they are with each other.”

“Yeah, just don’t have your RV near theirs when you want to actually sleep,” Victor groaned.

Emma blushed, and Killian’s smirk was on full display. “It only bugs you because you can’t keep up Vic. I’m so sorry, Ruby.” He winked at her and she started laughing.
“Oh no, you are not derailing this conversation.” Ariel started with a wag of her finger, “And that is not what myself or Ashley meant.” Ashley shook her head in agreement as both their faces got bigger. They turned to look at Emma, “Are you?”

That got the smile off both of the couples faces, and they turned to each other in question. They weren’t really ready to answer. But the length of time of answering was confirmation enough for the two women, who cheered and came over and gave the two of them hugs.

“I’m missing something.” Victor said looking at the other two men.

“I think you usually are,” Sean replied and Eric laughed. Victor threw his crinkled up straw wrapper at Sean.

It was that moment when Ruby placed together the information as well, and came over to hug her friends. “Ruby, mind filling us men in?” Victor requested.

Emma and Killian shrugged the girls off and they went back to sit down. “That is for them to say,” Ruby said and took a drink of her water. They all turned back to the couple, and put them on the spot.

Killian took Emma’s hand, and nodded his head. “I just found out this morning. I don’t even know how far along I am. I—”

“We,” Killian corrected her. There was no way he was missing that appointment, or any of them.

She smiled, “We have an appointment on Monday.”

“Appointment?” Victor asked and Ruby just rolled her eyes at her boyfriend.

“We’re having a baby,” Killian supplied, his excitement still evident. That got the cheers from the guys as the girls just laughed.

“Oh, my god. I have so much to do!” Ruby said as she got out her phone, already going into planning mode.

“Oh, boy. Here we go again,” Ariel said, and looked at Emma. “Good luck.”

Emma laughed. “Thanks. I remember the wedding planning.”

Ruby held up a finger, “Hush. That wedding was perfect, and you know it.” Her friend did have a point—it really had been. Ruby then stopped putting information into her phone, groaned, and stared Eric down. “You just had to be right didn’t you? You predicted these two,” she motioned to Killian and Emma, “would be married and have a kid by the time me and Victor…” She shook her head and took a deep breath.

Everyone laughed, even Ruby, except Victor, as his hand went to his pants pocket to play with the small velvet box that rested there. There was still time, after all, before the baby was born; Ruby would just be planning two things at once, once again. He reached for her hand and kissed the back of it. Ruby gave him a smile and leaned her head on his shoulder as she turned back to the couple as their drinks were sat in front of them. She picked up her drink and held it out, as did the others. “To the future parents. Best of luck and health to you and your new family.”

They all clinked glasses and took a drink. After they sat their drinks back on the table, Killian turned to Emma, his thumb lightly caressed her cheek. She smiled back at him, love shining deeply in both their eyes. “You make me unbelievably happy, Mrs. Jones.”
She leaned into the touch, “As do you, Mr. Jones.” He then captured her lips in a soft kiss, as the rest of their future began.

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**NASCAR Three Time Champion Killian Jones a Father**

**Published January 28, 2019 | Associated Press**

Charlotte, N.C. -- NASCAR Champion Killian Jones’s wife, Emma, gave birth to their daughter on Saturday. It is the reigning three-time champion’s first child.

The Mills Racing driver tweeted a photo of himself, wife Emma, and their newborn girl, Leia, at Lake Norman Regional Medical Center in Mooresville, N.C., on Sunday.

Jones said Leia Elizabeth Jones was born on Saturday at 1:05 p.m. with all ten fingers and toes, 8 pounds, 3 ounces and 20 inches long.

Jones and his wife, who runs his Lost Boys and Girls Charity, told reporters earlier in the year that they had been lucky that the due date for their child was during the off season, though neither of them had planned it that way. The new father now has one month with his new daughter before NASCAR starts in full swing once again at Daytona.

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**2016 Point Standings:**

Car - Driver - Chase Points / Non Chase Points System (just FYI)

#71 - Killian Jones - 5047 / 1409 - Champion
#8 - Phillip Haven - 2399 / 1356
#36 - Victor Whale - 5042 / 1403
#53 - Sean Herman - 5040 / 1369
#65 - Eric Sirena - 2406 / 1364
#92 - August Booth - 5044 / 1365
#12 - Tarrant Jefferson - 2284 / 1228

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