The Gateway

by IrishBella

Summary

They are walking down the passageway, Henry between them. He is clinging to both of their hands so tightly Emma and Regina wonder if he will rip them right off.

“There is no need to be frightened, Henry.” Regina whispers as she places her free hand on his cheek.

“You mom is right, Kid,” Emma says as they stop walking, “we’ll be alright, we can do anything.”

A look into what would happen if Regina, Emma, and their family left their lives in Storybrooke behind.

Notes

This is my first post EVER! This story came out of a dream I had a few weeks ago, and as you can see it kind of ran away from me. I already have a lot written for this story, but I want to get a feel for what you guys think of this before I post more.

I do not own any of the characters that may seem familiar. Story line and original characters all come from my imagination.

No beta. All mistakes are mine.
Enjoy :)

Euphoria

Chapter Summary

euphoria:
(elation/dreamland)
(n.) a feeling or state of intense excitement and happiness.

Chapter Notes

Background:
A look into what would happen if Regina, Emma, and their family left their lives in Storybrooke behind.
In this story line, Season 1 happens normally, but when Emma breaks the curse everyone is sent back to the Enchanted Forest. They still fight Cora and Henry is still taken to Neverland. When they come back from Neverland, Regina, Emma, and Henry decide to leave the Enchanted Forest. No need for beans in this story because there is a set of magic tunnels linking all of the worlds. Unfortunately, they have to forget everything and everyone and they’re given false memories (similar to what Regina does for Emma and Henry in 3b).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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They are walking down the passageway, Henry between them. He is clinging to both of their hands so tightly Emma and Regina wonder if he will rip them right off.

“There is no need to be frightened, Henry.” Regina whispers as she places her free hand on his cheek.

“Your mom is right, Kid,” Emma says as they stop walking, “we’ll be alright, we can do anything.”

“You should most certainly be frightened, child,” Blue says stepping up to them - invading the invisible barrier everyone seems to be avoiding today. Emma glares at her, “Fly away Moth,” she hears Regina ground out and she laughs. Henry giggles and tightens his holds on his mothers.

“You are going into the real world, someplace you will not be able to discuss your true heritage, nor where you are truly from. You are being stripped of your memories because of the evil your Mother,” she narrows her eyes when she spits out the word, “has caused and created.”

“Do not speak to them like that,” Emma says stepping in front of Henry and Regina.

Blue rolls her eyes at the protectiveness the Savior is portraying. For the Evil Queen no less, Blue thinks with a sneer.

“I’m here to take your memories,” Blue says with a sickly sweet smile painted on her face.
“You will come nowhere near myself or my family,” Regina says, “you know as well as everyone else that when we cross the line our lives here will be forgotten and we will be given false memories.”

“Just a precaution then, Your Majesty,” Blue scoffs the title, turning it into a belittling insult.

“Blue” Snow chastises. She turns to face her daughter, “are you sure about this?”

“Yeah, Mom. I need to do this,” Emma replies with a small smile as she steps toward her mother.

Snow has tears forming in her eyes, “I wish we didn’t have to do this, Emma. Just know that your father and I love you so much. We always have and we always will.”

“I know, Mom. Hey,” she says, adding a watery smile, “don’t let the Little Ones forget about their big sister, okay?”

“Never, Emma,” Snow says adamantly, “Never again.” Snow turns to her grandson, “I love you, Henry.”

“I love you too, Grams,” he says leaning in for a hug, never letting go of his moms.

He steps back and Snow turns to Regina. Regina is doing her best to look unaffected by all of this, but Emma can see that she’s barely holding it together. Regina will deny it until the day she dies, but Emma knows that Regina loves this place as much as she hates it; and she is going to miss everyone. Especially Mom, Emma thinks with a smirk. If Regina knew what she was thinking right now, Emma’s sure she’d had a fireball aimed at her head. Instead, Emma reaches around Henry and rests her hand on Regina’s lower back, rubbing comforting circles.

“Goodbye, Snow,” Regina says dismissively.

“Goodbye, Regina,” Snow says as she tentatively steps forward and before she can chicken out, she wraps her arms around Regina. Emma moves her hand from Regina’s back before it gets stuck in Snow’s arms. Henry lets go of his mom’s hand and steps toward Emma and they smile at the scene in front of them.

Regina is stunned at Snow’s show of affection. So stunned, that she stands frozen with her hands at her side for a moment before she hesitantly returns the hug.

Snow smiles when she feels Regina’s arms wrap around her and whispers, “Take care of them.”

“Of course,” Regina whispers back.

“And please, take care of yourself too,” Snow adds as she squeezes Regina tighter.

Regina doesn’t respond, just returns the squeeze with one of her own before retracting from the hug.

Emma notices that Regina and her mother were having a conversation, but she could not hear what they were saying, hopefully it’s civil, she thinks to herself.

Regina takes a step back and grabs Henry’s hand again while smiling over his head at Emma. “Ready?” she asks looking at them both.

“Yes,” they say simultaneously. Sometimes, Regina is overwhelmed with the knowledge that even spending years apart, they still are so similar in their looks and mannerisms.
“Everything is ready for you over there,” Archie says stepping forward to look at the three of them. “Bank accounts, fake documents, a home, cars, Henry’s school; we took care and made sure that you would not need to change who you are at your core when you cross the line.”

“Thank you,” they all chorus.

Everyone present says their final goodbyes and they watch the makeshift family cross over the line, none of them looking back.

“Good Morning, darling” Regina says as she walks into the kitchen putting her earrings in and straightening out her skirt and blouse.

“Morning, babe” Emma says while flipping the bacon on the stove, “how’d you sleep?”

Regina stands behind Emma and wraps her arms around her waist and kisses her cheek, "Fine, but I suppose I would have slept better - and without any odd dreams - if you had come to bed last night.”

Emma turns in her arms and runs her own hands up Regina’s arms to wrap around her neck, “I’m sorry, babe, but there was a case that needed to be solved.”

“And is it resolved?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Then you’ll come to bed at a decent time tonight” she says as a statement more than a question.

“Oh, I’m definitely going to make it up to you” Emma says with a wink.

Regina rolls her eyes and leans in for a kiss.

“Ugh it’s too early for this” Henry says as he stumbles into the kitchen.

Emma and Regina pull apart enough to look at their 13-year-old son and then back to each other while smiling.

Emma leans her forehead against Regina’s and whispers, “Getting cockblocked by our own son.”

Regina slaps her chest and says, “Language, darling.”

Emma shrugs, “Could’ve been worse, I could have said vagected, beaver impeder, or taco blocko,” she mutters as turned back to the bacon.

Regina gasps and slaps at her wife’s backside before turning to her son with a smile. “Good morning dear, did you sleep well?” Regina asks as she walks towards the fridge.

“Mhmm” Henry mumbles with his head down on the island.

Regina pulls out the ingredients she’s looking for and starts working on making French toast.

“What are you plans for today, Kid” Emma asks while taking the bacon off of the stove.

“I think Presley’s coming over to finish our project for history and then we were going to go to the
park for a while after school and hang with some other people,” he says while looking out the window.

“Do these ‘other people’ have names?” Regina asks with a raised eyebrow.

Henry rolls his eyes, “Of course they do Mom, but they’re just friends from school.”

Emma chuckles at the stare down happening between her wife and son. She walks behind Regina, kisses her cheek and whispers, “It’ll be fine, babe.”

“Very well” she says while putting the French toast on a plate. “I expect you to stop here after school and check in with your mother, though.”

“Fine Mom,” Henry says as he digs into the plate of French toast and bacon placed in front of him.

“How long will your meetings be today?” Emma asks from her spot leaning against the counter near her wife.

“Shouldn’t be too late since I’m going in early, but I’ll try to be home before dinner,” Regina says while putting her keys into her purse and donning her jacket.

“Well, we’ll be here ready for you.” Emma winks.

“Really darling” Regina says with an eye roll and a small smile.

“You love me,” Emma smirks as she wraps her arms around Regina’s waist.

“That I do” Regina says leaning in for a kiss.

“I love you too,” Emma whispers against her lips, “now go kick some ass today babe,” she says, smacking her wife’s butt for good measure.

Regina’s eyes widen, “Emma!”

Emma snickers while walking back to finish their breakfast.

“I think you’ll find you will regret that action dear,” Regina says with a haughty eyebrow raise.

Emma just smiles and says, “Whatever you say, Your Majesty” with a wink.

Regina rolls her eyes and kisses Henry on the forehead with a reminder, “Don’t miss the bus, dear,” and leaves.

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“Hey babe how was work?” Emma asks as Regina walks through the door.

“Exhausting” she says as she takes off her coat and puts her purse away.

“You’re home early,” Emma says, wrapping her arms around Regina’s waist.

“Yes, I had a few meetings cancelled and decided I could use an early evening with my family.”

“I love you,” Emma says kissing her and pulling her closer.

“I love you too,” Regina says with a smile, kissing her again.
Just then the front door opens and in walk Henry and Presley.

“The Kid has impeccable timing, as usual,” Emma whispers sarcastically, as her forehead rests on her wife’s temple.

Regina just smiles and tries to pull away, but Emma keeps her arms firmly around her waist.

“Ma?” Henry yells.

“In here,” Emma responds while staring at Regina.

“Hey, we’re just dropping our stuff off to head—oh hey Mom,” Henry says when he walks into the kitchen and notices his other mother.

“Hello dear. Presley.” Regina says acknowledging their son’s friend who stands awkwardly at the doorway to the kitchen.

“Mrs. Mills” he says to Regina, and then he looks to Emma, “Mrs. Mills,” Emma gives him a smile.

“How was school today?” Regina asks moving out of Emma’s arms and towards their son.

“Fine. We got an A on our History project today!” Henry says excitedly as he bounces on the balls of his feet.

“Wow, Kid, that’s amazing!” Emma says, walking towards Henry.

“Yeah, Presley here really knows a lot about what we were talking about so it made the assignment a lot easier.”

Regina smiles. “What did you end up discussing?”

“Magic” Henry says matter-of-factly.

“Magic?” Emma asks, “for a history class?”

“Yes,” Presley says stepping into the kitchen, “the history of magic. How it’s been perceived in the past, how it’s shown in this world, and how people with magic have been treated in the past.”

“Really?” Emma says with a raised eyebrow and a look at Regina that screams ‘what the heck?’

Regina gives a small shrug and asks, “What did you find during your research?”

“We found out that magic use is powered by emotion, the strength of the spell depends on the feelings the caster focused into the magic. Negative emotions are generally used to power spells while positive emotions are used to maintain control of spells” Presley quotes.

“Did you know that magic can do almost anything you want?” Henry asks excitedly. “The only thing it can’t do is bring back the dead, force someone to fall in love, or change the past.” Presley adds.

“Wow. I had no idea,” Emma says impressed.

“Mom, did you hear me?” Henry asks.

Emma looks over to her wife and notices her staring off into space. She steps closer and puts her
hand on the small of her back, “Hey.”

Regina jumps slightly and looks at Emma and smiled.

“Where’d you just go?” Emma asks quietly.

“Nowhere. It just seems I’m a little distracted.” She turns back to Henry and Presley (who was giving her a smug smile) “That sounds very interesting Henry, but didn’t you want to go to the park today?”

“Yeah, we just stopped to drop off our stuff,” Henry says dejectedly.

“Of course dear, we’re very proud of you. How about we talk more about it at dinner tonight?” Regina asks with a forced smile.

“Ok! Bye Moms” Henry says pushing Presley out the door.

“Be safe Henry” Emma calls after, “and make sure you’re home in time for dinner.”

“Ok” he replies before the door shuts.

Emma turns to Regina, “Alright, spill. What’s going on in that brain of yours?”

Regina doesn’t say a thing. Instead, she roughly grabs Emma by her cheeks and kisses her.

“Whoa, Babe, easy there” Emma says pulling back a little to look at her wife, “if that’s what you wanted all you had to do was ask. Is that what you were thinking about while our son and his friend were in here?” Emma asks with a smirk.

“You don’t remember,” Regina says quietly as she searches Emma’s eyes for any recognition.

“Remember what?” Emma asks, confused at the turn of events.

Instead of answering, Regina goes to the shelf behind their sink and grabs a bowl decorated with a bunch of symbols, all intricately designed specifically for them, “Do you remember when we got this?”

“Ummm, no? Was it at the farmer’s market we used to go to when Henry was little?”

“No, it was a gift from our wedding,” Regina sighs as she puts the bowl on the counter.

“Oh shit, Babe, I’m sorry. I didn’t realize it was so sentimental. I honestly don’t remember the gifts we got for our wedding. I was too busy pinching myself to make sure it really happened. I wanted to remember just how beautiful you were and how I got so lucky,” Emma says wrapping her arms around Regina’s waist and pulling her close.

Regina gives a small smile, “I’m sure you wouldn’t remember, it was something we had to forget I’m sure.”

“What are you talking about?” Emma asks looking into Regina’s eyes.

“Nothing darling, I think I’m just exhausted from my meetings today,” Regina says with a more convincing smile and leans in to kiss her wife.

“Well if you’re not too tired-“ Emma starts and she pulls her wife flush against her. Regina smiles against her lips, “-we could head up to our bedroom and have some time to ourselves.”
Regina nods and starts to pull away.

“Uh-Uh” Emma tsks as she pulls her wife close again. She starts kissing her again as they stumble towards the stairs.

They are up the stairs and almost to their bedroom (never once breaking away from each others lips) when Emma pushes Regina up against the wall, kissing her neck.

“Emma. Bedroom. Now.” Regina whispers with her hands wound tightly in blonde locks. She wraps her legs around her wife’s waist and pulls her even closer, if that was even possible.

“Momma?”

Regina’s head falls back against the wall as she drops her legs to the floor.

“Can’t catch a break,” Emma whispers as she pulls away from her wife’s neck.

Regina catches her by the lapels of her jacket and pulls her close, their lips brushing against each other as she whispers; “Oh you will definitely be finishing this later.”

Emma smiles, “Wouldn’t have it any other way, babe.”

She opens the door just to her right, “Hey there Big Guy, you know between you and your brother you’re ruining Momma’s game.”

“Game?” he asks excitedly.

Emma rolls her eyes with a smile and picks up the little boy. “We’re not on the same page I see, but that’s okay, you’ll figure it out someday.”

“I hope you’re not teaching him inappropriate things while I’ve been at work,” Regina says from the hallway.

“Mommy!” he jumps out of Emma’s arms and runs out the door.

“Hello, my little prince,” she says scooping him up into her arms.

“Kid’s got more game that I do right now,” Emma says leaning against the doorjamb looking at her son wrapped tightly around her wife.

“Don’t be jealous dear, it doesn’t suit you,” Regina says with a smirk as she rubs her son’s back and walks towards the stairs.

Emma rolls her eyes and starts to follow; thinking back to the day she found out she was pregnant.

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“Emma?” Regina calls as she walks into the house and doesn’t see her wife on the first floor.

“Up here” Emma calls as she sits back on the edge of the tub. Henry was still at school and Regina being home meant she had to tell her, but how? Oh god, she should have waited.

Regina climbs the stairs and walks into their bedroom. There is no sign of her wife in here either. “Emma?” she calls out again, this time with some wariness in her voice.

“In here” Emma whispers from the en suite.
Regina moves into the bathroom and sees Emma sitting on the edge of the tub with her head in her hands. “What’s the matter?” Regina asks, sitting next to her and wrapping Emma in her arms.

“I took the test,” Emma mumbles into her wife’s shirt.

“Emma. You know that the chances of it working the first time are slim. It’s okay, we planned for that, and a false negative is not uncommon either. We will make this work. I love you” Regina says, kissing the top of her head.

Emma shakes her head and points to the counter. “No,” she whispers.

“No?”

Emma points to the counter and that’s when Regina sees the pregnancy test. With two pink lines.

“You’re pregnant?” Regina whispers with disbelief.

“Yup.” Emma buries her head even further into her wife’s chest.

“Emma! That’s amazing! We’re having a baby?!”

Emma pulls back to look at her wife dubiously, “You’re not upset?”

“Why would I be upset? We’ve been trying but I didn’t think the treatments would work so quickly! I wish you had waited so we could have taken the test together, but we’re going to have a baby! And I cannot blame you for your impatience, I just wish you didn’t have to wait alone,” Regina rambled as she smiled looking at the positive pregnancy test.

“We’re having a baby.” Emma says with a smile.

“Yes we are.” Regina kisses her. “Oh! Now we have to tell Henry. How should we do this?”

“We’ll do it like we do everything else. Together.” Emma says leaning into Regina.

“Together. I like the sound of that.” Regina kisses Emma. “I love you.”

“I love you too, babe.”

“I missed you Mommy,” their son mumbles against Regina’s neck as she walks down the stairs. Emma smiles at the memory and follows.

“I missed you too dear, did you have fun with Momma today?”

“Yeah!” he says sitting up excitedly, “we had french toast for bweakfast and sent Henny to school and pwayed with Evy and Waw-tee and we dwawed pictures and we had ‘dillas for lunch and-“

“Easy Kid, take a breath,” Emma says coming to sit next to her wife and son on the couch.

He takes a deep, exaggerated breath as he glares at her.

Emma rolls her eyes and whispers conspiratorially to her wife, “His dramatic flare comes from you babe.”

Regina gives a coy smile and then looks back at her son, “Momma made you quesadillas for
lunch?” she asks with a bigger smile.

“Yes!! And dey was so nummy, but I missed you! You shoulda comed home. Den I pwayed wit cars but den I had to take a nap but now I’s awake and you is home and we can pway till Evy and Waw-tee wakes up!”

“Did you say Evy and Lottie?” Regina asks with a raised eyebrow.

He nods his head enthusiastically.

“I wish you wouldn’t do that,” Regina says shaking her head while looking at Emma.

She shrugs nonchalantly, leaning closer to them and says, “Tommy, remember how Momma said you have to use Evy and Lottie’s real names around Mommy because she’s a party pooper and doesn’t like their nicknames?”

Tommy looks sheepishly at Regina and says, “Sowwy Mommy, I meant Evewyn and Shawotte.”

Regina just shakes her head and looks to her wife, “Really dear? A party pooper?”

Before Emma could answer there was crying from upstairs, “Saved by the babies,” she says, kissing Regina’s cheek and tickling their son.

“Mhm” Regina hums haughtily.

Tommy giggles and pushes his face into Regina’s neck, hugging her tight.

Emma walks up to the nursery to see her infant daughter in her crib, “Wow baby girl, you’ve certainly grown into your lungs haven’t you. Yes, you have. You get that screaming from your Mommy, you know” she says with a smirk. She picks up her daughter and takes her over to the changing table.

She couldn’t believe that 9 months ago they found out that they were having twins.

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“I beg your pardon?” Regina stares at the monitor in disbelief.

“There are two heartbeats,” their doctor repeats.

“So our baby has two hearts?” Emma asks.

The doctor chuckles at Emma’s attempt to lighten the mood while Regina looks towards her, near hysterics.

Emma grabs her hand when the doctor says, “No. You are having two babies, each with their own perfectly healthy heart.” She smiles as she hands Emma a towel to wipe off the ultrasound gel.

“Twins?” Regina repeats looking at the image on the screen.

The doctor smiles gently and says, “I’ll go get your print outs while you process,” as she leaves the room.

Emma wipes off the gel and fixes her shirt as she stands up next to her wife. “Babe?”

Regina looks from the monitor to Emma’s stomach, “Twins?” she whispers.
“Twins,” Emma says with a smile. “Two little jelly beans. Oooooh! They can be my little belly beans, Gina!!”

Regina laughs in spite of herself. She offsets it with an eye roll, but grabs Emma’s hands and pulls her close. “You will not be calling them that.”

“You hear that belly beans?” Emma says looking down at her flat stomach, “your Mommy doesn’t like your new nickname. Guess we’ll have to keep thinking, but until then you’re still the size of beans, so that’s what you’ll be.”

“And what happens when they’re each the size of a watermelon?” Regina asks with a smile.

“A watermelon?!” Emma squeals, “No way, there’s two of them. There’s no room for two watermelons in this body!”

The doctor had walked in on this conversation and couldn’t help but laugh. The wives turned to the doctor and she held up the folder in her hands, “I thought you’d like your babies’ first pictures.”

“Thank you doctor,” Regina says taking the folder.

“I couldn’t help but overhear your conversation, and currently your babies are each about the size of a Brussels sprout.”

“Brussels sprouts?” Emma repeats as she looks down to her belly with a grimace, “Sprouts?” she asks again looking contemplatively down at her stomach, almost as if she’s waiting for the babies to respond. “Hmmm…seems they don’t like it either. Now, belly beans? That’s adorable,” she puts her hands flat on her stomach. “Yup, we all definitely want jelly beans now.”

Regina laughed at her wife’s antics and thanked the doctor. “We have some people anxiously awaiting our news, darling,” she says dragging her wife out of the room.

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Emma laughs at the memory and looks down at her daughter. The little girl stares up at her in wonder.

“And now your Mommy is onto us and our little nickname charade so we’ll have to try extra hard to convince her that it’s awesome and you love it. Because-kid, you know I love you, right? Good, because Evelyn is too much name for such a little girl. Evy is much cuter, Sweet Pea.”

Evy gives her a big smile as she is redressed and placed in the swing next to the changing table.

Emma turns and grabs the other baby who has started to cry, “Oh I know, I didn’t forget about you Lottie.” She moves her to the changing table, “Mommy doesn’t think Charlotte is too much name either, but I disagree. Now don’t get me wrong, I love your name, that’s why your Mommy named you girls, but it’s a lot to say for such little people. But don’t worry; Mommy will come around, I’m sure of it. We just have to help her see the light,” she says with a conspiratorial wink.

Lottie smiles as she is picked up. Emma reaches over and grabs Evy from the swing and holds them both in her arms.

“Glad we’re on the same page baby girls. Now let’s turn on the charm and go see Mommy.” Evy nuzzles into Emma’s neck as she starts walking towards the stairs.

She walks back towards her wife and son who are now sitting in front of the couch on the floor
playing with some toys.

“Hello, my angels,” Regina says looking up at her daughters.

“Hey babe,” Emma smirks. Oh, it was just too easy to rile her wife up.

“Charming,” she says wryly.

“It’s in my genes babe,” Emma utters. Then she freezes. Where the hell did that come from? In my genes? she thinks, what does that even mean?

Regina just gives her an odd look, gauging to see if she truly remembers or not.

Emma just shakes her head to get rid of the strange thoughts; she hands one daughter to her wife, and says, “Maybe we should take the kids out for a walk?”

“Yeah to da park!” Tommy chimes in looking up from his toys.

Regina laughs, “Well I guess that’s settled, let’s get you and your sisters ready to go to the park.”

“Come on Evy and Waw-tee, let’s go!” Tommy says taking off at a sprint to get his shoes on.

Emma receives the death glare to end all death glares from her wife in this moment. She decides to grin back and says, “They’ll grow on you, babe.”

“I highly doubt that,” Regina says with a sneer.

“You said the same thing about me and look at us now,” Emma declares with a smirk.

“Touché.”

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After getting Tommy ready to go outside, undressing him and taking him to the bathroom, redressing him, and getting Evy and Lottie into their seats and into the stroller with their bag packed, the Mills family was finally ready to go for a walk.

They start walking towards the park to let Tommy run around and release some energy.

As soon as they make it to the park, Emma puts Tommy on her back with a, “Come on Tommy” and is about to run off with him when she is stopped by a stern look from her wife.

She puts Tommy down and pushes his shoulders a little towards his other mother.

“Yes Mommy?” he asks in his sweetest voice.

“Thomas, you must remember to be safe and always stay with Momma or I, understand?”

“Yes Mommy, stay away from strangers and be safe,” he says nodding along. This wasn’t the first time his Mom has given him this speech. In fact he receives this speech every time they go out, so he knows exactly what to say to speed up the process.

“Exactly” Regina nods.

Emma grabs him again and throws him onto her back and takes off running towards the slide while Tommy squeals and holds on for dear life.
Regina shakes her head but she cannot keep the smile off of her face.

She looks down at her daughters who are staring back at her, “She will never change,” she says with a shake of her head. The smile never leaving her face. “Now, let’s find that brother of yours and see what he knows.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed!! Please let me know what you think! :)

**Redamancy**

Chapter Summary

redamancy:
(n.) the act of loving the one who loves you; a love returned in full.

Chapter Notes

I have updated the Summary for Chapter 1 and provided some more background for this story if you'd like to check it out.

And here's to Chapter 2! It's a bit longer than the first chapter (nearly double-EEK) but I just couldn't find the right place to cut it off.

Anyways, ENJOY! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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The park is absolutely breathtaking. Regina has always felt a sense of serenity here; and now with her memories back, she knows that the park is set up similarly to her estate back in the Enchanted Forest. Her fondest memories had taken place outside, away from her mother. She remembers running through the grass with her nanny, rolling in the grass while her father looked on: Mija he would say with a shake of his head and a smile. She recalls sitting on a log near their pond as her father would tell her stories; and of course Daniel. Sweet, loving, Daniel. How they would ride through the grass together with their secret smiles and loving glances, their secret picnics, their stolen kisses.

Those memories don’t sting as much as they used to. Not when she can look down at her daughters in front of her, at her youngest son running with his other mother as they chase each other through the open park. She smiles, *It has all lead to this*, she thinks, *and boy was it worth it.*

Regina finds her oldest child sitting on the swings with Presley.

“Henry” she calls out as she made her way towards them.

“Mom? What are you doing here?” he asks looking at her questioningly.

“What do you know about this?” she asks suspiciously, holding up the ceramic bowl she had showed Emma earlier. She steps off the path towards her son but keeps an eye on the stroller with her daughters inside, always keeps them within reach.

“What is that?” Henry asks with a confused look on his face. “Is that from behind the sink? What’s so important about that?” The rapid firing of questions shows Regina that he really has no idea what the bowl is or where it was found.
“It’s magic” Presley says nonchalantly.

“And how would you know something like that?” Regina asks with a raised eyebrow.

“The symbols” Presley answers as he gets up from the swings and walks towards her. “They were in the books we looked at. This one means strength,” he says pointing to a symbol, “and this one here means protection, and this one partnership, and woman, growth, luck, truth, synchronicity, joy, energy,” Presley points to each symbol as he names them off, “and this one means fertility,” he stops and looks at Regina.

“Of course it does,” she says with an eye roll and a shake of her head. She knew exactly who had given them this gift and oh, how she wished she could forget again, “where did you find these books?”

“…..” Presley looks at Henry.

“Uhh…..” Henry starts, looking all over the park, anywhere but at his mother.

Regina waits for him to look at her and then raises an eyebrow.

“Ummm. We kinda found them in the basement buried under a bunch of stuff-“

“In the basement?” Regina asks, startled by the admission.

“Yeah. We were looking for my other controller for my game and we stumbled onto these old books and they looked really cool so we started reading them and they’re sooooo awesome mom. Where’d you get them?”

It was Regina’s turn to flounder for a response. Magic books were in the basement? She had never given much thought to anything in their basement before her memories returned. Why were there books about magic? Shouldn’t they have stayed in the Enchanted Forest when they left? Were they always there or are they a recent addition to their home? She wonders if these books were left in the same manner as Henry’s storybook. Oh no, was the storybook one of these books the boys had found? Would Henry think of her as the Evil Queen again? She doesn’t know if she can go through that again. But no, the only reason Henry believed that was because she was distant then; alone, living with a bunch of fairy tale characters in a town that never changed. Now everything is different; she has a wife, 4 children, and not even Snow White at her worst could tear them away from her.

Instead of saying any of these things, she simply shrugs her shoulders and says, “I’m not sure, darling. Perhaps they are something left by the previous tenant in our house.”

“Maybe.” Henry says disbelievingly. His eyes narrow as he tries to figure out if she is lying or if she truly doesn’t know.

“Henny push me!!” Tommy says as he runs towards them; trying-unsuccessfully-to jump onto the swing.

“Coming Little T” Henry calls as he walks away from his mom and his friend with one last glance back.

Presley looks at Regina with a smug smile.

Regina merely cocks an eyebrow, “Something you would like to say?”
“I am curious about something. What does this symbol mean right here?” he asks pointing to the only symbol he did not name on the bowl.

“What makes you think I know what any of those things mean dear?” Regina asks haughtily.

Presley leans in closer to Regina, pretending to get a closer look at the ceramic. “Because I know exactly who you are, Your Majesty.”

Regina’s eyes grow wide before returning back to their normal size where she dons a look of confusion, but Presley sees the fear behind the façade. “I beg your pardon?”

“Don’t be that way. I just want answers.”

“Answers to what exactly?” Regina asks before she remembers to add, “and what makes you think I could - or would - help you?”

Presley smiles. “I know you think you’re not that person anymore, and here in the real world there’s no magic, so you’re powerless. I could easily win against you.”

“You think too highly of yourself,” Regina scoffs while her brain is work overtime. Who is this boy? What exactly does he know? How did he find out who I used to be? What does he want from me? Is he a threat to my family? No. No one would threaten my family and get away with it. This boy here is nothing more than that - a boy. Even without magic I could handle a mere child, Regina thinks to herself.

Presley gives her another smirk. “What is this symbol,” he repeats, pointing to the bowl.

Regina glances at the bowl, but instead of answering him she asks a question of her own, “What’s so important about this symbol?”

Presley shrugs, “It’s the only one I couldn’t figure out.”

That doesn’t seem right, why would he be so adamant about a single symbol? What’s so important about this symbol? Regina doesn’t let her fear and curiosity show. She simply points to the symbol and says, “This symbol is a doorway,” as if it means nothing to her.

“A doorway?” he asks with a frown and narrows his eyes.

“Yes, a doorway,” she says with a roll of her eyes.

“Why on earth would someone put a doorway on a gift for your wedding?”

“Well, I suppose you’d have to ask the person who gave it to us. I just assumed it was meant to symbolize our happy ending. Together.”

He looks at her incredulously, “and you’re sure it means doorway?”

“Doorway. Gateway. Entry. Entrance. Call it what you want, the meaning is the same.” She stares at him to see if his face changes at any of these words.

“Gateway,” he whispers.

She steps into his personal space and gives him a glare just a shade off of the Evil Queen. If he thinks he knows who I used to be, who am I to deny him a first-hand experience? Regina thinks the smug thought as she asks, “What do you want?”
Presley starts to fidget under her intense gaze but manages to stutter out, “T-the Gateway. Where is it?” he asks, moving backwards away from her.

“The Gateway?” she asks suspiciously.

“Yes. The Gateway.” Presley repeats, growing bolder as he points to a symbol on the bowl. “Where is it?”

_That’s what this was all about? What a naïve little boy,_ Regina thinks as she states, “I honestly do not know,” simply and turns to look at her sons playing on the swings.

“Liar!” Presley yells.

Regina looks at him and raises an eyebrow. Presley’s eyes go wide as Henry looks over towards them, confusion written all over his face.

“Hey babe,” Emma says running over as she hangs up her phone. She notices everyone frozen in place and asks, “Everything okay over here?”

“Of course darling,” Regina replies with a smile. In reality though, Regina was worried. She isn’t supposed to remember; those were the rules, no memories, and no contact. _Why am I remembering then?_ But the bigger question is why did she remember and Emma did not? Did Henry remember too? She will have to look into that and figure out if they had regained any memories, but after the genes comment earlier, she would bet that their memories are starting to come back. Now, what is she going to do about it?

“Oooookay?” Emma says looking between her wife, her sons, and her son’s friend. She shakes her head and declares, “Looks like I have to go into work for a little bit, something came up and they just need my expertise,” Emma says with a wink.

Regina gives a small smirk, “I’m sure that’s it, darling.” She punctuates her sentence with a signature eye roll. If her wife wanted to downplay this with humor then she’d let her, for now. “Will you be gone long?”

“I’ll probably miss bedtime.” Emma says quietly, looking down at her shoes.

Regina hooks a finger under her chin and gently guides her up until their eyes meet, “Hopefully not my bedtime dear, I believe you have some unfinished business to attend to,” she whispers.

“God you’re amazing. How do you do that?” Emma asks wrapping her arms around her wife and burying her face in brown locks.

Regina lets out a laugh and rubs her hands up and down her wife’s back. “I love you. Be safe and hurry back to us.”

Emma kisses her, “I love you too.” She looks down at her daughters in their stroller, “and I love you, sweet peas” kissing their foreheads. “And I love you my little monkey,” she says swinging Tommy up into her arms as he giggles.
Regina feels her heart soar as she looks at her wife. Her wife. Now that she has her memories back, her real memories that is, she appreciates where they are and how far they’ve come from their initial meeting.

“You be good for Mommy, okay?” she asks looking at Tommy.

“Aways” he says with a huge smile.

“Good boy.” She sets him down and walks over to Henry. They talk back and forth about something that Regina cannot hear, but she’s distracted as Tommy runs over, “Mommy, Mommy, MOMMY!!”

“Yes, Thomas?” she asks him with a smile as she leans over to look him in the eye.

He giggles, “You siwwy Mommy.”

“I’m silly?” she asks, confusion written all over her face as she kneels in front of him.

“Yes. You da onwy one dat says Thomas,” he says as he wrinkles his nose.

“Well that is your name, my love. And I will deal with your mother and her silly nicknames later. How about we head home and start making dinner?” she asks as she stands up and offers him her hands.

“I can hepp?!?!?” he asks jumping up and down.

“Well of course you can help, Querido,” she grins. This is worth everything she has ever gone through. Seeing her son look at her with adoration and love so freely given.

He wraps his little arms around her legs and says, “I wuv you Mommy.”

“And I love you, my little prince,” she says and she picks him up and wraps her arms around him.

She looks up to see that her wife is already gone and Henry and Presley are having what appears to be a very heated conversation.

Regina shifts Tommy onto her hip as she calls, “Henry, let’s go. Presley, will you be joining us for dinner tonight?” She may not trust the boy, but her son’s happiness will always come before her own.

“No” he whispers looking back at the ground, “but can we wait to talk about it until we’re home?”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” Henry says stomping towards her.

Regina raises an eyebrow but does not comment. She simply says, “Goodbye, Presley. Tell your Mother hello.”

Presley nods but doesn’t say anything as he sulks away.

As soon as Henry has taken Tommy and placed him on his back and Regina is pushing the twins back towards their home she asks, “Is everything alright, dear?”

Henry looks towards her. She sees confusion and possibly fear looking back at her in her sons tear-filled eyes and her breath catches in her throat. “No” he whispers looking back at the ground, “but can we wait to talk about it until we’re home?”

“Sure dear,” she says as she faces forward again. Her heart sinks in her chest and she hopes what he wants to talk about won’t tear her apart. Again.
Dinner had gone smoothly, all things considered, Regina thinks as she helps Tommy out of bathtub, wrapping him in his towel and carrying him to his room.

“What pajamas are we going to have tonight, my little prince?” she asks moving to his dresser where his pajamas are held.

“No Prince. Me be like Momma,” he says from his spot in the middle of his floor. She can’t help but smile. The towel wrapped around him makes it look like he is drowning in a sea of blue cotton.

Her smile grows as she pulls out his police officer footie pajamas. “These pajamas?” she asks with the megawatt smile still firmly in place as she shows them to her son.

“Yes, Mommy!! Now me like Momma and saves peoples,” he says as he runs over to her.

Well, at least he tried running, but since the towel is too big, his feet get stuck in the towel and he falls forward, landing right in Regina’s lap. “Be careful dear. We can’t have you getting hurt before you are able to save people,” she says with a wink and she helps him finish drying off and putting his pajamas on.

He gives his biggest smile and wraps his arms around her neck. “I wuv you Mommy,” he mumbles, the words muffled by her neck. Regina wraps her arms around him just a little bit tighter and whispers, “and I love you, my little deputy.” She carries him back into the bathroom to hang up his towel and places him on her lap to brush his hair.

“MOMMY!” Tommy shouts. Jarring her from her thoughts.

“Yes dear?” she asks as she shakes herself back to reality.

“I said,” he pauses to sigh dramatically, “Can Henny weed me a stowy NOW?!”

“Well, you will have to ask your brother that, but since your mother is not here tonight and the twins still need a bath, perhaps Henry will have a new story for you,” she says with a wink as she pushes his hair out of his eyes. Definitely in need of a trim.

“Moooommy,” he whines, “stowy time,” he tries to wiggle away from her.

She kisses his cheek and says, “Of course, of course. Let’s go see if Henry has any new stories for you.” She sets him down and he takes off running towards the stairs, “Slow down Thomas,” she calls after. She can hear the dramatic sigh and then the footsteps slow. She smiles and thinks that he certainly got his attitude from her. With a small shake of her head she follows him.

When she reaches the bottom of the stairs she can just see her youngest son running up to her oldest as he says, “Henny, Henny! Stowy time!!!!” as he climbs onto Henry’s lap.

Henry laughs as he helps his little brother onto the couch with him as he says, “What’s on your PJs, Little T?”
“I’m a poweece offica, just wike Momma, Henny!”

“Oh! You’re a police officer? Wow. That sounds kinda dangerous for such a little boy.”

“Nuh-uh, I no wittle boy. I’s a super he-o.” He says adamantly as he stands on the couch with his hands on his hips.

Regina leans against the doorway and smiles. She doesn’t know what she did to deserve all this happiness, but she knows better than to look a gift horse in the mouth, so she’ll soak up all the love while she can.

“A police officer and a super hero. Wow. I have the coolest little brother ever,” Henry says as he stares at him in awe.

“Duh.” Tommy says as he rolls his eyes and flops to sit on the couch.

Regina actually chuckles at that. She’s sure Emma would have something to say about that attitude right now, but all she can do is smile at her sons getting along so well. Henry looks to the doorway then and smiles as he wraps his arm around Tommy’s shoulders. “The twins were perfect angels,” he sing-songs, as he looks to his little sisters who are propped up on the floor in their Twin-Z pillow. “They enjoyed listening to me tell them about my math homework. They especially enjoyed the tickles they got in between questions. I love that they laugh all the time now,” he says smiling down at his sisters.

Regina can’t help but smile again and think about just how perfect her family is. “Me too, Henry,” she says as she walks over to her daughters.

Henry and Tommy both slide off the couch and move towards the babies. Henry blows raspberries against Evelyn’s cheek, only to turn and do the same thing to Charlotte. They both start giggling and Tommy loves it and starts laughing at them as well. Regina’s heart soars again and she wishes she could stay in this moment forever, watching her children smile and laugh like this is music to her ears.

“Henny!” Tommy says pulling his brother’s attention from his sisters back to him. “Have a new stowy?”

“Do I have a new story?” Henry asks as he rubbed his chin like he was deep in thought. “Hmmmm. Perhaps. Do you think you are ready for a new story?”

“Yes. Yes. YES!” He screams as he launches himself at his brother. Henry falls backwards and winds up on the floor with his three-year old brother sprawled on top of him. Tommy pulls himself up so he was sitting on Henry’s chest and started bouncing up and down, “Stowy time. Stowy time. Stowy time!”

“Alright Little T, settle down,” Henry groans when his brother jumps on him, “I’ll tell you a new story, but let’s go up on the couch.”

Tommy begrudgingly crawls off his brother and onto the couch. “What stowy, Henny?” he asks in anticipation.

“How about a new story about a queen and her knight?”

“Yeah!” Tommy squeals.

Regina had stayed on the floor by her daughters, but freezes in place at Henry’s words. She glances
up to see him staring at her with a strange look she can’t place. Confusion? Anticipation? Certainly not fear, and that warms her heart more than words can describe.

“I’m going to take Evelyn and Charlotte upstairs for their bath, will you be alright?” she asks.

“Of course, Mom. We’ll be fine. I know all about fairytales now. It’ll be great,” he says with a smile.

She forces a tight smile back as she scoops up her daughters and carries them upstairs to the bathroom.

“I wonder what story is being told right now,” Regina wonders out loud to her daughters as they stare up at her from their little tubs. She smirks and says, “I wonder if it’s the real story about how the queen met her knight.” Evelyn giggles as Regina puts the washcloth on her stomach, “Oh, do you find that funny, Evy?” She does it again and gets the same result, “How about you Lottie?” she asks as she rubs another washcloth on her other daughter’s stomach and receives more giggles. She smiles again and leans close over her daughters laying in their tubs and whispers conspiratorially, “and if you think you can tell your mother that I am using those nicknames I will deny it. However,” she starts as she leans back, “I can see their charm.” Both girls giggle and she rolls her eyes. “Not a word,” she says as points a stern finger at her daughters as she finishes their bath.

Once both girls are clean, dry, and into their pajamas she heads back downstairs by her sons. She stops at the bottom of the stairs and hears, “Do da knight and queen wuv each udder Henny?”

“Very much so, Little T, they just don’t know it right now in the story.”

“Keep goin den,” Tommy demands.

Regina can see Henry smile as he says, “I would but you keep interrupting me with your questions.”

Regina smiles as her youngest son rolls his eyes and says, “Mommy says it’s good to ask lotsa questions.”

“That’s right dear,” Regina says walking into the family room.

“Mommy!” Tommy says jumping off the couch to run to his mother. She lays her daughters into their pillow in time to catch her son as he throws himself into her arms.

“Yes, dear?” she asks wrapping her arms around him and kissing his forehead.

“Did you know da queen and da knight awe in wuv?!’ he asks excitedly.

“They are?” she asks equally excited as she turns towards Henry and smiles.

“Yes!” Tommy says looking at her, “but dey don’t know yet.”

“Well then, I guess Henry will just have to keep telling the story so they can fall in love.” She moves herself so she’s sitting cross-legged facing Henry.

“Yeah!” Tommy squeals as he turns in Regina’s lap to face his brother.

Henry smiles at Tommy’s excitement and then glances at his mother, she gives a tentative smile and nods at him to continue. He slides to the floor and leans against the sofa as he continues. “Well, the queen was running her kingdom perfectly until the knight showed up and everything
went wild. The queen did not like someone disrupting the harmony of her kingdom and she certainly did not like the fact that the knight was spending so much time with her son, or the fact that her son seemed completely enamored by her and wanted to spend every waking moment with this new knight. So, the queen did everything in her power to send the knight away, but the knight was very stubborn and refused to leave. The knight spent all of her time figuring out how to talk to the queen, but every time she got close, she and the queen just fought. Finally, there was a threat to the kingdom and a monster took the queen’s son. So, the knight and the queen fought side by side to defeat the threat.”

“Queens don’t fight, Henny, dey has guawds for dat,” Tommy says shaking his head.

“Ah, but this was just any queen,” Henry replies.

Regina braces herself for the words to come out. Henry hasn’t called her Evil in so long, the only thing she can do is not let her heartbreak show when he did. Those words never came and what did come out instead almost made Regina burst into tears.

“She had magic, and with thoughts only of her son and his safety, she used that magic to save her son. But it wasn’t enough,” Henry sighs dramatically. “Her magic wasn’t strong enough to end the fight and she was losing energy fast.”

Tommy gasps on Regina’s lap and grabs her hands, “DA KNIGHT!” he screams, “Da knight has to save dem!!!” He then takes Regina’s hands and wraps them around him as he leans back into her. She rests her chin on his shoulder and she looks up at Henry, who is completely absorbed in his story and unaware of his brother’s outburst.

Henry smiles at them and says, “The knight was worried about the queen. Even though they didn’t get along, she enjoyed the word battles and verbal sparring they engaged in, and the knight knew that if she didn’t step in before the queen lost too much power, there would be nothing left to save the little prince. So, the knight reached way down inside of her self and felt for her magic.”

Tommy gasps again and looks back at his mother who smiles lightly. “Da knight has magic?!”

Regina puts a finger to his lips and points back and Henry who is sporting the biggest smile on his face. Tommy nods and looks back to his brother.

“Yes, the knight has magic, but she hadn’t used it before and she really only knew she had the magic because someone told her once when she was very young. Then she was taught to never use it because it was dangerous. All magic comes with a price, Little T, and it was very dangerous to use because if the wrong person knew about it, she could be killed.”

Another gasp from Tommy and Regina pulls him closer to her while giving Henry a stern look not to continue down that line of the story.

“But...umm...that wouldn’t have happened to the knight because she’s tough and she can take care of herself.” At Regina’s raised eyebrow, “Anyways,” Henry says, shaking his head and moving the story along. He’s sitting across from his mother and siblings and he has them all captivated with his story. He is feeling pretty powerful right about now. Even the twins are staring at him with big round eyes. “The knight reached deep down inside and found her magic in time to throw it at the monster hurting the queen. The queen couldn’t believe what was happening but she didn’t have time to think on the fact that this knight had magic because her son was in danger. So, she used the last of her magical reserves and pushed it all towards the monster and when both the queen’s magic and the knight’s magic hit the monster there was a blinding white light and when it faded, the monster was gone.”
“Wow,” Tommy whispers.

“Together, the queen and the knight were able to save the kingdom. When everyone was safe and everything was starting to get back to normal there was a celebration to thank the knight for her bravery. Everyone in the kingdom started calling her the Savior.” Regina rolls her eyes at this and smiles fondly at her son who smiles back. “The knight didn’t like this title, but she couldn’t care less what the people called her, she wanted to know why there was a bright light when her magic mixed with the queen’s but the queen was doing her best to avoid the knight all together. Even allowing the knight some time with the prince without her presence so they were never in the same room. Finally, the knight cornered the queen in her library pouring over books on magic. The knight stood silently in the doorway and watched the queen stare at the books, flipping the pages and becoming angrier and angrier until finally she slammed the book and threw it across the room. It slammed into a bookshelf and the knight laughed. The queen was startled and whirled around to throw a fireball at the intruder. It’s a good thing the knight was so fast because she only had a split second to duck away from the fireball before she was burned to a crisp.” Tommy laughs at this and snuggles further into his mother’s chest while laying his head back against her. Regina kisses his forehead and turns back to Henry. “The knight asked her about what happened during the fight with the monster and the queen told her it was nothing more than their magic combining for the first time. The knight didn’t believe her and told her she was lying, because the knight had a superpower and she could always tell when someone was lying to her.”

“Just like Momma!” Tommy says. He is still excited, but he is starting to get tired and it’s showing. Regina wraps her arms tighter around him and starts rocking side to side.

“Yes, just like Momma,” Henry says with a smile. “So, since the knight knew the queen was lying, she went and picked up the book the queen had thrown across the room and opened it up to the page that was folded over from where the queen had left off. She quickly read the page and looked back at the queen. ‘Is it true?’ she asked. The queen looked at the floor and didn’t respond. The knight moved closer until she was right in front of the queen and repeated, ‘is it true? True Love?’ she whispered as she lifted the queen’s chin so they were looking into each other’s eyes. ‘Yes’ the queen whispered back. The queen was so worried that the knight wouldn’t believe her, or worse, would laugh at her. That’s why she spent days after the battle looking for any other explanation and finding none. The queen searched the knight’s eyes to see any emotion. Fear? Disappointment? Anger? Disgust? Instead, she found relief, longing, and—even happiness? The queen didn’t think that could be right, but before she could move away the knight tightened her grip on the queen’s chin and whispered, ‘Good.’ The queen looked at her and asked what she meant. ‘I didn’t want this to all be in my head,’ the knight said with a shrug. The queen smiled. The knight smiled back and they kissed.” Henry pauses here to wait for Tommy’s response. Anytime he talks about kissing in his stories, his little brother always makes noises and says, “gross,” but it never comes. Henry looks up to see his brother fast asleep in his mother’s lap. He smiles, but this smile fades when he looked up to see tears on his mom’s face. He moves forward until he is directly in front of her and she smiles and shakes her head as he wipes some tears from her face.

“The Evil Queen and The Savior,” she says with another shake of her head and a self-deprecating laugh. “It shouldn’t work. It shouldn’t be like this.”

“But it is,” Henry whispers as he moves to his mom’s side.

Regina smiles and wraps an arm around Henry’s shoulders and pulls him close without disrupting Tommy. She kisses Henry’s forehead and said, “It is. It really is.”

“And you’re not Evil, Mom. I know that. We all know that.”
“Do we?” she questions. She hates that she sounds so weak in front of her son.

“Of course. You’re our Mom, and we love you.”

Henry says this with such conviction that new tears roll down her face. She is just so happy. Her son remembers, and he doesn’t hate her. She kisses his forehead again and lays her cheek on top of his head, trying to regain control of her emotions. “When did you remember?” she whispers looking at her sleeping son and daughters.

“It wasn’t all at once. I think it started after we found those books. At first, I thought they were just really weird dreams, but then today it all just made sense. Did you always remember?” he questions as he snuggles closer to his mother.

She shakes her head against his, “No. Today, when you and Presley started talking about your project it all just hit me. I remembered everything, but your mother does not.”

“She will.” Henry says with absolute conviction.

“I hope you’re right, I don’t like lying to her.” Regina gives a sad smile.

“It’ll happen Mom, and if it doesn’t by itself, we’ll help her remember.”

“I love you, Henry,” Regina says kissing his forehead again.

“I love you too, Mom.”

When Henry squeezes his mom tighter, Tommy wakes up and asks sleepily, “Did da knight and queen kiss?”

Henry laughs and says, “Yes they did.”

“Ew” Tommy sighs as he snuggles in closer to his mother.

It’s Regina’s turn to laugh as she leans down and whispers, “and they lived happily ever after,” against her son’s temple.

“Good,” Tommy mumbles as he turns in his mother’s arms to lay his head on her shoulder.

Regina smiles and turns to Henry who has moved back to spot in front of the couch. “Will you keep an eye on your sisters while I lay Tommy down?”

“Sure,” Henry said. He waits until his mom is to the bottom of the stairs before calling to her, “and I’ll also be sure not to mention to Ma that you call him Tommy when she’s not around.”

“Be sure that she never finds out either, dear,” Regina calls back as she climbs the stairs. Henry stares down at his homework with a smile.

After Tommy is tucked into bed and Regina has pressed another kiss to his forehead; she heads back downstairs to find that both her daughters are awake and Henry is shaking a toy in front of them while reading a book out loud.

“Quite the multi-tasker, I see,” Regina says with a smirk.

“Yeah. These babies are hungry and this was all that would keep them quiet,” he says in a huff.

“While I’m sure that they are enjoying Lord of the Flies, I don’t think that is age appropriate.”
“Mom,” Henry groans, “this book isn’t appropriate for any age.”

“Then it’s a good thing you are reading it for school.”

“Ugh,” he groans again throwing his head back against the couch.

Evy starts fussing again and he jumps back up to look at his mother. She smiles and says, “Could you entertain them with your riveting rendition of this book before I feed them?”

“Of course,” he says as he starts wiggling their toy and starts saying, "I don't care what they call me,’ he said confidentially, ‘so long as they don't call me what they used to call me in school.’ Ralph was faintly interested. ‘What was that?’ The fat boy glanced over his shoulder, then leaned toward Ralph. He whispered. ‘They used to call me Piggy!’ Evy giggled at her brother’s silly voices.

Regina smiled as she set up everything she needed to feed her babies.

When everything was ready, she sat in the rocking chair in the corner of the room with the Twin-Z and Henry brought Evy and Charlie over. “I’m going to go get ready for bed, goodnight Mom.”

“Thank you, dear. Goodnight” she says with a smile as she situates her daughters on the Twin-Z so she can unbutton her top. She smiles again realizing how this almost didn’t happen.

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

“You want me to what?” Regina asked as she sat next to her wife on their bed.

“I think you should be the one to breastfeed these two,” Emma repeated looking over at Regina.

“You’re the one who’s pregnant, darling. Your body is already preparing to do this,” Regina explained as she got up from the bed and moved into their en suite to finish getting ready for bed.

“Well then, I guess we’ll just have to get your body ready too.”

“Excuse me?” Where was this coming from? Emma was not usually the nervous type and when she was nervous, she hid it behind laughter. She didn’t push something off to someone else. She would deal with it herself. “Do you not want to do this? Because, my love, you can do this. You’ve already done this with Thomas; it is the exact same thing. You’re body is changing to be ready for the arrival of our babies. You will do perfect, as always,” Regina said with a smile.

Emma shook her head, “it’s not that I don’t think I can do this. It’s that I want you to do this.”

“Emma,” Regina said with a small shake of her head, “where is this coming from?”

“I just-“ Emma started, as she looked down at her lap and her barely visible bump, avoiding her wife’s eyes, the same knowing eyes that could always see right through her and into her very soul. "I know how much you want kids and that you can’t carry yourself but I want you to be as involved as possible and I feel like you’re doing so much taking care of me and I just want you to experience as much as you can and I was on a website earlier and I found out that anyone can start producing milk naturally, or with the help of medication or some herbs and then they can start breastfeeding and I thought that maybe you’d want to do this and be this person for our babies but now I see that it’s just the hormones talking and they’re making me ramble more than usual and I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking. It was stupid. I’m sorry.”

Regina hooked a finger under Emma’s chin and moved until they were looking into each other’s
eyes. “It wasn’t stupid,” she whispered, “this is the sweetest thing I have ever heard. I know you think I am not involved enough but just going through everything with you is more than I ever could have imagined.”

“I know, but I want you to do this. This isn’t some hormone thing that’s going to change in an hour. I want this,” Emma said wrapping her arms around Regina

“Okay.”

“Good. And they say the sooner you start the better chance you have or producing more milk, so I think we should start right away,” Emma thought out loud with a grin.

“And how does one prepare their body to produce breast milk?” Regina asked leaning back to look her wife in the eye.

“Well, there’s not one specific way, but breast massage, nipple stimulation and suckling are all sited to help the process along.”

“Oh, and this has nothing to do with how much you enjoy touching and kissing my breasts?” Regina queried with a smirk of her own.

Emma gasped, “Regina! I cannot believe you! I am only concerned with our babies and I want them to have their best chance. That will only happen if you let me help you.”

“Oh of course, my dear. Well then, what are we waiting for?”

Emma rolled her wife on top of her and kissed her slowly. “I love you,” she whispered.

“And I you,” Regina whispered back. She kissed her way down Emma’s neck to her slightly protruding belly and kissed it, “And you,” kissed it again, “and you.”

Emma brought her back up to kiss her fully and rolled them so she was on straddling Regina’s hips. “Now I think it’s time we start this process,” as she kissed down her wife’s neck.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

Regina is sitting up in bed reading The Handmaid’s Tale when Emma walks into their bedroom. As soon as she sees her wife, Regina is out of their bed and in front of her before the book hits the ground. “What happened to you?” she asks in a panic. She’s looking all over Emma for injuries.

“It’s nothing. I just got into a bit of a tumble while making an arrest,” Emma mumbles as she sways on her feet. She tosses her jacket towards the settee but misses terribly. Regina noticed that Emma is covered in cuts and bruises from the moment she walked in, but nothing looks to be life or death, but why is she- “are you drunk?” Regina asks taking a step away.

Emma sways again and Regina is forced grab her before she falls over. “I swear Gina, I haven’t had anything to drink.” She hiccups, “well I had a little something to take the edge off, but I don’t know what’s wrong with me. It was only one shot, I swear.”

“Take the edge off? What edge?” Regina asks as she leads Emma to their en suite so she can start cleaning her up. She eases Emma down onto the toilet lid and immediately reaches for the first aid kit. She gets right to work cleaning Emma’s cuts and covering them in Neosporin and Band-Aids.

“Well, I’ve been kinda seeing things all day,” Emma says as she’s looking at the wall behind her wife. She’s ashamed to be telling her this at all and if she wasn’t in this situation she’s sure she
never would have said anything.

Regina stops cleaning Emma’s cuts and looks up, “Seeing things?” she asks quietly.

“Yeah. Some weird shit. Like, you being in some crazy-ass costume dress with your boobs on display. I cut down an apple tree with a chainsaw. I saved you from a fire, I think? Or maybe I set the fire? Then, there was a curse and I was bringing back happy endings and…” she mock-gasps in outrage and starts laughing immediately as she declares, “and you tried to kill me with a fucking dessert, and then we were in a castle and…and you were teaching me magic and…” she stops and stares at the wall behind Regina again.

Regina gently grabs her chin and moves her until they are looking into each other’s eyes. “What are you thinking?” she asks quietly.

“That my head hurts like a bitch but everything that should be absolutely crazy makes sense in my head.”

“It should, it all happened,” Regina says with a shrug as she gets up to put everything in the first aid kit away.

“What the fuck, Regina?” Emma asks, trying to stand. Key word: trying. She ends up falling into the counter and Regina grabs her and helps her back into the bedroom.

Instead of responding to her wife, Regina helps Emma sit on the bed, “I’m sure you have a concussion. That’s why that drink is having this effect on you.”

“Well thank you for your diagnosis, Doc Gina,” Emma mutters.

Regina ignores her and says, “I’m going to get you an ice pack. Will you be okay until I get back?”

“You’ll be right back, babe. I think I’ll be fine.” Emma says with as much snark as she can muster—which isn’t a lot considering she’s swaying sitting down.

Regina rolls her eyes at the stubbornness she has to deal with. Genetics, I’m sure, she thinks. She leans Emma against the headboard of their bed and pushes her feet up so she can’t fall out of the bed as she leaves to go downstairs.

Apparently, her thoughts of ‘of course my wife can’t fall out of the bed’ were entirely wrong. She obviously underestimated Emma’s ability to do exactly what Regina tells her not to. Idiot, she thinks, and she’s not sure if she’s talking about Emma or herself as she runs back into their room with an ice pack to see her wife sprawled out on the floor with her head under their bed.

“Emma? What the hell are you doing?” Regina asks as she pulls her wife out from under the bed.

“I’m hiding,” Emma slurs in a conspiratorial whisper as she leans in to Regina’s side, “but shhhh don’t tell Gina, ‘cuz she’s gonna be pissed if she finds me out of bed.”

Regina rolls her eyes and says, “Your concussion is worse that I thought. You should probably go to the hospital.”

“No,” Emma whines, “just use your magic and fix it.”

Regina stares at her. “I couldn’t even if I wanted to Emma, you know there’s no magic in this world.”
Emma groans and then, in a moment of lucidity, she whispers, “This is so fucked up, babe. Are we really having a conversation about magic right now?”

“Yes dear,” she replies impatiently as she stands, “and now you need to get into bed and stay there. I will wake you every hour tonight, understood?”

“Mhmm,” Emma mumbles as Regina helps her into bed. Again.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you like it!! Please let me know what you think! :)
Gezellig

Chapter Summary

gезellig:
(adj.) cozy, nice, inviting, pleasant, comfortable; connoting time spent with loved ones
or togetherness after a long separation.

Chapter Notes

Alright, I know that this is a shorter chapter but that's because I am splitting this into
multiple chapters with the next chapter being a flashback. I'll do my best to post it later
tonight, but I have some quizzes due and my friends are insisting to "get me out of my
dorm room". I'm not sure why-it's a blizzard outside. I'll just stay in my cozy room
with my fuzzy blankets and all of my thoughts to keep me company-and help me
procrastinate from real life responsibilities ;)

But enough about me and my niche for procrastination, here's the next chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQ

Her alarm goes off. Again. She groans and rolls over to shut it off. She fumbles for the alarm and it
goes flying off the nightstand. She groans again as she rolls closer to the edge of the bed to reach it.
Once it finally shuts off, she rolls back to face her slumbering wife. Only now, Emma is awake and
looking at her with a shy smile. “Morning babe,” she says taking her hand.

“Mmmnn,” Regina grumbles as she burrows further under the covers and closer to her wife.

Emma laughs as she wraps her arms around Regina, pulling her closer.

Regina wakes up enough to sit up and look at Emma before she says, “You seem more alert this
morning.”

“Yeah. I’m feeling better too. I can actually remember what I’m doing. I guess it’s a good thing my
wife is some sort of Florence Nightingale, huh?” Emma says with a grin and kisses Regina.

Regina rolls her eyes and lays her head back down on Emma’s chest, listening to her heartbeat. The
monotony of the beating lulling her back to sleep when Emma speaks again, “So, what exactly
happened last night?”

Regina pulls back again and looks at her wife with concern, “You don’t remember?”

“Well, I feel like I remember a lot, but it’s all so crazy. I’m hoping you’re going to tell me that I
just stumbled in here, you took care of me and there was no talk of Evil Queens or Saviors or
curses and I didn’t make a fool of myself by talking so stupid.”
“Actually dear, I’m quite used to your ability to ‘talk stupid’ as you so eloquently put it. However, last night was not one of those times.” Regina said with a coy smile.

Emma rolled her eyes at the first part of Regina’s sentence, but she looked confused when Regina finished. “I didn’t say anything dumb?” she asks.

“Darling, you always manage to succeed in that department, but if you are referring to the talk about an Evil Queen, a Savior, and the curse to end all curses, that does not make you sound dumb. It sounds like you’re remembering.”

“Fuuuuuuuck,” Emma groans as she throws her head back onto her pillow. She whimpers as she realizes how much her head still hurts and moving that fast makes her feel like she is going to pass out, or puke, or both. “What if I don’t want to remember?” Emma whispers looking down to the end of the bed.

“Emma?” Regina asks. She doesn’t know what her wife is referring to. Does she not want to remember that she’s married to the Evil Queen now that she knows what it’s like to be married to just Regina?

Regina pulls away from Emma and decides to leave before her feelings get the best of her. If she can just make it to the bathroom before the tears start.

“Don’t do that,” Emma mutters as she pulls Regina back to her.

“Do what,” Regina whispers, still keeping up the pretense of moving away, but she’s not actively trying to get away from Emma.

“Pull away. Don’t do that.” Emma pulls her wife back to her chest and rests her chin on the top of Regina’s head. “When did you remember?”

Regina adjusts her position so her ear is right over Emma’s heart; the thumping calming her own rapid heart beat, “Yesterday when the boys were talking about their history project.”

“Do you want to forget again?”

Regina pulls up to look Emma in the eye, “What do you mean?”

“I mean, like, do you wish we could go back; to being just Emma and just Regina? A detective and a lawyer; no Evil Queen, no Savior, just two women that fell in love and are raising a family together.”

“Emma. Look at me,” Regina says leaning up to catch Emma’s eye. When Emma finally makes eye contact Regina smiles, a real smile - genuine and so full of love. “You will always be just Emma to me. You are so much more than a title given to you before you were even born by a man driven further into the darkness over his own grief. You are more than a pawn in his demented game. You are my wife, the mother of my children; you have made yourself into who you are. Even if we do remember now, that doesn’t mean a thing. Nothing has to change. We can still be a detective and a lawyer, just Emma and Regina.”

Emma gives a sad smile, “It doesn’t work like that and you know it. Those books were put in the basement for a reason. When we cleaned down there after we moved, they weren’t down there. Now they are. Someone wants us to remember, there’s a reason; there’s always a reason. It’s like the curse all over again. There’s been no pressure for years and suddenly it feels like I’m drowning.”

“It’s not the curse all over again,” Regina says adamantly. Emma gives her a dubious look and opens her mouth to speak when Regina shakes her head, “now we are together and nothing is going
to pull us apart. If you think you’re drowning, let me save you.”

“You want to be my lifeguard?” she asks with a wink, “I think I need mouth to mouth,” she says causing Regina to roll her eyes.

“Idiot,” Regina whispers as she kisses Emma’s temple. “I try to make a moment romantic and you make a joke. Typical.”

Emma grumbles, ineligible but pulls her wife closer to her. Regina smiles and kisses her temple again. If the sigh Emma gives is any indication as to how she really feels, Regina would assume Emma is enjoying herself. So, Regina keeps kissing her face. First, Regina kisses her temples and then her forehead. Then from her cheekbones to her nose, along her jaw, and from her chin to her ear. She nips at the spot right behind her ear that she knows drives Emma crazy and then lazily licks the shell of her ear before kissing her way back to her lips.

“Damn woman, let’s stay in bed all day,” Emma says as she pulls Regina on top of her.

“All day dear? I’d say someone is overconfident,” Regina drawls with a smirk as she leans down to kiss her wife.

“I will always follow through babe,” Emma smirks right back as she flips their positions.

“Well then,” Regina laughs as she looks up into her wife’s eyes, “get to it. I believe you started something yesterday you couldn’t finish. Better not let that happen again.”

Emma looks at her with a wicked gleam in her eye, “Of course not, my queen,” and closes the distance between their lips.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“Are you sure you’re going to be okay?” Regina asks for the fifth time that morning.

“Yes, Regina. I will be fine. We will all be fine,” Emma says with a smile, looking at her kids sitting around her as she brings the boys their pancakes.

“Alright,” Regina says as she fixes her outfit one last time. “Zelena will be here soon, she just has to drop off Roland and Kelly at school.”

Emma rolls her eyes, “I don’t need a babysitter, Regina.”

Regina walks towards her and grabs her wrists, “From the way you’re swaying I’d say you need more than that. You need to go to the doctor, but I will not force you. Your stubborn ways will catch up to you, my dear. However, I will not leave you with three small children when you are not feeling well. As soon as Zelena gets here you can get some rest. I will come home as soon as possible.”

“Oh, but I don’t want your sister taking care of me,” Emma says in a huff after Regina kisses her temple.

“Well, that makes two of us,” Zelena says walking into the kitchen.

“Auntie Z!” Tommy screams as he launches himself from the table into her arms.

“And good morning to you, my little flying monkey. How are you?” she asks with a chuckle as she moves to set him back down in front of his plate.
“Good,” he mumbles through a bite of pancakes.


“Yes, Mommy,” he says after he swallowed. “Are you gonna stay awl day, Auntie Z?!”

“Well, I will stay until your Mummy gets back from work, how does that sound?”

“YAY!!” he squealed.

“You’re early Zelena,” Regina says as she moves about the kitchen.

“Yes. Robin offered to take the children to school this morning.”

“My hero,” Emma grumbled.

“Thank you for coming over on such short notice Zelena,” Regina says as she subtly pokes her wife. Emma jumps, but stays quiet as she moves closer to the boys and further from Regina’s fingers.

“Of course, what are sisters for if not to help out their little sister’s wife when she gives herself a concussion after being back at work for less than a month,” she says with a smirk.

Regina laughs and Emma glares, “I resent that.”

Regina walks over and kisses her cheek and whispers, “But it’s true dear.” She looks at Henry to see if he’s ready to go, and continues to Tommy where she kisses his forehead and says, “be good for your Aunt and make sure you take good care of Momma until I get home, understand?”

He nods enthusiastically and says, “Yes Mommy! I be da bestest helper.”

She gives him a smile before kissing her daughters and moving back to grab her purse and coat. She pauses in front of her surly wife. “Do try to tone down the dramatics darling, wouldn’t want you to pull a muscle with all that scowling,” she says giving her a kiss at the edge of her mouth.

Henry snickers and looks down at his empty plate.

“Said by the Royal Drama Queen herself.”

“Her Royal Majesty will suffice just fine dear,” Regina snarks right back. Emma has always called her a queen, but with her memories returned it takes everything to a whole new level of teasing.

“More like Her Royal Pain-In-My-Ass,” Emma grumbles as she turns to open the fridge.

Regina just smirks and smacks her wife’s butt when she walks past to grab her phone.

“Ew. Moms.” Henry groans as he puts his plate in the sink.

“Yeah. Ew. Moms.” Tommy repeats. The whole kitchen erupts in laughter at the mocking quality of the young three year old.

“Mom, if we don’t hurry I’m going to be late,” Henry says as he heads to the door with his backpack.

“Alright dear,” she turns back to her wife, “I’ll be back as soon as I can-“
“Oh for the love of God!” Zelena exclaims. “Just go! Everything will be fine!”

Emma chuckles, “She’s not wrong babe, everything will be okay. I’ll see you when you get home.”

“Please be civil in front of the children,” Regina says as she kisses her wife.

Emma and Zelena just roll their eyes, but no promises are made.

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

When Regina walks into her home just after lunch it’s quiet; too quiet. She places her things down and walks towards the living area where she hears quiet murmuring. She peeks in through the doorway where she sees her wife laying on the couch across the room with an arm over her eyes. Zelena was sitting in the middle of the room facing away from Regina and is staring at her hands. The twins are in their swings fast asleep. Right as she is about to make her presence known Zelena growls, “Dammit!”

Regina is taken aback; Zelena swears even less than she does, always perfectly composed - it’s nauseating, really. However, Emma just laughs, “Easy Z, you keep this up and people will find out that you actually have the mouth of a sailor.”

“That is largely incorrect,” Zelena huffs, “I am not uncouth like yourself.”

“Whatever,” Emma says shaking her head, “you know you enjoy swearing. If you didn’t, you wouldn’t do it. I think this would be considered your guilty pleasure,” she’s teasing now, in her best sing song voice, “Something you don’t want anyone else to find out about. It’d truly be a shame if you were no longer the perfect one, wouldn’t it?”

“Shut it, Swan,” Zelena gives a perfect Mills glare.

Emma head is pointed at the ceiling and she has a shit-eating grin on her face as Zelena continues to scowl, “It’s Mills, Sis.”

“Good afternoon,” Regina says stepping into the room before Zelena can try to maim her wife. Both Emma and Zelena jump.

Emma recovers first and says, “Hey babe, did you get everything at work taken care of?”

“Yes.” Regina looks to her sister who is looking back at her hands. “Is everything alright Zelena?”

Zelena looks up at her sister and says, “Unfortunately not, Sis.” Regina raises an eyebrow in silent question. “My magic is not returning.”

“You remember?” Regina asks startled.

“Of course,” she says haughtily.

And of course that’s all the answer Regina is going to get out of Zelena. She may be the reformed Wicked Witch but she will never willingly give up information to Regina. They may have resolved their issues long ago and they trust each other with their lives -and more importantly the lives of their families - but Zelena will never truly trust anyone. Even after going back in time, being stopped by Emma before she could kill Regina - she found out just how unruly Cora had truly been.
I hope you guys liked this chapter! Again, sorry that it's so short but I really wanted to dedicate a whole chapter to the flashback scene coming next-it's pretty long and has some interesting background in it, but hey! Maybe I'm a little biased ;)

Some background to hopefully clear some things up:
In this story Henry was actually a little younger when he originally brings Emma to Storybrooke (think about 8).
Emma and Regina got together before the curse purely to relieve all of that tension *wink wink nudge nudge* and then when the curse broke and everyone was sent back to the Enchanted Forest, they fought a lot (family stuff-'nuff said) and then they started a real relationship soon after that (I'll maybe delve into that more in future chapters).
Tommy, Evy, and Lottie were all born in the world without magic.
Henry is 13 at this time. They came to this world about 4 years ago, Tommy is 3, so they found out they were pregnant pretty quick after they came here. Evy and Lottie are a 3 months old and Emma and Regina just started going back to work a month ago. The twins and Tommy were born through fertility treatments.
Adoptive nursing is a real thing that I learned about in a few of my classes last semester and I thought it was something Regina would totally do to be closer to her babies. *heart eyes* If you are still confused about what it is and what it entails you can ask me or you can totally google it and it'll pop up.

In my head, Regina and Robin were never together (DON'T FORCE IT *cough cough* show writers)
Anyways, turns out Zelena is Robin's soul mate (awwwww) and with Marian never coming back (because Zelena didn't kill her) Zelena and Robin are free to live out their lives together happily with Roland and Kelly.
Regina is a human rights lawyer (think: helping women out of abusive relationships, defending their rights, she could even investigate war crimes or crimes against humanity, protecting prisoners' rights, etc. if she wanted to-but I see her mostly fighting for female equality)
Emma is a detective that specializes in finding Missing Persons (like a private detective and a bounty hunter put together with a badge that says she a detective).
Robin is a human rights activist that works with Regina's firm. He's not so good at the legalese, but he has a heart of gold and is a pretty awesome thief/burglar so he can do the dirty work that would cost Regina her job. FRIENDSHIP ;)
Zelena is pretty much a stay at home mom, dabbling in daycare (sometimes watching her nieces and nephew), being a midwife (only sometimes, because I mostly see her staying at home), and I totally see her being into incense (making her own candles, using oils all the time, etc.)
Right now Emma and Regina are both back at work part-time (since they just had twins) and they are both at home with the kids on their off days so there's no daycare right now.

Wow. That was a lot of background. Let me know if you guys have any questions and I'll do my best to answer them either in the notes or in the story :)
Serendipity

Chapter Summary

serendipity:
(n.) the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.

Chapter Notes

AHHHHH! Unfortunately it's not before midnight, but it's still night, so I guess it still counts. This flashback is a lot longer than previous flashbacks, but there's a lot going on. Hope you like it! :) and now I should go do some actual homework. Meh-maybe.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

FLASHBACK

“It worked!” Zelena explains, looking into the portal.

“Oh no you don’t,” Emma yells as she jumps at Zelena.

“Don’t worry my dear, after this you won’t even remember your precious Regina because she will have never existed,” Zelena cackles as they tumble through the portal together.

“No!” Regina screams as she tries to go after them. It’s futile. The portal has already closed. Her girlfriend has gone along with her insane, long-lost sister she never knew existed. Little did she know that what she remembered about her childhood was all a farce that went far deeper than even her mother knew.

Zelena and Emma fall gracelessly out of the portal and onto a grassy field.

“Get off of me!” Zelena yells as she tries to push the fallen Savior away from her.

“I won’t let you hurt Regina.”

“Well, good luck trying to stop me dear,” Zelena says as she stands. Emma gathers herself and gives chase only to run right into Zelena’s back, as she freezes mid-step. “No,” Zelena whispers.

Emma peers around Zelena to see two young girls, maybe 5 and 3 - one with hair the color of fire and the other as dark as night. She’s stunned. Regina always said that her mother had never mentioned having any other children, but here it was clear as day that they knew each other. They even played with each other as children. “Wait. I thought you grew up in Oz?” Emma asks as she steps up next to Zelena.

“I did,” she says, eyes never leaving the two girls in the field. They were laughing and squealing as
they chased each other round and round.

Zelena reaches her hand out as if to squeeze the air out of a toddling Regina. Seriously? She’s going to kill a toddler? Of course she is, Emma thinks. What else would she do? Crazy Bitch. Suddenly, there’s magic filling the clearing, dark violet in color. Emma grabs Zelena and drags her into the shrubs and out of sight.

“Hey-” Zelena exclaims until Emma puts a hand over her mouth and silences her.

“No talking,” Emma whispers, “Cora is near. Look at the magic. If we’re found, we’re as good as dead.”

Zelena doesn’t respond as Emma removes her hand from her face. She simply lowers herself to the ground and looks back out at the girls who remain completely oblivious to the magic surrounding them.

“Lena! Come on!” Little Regina squeals as she takes off running towards the hidden figures that move further into the shrubs to remain hidden. Emma smiles, never thinking she’d ever see her girlfriend so young and carefree. She trips over her long dress and falls on her face right in front of them.

“Regina!” Little Zelena yells as she runs to her. “Are you alright?” she asks kneeling in front of her sister.

Little Regina nods but her lower lip is protruding like she’s a breath away from tears.

“It’s alright, Sissy,” Little Zelena says as she wraps her arms around her little sister, “you’re alright,” she says again rubbing her hands up and down Little Regina’s back.

“What is going on?” a voice booms.

Both Little Zelena and Little Regina jump to their feet and face away from the hidden women and towards the approach figure.

Big Zelena gasps and grabs the grass as if that can ground her.

“I asked you a question.” It’s Cora. Of course, Emma thinks. She sees Little Regina discretely wipe tears away from her eyes.

“I tripped, Mother,” Little Regina says taking a step forward.

“Oh my darling daughter,” Cora coos as she steps forward and grasps Little Regina (who flinches away) and pulls her close, “are you alright?” Apparently Cora at one time had perfected the pretense of caring for her young daughter. Emma saw right through that act. Spending time in more foster homes than she could remember taught her what a Fake Mother looks like; someone who has ulterior motives and strings attached to their ‘love’. Cora is probably worse than all of the foster moms Emma has ever had to deal with because Regina actually does love her in ways that Emma never loved her own foster parents.

Little Regina nods and responds, “I believe so, Mother.”

“And what of you?” Cora snaps at Little Zelena.

“I am unharmed, Mother,” she says with her head down.
“Look at me when I am talking to you, Child.” Little Zelena lifts her head and is immediately
thrown back by magic.

“Lena!” Little Regina screams as she tries to go to Little Zelena.

Cora holds her back and says, “You are supposed to be protecting your sister and teaching her how
to be a lady, a princess, a queen; not encouraging her to ignore her responsibilities and ruin her
perfect dresses. The only way you stay here is if you take your responsibilities seriously.”

“Yes, Mother.” Little Zelena says hanging her head in shame.

Big Zelena looks at the scene in barely contained rage. What is going on? Why isn’t little me
fighting back? Why is Mother treating me this way? I should be the one being prepared to be
queen. Not Regina. She is nothing. I am the perfect daughter. Why can Cora not see this? Zelena
thinks.

Emma looks on in a similar fashion as the Zelena sitting next to her - with barely contained rage
towards Cora. But Emma couldn’t care less that Zelena was still jealous of Regina, even as she’s a
toddler. A freaking toddler! Zelena is jealous of a toddler, Emma thinks she’s totally off her rocker,
she has to be. But Emma was fuming because Cora was punishing a child for another child ruining
a dress. What does she think children do? Children play, they get dirty. Although Emma knows she
had been punished for less in the foster system, she never imagined Regina being punished for
something so trivial. How could she be so naïve? Regina grew up with the Queen of Hearts before
she had that title to soothe her anger. Regina was probably punished for much less, and Zelena too
if this place they were in actually was the past instead of an alternate universe. Where did Zelena
send us? And if this is actually the past why don’t Regina or Zelena remember?

“Enough wallowing Child, you will go straight to your quarters and you will spend the evening
fixing your sister’s dress.”

“Of course, Mother.”

“And you!” Cora seethes as she turns and wraps Little Regina in a magic hold. All but dropping
Little Zelena to the ground - completely forgotten. “You are destined for greatness, my dear
daughter. Yet you spend your time running amuck and ruining your nice things. How can you be
Queen when you refuse to learn.”

Little Regina is crying, tears streaming down her face, as the magic grows tighter. Emma wants
nothing more than to barge out of her hiding spot and show Cora that it’s not okay to treat a child
like that ever, and maybe she should show her someone who will fight back, but they cannot mess
with the timeline. Who knows what could happen. So, she turns to look at Zelena to see the woman
grinning wickedly. It’s official, she’s bat-shit crazy. She’s enjoying watching a toddler being
squeezed by magic.

“Regina!” Little Zelena yells as she gets to her feet. Suddenly, the violet magic surrounding Little
Regina and holding her in midair is gone and Little Regina is gently placed on the ground -
surrounded in a green glow - gasping and coughing and crying as Little Zelena has her in her arms
whispering soothing words, “It’s alright. You’re safe. I have you.”

“What?” Big Zelena whispers angrily, “she was getting what she deserved, it was her fault!”

Cora turns towards the shrubbery where Emma and Zelena are hiding and Emma pushes her magic
out to conceal them. “Shuddup!” Emma whispers as she smacks Big Zelena. Zelena doesn’t even
flinch; she’s too engrossed in what is going on outside their little magic bubble.
Cora gives one last glance to the shrubs before turning back towards her daughters. “Oh enough!” There’s green magic everywhere and Emma realizes it’s not from the full-sized version next to her. “Stand up and wipe your tears. You will go back to the estate and change your clothes. No children of mine will be seen in such a state.” And with that she was gone with a dramatic flip of her hand and a puff of violet smoke.

The girls remain in each other’s arms until Henry Sr. makes his way on his horse a short while later.

“Girls?” he asks as he dismounts.

“Oh Daddy!” Little Regina exclaims as she wraps her arms around her father’s neck when he bends over.

“What’s the matter, Mija?” he asks picking her up.

“Mother—“ as soon as she starts, her chin starts wobbling and the tears start falling.

“Shhh” Henry Sr. coos as he sits in the grass and motions for Little Zelena to join him, leaning against a log near where Emma and full-sized Zelena are hiding. Little Zelena hesitates for only a moment before she goes and leans against Henry Sr. as he wraps an arm around her. “What happened, Chiquita?” he asks, looking at Little Zelena.

She’s looking at the ground. Emma turns to the full-sized version next to and sees tears in her eyes but wisely does not comment. *Maybe this’ll be good for everyone involved. Maybe no one will have to die. And maybe, just maybe, Regina won’t have to lose another person in her life. Whether she thinks she needs them or not.* “Regina fell,” Little Zelena says burying her face in Henry’s shoulder, “and when I went to help her up Mother came and was very upset that Regina’s dress is ruined. She used magic, Father—”

Big Zelena gasps. Even Emma was having a hard time keeping up, and she wasn’t the one filled with (apparently) false memories. “This must be an alternate reality,” Big Zelena says shaking her head, “there’s no way any of this is real.” She moves to stand but Emma is quick to pull her back to the ground.

“We wait until they leave, then we get the hell out of here before Cora comes back to sniff us out.” Emma turns back to Little Zelena who is still talking.

“-not just on me, but on Regina this time.”

Henry Sr. looks down at his sobbing daughter clutching to his shirt like a lifeline. “Oh, Mija,” he says squeezing her tighter. “I’m so sorry.”

“You have to do something!” Little Zelena yells, “It’s not fair.”

“Cora is just doing what she thinks is best for Regina,” Henry Sr. says with a shake of his head.

“Well, she’s wrong,” Little Zelena says with conviction, “and if you won’t do anything, I will protect Regina.”

“Oh, Chiquita,” Henry Sr. says pulling Little Zelena closer, “you know that that is very dangerous. Follow your Mother’s rules and she won’t have to hurt you.”

Emma is disgusted, *How can a man say these things? These are children! Innocents! If ever there was a case that fit the definition of Stockholm syndrome it would be this one.* However, the
protectiveness in Young Zelena is shocking. Anyone with a brain can see that she loves her sister very much. She was ready to take a magical punishment for her little sister. She was protecting Regina from their mother’s magic.

Before the scene unfolds further, Emma and full-sized Zelena are surrounded in a black smoke-magic, Emma thinks and suddenly she can’t see a thing.

She blinks and she’s inside a home. No, not just any home, a huge home, an estate. Oh god, she’s inside Regina’s childhood home isn’t she? Zelena is next to her and as Emma turns to look at her she is shocked to see she is transparent. “Whoo,” she whispers.

Zelena looks around until her eyes land on Emma, “Oh great,” she says sarcastically, “we’re invisible.” But before she can say anything else two girls run into the room. As soon as Emma sees them she knows that it’s Little Regina and Little Zelena again, only this time they must be 11 and 13. Emma grabs Big Zelena and moves them against the wall. “We don’t have to move, you idiot,” Zelena says with an exaggerated eye roll, “we’re invisible.”

“Just a precaution,” Emma says looking back at the girls.

“Zelena, give it back!” Little Regina grounds out as she chases the redhead.

“Or what, Sis?”

Before Little Regina could respond someone else walks into the room.

“Camilla?” Little Zelena asks as she stops running. Little Regina uses this distraction and grabs for the diary.

“Do not instigate, Zelena,” this Camilla says with a small shake of her head, she moves towards Little Regina who is looking pretty smug, “and you” she says turning Little Regina and sits her in front of the mirror, “if you yell like that and your mother hears, what do you think will happen, hmmm?”

Both Little Zelena and Little Regina hang their heads and mumble apologies.

“Now, Miss Regina, your mother is expecting you for tea before you accompany her into the village,” Camilla says as she brushes out Little Regina’s long hair.

Little Regina groans and slouches lower in her seat. Little Zelena moves closer and rests a hand on her shoulder, “Don’t slouch, Sissy, Mother won’t approve.” Little Regina sits up straight and looks at Zelena with an expression of fear.

“Will you go with me?” she asks.

“You know Mother will not allow that,” Little Zelena whispers sitting next to her sister.

“But I need you,” Little Regina whispers back as Little Zelena wraps her in a hug.

“You can do this, Regina. You know Mother will not hurt you. She loves you,” Little Zelena says into her sister’s hair as Camilla watches from behind them.

Emma scoffs, “Love?”

Big Zelena turns to her, “She kept her,” she whispers with venom.

“Apparently she kept you too, you just don’t remember,” Emma says with a shrug.
“This is just a ridiculous notion. A side effect of the spell, I’m sure.”

“Yes,” Emma rolls her eyes, “the spell you cast that sent us into the past so you could kill your sister is obviously lying to us. You know, for all your ‘wicked ways’ and evilness you certainly are dense.”

Before Zelena could retort, the doors of the bedroom magically flew open and Cora walked in.

“Camilla! I asked you to prepare Regina, not allow her to ruin her face with useless tears,” she says flinging her hands in the direction of her daughters, “and Zelena, what are you doing in here? You do not belong in these quarters.”

Big Zelena gasps, “Of course Mother, my apologies,” Little Zelena says stepping away from Little Regina.

“No! Zelena should come with us today, Mother.”

Cora looks at Little Regina with barely contained rage.

“I-I mean if you think it would be smart, Mother,” Little Regina retracts as she steps back and bows her head in submission.

“I do not think that would be smart, my darling daughter,” Cora says as she grasps Little Regina’s chin. “I need you to make sure everyone sees you today. That you make everyone fall in love with you.”

“Why?” Little Regina asks as she tries to pull away from her mother’s grasp.

“Because, my dear, a queen needs her subjects to love her, to adore her. If your subjects don’t love you, they will not obey you.”

“I’m not a queen, Mother. I’m barely a Lady,” Little Regina says shamefully, with tears in her eyes.

“Enough!” Cora says as she squeezes Little Regina’s chin tighter, “You will be queen. Now clean yourself up and prepare for the carriage. Camilla, I expect her to look perfect,” and now she is turning to leave. She pauses and looks right at Emma and Zelena against the wall. They both hold their breath as she stares and then is gone in a flourish. They exhale, “Holy shit,” Emma whispers, but Big Zelena is already staring at the girls again. Little Zelena has Little Regina in her arms as she weeps.

“I don’t want to go. I don’t want to be Queen,” Little Regina sobs.

“Shhh,” Little Zelena coos as she rubs circles on her back, “you will be fine. Keep quiet and smile politely. Everyone in the village will love you and then Mother will be happy.”

“You would make a better Queen, Zelena, you always do everything right. I just want to be happy. I don’t want to be Queen.”

“Hush now,” Little Zelena says pulling back to look Little Regina in the eye, “do not ever let Mother hear you say that. She will punish you. Follow her rules, Sissy, and everything will be okay.”

Camilla moves up and clears her throat, “Miss Regina, we must be quick before your mother returns.”
She barely finishes her sentence when Cora comes back in the room and faces Emma and Zelena. As she moves towards them Big Zelena wraps them in her magic and they’re gone. Emma blinks but they haven’t moved. However, the room is empty.

“Where did they-“ Emma starts; but before she can finish the door is flung open and Little Regina runs in. She is in a different dress and it’s torn on the bottom. She falls onto the bed sobbing. Little Zelena comes in soon after. She is much calmer and simply sits on the bed next to Little Regina.

“We’ve moved ahead again in the timeline it seems,” Big Zelena murmurs as she steps closer to the younger girls. Emma notices what Zelena is talking about because now Little Regina seems to be about fifteen or sixteen.

Little Regina continues to sob but moves until she is curled around Little Zelena. She cries until her sobs turn to hiccups and then Little Zelena asks, “Would you like to talk?”

Little Regina nods and sits up a little so they are both resting against the headboard still wrapped in each others arms as Little Regina lays her head on Little Zelena’s shoulder. “Mother is trying to marry me off.”

“Regina,” Little Zelena sighs, “we’ve talked about this, and it is your job. Become Queen and make Mother proud.”

“No Zelena!” Little Regina says as she sits up and pulls away from her sister, “I do not want to be Queen.”

“Of course not, but it is what Mother wants, and she always gets what she wants,” Little Zelena says dejectedly.

“I do not wish you to go,” Little Regina says quietly, looking into her sister’s eyes. Well, that took a strange turn, Emma thinks. And by the look on Big Zelena’s face, she was thinking the same thing.

“Nor do I, but it is what Mother wishes, so it is what shall occur.”

“Why must you go to this Dark One? Does Mother not understand how dangerous he is? I hear whispers in the village, Lena.”

“They are nothing more than whispers, Gi. Truly, he is not as terrible as his name suggests.”

“You have met him?” Little Regina asks looking up at her sister.

“Yes, and he is going to teach me how to control my magic.”

“You do not need him, Lena. You are perfect how you are.”

“I am a danger to everyone around me when I lose my temper. I am a danger to you.”

“NO!” Regina says pulling further away from Zelena, “You have never harmed me Zelena. You are the only one that has ever protected me,” she adds quietly.

Little Zelena sighs as she wraps her arms around her little sister again, pulling her close, “It will not be as bad as it seems, we will always be sisters, even if we are not so close in distance, Sissy. I will always be here for you.”

Little Regina sighs and lays her head back down and says quietly, “She used magic on me again.”
“What?!?” Little Zelena asks trying to pull away to look at her sister, but Little Regina just holds tighter.

“She was angry when I tore my dress and wrapped me in magic again to teach me my lesson. However, I soon fainted from the grip and we had to leave the ball. I believe she was even angrier at me and I feared the trip to be dangerous when we were leaving; that is until a prince stopped us on our way out.”

“Oh?” Little Zelena asks quietly.

“Yes. Apparently he was quite taken with me,” Little Regina scoffs and adds an eye roll for good measure.

Little Zelena smiles, “Of course he was, Mei Mei. You’re beautiful.”

“Not like you, Zelena,” Little Regina says quietly, cuddling closer to her sister.

And that’s how they stayed, quietly contemplating their futures. Two sisters on two very different paths, predetermined for them by their mother.

Emma turns to look at the Zelena from her time to see her distressed and staring at the two sisters. “What are you thinking?” she whispers.

Zelena jumps and whips her head around, “That this imagery is incredibly pathetic and even in a fake world we cannot plausibly be friends.”

Emma scoffs, “Looks like closer than friends to me, Zelena. You look like sisters.”

“Shut. Up.” Zelena growls as she turns to look back at the younger version of herself calming Regina.

Before Zelena can add another scathing remark, Emma jumps in and asks, “What does Mei Mei mean?”

Zelena looks at her like she is the dumbest creature she has ever laid eyes upon. “You truly are dumber than I initially assumed. And that is most definitely not a good thing, Savior,” she draws out the title like it leaves a bitter taste in her mouth. “However, Mei Mei is the Mandarin term for ‘Little Sister’”

“When did you learn Mandarin?” Emma asks trying to imagine what Oz is like, but then she realizes that Zelena actually did not grow up in Oz and that she probably learned it here in the Enchanted Forest.

“I remember learning it in Oz, but as you can clearly see, that has to be false because I never grew up in Oz.” She’s furious now, she grabs for Emma’s hand and tries using magic again. This time when Emma blinks they are in a great room. They are standing behind Regina and Cora. Regina is in a pale blue dress, looking positively stunning, Emma thinks. As always, she adds with a smile. That’s when Emma notices that Regina isn’t moving. She quickly looks to Cora to see if she is using magic, but there’s no magic. Regina simply isn’t moving. Emma moves closer to Zelena and sees that a man is in front of them down on one knee. She gasps. This must be her grandfather. Oh god, this is so weird - definitely the weirdest thing to ever happen to me. And a lot of weird shit has happened to me. I mean, come on, my parents are Snow freaking White and Prince Charming, my son is related to the Dark One because I slept with his son, and I’m dating the Evil Queen, who just happens to be sisters with the Wicked Witch and daughter to the Queen of Hearts. I didn’t think it could get any weirder than that. Whelp - I was wrong.
Cora grabs Regina’s arm and accepts his proposal. Emma thinks she’s going to be sick. Regina looks like she’s going to be as well.

Emma blinks again and they’re back in Regina’s bedroom. She’s standing at the window crying. Little Zelena—should I even be calling her little anymore? She’s the exact same size as the Zelena I traveled here with. Hmmm...now her brain isn’t even listening to what they’re saying, but Current Zelena is moving closer, and she seems genuinely concerned now instead of envious or angry.

Emma looks to see Zelena and Regina hugging in front of Regina’s balcony. Zelena seems to be whispering into her ear and Emma and Current Zelena both unconsciously move closer to hear what they are saying.

“It will be alright,” Zelena is saying, “you can do this. You saved his daughter, he is probably just looking for a mother for that little brat.”

“Lena!” Regina exclaims, “She’s a child. She couldn’t have predicted that her father would be so happy that he would ask me to be his wife and raise her.”

“Sounds like an obnoxious princess to me,” Zelena mutters into Regina’s hair. Current Zelena chuckles and Emma rolls her eyes. Snow couldn’t have known - could she?

Regina is speaking again, “What about Daniel?” she whispers.

“What about him?” Zelena asks pulling back to look into her sister’s eyes.

“I love him.”

“And?” Zelena asks perplexed.

“I do not wish to be Queen, Lena.”

“Regina!” Zelena exasperates, “We have talked about this. You do not have a choice; it is Mother’s choice in what we do. It is why I am in training and why she doesn't know yet that I visit you. It is why you will do this. You were always meant to be Queen, Sissy.”

“I do not wish that title,” Regina sneers as she turns away from her sister to look out at the sky. “I wish to be free. I want to run and not be punished. I want to love without being weak. I want to marry Daniel and live an innocent life filled with love and happiness. Do you want this as well? We can do this together, Lena.”

Zelena looks like she is contemplating this offer until she shakes her head and says, “No. This fantasy cannot continue, Regina. You are to marry the King and become Queen. It has always been your destiny. You have been groomed for this your whole life. Mother chose you and you must respect her wishes. She loves you and will do anything to make this dream come true.”

“This is not a dream!” Regina screams, rounding on her sister, “this is a nightmare. You know as well as I, Zelena. I want to be free,” she says as an afterthought. “Why can I not choose happiness?”

Zelena smiles sadly, “You were never destined for happiness, Sissy. You were destined to be Queen, and Mother will stop at nothing until she wins. You know this.”

“Lena, we need to leave. We can be gone by morning and Mother will never be able to stop us. We can finally be happy. No pressure to be Queen or to be Powerful. No one to force us into things we do not wish to do. We could finally be free. Please?” Regina begs as she grabs her sister’s hands with a hopeful smile.
Emma looks at Current Zelena and sees her hands clenched tightly. Then she looks to her face and she sees the hopeful look there. *Interesting*, Emma muses. *Zelena actually wants this. About damn time she’s figured it out.*

“I will help you and Daniel to safety,” Zelena says with a small smile, “I cannot promise myself, but I will do my best to help you, Sissy.”

“Thank you Lena. I love you,” Regina says wrapping her arms around Zelena tightly.

“I love you too,” Zelena whispers into Regina’s hair and she clings tightly to her. Emma looks back to Current Zelena and sees tears in her eyes. *We must be almost there.*

Emma blinks and they are in the stable. She sees Regina and Daniel locked in a loving embrace. *I should not be jealous,* she thinks, *Regina didn’t even know me yet. And this was who she thought was her true love. God, I’m jealous of a dead man. This is a new low, Swan, a new low indeed.* Now, Emma looks around and she realizes where they are in the timeline. Cora is about to kill Daniel—and there’s nothing Emma can do to stop it. The invisibility is still in effect. She looks to Zelena who is incredibly confused. *She either doesn’t know what happened or didn’t actually think about the repercussions,* Emma thinks as she turns back to Regina.

She and Daniel are smiling at each other as Zelena clears her throat from the other side of the barn.

“You must go,” she says, “Mother will know.”

“Know what dear?” Cora asks as she steps out of the shadows, “That my daughter is trying to run away from the marriage I procured for her? That you are an accomplice? How pathetic. You are pathetic. You are all pathetic.”

Emma watches the scene unfold. Cora steals Daniel’s heart, Zelena tries to stop her, but she’s too late, and when Zelena tries to comfort Regina she is stopped by Cora’s magic.

Cora gets into Zelena’s face and hisses, “You have ruined *everything.* This is your fault. You are the reason Regina does not obey; but by taking her memories she will not have to worry about a sister she’s never known.”

“You can’t do this,” Zelena grits out, fighting against the magical bonds holding her away from Regina, who seems completely oblivious to what is going on.

“Oh course I can, dear. I already am.” Just then purple magic swirls around the barn. “And the beauty of this is, that no one will not remember this. When you wake up you will be in Oz, where you would have been raised by an abusive father who never loved you because you are different, never truly belonging,” Cora says with a mock pout. “You will figure out you have a sister and spend the rest of your life envying what she has and what you will never have. Simply because your father was a no one and hers is a prince.”

“Mother, be reasonable,” Zelena pleads as she looks to see if Regina has looked up yet.

“Do not call me that,” Cora growls as she tightens the magical holds on Zelena.

Current Zelena gasps.

“You are not my daughter. You were a mistake. I should have never kept you. I should have sent you to Oz when I had the chance, but my dear husband has a kind heart. Even if he is completely useless, you should be grateful, he is the only reason you are here today.”
Current Zelena falls to the ground watching everything unfold. Emma would have been concerned if she wasn’t too busy looking between Regina sobbing over her fiancé’s dead body, or the fight unfolding between the two off standing witches.

The magic is getting overwhelming and Emma reaches out blinding for Current Zelena. She may loathe the woman, but she’ll be damned if she winds up stranded in the past without this psychopath.

“No!!!” and it’s difficult for Emma to distinguish which version of Zelena has screamed.

Chapter End Notes

Let me know what you think and if you have any questions ;)
Natsukashii

Chapter Summary

natsukashii:
(adj.) of some small thing that brings you suddenly, joyously back to fond memories, not with the wistful longing for what's past, but with an appreciation of the good times.

Chapter Notes

So sorry I did not post yesterday but I had some adulting to do (and it was horrible—every. single. minute.) But I do not have classes tomorrow so I will hopefully be able to get some serious writing done tonight and tomorrow *fingers crossed*

And here's some more background that was posted in the comments of chapter three in case you didn't get a chance to read it:

So, Season 1 happens totally the way it did in the show (with some secretive Swan Queen loving going on) and when Emma kisses Henry awake everyone is sent back to the Enchanted Forest. From there Emma and Regina fight-"I can't believe you're the Evil Queen, I almost loved you" blah blah—Emma has a total meltdown because she can't figure out her feelings ;)

Emma and Henry go exploring one day and find the "tunnels" and when they bring Regina down to check them out they realize that these tunnels/passageways lead to every realm. So, if you find "The Gateway" you can go anywhere. Super cool, right? Right ;)

So they (Emma and Henry—and probably David because he's all about the adventures, too) were going to go on an adventure to a new realm (against Regina's wishes) when Cora shows up. Emma and Regina have to work together in order to stop her, but they aren't working together because Emma is acting like a child, so Snow still does the whole thing with the candle and has Regina kill her own mother. This messes her up and she is trying to cope (and failing) when Emma steps in and helps. They have a heart to heart and BAM! They decide to give this relationship another go (YAY!) They're all living at Regina's castle because Snow and Charming's is in ruins and they are rebuilding it. Henry is kidnapped by the shadow and taken to Neverland and they all rush to rescue him. When they get him back they realize that a Wicked Witch has taken over Regina's castle and that she is trying to kill Regina/take away the life she knows—which is as dramatic as it sounds ;)

Zelena tries to create the portal, and then we have the flashback scene that is in Chapter 4. After they get back and check out if they can get their memories back, Regina and Emma decide the Enchanted Forest isn't where they want to be. Emma was staying because Henry loved it so much and she thought Regina felt more at home there but Regina was still the Evil Queen to everyone and she hated it. Once Emma realized this they decided they were going to leave the Enchanted Forest and so they decide to leave for the World Without Magic, the only catch is that since there's no magic, they cannot remember anything (so says the rules of "The Passageways") so when they leave they are given false memories (similar to Regina giving Emma and Henry happy memories after 3b).

The entire time between Henry bringing Emma to Storybrooke and them coming back to this world is about a year.
This story is *technically* AU after season 1. Some of the same things that happened in the show happen in here but it all occurs at a different pace and in a bit of a different way. So, Pan's Curse doesn't happen here—there's not a missing year. They come back from Neverland and BOOM there's the Wicked Witch plotting to kill Regina and the curse Zelena casts to send them into the past happens right after that.

Thank you guys so much for all the love I've been getting for this story, it really motivates me to keep writing :) 

And now onto the next chapter:

Suddenly, Emma is back in Storybrooke. She’s laying face down in the barn where she and Zelena had left through the portal. She cracks open an eye to see Zelena lying farther away in a similar state.

That’s when she hears it. Someone is crying. She tries to move her body but everything hurts. So, she lets out an involuntary groan instead.

The crying stops and suddenly Regina is in front of her, “Emma?” she asks.

“Mmmmmnn,” is the only response Emma can give.

“Emma!” she screams and suddenly she’s lying on top of her. Emma groans again. “Oh no, you’re hurt!” Regina exclaims as she leans back to look her girlfriend over. Emma tries to smile but ends up grimacing instead. “Don’t you ever do that again, alright? I was so worried,” Regina whispers as she finds no wounds that need to be tended to, at least no physical ones.

“Mmmmkay, Gina,” Emma whispers. “I love you,” she tries to grin.

Regina chokes out something between a laugh and a sob and says, “I love you too, *Idiot*.”

“You know,” Emma grimaces as she shifts into a sitting position, leaning against the wall of the barn. “you make that sound like an insult, but I know better.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “You just tried to stop my crazy half-sister from traveling to the past and killing me. Only an idiot would continuously jump into danger like you do.”

“Yes, but you find it *charming*,” Emma smirks.

“Do *not* start that,” Regina says giving Emma a stern look.

“Come here,” Emma says, opening her arms. Regina takes only a second to wrap herself in her girlfriend’s arms, resting her head over Emma’s heart. “I’m *your* idiot,” Emma says into Regina’s hair.

“Yes, you are,” Regina chuckles.

“Oh my god, make it stop,” Zelena groans as she rolls onto her back.

Emma laughs until she realizes that Regina has froze and is trying to pull away. “Don’t,” Emma
whispers as she pulls Regina back to her.

“Don’t? She tried to kill us all!” Regina exclaimed as she tried to pull away again.

Emma just holds her tighter and says, “How long were we gone?”

“Gone?” Regina asks as she stops fighting to look perplexingly at her girlfriend, “you did not go anywhere. You pushed Zelena and instead of flying into the portal you both collapsed on the ground and neither of you has moved in 10 minutes.”

“Ten minutes?” Emma asks in disbelief. She turns to look at Zelena who has a similar look. Well at least I didn’t imagine it, Emma thinks.

“Yes, you were not moving,” Regina says. She looks down and whispers, “I thought you had died.”

“Hey. I’m fine,” Emma says wrapping Regina in a tight hug. She rests her chin on Regina’s head, “we actually did go back in time, and we-“

“You what?!” Regina exclaims, “That is not possible.”

“Neither is magic, but it’s still here,” Emma mutters.

“Time travel defies the laws of magic, dear.”

“And yet there should be no laws of magic to begin with, babe.” Emma grins triumphantly.

“Do not call me that again,” Regina glares but Emma simply smirks and kisses Regina’s nose.

“It may not be possible, but we did it. And we found out-“

“That it is impossible to kill you,” Zelena jumps in as she sits up, “we were invisible the entire time.”

Emma looks over to Zelena who is glaring at her. Why can’t I tell Regina, Emma wonders silently. Of course, Zelena would never admit to caring for Regina, even seeing the proof for herself. Crazy Bitch. “How terribly fortunate for you, Sis,” Zelena drawls and then freezes.

Aha! Emma thinks, She does remember. She called Regina that lovingly in the past. I wonder how we can get their real memories back. Who took them? Why? This is too many questions, Swan, listen to what they’re saying before they kill each other.

Regina looks like she is ready to maim Zelena where she sits so Emma jumps in, “Hey Gina?” Now Regina is turning her maim-look onto Emma who simply grins and continues, “how would someone go about removing memories?”

“I beg your pardon?” Regina asks. Why would Emma want to know this? “Did Zelena try to steal your memories?” she asks glaring at her supposed half-sister.

“No,” Emma says looking at Zelena who is shaking her head, “but someone took yours.”

“I’m sorry?” Regina cannot believe what she is hearing. What the hell happened when Emma hit her head? “Did you hit your head? You probably have a concussion. We need to get you to the hospital, or at the very least someplace where you can properly rest until your brain heals.”

“Regina, I’m fine. I did not hit my head. I think.” Emma pauses to see if there’s any pain. Nope. No
pain. She turns back to Regina, “When we went back in time we saw you. Little you - and you were adorable by the way,” she says with a smirk that turns into a full-blown smile when Regina glares at her. *Why she hates being called adorable, I will never understand.* Emma internally shakes her head. “Anyways, we saw you as a child, playing with Little Zelena. You guys grew up together but Cora made you forget because Zelena tried to help you run away.”

“Emma, what are you talking about? Zelena was sent to Oz before I was even born. I never knew she existed until we returned to the Enchanted Forest after Neverland.”

“No, those are false memories! You guys were best friends-Zelena even *protected* you! I couldn’t even make that up if I tried! You’ve got to believe me, Gina. I saw it.”

“You hit your head, dear. We need to get you to the hospital to make sure you do not lose additional brain cells. I know you cannot spare to lose any more.”

“Don’t try to joke, Regina, I’m being serious.”

“She is correct, Regina,” Zelena says from across the barn.

Regina turns her head so fast Emma swears she can hear the bones cracking. If Regina is being completely honest, she completely forgot that Zelena was even there. *But why is she agreeing with Emma? This doesn’t make any sense.*

“When Emma and I were sent into the past we saw us, together, over the course of our childhoods. We started out as toddlers, then into adolescence, and finally the beginning of our adult lives. That is when Mother changed our memories.”

“You are not making any sense. I do not believe you.”

“If this did not actually happen, then how would I know that when the King proposed to you, you were wearing a blue dress and you cried at your balcony because you wished to run away with Daniel?”

Regina pauses, she hadn’t even told Emma about the balcony. *What is going on here?*

“We need to speak to Rumple,” she says as she helps Emma to her feet. She turns to Zelena and waits for her. When Zelena does not move she asks, “Well? Are you coming?”

“Oh.” Zelena stumbles as she hurried to her feet, “I did not realize you wished for me to accompany you.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Of course you are coming. I cannot regain my supposed ‘lost memories’ by myself. If our memories were tampered with together, it will be easier to return them if we are together as well.”

*Of course, Zelena thinks, why didn’t I think of that? Perhaps Regina deserves more credit than I give her. No, that is just the stupid illusion talking. It never actually happened - I just want to mess with Regina’s head so her perfect ‘happy ending’ never happens.*

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“When did you remember?” Regina asks.

“I have always remembered some things,” Zelena says turning to look at her sister, “I remembered growing up and protecting you from Mother. I remembered you trying to run away and being
punished. I remembered trying to kill you. Repeatedly.”

“Ah. Good times,” Emma says with a grin.

Zelena rolls her eyes, “I also remembered having to leave someplace, but not knowing why. I did not remember that I was forced to leave the Enchanted Forest specifically, or that I was the Wicked Witch per say, or that I possess magic. However, I knew that I had a special connection to the Wizard of Oz when Henry played the Wizard our first year in this world. From there I started digging into my memories until I started remembering more.”

Zelena gets to her feet and walks over to her sleeping nieces. She leans over and kisses Evelyn and then Charlotte, “Goodbye, my little munchkins.”

“You know,” Emma starts, “I always thought it was a little weird that you called Tommy your little flying monkey and the twins your little munchkins, but it’s a lot weirder now that I remember you’re the Wicked Witch.”

Zelena turns towards Emma and gives her a wicked grin, “I always enjoyed watching you squirm when I called them that.”

“Of course you did,” Emma says with an eye roll.

Regina shakes her head and asks, “Will you, Robin, and the children be joining us for dinner tonight?”

“Yes, Mei Mei.” Zelena says with a shake of her head.

Regina startles, Zelena has not called her that since—no, Regina thinks, my original memories?

Zelena looks just as perplexed, “It seems we were finally able to regain our original memories in this new world. I actually remember liking you before we came here,” she says with a sneer.

Emma laughs out loud, startling both sisters. It seems they forgot that she was in the room. “You guys are so stinking cute when you bicker and pretend not to like each other. Glad to see that hasn’t changed, even with these false memories,” she says clapping her hands together and grinning.

“I am not cute,” they say simultaneously. Emma just laughs again, Sister like Sister, she thinks.

Zelena looks from Emma to Regina, she not only remembers going back in time to witness them together, now she actually remembers caring for Regina, protecting Regina, loving Regina. She shakes her head and says, “I will have to check with Robin, but regardless of his plans, Roland, Kelly, and I will be here.”

“Wonderful. See you tonight, Lena,” Regina says with a grin.

Zelena merely rolls her eyes and leaves.

Emma sits back on the couch and Regina remembers why Zelena was here in the first place, “How is your head?” Regina asks moving to sit next to her wife.

“It’s okay,” Emma shrugs, “I think I slept most of it off.”

“You cannot sleep off a concussion, darling,” Regina says with a shake of her head and a smile.
“Well, you can take your logic and get it away from me,” Emma says defiantly, “I’ll just be over here sleeping off the rest of my concussion.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “You’re impossible. I am going to go change and then start preparing dinner.” She stands to leave.

“Wait!” Emma says as she grabs Regina’s wrist.

“Yes?”

“You forgot something,” Emma says pulling Regina back onto the couch.

“I did?” Regina asks.

“Mhmm,” Emma voices as she points to her lips.

Regina rolls her eyes, “You are a child.”

Emma just stares at her.

Regina raises an eyebrow and stares back.

This staring contest continues until Evelyn shifts in her swing and Regina turns to check on her. Emma uses this distraction to push Regina to lie back on the couch below her. Straddling her wife, Emma smiles down at Regina and raises a hand to tap her chin in thought. “Hmmmm, I wonder what it could be,” she says as she looks at the wall in front of her. “Oh right, I know. I always kiss my wife when I get home and usually she does as well but it seems today she needs to be reminded.”

Regina smiles and shakes her head, “Just shut up and kiss me.” And Emma does not need to be told twice.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

She hears them before she sees them. I should have known better than to call them for dinner when they were upstairs, Regina thinks with a shake of her head, they sound like a herd of elephants coming down my stairs like that. She huffs a little but does not say anything.

“Rookie mistake, babe,” Emma says coming up behind her, knowing full well that her wife was upset at all the ruckus their family was making.

“I am anything but a rookie, darling,” she says putting the finishing touches on the table.

Emma laughs as the kids start filing into the dining room. “Hands!” she yells and they all slump their shoulders and head back out the door towards the bathroom.

“There was no need to yell,” Regina says with a disappointed frown.

“Nope. But I happen to know you like it when I scream,” she says as she wraps her arms around Regina.

“Emma!” Regina exclaims in a whisper.

“And I love it when you say my name,” Emma says as she nuzzles her nose into Regina’s neck.

“Stop it.” Regina smacks her shoulder and tries to push her away.
“I love you,” Emma says as she kisses Regina’s neck before pulling away to look her in the eye. She keeps her arms securely around her wife’s waist and smiles.

“I love you too,” Regina says with a smile.

“Oh god, do you two need a minute? Because if you’re going to have sex I would hope you’d move the food, I would still like to eat tonight.” Zelena says walking into the dining room with Robin.

Emma rolls her eyes and walks into the kitchen, “I need a drink.”

Regina shakes her head, “Really, Zelena, was that necessary?”

She shrugs, “Probably not, but I was concerned that you would not be able to stop yourselves so I was simply helping you. We wouldn’t want you to scar your sons had they walked in on that, or even worse, scar my children.”

Now it’s Regina’s turn to roll her eyes.

Henry, Roland, Kelly, and Tommy all come back in the dining room with clean hands and big smiles as they see all of the food on the table. Everyone sits and food is passed around. Regina helps Tommy while Emma keeps the twins entertained. There’s a lot of laughing and even more scathing remarks with no real bite behind them.

This is what it’s all about. Family. Laughter. Love. You can feel the love in the room. For one night there are no Evil Queens, no Saviors, no Wicked Witches. They were just 3 women and their children (and a random husband that is just starting to remember his past life).

They had never done this in the Enchanted Forest. Once everyone returned from Neverland they were surprised to see that the Wicked Witch had taken control of Regina’s castle, and was apparently plotting Regina’s doom. *Has a sense of foreboding to it*, Regina thinks as she remembers what happened before they forgot everything. *We were too busy trying to keep her away from Snow and the baby and making sure she didn’t kill everyone - there really wasn’t time to sit down for family dinner,* she thinks sarcastically. She looks around at her family. Her wife making faces at their daughters, their laughs always bring a smile to her face. She looks to her sons who are trying to conspicuously hide their Beets so they can eat dessert. She simple raises an eyebrow when she catches Henry’s eye and he hangs his head before saying, “Here Little T, check this out, they’re really good,” he puts one in his mouth and does his best to not spit it back out. Regina chuckles, *quite the actor,* she muses as she looks at her younger son and her niece who are laughing at him—both near hysterics. Regina cannot believe how much Kelly looks and acts like Zelena, *except the eyes,* she thinks as she looks to her niece who has her dark eyes. She remembers going to the hospital when Zelena had had Kelly. Seeing her niece with dark chocolate eyes. Zelena and Robin both have blue eyes, and out pops Baby Kelly with eyes as dark as night.

During the years in this world when they did not have their true memories, there was never a question that they were sisters. They always knew they were related, they knew they did not have a good relationship with their mother and they knew Regina’s father was dead and Zelena never knew her father. That was never a problem for them though; being sisters was effortless for them. They teased each other, they mocked each other, and they loved each other. Hard. They were best friends and sisters wrapped together in a perfect little package.

*We truly are sisters,* Regina thinks as she remembers the day they met Kelly.
“She’s going to perfect, all of her aunt’s looks early on” Emma had said when they went to visit Zelena in the hospital. She leans close to the baby in her wife’s arms - looking into the eyes this baby already shares with her wife-and says, “It’ll be fun seeing how long it takes for you to develop the attitude, too.” Regina huffs and turns her arms so Kelly is farther away from Emma. She leans closer and in a mock whisper says, “It’s a blessing and a curse, Baby Girl.” Everyone smiles as she continues, “but I’ll teach you all of my tricks,” she adds with a wink.

“Should I be concerned?” Robin asks with only a slight tremor in his voice.

Emma laughs at his expression, “Well you married one sister and work for the other, you tell us.”

Regina just smiles and says, “You should really be concerned if she picks up any of your traits, Robin.”

Regina smiles at the memory and moves on to look at her sister who is talking animatedly with Roland. Regina cannot believe how good she is with him. She really does have a niche for kids, Regina thinks, must be genetic, she adds with a grin as she looks back at her own children. She’s not sure who they got that from - because it certainly wasn’t their mother. Perhaps, it was on her father’s side and he was able to instill it in Zelena when they were younger. Regina remembers just how good Zelena was with Roland the first time they met him back in the Enchanted Forest.

“Are you sure about this?” Zelena asks as they ride along in the carriage.

“No, but this is the only way to get our memories back,” Regina says as she looks out the window.

“I do not wish to see him again.”

Regina looks at Zelena but decides not to push Zelena on this. Zelena has not tried to kill her since she and Emma returned from the past. It has been less than a day and already it’s a new record.

The carriage is silent and Regina can hear Emma speaking with the driver, always the white knight, Regina thinks dryly. Before Regina can decide whether to keep up conversation with Zelena or call her girlfriend back to her the carriage abruptly stops moving.

“What the-“ Regina hears Emma start before there is a thump.

Regina rushes out of the carriage to see Emma and the driver on the ground surrounded by 5 men. “Emma!” she exclaims as she rushes to her side. She doesn’t pay the men any attention when suddenly all 5 men are flying backwards and are wrapped in tree limbs. Regina shudders, knowing exactly what it feels like.

She turns to see Zelena stepping out of the carriage with a careless flip of her hand. Regina smiles tentatively and starts to say, “thank you” before turning back to Emma laying in front of her but she is stopped when she feels a presence to her side. She turns her head in time to see him approach Zelena but before she can warn her sister, Zelena turns and looks into his eyes - into his soul. Suddenly, there’s a blinding white light leaping out of both of their chests and connecting them to each other. Soulmates, Regina thinks as she watches the lights dance around each other. Recognizing it’s other half and welcoming it home. It’s beautiful, she thinks as she watches the magical light show. There are sparks flying - literally - and some are hitting Emma and Regina, but
“Whoa,” she hears Emma say, but she cannot tear her eyes away from Zelena and the man from the forest. They have not taken their eyes off of each other. Both their eyes blown wide in fear and anticipation.

The magic hooks and pulls them together until they are standing barely a foot away from each other.

“Hi” the forest man says with a smile.

“Hello” Zelena says shyly. Did her sister just blush? An actual blush?

“Who knew the Wicked Witch actually had blood running through her veins.” Emma says with a chuckle, but silences it when she receives a glare from Regina.

“I’m Robin,” the forest man says as he puts his hand out towards Zelena.

“Zelena,” she says shaking his hand.

They are completely oblivious to everyone around them. The men are still stuck in the trees and Emma is stuck on the ground because Regina is kneeling next her, pushing her shoulder into the ground. “Holy Shit!” Emma says as she finally breaks free from Regina’s hold and sits up. “Robin Hood? THE Robin Hood?”

This seems to break them from their trance as they both turn to look at Emma with slightly dazed expressions.

“You’ve heard of me?” he asks.

“Only every night of my childhood! You were always my favorite story, a thief giving to those in need? That’s all I’ve ever wanted. I would have killed to be a part of your troupe.”

He laughs, “Well, you certainly wouldn’t have been the first Merry Woman,” he states with a smile. He turns back to Zelena and says, “Where might you be headed?”

Zelena stares, completely entranced by his eyes. Regina clears her throat and says, “To the Dark One’s castle.”

“That’s dangerous territory,” Robin states-his eyes never leaving Zelena’s.

“We can handle it,” Emma says standing up tall.

Regina rolls her eyes but takes the proffered hand and lets herself be helped up.

“Perhaps you would like the accompaniment of some Merry Men?” he questions.

“Perhaps,” Zelena says with a shrug.

Before Emma or Regina can say anything they hear a squeal. “PAPA!” A young boy comes running into the clearing where they stand.

Zelena jumps at the sound and all of the Merry Men are dropped from their tree prisons.

“Roland,” Robin chastises as he bends over to pick up the boy, “you know you must stay hidden
until we return.”

“I know, Papa, but Friar Tuck said there was magic and I just had to see it!” he exclaims as he looks around everyone in the clearing. Everyone is stunned into silence so Roland says, “So? Where’s the magic?”

Zelena is the first to break out of the trance and smiles at the boy, “Right here,” she says as she holds her hand out and green sparks fly into the air.

“Wow,” Roland says as he watches the sparks.

“Roland,” Robin says pulling the boy’s attention back to him, “how would you like to accompany these fine ladies on an adventure?”

“Of course, Papa!” he says with a grin at Zelena, Emma, and Regina.

“Well then it’s settled,” Robin says as he smiles at Zelena.

“It’s settled,” she replies with the same smile.

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“Auntie Em!” Kelly screams later that night as she comes running into the living room to stop in front of Emma who is sitting on the couch with an arm wrapped around Regina.

Oh boy, this is a whole new level of funny, Emma thinks as she smiles down at her niece. “Yes, sweetie?”

“Wanna play a game?” she asks with a smile.

“Oh I don’t know Kells, I think I’m just going to sit here with your Auntie Gi for a while,” Emma says with a smile. This smile only growing when she sees Regina cringe at the nickname.

Kelly looks at them both, snuggling on the couch, with a critical eye, “She can play too!” Kelly exclaims with a smile.

Regina laughs and looks at Emma, “Yes, dear, I can play too,” she raises an eyebrow. A challenge.

Well, two can play at this game, Emma thinks, ugh, but I don’t want to play, I just want to snuggle with my wife.

“See?! Come on Auntie Em!” Kelly grabs her hand and starts pulling her up.

Emma doesn’t move.

Kelly groans, “Aunt Gina!” she whines, “Tell Auntie Em she has to come play!”

Regina smiles at her wife who is trying not to be pulled by her whining 5-year-old niece. She stands and offers a hand to her wife, “Come along, dear, you know she will not stop until she succeeds.”

“An obnoxious trait all of the Mills women seem to possess,” Emma grumbles as her niece and her wife pull her up.

“Did you just call me obnoxious?” Regina asks, slightly offended.
Emma smiles and kisses her wife’s nose as she says, “You’re so cute when you pout like that!”

“I am not cute,” Regina says with a glare.

Emma leans into Regina and whispers against the shell of her ear, “Don’t give me that face, it’s so cute I might not be able to hold back.”

“You are on your way to sleeping on the couch tonight, Miss Swan,” Regina says as she steps back and lets go of Emma’s hand.

“Uh-oh” Emma says crouching in front of Kelly - who is staring up at them in confusion. “Auntie Gi is so angry she’s calling me Miss Swan.” Emma puts both hands on her cheeks and makes a shocked face; Kelly busts into a giggle fit and Emma smiles at her success. She looks up to see her wife glare at her. She smiles bigger and stands back up to step closer to her wife. “I haven’t been Miss Swan in years, Gina, but I do like it when you call me that,” she adds with a wink.

“Well, dear, I hope you enjoy sleeping on the couch tonight as well,” Regina says as she turns away.

Before she can go anywhere, Emma grabs her wrist and pulls her back against her. Emma wraps both of her arms around Regina’s waist and pulls her close enough that Regina’s back is pressed firmly against Emma’s front. “Are we fighting?” Her breath ghosts across Regina’s ear, making her shiver. Emma smiles at that knowledge and adds, “You know, when this is over, we should really have angry sex,” in a whisper.

“Emma!” Regina says as she pulls away from her wife. Emma stands with a huge grin plastered on her face.

Before Regina can reprimand her for being worse than a horny teenager, she sees her wife turn to their niece and say, “Alright Kells, let’s go play that game.”
Home

Chapter Summary

home:
(n.) a place where one lives; an environment affording security and happiness; a valued place considered a refuge or place of origin.

Chapter Notes

I am SOOOOOO sorry I didn't update yesterday but I've been fighting this nasty migraine and I haven't been able to look at any screens but I think I might have finally gotten through *claps enthusiastically*

If any of you have migraines, you know what a big deal this is, and if you do have migraines-I feel your pain. Migraines are literally the worst pain I have ever felt. But enough about my problems. Here's the next chapter, I'm not entirely pleased with what is happening but it seems to be a filler chapter before I start back into some deeper stuff.

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Emma falls into the bed gracelessly and groans.

“What are you alright, dear?” Regina asks as she closes her book. “Is it your head?”

“Mmmmmmn,” Emma responds as she rolls over and lays her head in Regina’s lap.

Regina chuckles as she runs her fingers through her wife’s hair. “English darling.”

“You are ridiculously comfortable,” Emma says as she wraps an arm around her wife’s legs.

Regina smiles and continues to run her fingers through Emma’s hair, gently scratching the scalp every now and then. Enjoying the sounds of contentment her wife was making.

They stay like this for a while, neither of them moving or speaking, neither wanting to ruin this perfect moment. Emma sighed again as Regina ran her nails over her scalp. “Do you remember when we bought this place?” she whispers.

Regina’s hand stills momentarily before she resumes her random scalp scratching. “Yes.” She responds just as quietly but there is a hesitation in her voice. Why does she want to talk about this?

“I love you.”

That’s all she’s going to say? Regina wonders. She raises her eyebrow even though Emma cannot see it, what the heck is going on? She mentions the move and then that’s all she says? Oh, wait she’s still talking.
“-always loved you. Even when I didn’t want to.”

“I know,” Regina says.

“I will always love you Gina. I can’t control it, and even if I could I don’t think I’d want to. You make me so happy. We have this great life here with great kids, great friends, and even your crazy sister.”

Regina smiles and rolls her eyes. She gently tugs on Emma’s hair until Emma is looking up at her. Regina smiles down at her and runs her finger across her cheek, “I love you too, darling.”

Emma gives her a tentative smile, “Even if we have to go back there?”

“I do not understand why you think that there is some dire situation and we have to go back and save the day. Darling, they took our memories. Perhaps the books were brought over with our things and we never noticed until Henry and Presley dug through our things in the basement. We were not as thorough in our unpacking as I would have liked.”

Emma chuckles at this, “Well, you did have a very pregnant, very cranky wife and an energetic toddler to deal with. You may have had Henry, but he was too busy trying to keep Tommy from climbing the walls.”

Regina laughs as she remembers when they moved here.

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“Are you sure you want to move now?” Emma asks as they sit in the car.

“I believe it’s a little late to second guess now, darling.” Regina says as she looks at the house, their house. By this afternoon, it will be theirs.

“I just don’t think we should rush into anything,” Emma says looking at their house.

“Darling, everything is already done. We already signed the papers, this house is our as of one o’clock this afternoon.”

“This wasn’t a good idea.” Emma is starting to panic.

Regina sighs as she gets out of the car.

“What are you-“ but Emma stops her question as Regina walks around and opens Emma’s door.

She bends down so she is eye level with her wife, “Emma. Breathe. This is a good thing. You know we cannot stay where we are with two more babies added in. We’ve been looking for a new place since Tommy was born and with the twins on the way this was the perfect time. This house is exactly what we have been looking for. It has the room we need and it’s in a good neighborhood with great schools. This is a good thing, Emma. I know you’re anxious for the move but it will be fine. We will be fine.”

Emma gives a small smile, “I don’t want to move. I don’t like change.”

“I know, darling,” Regina returns with a smile, “but nothing changes except our location. We are still the same. You are growing our babies and our boys are very excited, for the move and for the new babies.”
“Oh god, we have to prepare the nursery,” Emma says as her eyes widen.

“Emma.” Regina puts a hand under her chin until they are looking at each other again. “Breathe.” Emma takes a deep breath. “Good,” Regina praises, “I have already taken care of it. We are going to move our things in this afternoon, we are going to spend our evening in our apartment and then in the morning I have contractors coming to fix the things we discussed here and they can set up the nursery for us if we ask. It will all been taken care of darling.”

Emma still looks like she’s on the verge of a panic attack, but she gives a small smile, “You always think of everything.”

“I love you too, dear,” Regina says with a chuckle as she leans in to kiss her wife.

“Where the hell does this go?” Robin asks looking at the piece in his hand.

“Have you looked at the directions, hun?” Zelena asks as she walks towards her husband.

“I do not need the directions,” Robin grumbles as he looks back at the cribs he is supposed to be putting together for his sister-in-law and her wife. “These cribs are obviously missing pieces.”

“No they’re not,” Emma says as she stands in the doorway.

“Emma!” Robin gasps as he turns to see her, turning a bright shade of red, “I-uh-um-was just taking a break.”

“Before starting?” Emma asks as she rests her hands on her stomach.

Robin chuckles nervously, “Uh-something like that.”

“Emma, perhaps you should go rest while we finish up in here,” Zelena says with a tentative smile. They’ve never been particularly close, but they’ve never hated each other either, as far as I know, Zelena thinks, but when her memories start to glaze over she shakes herself from that train of thought.

“I’m fine,” Emma says defensively.

Ugh, Zelena thinks looking at her sister-in-law, this is why I have no patience for her, she simply does not listen to reason. “Emma you are 34 weeks pregnant with twins, it’s okay to take a rest while we put these cribs together.”

“We have done it before,” Robin says with an irritated sigh.

“Oh of course,” Emma drawls, “how could I forget?”

Zelena raises an eyebrow but before she can answer she hears Regina on the steps, “Emma?” she asks as she steps in front of the soon-to-be-nursery, “How is everything coming along?” she asks Robin and Zelena.

“Oh just peachy,” Emma says as she rolls her eyes.

Regina looks to her wife in shock at her sarcasm and then to her sister. Zelena merely shrugs as if to say, she’s your wife, figure it out.

Regina sighs and turns back to Emma, “Darling, Thomas has requested you read to him before his
nap." Emma simply looks from Regina to Robin, as if saying, I can't leave him alone, he'll screw it all up. Regina shakes her head. "Henry is coming up here to help while you lay down with Thomas."

As if on cue a loud, "MOMMA!" rings through the house.

Regina cringes as her young son stumbles up the steps, “Be careful, Thomas.”

"I've got him, Mom," Henry says as he helps Tommy to the top of the stairs.

“Momma, me no nap-nap,” he practically growls as he stands in front of his mothers.

Emma laughs as she looks down to him over her massive belly. “Well, I am very sleepy but the babies are very awake, do you think you could help me get them to settle down so I can take a nap?”

Tommy looks at her skeptically. Regina can’t help but chuckle; it’s the same look Henry used to give when he was that age. “I think Momma needs a really good helper, Thomas. Do you think you can do it?”

Tommy looks between his moms and then nods his head vigorous, “YES! I hep Momma,” he says with a huge grin.

Regina smiles, “Perfect, now let’s go help Momma lay down so she can rest,” she says picking him up and placing him on her hip.

“Come on Momma,” Tommy says as they start to move towards the master bedroom, where Regina had placed a mattress so that Emma would be able to rest today. Emma follows and situates herself on the pillows with Regina’s (and Tommy’s) help.

Once Emma is as comfortable as she’s going to get and stops fidgeting, Tommy places both hands on her belly and puts his face right next to it and says, “awight babies, time to nap-nap.”

Emma feels a kick and Tommy jumps. She laughs and says, “I don’t know…I think the babies are wide awake, maybe they need a story.”

Tommy eyes her skeptically and says, “No sowy, dey needs song. Mommy sing,” he commands looking to Regina. She raises an eyebrow until he says, “Mommy, nowa! Momma needs nap-nap and babies no sweepy.” He pauses waiting for her to move and when she doesn’t he gives an exasperated sigh and says, “pa-wease!”

“Alright, my little prince, perhaps if the babies knew that their big brother was going to sleep too they would be more likely to calm down and not kick Momma so much.”

Tommy gives her an incredulous look but relents when she doesn’t back down and whispers to Emma’s belly, “Be good, babies,” as he lays down next to Emma with his head on her chest and his hand protectively on her belly.

Regina smiles at the picture-perfect moment before she moves to sit next to her wife. She rubs a hand on her son’s back before placing her other hand on her wife’s belly where her two smallest children are currently residing, kicking up a storm. “Alright my darlings, it’s time to sleep.

Hush-a-by, don't you cry,

Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.
Black and bays, dapples, grays,
All the pretty little horses.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.

_Sweet dreams, my angels,_” she whispers with a smile as she looks to see her son cuddled on her wife’s chest and she can feel the calm of her unborn children through her hand still resting on Emma’s abdomen.

“You’re amazing,” Emma whispers with a sleepy smile, “you can always calm them down. Even the Unborn!” she exclaims.

Regina rolls her eyes, “Do not reference our children like that, dear.”

Emma laughs, “I don’t know how you do it, you can simply be around me and they just relax. It’s like magic or something, babe. I have no idea how it works but I won’t question it as long as it keeps working. I’ll just have to keep you by my side for the next 6 weeks or until these babies come out of me.”

“Are you sure darling? I can be _quite_ overbearing,” Regina says with a smirk.

“Don’t care. As long as these babies chill out I’ll be fine.”

“Well, my dear, I’m so very glad I could assist in helping our babies ‘chill out’ so you can nap,” Regina says. She practically shudders when she says ‘chill out’ almost as if it physically pains her to say something so slang-like.

Emma laughs, but instantly calms so she does not wake up their sleeping son, “Let me just say that hearing you say ‘chill out’ has definitely made me the happiest person today.” She puts her hand over Regina’s, still resting on her stomach and whispers, “you make me the happiest person every day.”

“Careful dear,” Regina says with a smirk, “someone might actually take you for a romantic sap when you talk that way.”

“Don’t care, Gina. I’ll be your sap any day.”

Regina smiles as she leans in to kiss her wife, “Good, because I don’t plan on giving you up any time soon. Now, get some rest, I’ll make a snack when you wake up.”

“Love you Gina,” Emma mumbles as she rests her head atop her young son’s.
“And I love you, darling. Even when you use that atrocious nickname.”

“I know you secretly love it, babe,” Emma says with a grin as she cracks open an eye to see her wife nearing the doorway.

“Whatever you say, dear. Sweet dreams.” She leaves, quietly closing the door behind her.

Emma smiles, with you on my mind I will always have sweet dreams. Hmmm…maybe I am turning into a sap. Totally worth it, she thinks as she smiles down at her slumbering son and her belly filled with two babies ready to be loved.

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“I was sooooo horrible,” Emma says quietly as she also remembers when they moved in.

“You were sooo very pregnant, darling. You were nervous about the move, and about the babies; it was perfectly normal and expected for you to lash out a little,” Regina says as she runs her fingers through her wife’s hair, finding her calming rhythm once again.

“You’re too good to me,” Emma whispers as she closes her eyes in appreciate of what Regina is doing to her scalp.

“On the contrary, dear, it is you who is too good to me.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too darling.”

And they fall back into a peaceful silence. For 5 minutes.

Waaaaaaaaaaaaa

Emma groans as she hears a piercing baby scream. “Well, that was nice while it lasted.”

Regina chuckles, “I am actually surprised we have had this long dear.”

“Me too,” Emma says as she crawls out of bed, “I’ll go get her if you want to get ready. I’m sure she’s hungry.”

“Of course,” Regina says as she too leaves the bed.

Three minutes later and Regina is sitting in the rocking chair in the corner of the nursery, rocking gently while Evelyn and Charlotte nurse simultaneously. Emma sits against the wall opposite her wife and daughters and watches with a smile as Regina looks down and starts softly singing,

Hush-a-by, don't you cry,

Go to sleep my little baby.

When you wake you shall have

All the pretty little horses.

Black and bays, dapples, grays,

All the pretty little horses.
Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.

She stops singing and smiles down at their daughters.

“How’d I get so lucky?” Emma whispers. Regina whips her head up to look at her wife. She smiles with a quizzical look on her face. “You’re so fucking perfect it hurts, babe.” Regina rolls her eyes and looks at her daughters so Emma cannot see her blush. “I’m serious!” Emma whispers as she moves from her spot on the wall and scoots closer to her wife. When she gets in front of her wife she smiles and says, “I love you so much,” and leans in to kiss Regina. She pulls back and looks down at her daughters asleep at her wife’s breasts. “And I’m the luckiest person in the world.”

“I’m the luckiest,” Regina whispers as she leans her forehead against Emma’s.
“You did this!” Emma says as she grabs Regina from Henry’s bedside and drags her to the closest supply closet.

“What the hell are you doing?!” Regina says fighting back. They are throwing each other into shelves and knocking supplies to the floor but neither notices. Their son is lying in a hospital bed and here they are fighting over what happened. “Stop this!” Regina yells as Emma pins her to the lockers.

“He is sick because of you! That apple turnover you gave me, he ate it!” Emma yells in her face.

“What?” Regina asks as her face falls. “That was meant for you.” The only thing keeping her upright was Emma pinning her to the lockers with her body. She had done this. She thinks she’s going to be sick. That was meant for Emma, she wanted to leave, Regina thinks as she looks at Emma, I couldn’t let her go.

Emma pulls her from her thoughts when she asks, “It’s true isn’t it” with barely contained loathing, but Regina catches something else in that tone - fear.

“What-What are you talking about?” Regina says even though she knows exactly what Emma is asking her. She racks her brain for a way out of this but all she comes back to is Henry. Her baby boy was laying in a hospital bed because she couldn’t figure out what she wanted in life. She wanted Emma gone but couldn’t bear to let her go. She wanted Henry but couldn’t bear to share him with Emma. Henry. Henry. Henry. This is about Henry, not her feelings. She needs to focus on Henry.

“IT’S TRUE ISN’T IT?!” Emma yells again.
Regina feels her head fall back against the lockers in defeat and nods her head, “yes,” she whispers. If she didn’t already hate me, she will now. I was the Evil Queen. I am the Evil Queen.

“I was leaving town, why couldn’t you just leave things alone?”

“Because-” Regina wants to say she didn’t want her to leave, she doesn’t want that anymore, but they never discuss their feelings. It’s not what they do. They weren’t going to form attachments. It was always about releasing tension. Emma was the first to challenge Regina in decades; that was why she was drawn to her, it was nothing more. But suddenly, Regina couldn’t let her go. She has never been good at sharing her possessions, and Emma Swan was definitely hers - even if she didn’t want to admit it. So, Regina went with the easy answer, a cop out. “Because with you alive Henry will never be mine.” It hurts to even say this. She wants to tell Emma the truth but her mouth can’t form the words. So, she sighs and waits for disgust to take over Emma’s expression.

No one could ever love the Evil Queen, Regina thinks to herself. Emma couldn’t even love Regina, the uptight Mayor, why would she love a murderous tyrant like the Evil Queen? Regina internally scoffs at the thought of love. She and Emma didn’t love. Period. Except for Henry. He pulls people together, whether he knows it or not.

Emma does not notice the internal fight going on within Regina, “He will never be anyone’s unless you fix this. You wake him up!”

“I can’t!” Regina yells back. She cannot face the fact that she is just as helpless in this.

“Don’t you have magic?” Emma asks. She actually seems scared to hear the answer.

Regina shakes her head as tears fall down her face, “That was the last of it.” She had given up Daniel’s ring for this. How dare Emma Swan ruin this; I put everything into finishing this off and here she is not realizing what I have done. I have lost everything and she doesn’t even realize. Of course not, Regina internally scoffs, because the Evil Queen has no feelings, she’s just evil. Evil cannot love. Evil is a part of the story to make the heroes look good. Evil simply is, there’s no gray in the world of fairy tales - especially, in this world. The world where there is nothing but shades of gray. But no, the Evil Queen is just bad, she cannot love-no matter how hard she tries. So, Regina tries to hide her feelings by lashing out. “It was supposed to put you to sleep!” Regina screams as she pushes Emma away from her to give her some space. It was getting harder to focus with the close proximity. Regina needs to clear her head to save her son.

“What’s it going to do to him?” Emma asks as she steps away. It must be too revolting to be so close to the Evil Queen, Regina thinks as her heart sinks. We don’t have time for her to lose her mind. Emma takes another step back. My son is lying in a hospital bed because he ate a turnover meant for her. She can’t care about me. I’m sick and twisted. I tried to kill her! But all I want is for her to push me back up against those lockers. No! Henry comes first, he needs to wake up and I’m the only one that can fix this. That’s why she needs me; I have to fix this. Then she’ll go back to being mad at me.

“I don’t know,” Regina whispers as she leans back against the lockers again. “Magic, here, is unpredictable.” She shakes her head and looks at the wall trying to think of something, anything, that will help her save her son.

“So. So, he could-“

“Yes.” Regina interrupts before Emma could finish her sentence.

Emma looks away from Regina as she processes. “So what do we do?” Emma asks.
Regina looks at her, she is asking me? She trusts me? That’s her trusting look. After what just happened as she’s still looking to me to fix this? Regina wonders what this means for them futuristically, No. Henry comes first. Always Henry. Emma must just think I am her best bet because I know about magic. I am the one who did this, so I should be the one to fix it. That’s obviously all this is. She only trusts me out of necessity. That’s it. “We need help.” She walks away from the lockers; no longer able to look at Emma’s face and know she doesn’t deserve that look. She can’t look at me like I can solve everything. “There’s one other person in this town who knows about this. Knows about magic.”

“Mr. Gold.” Emma says as she puts the pieces together.

“Actually he goes by Rumpelstiltskin,” Regina says as she finally turns back to look at Emma.

Emma freezes. Oh boy, here we go. She’s going to lose it. I’m going to watch her hyperventilate and pass out. We don’t have time for this. She’s having a conversation with the Evil Queen that spent a lifetime hunting her mother, but Rumpelstiltskin freaks her out? Really? He turned straw into gold. I’m surprised she didn’t put it together sooner; I thought it was pretty clever - all of the inside jokes built within the curse? Pure genius. I wonder if Henry figured it out. Of course he did, he’s my son. Oh God, what if we can’t save him. No. We will save him. Emma is the Savior, she can’t fail. I won’t let her. Emma turns to Regina with a look of absolute terror.

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Regina tosses and turns in her sleep; enough to wake up her slumbering wife. Emma looks around as she gets her bearings. No one’s crying, she realizes, then why the hell am I awake? Then she hears it, a soft whimper coming from her wife. She immediately sits up and faces Regina who is laying on her back with her fists clamped down around the sheets. Emma tentatively reaches over and touches Regina’s forehead. She never knows what kind of nightmare her wife is having. If it has to do with her days as the Evil Queen, then she usually allows the contact, if it is from her time before she became evil, she’d strike out against the contact, because in those dreams the only contact she received was violent. Emma sighs with relief when Regina moves in towards the contact. Thank God, she thinks, it’s much easier to comfort her when I can hold her. She wraps Regina in her arms so Regina is lying directly over Emma’s heart. Emma places one hand on Regina’s back, tracing patterns up and down her spine, while her other hand goes to the back of Regina’s head, holding her close. She kisses Regina’s forehead and whispers reassurances to her “I love you.” “You’re safe.” She starts running her fingers through Regina’s hair as she props herself up against the headboard. She can never fall back asleep when Regina’s having a nightmare, so she pulls her even closer and keeps whispering to her and kissing her face. When Emma feels Regina’s grip tighten around her waist, she knows she’s in for a long night. “I love you babe, I know there’s something going on in that head of yours, but you’re not her anymore. You’re safe, you’re loved; just come back to me.”

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

Regina hears Emma throws the potion up to Mr. Gold. She thinks I abandoned her. I would never leave her. I want to save Henry just as much as I do. This is not going to end well. But why does Gold need this potion? What is he going to do with it? “Gold? GOLD?” Regina hears Emma climbing the elevator shaft and pull herself up to the ground floor of the library. “Regina!” she exclaims, well at least she sees me bound and gagged to a chair; about time, Regina thinks as Emma rushes to her and frees her mouth of the duct tape.

Regina yells as soon as she’s free, “He tricked you!” As Emma unbounds her hands she says, “How could you give him that?!?” That was supposed to save Henry, Regina thinks. How could I be so
stupid to let my guard down; I was so concerned for Emma’s safety that I didn’t hear him come in and by the time I noticed he had knocked me out. That Bastard, she thinks, if he takes that and Henry doesn’t make it I will end that stupid little imp myself. He may be Rumplestiltskin in our world, but here he is just another mortal - easy to kill.

Emma pulls her from her murderous thoughts by asking, “Where is he?”

“Gone,” Regina whispers as she hangs her head in shame, how could I have been so stupid, she wonders again. “Gold,” she sneers his name, “he manipulated all of this.” Her temper is flaring and she’s falling down a deep rabbit hole. I need to be thinking clearly. Henry doesn’t have time for this, Regina thinks.

“Come on. He can’t be that far.”

And then it happens.

Their phones ring and their hearts sink. “It’s the hospital,” Emma whispers.

They’re running. Regina doesn’t know how, or when that happened, but they’re running; running through the streets and then through the hospital. Emma walks into the room but Regina is frozen outside the window. Her baby boy. Gone. It can’t be, she thinks as she holds herself up against the glass. They watch the nurse turn off the machines. Emma walks over to Henry’s side and she lets the tears fall. What she doesn’t notice is how Regina’s tears are falling at the exact same time. Her son is dead.

Regina steps into the room after regaining a semblance of composure. Emma is still standing frozen at the end of Henry’s bed. Regina is behind her and Dr. Whale and Mother Superior are standing by the door.

“No.” Regina cries as she turns to Dr. Whale who is so shocked by the display of weakness from the mayor that he doesn’t respond immediately. Eventually he gently rests his hands on her back in a way that is supposed to be comforting. Regina doesn’t care that it’s awkward. She doesn’t even realize whom she’s leaning into right now. All she can think is, Henry. My perfect boy is gone because of me. How could I be so stupid? I’ve ruined everything. “No, no, no,” she keeps repeating the chant.

Emma walks closer to Henry as she lets her tears fall silently. She brushes his hair of his face and leans down to whisper, “I love you Henry,” before she kisses his forehead.

There’s a blinding white light that leaves their bodies. Regina turns around and watches as the light passes through her.

The curse, she thinks, it’s broken.

Emma pulls back. Henry’s eyes fly open as he gasps for a breath. Regina and Emma smile, he’s alive, they think simultaneously.

“I love you too,” Henry says looking at Emma. “You saved me,” Henry adds with a smile.

Regina is not even affected by these words because her son is alive, Henry is okay, she thinks with a relieved sigh. Emma saved him, she adds with a secret smile. “You did it,” she says. Emma and Henry both turn to look at her and Emma gives a small smile which quickly turns into a frown and she has to look away, she can’t even look at me, Regina thinks with a frown. Emma turns back to look and Henry and smiles again.

Suddenly, the world begins to shake, Emma quickly turns back to Regina as she falls forward. Emma reaches out and grabs her, “Are you alright?” she asks when Regina is upright next to her,
near the bed.

“Yes,” Regina whispers as she looks to Henry and gives a small smile. Will he still hate me? Will he hate me more? She wonders looking over his face, he’s alive, and her smile grows with relief.

“What’s happening?” Emma asks.

“The curse is ending,” Regina says, “We’re all being sent back to the Enchanted Forest.”

"The what?” Emma asks.

It’s Henry that answers her, “The Enchanted Forest. That’s where you’re all from. Am I coming with?” he asks suddenly worried that he’ll be left behind.

“Of course,” Regina answers surely, “we’d never leave you behind.”

Emma unconsciously smiles but stops that. She can’t even look at me, Regina repeats to herself with a frown.

Now the ground is shaking again and they both reach out to protect Henry from the falling light fixtures.

The three of them held onto each other tightly. Don’t think about it, she’s doing this for Henry. It’s always about Henry. She really doesn’t care if you’re safe or not. Emma holds onto Regina tighter. Maybe she does care, Regina thinks, no. It’s always for Henry. I’m just his best chance. She’s the Savior, it’s her job to protect everyone, even if it is the Evil Queen.

God, I want to touch her. I want to hug her and breathe in her scent. God, she always smells so nice. Like, fresh air after it rains, Regina thinks as she breathes her in. She smiles as Emma takes a deep breath too. She always told me I smelled like vanilla and cinnamon, she smiles wider as she hears - and feels - Emma breathe in again. I missed this. She holds on tighter to Emma and their son as purple smoke fills the room.

When the purple smoke clears they’re in a clearing. Emma stands up from her spot on the ground, her arms never letting go of Regina or Henry. Regina holds just as tight as she looks around and sees her castle in the distance.

“Whoa,” Henry says as he looks around, taking everything in, “this is where you’re from Mom?” he asks looks up at Regina.

She smiles down at him, he called me Mom. She could cry again, but she simply smiles and says, “Yes dear. This is the Enchanted Forest.”

“Cool.”

“Are you alright?” Regina asks him.

“Mhmm,” but he’s no longer actually listening. He’s looking down at himself realizing he’s still in his hospital gown.

“Henry? What’s the matter?” Regina asks.

“I need clothes.”

“I can help. If you’ll let me,” she adds hastily. He looks at her with disapproval, “Magic is all about intent dear,” she says as she steps back from Henry and Emma. Emma is reluctant to let go
but doesn’t stop her. Regina flips her hands and suddenly is engulfed in purple smoke. When it clears she’s wearing her tamest Evil Queen dress. She watches Emma gulp, as she looks her up and down. Regina is smirking by the time Emma’s eyes make it to her face. She raises her eyebrow and Emma flushes, never very subtle, dear. If this is how she reacts to a dress like this I can only imagine what’ll happen when she sees some of my more intricate ensembles.

Henry stares at Regina for a minute before looking at Emma. She shrugs her shoulders and looks back to Regina. Henry turns back to his mom and says, “Okay Mom.” She smiles even though she watched the exchange between her son and Emma. He didn’t trust her with magic. He shouldn’t, she thinks sadly. She waves her hand and Henry is engulfed in smoke. Then, he is wearing loose black pants with a white shirt and silver sash. “An outfit fit for a prince,” she says with a wink.

“Whoa,” he says as he looks down at his wardrobe change, “that was so cool Mom! But what’s with the sash?”

“Silver and Black were my kingdom’s colors.”

“Cool. Can I have a sword?”

“I don’t know,” Regina starts, “perhaps after you have lessons.”

“I can have sword lessons?!” Henry asks excitedly. He’s practically bouncing up and down.

“Well, you are a prince dear, and princes know how to wield a sword. Even your grandfather knew how to wield a sword - and he grew up a shepherd.”

Emma laughs, “David was a shepherd?”

Regina smiles back but Henry shakes his head, “You should have read the book. I told you I was right.”

“I know Henry,” she says and then she looks to Regina and smirks, “and what would a princess like me wear in a place like this?”

Regina smirks back and twirls her finger.

“Emma!” Snow yells as she and Charming enter the clearing to see her with Regina and Henry. Regina twirls her finger and wraps Emma in purple smoke, completely ignoring Snow and Charming.

“No!” Charming yells as he runs towards them with his sword out. Snow follows suit but comes to a stop when she sees Emma in a pink frilly dress.

“Are you kidding me?!” Emma yells as she looks down at the dress she’s in. I’m sure she’ll enjoy that corset, Regina thinks with a smirk, five minutes without proper usage of her lungs and she’ll be begging me to change her back. Emma looks back up and see Regina laughing until suddenly, David is there holding a sword at her throat. “David!” Emma yells. She tries to step forward. She trips on her dress and falls into Regina.

Regina merely helps her to a standing position before looking back to David, “Charming,” she sneers. He pushes the sword further into her neck but she doesn’t flinch.

“David.” Emma repeats, “What the hell are you doing?”

“She’s using magic to kill you,” he says like it’s the most obvious thing in the world.
“No she wasn’t,” Emma, says with a shake of her head, “she was just changing my outfit.”

It seems that the fog between his ears has cleared and he turns to see Emma in a princess dress. “Her magic is dangerous,” he says, unable to imagine the Evil Queen using magic for anything but evil.

Regina rolls her eyes but before she can say anything Snow steps up and says, “Charming, let her go.”

“Let her go?” he repeats in disbelief.

“Yes. She won’t hurt us. Not in front of Henry.” Snow rests her hands on her growing bump.

David gives Regina a glare but steps away from her. She merely rolls her eyes and says, “Keep your guard dog on a shorter leash, Snow.”

Snow doesn’t even grace that with a response as she turns to look at Emma, “Emma,” she whispers.

Emma gives a shy smile and turns back to Regina, “Do you mind?” she asks motioning to herself in a dress. She sees Regina share a laugh with Henry and she rolls her eyes, “Please?”

Regina swirls her hand again and Emma is left in an outfit similar to Henry’s yet different because it is made up of an extremely tight pair of leather black pants and a flowing red shirt with a silver sash. “Thank you,” she says with a smile noticing the same silver sash that Henry has. I can stake my claim and piss off Snow and Charming, Regina thinks with a grin. She watches Emma turn back to Mary Margaret and David. Before she can say anything, a mob comes running through the trees.

“Kill the Evil Queen!” they scream as they charge towards them.

Regina watches Emma reach to her side for her gun, only to find a sword there instead. She pulls it out anyway and says, “Stop!” as she steps in front of Regina. Henry silently moves closer to them and sneaks under Regina’s arm.

The mob stops when they see Snow, Charming, and the Savior.

“No one is killing anybody,” Emma says.

“She cursed us all!” Someone yells.

“Yes, because indoor plumbing, electricity, and healthcare are absolutely dreadful,” Regina snarks quietly so only Emma and Henry can hear. Emma tries to hide her smile.

“She will be taken care of,” Charming says as he takes control of the situation.

Regina rolls her eyes while Emma says, “What?! We are not killing her.”

“Emma, you don’t know her like we do, she’s a danger,” Charming says as if he is talking to a child.

Snow remains quiet and watches Emma and Regina. She must be remembering before the curse when she and Emma were merely roommates. Oh the things Emma must have told her, I wonder if she’ll lose her lunch, Regina wonders with a smirk, those are certainly not things your mother wants to know.
“I don’t care. We’re not sending her off to slaughter. No matter what she’s done,” Emma says with finality.

“She’s a murderer!” Someone from the mob yells. “She’s going to kill us all!”

Regina rolls her eyes and bends down to look Henry in the eye. “Henry,” she waits until he looks up at her, “no matter what anyone says, I love you - more than anything, alright?”

“What are you doing, Mom?” he asks as he grabs onto her arm.

“I’m leaving. I’m not going to sit here while everyone else decides my fate. I love you dear.”

“No! Don’t leave me!” he exclaims as he wraps his arms around her waist, “you’re still my mom, you’ll always be my mom. Please don’t leave me.”

Emma turned around when Regina had first started talking and she couldn’t believe just how young Henry looked wrapped in his mother’s embrace. The mob was still fighting over Regina’s fate with her parents but Emma couldn’t tear her eyes away from the scene unfolding in front of her.

“I would never abandon you dear. You are always welcome. My castle is straight that way, but if you feel like you need me use this,” she waves her hand and produces a long chained necklace. She places it over his head and puts it under his shirt, “just hold onto this and think of me and we will be together.”

Henry smiles and puts his hand over the hidden necklace.

“I love you Henry,” Regina says with a smile filled with tears.

“I love you too Mom,” he says as he wraps her in another hug.

Regina stands back up to her full height and looks at Emma, “Miss Swan,” she acknowledges.

Emma rolls her eyes but stops and her eyes go wide as she feels something underneath her shirt. She looks down and notices a necklace similar to Henry’s beneath her shirt and smiles to herself. Maybe this show of possessiveness will upset her. However, when Regina looks up Emma has a small smile on her face. Someone showing that they care is all Emma has ever wanted, Regina thinks. This must really be upsetting her. The only person to never leave her just so happens to be the Evil Queen that spent years trying to kill her mother and cursed an entire land. Regina turns to stand in front of the mob.

“Silence!” she commands. The mob grows quiet and turns to her. She feels taller, standing in front of these peasants, who were trying to kill me minutes ago. “You do not get to decide my fate. I have never chosen anything for myself until the curse and you had rights there. You may not have remembered who you were but you were able to live freely without a monarch dictating every single thing you do and you did not have to live in poverty with barely enough food to survive. I may not have done this in the right way, but I certainly did not ‘ruin’ your lives. However, I see that you are still just as small-minded as you were before, so I will make this easy on you. I am leaving and you will not follow me. If you decide to finish out this mob mentality I will show you exactly
who the Evil Queen is,” she sneers as she looks at everyone, and in a flash of purple she’s gone.

“Mom?” Henry looks around the clearing.

“It’s okay, Kid. She’ll be alright,” Emma says as she puts her arm around his shoulder.

“Will she?” he asks timidly.

“Yes,” she says loud enough for everyone to hear. Then she leans down to make it look like she’s kissing his cheek and whispers, “we can check on her later if you want.”

“We?”

“Uhhhh. Ummm. I-I mean if you want me to come with you, that is.” Emma stutters out.

“I think Mom would like that,” Henry whispers with a smile.

“Alright then, Kid.” She stands back up and looks at everyone. “Now what?” she asks looking to Mary Margaret and David, or Snow and Charming, or are they Mom and Dad now? I’m sure Emma will go straight for a drink, Regina thinks as she watches Emma’s face contort.

Regina looks on from a reflection of Emma and Henry and smiles. She never told them she wouldn’t spy. Was she in the wrong? She just wants to protect her son, and seeing him with Emma hurt. I can’t deny that, she reasons, but with them both worrying about me I think I will be seeing them both very soon, she thinks with a smirk. And there was something about watching Emma get all flustered over her feelings that sent Regina’s heart soaring. No one has ever cared enough. Now, she has two people who care about her. With a smile firmly on her face she turns off the image with a flick of her wrist.

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Emma has been watching Regina’s facial expressions to know what kind of dream she was having. Sometimes Regina would grab Emma tightly and burrow into her chest whimpering or even mumbling words or names. Right now was not one of those times though, right now Regina was smiling a smile Emma will never tire of. Emma has not stopped finger combing Regina’s hair or tracing random patterns across her back and arms. She leans in and kisses Regina’s forehead and whispers “I love you” and Regina’s smile grows when she feels her wife’s lips against her skin.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter will be a continuation of what’s going on in this chapter, but I split it up because together it was over 10,000 words. I’m headed to class now, but I’ll try to post it before I go out tonight.
-IrishBella
Chapter Summary

la douleur exquise:
(n.) the heart-wrenching pain of wanting the affection of someone unattainable.

Chapter Notes

WOOHOO!!! It's before midnight here! Which means I succeeding in posting this chapter tonight :) It would have been up earlier but my friend and I were supposed to do some online quizzes but then we found out it was National Pizza Day, and we just had to celebrate!

Let's not talk about the fact that I'm 100% avoiding adult responsibilities right now because THE CHAPTER IS UP!

I hope you guys are still enjoying this story and HAPPY NATIONAL PIZZA DAY!!!! :)

Hugs and Such
-IrishBella

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

“Mom?” She hears Henry before she sees him. She’s been in her library for hours, reminiscing on how often she used to read and how she hasn’t truly had the time in nearly a decade, possibly more. She decided she needed to brush up on her languages if they were to truly stay here. No need to be an incompetent fool, she thinks as she looks up to see Henry run into the library. “Mom!” he exclaims with relief as he runs to her.

“How dear,” she greets as he wraps her in a hug like he hasn’t done in nearly a year. She doesn’t dwell on that and simply hugs him back just as tight.

“I was so worried about you!”

“You were?” she asks as she pulls back to look at him.

“Of course!” he says looking at her like it’s the most obvious thing in the world. “I was worried that they were going to hurt you.”

“You need not worry about that dear, I can certainly handle myself,” she says lifting his chin so their eyes met.

“And what she can’t, we will,” a voice says from the doorway.

Henry spins around to look at the wall and sees someone dressed all in black. “Mom?” he asks as
he steps closer to her and under her arm.

“Henry, this is Kam,” Regina says as she rests her hands on her son’s shoulders. “Kam, this is Henry.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Young Prince,” Kam says as he bows and returns to a standing position, “Your Majesty,” Kam says as he bows lower than the first time before continuing, “everyone that has sought refuge has been assigned quarters and is ready to start their regular routines in the morning.”

“Thank you Kam,” she says with a nod. The knight turns and moves to his original position outside the door.

“There are people living here?” Henry asks as he leans back to look his mother in the eye.

“Yes, Henry. Some people did prefer to live here after I was exiled. Whether I was the Evil Queen or not, they preferred my leadership over Snow White’s.”

“I didn’t know that,” Henry whispered.

“No, I would suppose not, I’m sure that storybook of yours deemed that detail unworthy. But that is of no matter; I have maintained loyal subjects before, during, and now after the curse.”

“Wow,” Emma says from her spot against the wall.

“Miss Swan?” Regina asks, slightly startled at the intrusion.

“Ma?” Henry asks in the same manner.

“Hi,” Emma says with a small smile, “I didn’t know you were so Goth-chic, Regina.”

Regina smirks, “there seems to be a lot you do not know about me dear.”

Emma blushes as she realizes she’s been caught staring at Regina. Again. “Well, um, I just-uh-wanted to check on you. I-I mean I wanted to check on Henry. I knew he was going to come here and I wanted to make sure he made it safely.”

“Of course he made it safely, Miss Swan,” Regina says with a scoff, “I made the necklace myself, I know exactly how it works to make sure he would make it safe and sound.”

“Yes, because that worked so well with the turnover,” Emma bites back.

Regina is stunned, how dare she? She wonders with a sneer. “Is there a reason you are here, or are you simply here to push my son farther away from me?”

“No, Regina. I would never keep Henry from you, especially when it wouldn’t work. He’s pretty scrappy, I’m sure he’d find a way here with or without your magical help.”

“Well, he is always welcome here,” Regina says as she smiles down at Henry. He smiles back.

“Oh, Mom!” he exclaims as he grabs her arm to get her attention, even though he already had it. “Gram, and Gramps castle is all broken,” Emma sees Regina smile at this and Emma rolls her eyes, “and they are going to come here and stay with you while they fix it. Isn’t that great? We can all be a big family!”

“Oh no, dear. They may be your family by blood, but you are my only family. And Henry, I’m sorry
“Don’t tell me this but your grandparents and I have a very long and dark history. We have all done some pretty terrible things to each other and I doubt they would want to stay here.”

“That’s where you’re wrong,” Emma pipes in. Regina snaps her head up to her and Emma smirks, “they’re planning on coming here to stay because - oh how did they say this - they are the rightful rulers and this is their castle anyways. So, it seems they are planning a takeover.”

“It would seem,” Regina muses, “Kam!” she speaks calmly but Kam appears from around the corner immediately.

“Yes, My Queen?” he asks as he bows. He’s glaring at Emma from under his helmet but Regina does not know why, perhaps because she is related to Snow? No, there must be another reason. Not that it matters, Regina says as she internally berates herself, I do not care that he does not like her, as long as he is loyal, that’s all that matters. She’s here for Henry only, so what does it matter that her guard does not care for her.

“I need you to prepare the others in the War Room.”

“Of course,” he bows and is gone.

“The War Room?” Henry asks.

Henry, I will not have you grandparents coming after me without being prepared.” She bends over so she is looking right in Henry’s eye (and is also giving Emma quite a view of her backside) and says, “I promise you dear, I will not attack first, but I will do everything in my power to protect those around me.”

“You really have changed,” Henry says with a smile.

“No dear, you are just seeing the real me,” Regina says sadly as she stands back up and looks at Emma who is looking very flustered and is looking anywhere but at her, Good, Regina thinks, serves her right for talking to me in that manner. I am a queen after all.

“Well, Miss Swan, if you would be so kind, I think it is time to take Henry back and put him to bed.”

“Oh, right, of course,” Emma says as she finally turns to look at Regina.

“Aww, Mom, can’t I stay just a little longer? Please!” Henry pleads.

Before she can respond there is a knock on the door and a young girl enters, “Your Majesty,” she greets as she bows low.

“Yes, Sophia?” she asks turning towards her.

“When would you wish your bath to be drawn?” Sophia-asks, never lifting her eyes from the ground.

“I will call for you, dear, thank you,” Regina says turning back towards Henry. Sophia quietly makes her exit.

“You have someone draw you a bath?” Emma asks.

“Of course dear, I am a queen, I ask for something and I get it,” Regina says as she turns to look at Emma, “I’m sure when you get back to your parent’s castle you will realize that being a royal is
not all it’s made up to be, you are never alone and there will always be people wanting to do
everything for you.”

Emma scoffs, “Like you hate it when people do things for you.”

Regina’s face darkens and steps menacingly towards Emma, “I will have you know that I survived
28 years without magic and without servants after a lifetime with them.”

“Because you had no choice,” Emma says stepping into Regina’s personal space.

“Miss Swan, I will remind you, the curse was mine, and if I wanted to be surrounded by servants, I
would have been. Do not pretend to know me when you know nothing.”

“I know nothing? Are you kidding me Regina? The only reason I know nothing is because you took
everything away from me! It’s your fault I grew up without parents!”

Regina steps back as if she’d been slapped. Emma’s eyes grow wide with embarrassment.

“I-I didn’t mean that Regina,” Emma says as she steps towards Regina who responds by stepping
back again.

“Henry, dear, why don’t you go to the War Room and look at some maps with Kam,” Regina says
as she tries to remain calm.

“But-” Henry starts.

“There are swords in there that you may test out,” Regina bribes as she looks towards her son.

“Really?!” he’s practically jumping up and down with excitement. His concern about this
encounter is immediately forgotten.

“Of course dear. Just be careful and allow Kam to show you how to properly use it.”

“Okay Mom!” He runs towards the door only to stop and look back.

“Take the hallway to your left and follow it down the stairs, the War Room is the third door on
your right, dear.”

Henry looks back and his moms one last time before running out into the hallway.

Suddenly, the door slam shuts and a purple pulse of magic flies around the walls, sealing them in.

“What the hell?” Emma asks as she steps back.

“You wanted to talk, Miss Swan, now you may talk, scream, whatever you please and it will disrupt
no one. But be careful dear, I can do the same.” Regina leans against the table she had been
reading at when Henry first came in.

After minutes of watching Emma squirm under her intense gaze Regina straightens up and walks
toward her. “If you’re not going to start dear, then I will.” Emma takes a step back and Regina
smirks, “I hope you’re not afraid of me dear,” she coos condescendingly.

Emma scoffs, but takes another step back.

“Very well. I just want to inform you that it was not my intent to separate you from your family. In
fact, you were born an entire month early. Had you not been born early, your mother would have
been pregnant throughout the entire curse and the curse would have never been broken. But as fate would have it, your mother would go against my wishes and she had you early. I never would have assumed she would put you in a tree and send you into the unknown. I had expected her to keep you as close as possible but even then you would have been a part of the curse. You were never a factor in my curse casting. I know you think me to be this horrible, evil being, but I did not put you in a magical wardrobe because a glorified moth told me to. That is on your parents dear, I have done many horrible things - but this mistake is certainly not mine and for you to blame me for something I did not control is beneath you. I understand your anger and your confusion at what you know and what is real, but blaming me for every little problem you have faced is utterly ridiculous and I will not have you wasting my time when I should be preparing a plan against your parents.”

“You said you wouldn’t hurt them.”

“I said I wouldn’t attack first, dear. There’s a difference. I may not have been a queen for the last 28 years, but now I have subjects looking to me as their leader and I will not allow Snow White and her precious prince to waltz in here and ruin my kingdom. They can ruin their own.”

“Real mature Regina,” Emma says with an eye roll.

“Ah yes, a maturity comment by none other than Emma Swan, the girl who runs from her problems faster than any other creature in all the realms.”

“Fuck you,” Emma growls.

“No dear, you have missed your chance to do that. You chose to run when things got complicated. You have to deal with your decisions.”

“My decisions? Regina are you fucking kidding me? I have found out I have parents, I am a princess, my parents are fucking Snow White and Prince Charming and my son’s adoptive mother - who I happened to have casual sex with - is the fucking Evil Queen. I’ve fought a dragon, taken down an imp, broke two curses and was sent to an alternate fucking universe in the last 24 hours. I think I deserve a break.”

“You truly are dramatic dear,” Regina says with an eye roll, “this is not an alternate universe. Simply a different realm.”

“Oh my god,” Emma says as she starts to pace.

“And you know as well as I that we had much more than casual sex at the end, Miss Swan.”

“Really?” Emma asks as she turns on Regina, “then why can’t you call me by my fucking name Regina? Hmmmm? If what we had was more than casual sex you would be able to call me Emma. Say it. Em-ma.”

“You do not deserve it, Miss Swan, you chose to run like a coward. I told you my feelings and you ran like a scared little girl,” Regina says as she glares at Emma.

“Fuck, Regina!” Emma exclaims. “You’re the Evil fucking Queen! What am I supposed to do with that information?!” She’s yelling now.

“Nothing!” Regina yells back, “I have not been her in a very long time. You never knew her and I am glad for that because she was a terrible person who did very bad things with a smile. But you never knew that part of me. All you have ever known is Regina the mayor and Regina the mother. You do not get to be upset of things I did a lifetime ago.”
“Oh. I don’t get to be upset? Are you fucking kidding me Regina? I was fucking falling for you; don’t you get that? I was falling in love with you and we agreed it was only casual and suddenly there are these feelings and I figured I’d get over it with time but then you come along and say you are feeling the same things. How dare you? Who do you think you are to tell me all of those things? I was scared I was going to mess it up, to mess us up, and I couldn’t do that to you or Henry. I would never hurt you.”

“You would have preferred I lie to you and tell you I didn’t feel a thing? That I didn’t care about you? Emma,” she says in a quieter voice, “you have had people leave you your entire life, I wanted you to know that I would never be that person. I wanted you to feel safe with us.”

“Safe? With you? That’s a good one,” Emma scoffs.

“Really?” Regina starts yelling again, “You just professed that you were falling for me and now you know that I used to be someone terrible a lifetime ago and suddenly I’m not good enough for the SAVIOR? That’s rich, dear. You cannot just turn off your feelings, no matter how hard you try.”

“You don’t fucking know me Regina,” Emma growls.

“That’s where you’re wrong dear. You see, I know all about you, I probably know more about you than you do. I would’ve done anything for you. I put myself out there, I told you what I was feeling and you turned around and left. You didn’t stay, you didn’t say anything you just turned around and walked out the door. And now you use my magic to make yourself appear in my castle to yell at me and tell me how I ruined your life? Tell me dear, who held you when you had nightmares these past few months? Who did you call when you were scared, or angry, or happy, or feeling any strong emotion? You called me.”

“Fuck you,” Emma snarls as she moves closer to Regina.

“You already said that, dear. Try some new material if you plan on yelling at me.”

Emma throws Regina against the wall, “Shut up!”

“Or what? We’ve already done this today, Miss Swan. Are you running out of ideas?” she mocks.

“God, you’re impossible. I can’t believe I thought I cared for you,” Emma shakes her head as she steps away from Regina.

“You were supposed to be different,” Regina says quietly as she rubs her neck where Emma pushed her arm against her.

“And you weren’t supposed to be the Evil Queen. Guess we can’t all get what we want.”

“That’s really what you want?” Regina asks softly, “you wish for me to be different?”

“Regina!” Emma exclaims as she throws her arms in the air, “I don’t know what I want, but I definitely don’t want to have feelings for a sociopath with a temper. And when it flares she goes on a murderous rampage killing hundred and cursing thousands because a young girl was prettier than you.”

Regina scoffs at that and rolls her eyes, “Oh Miss Swan, you truly are more thick-headed than you look.”

“What?” Emma asks as she turns to look at Regina.
“Do you truly believe I would curse an entire town based on looks? My looks are merely a means to an end and I certainly would hope that you know me well enough to know that I may be vain, but certainly not envious of someone such as Snow White,” she sneers the name.

“Then why did you do it?” Emma asks quietly.

“She ruined my life,” Regina states simply.

“I doubt that, Mary Margaret couldn’t hurt a fly.”

Regina glares at Emma. “Mary Margaret and Snow may share the same body but they are certainly two different people and Snow White certainly isn’t a saint like Disney makes her out to be. She had my fiancé killed so she could have her perfect, handpicked new mother.”

“What?” Emma asks as she looks at Regina to see if she’s lying.

“I am not getting into this. You left me. You don’t get to come back and demand answers. If you want answers, ask your precious perfect mother and her pious husband, I’m sure their version of events is certainly entertaining and paint me to be the perfect villain and they never did anything wrong.”

“I can’t do this anymore,” Emma says as she leans against the wall.

“What?” Regina asks with a sigh.

“I can’t keep feeling these things.”

“Well I’m sorry dear, but there’s nothing I can do about your feelings. That is something you need to deal with on your own.”

“I want you to hurt like I do,” Emma practically growls as she throws herself off the wall and stalks toward Regina, effectively pinning her to the wall.

“Excuse me?” Regina asks as she puts her head against the wall she’s pinned up to, putting her as far away as she can from Emma.

“These feelings I’m having I should not be having. I should hate you, but I can’t. I should be furious with you, and I try so fucking hard but I can’t stay mad. As soon as you left earlier I wanted to check in on you, but I couldn’t because that would have raised questions that I don’t want to answer, and I certainly should not love you but it seems I can’t stop it. So, I want you to hurt like I’m hurting. I want you to feel so conflicted you think you might actually break into a million pieces.”

“I have had plenty of my own pain Miss Swan, but if you feel the need to push any more on me then you can leave, and do not plan on returning. Do you realize what you are saying? Your mother had my fiancé killed, married me off to her oaf of a father and had me at her beck and call as her new mother before the age of 13. Do my feelings even matter to you? Do you have any idea what it was like to lose the love of my life and suddenly be forced into a marriage to a man older than my father? He may have been known as a good and kind king, but he certainly didn’t act that way with his possessions, and I, dear, was he favorite possession to use and abuse and walk away from when my services were no longer needed. Do you know what it’s like to be a glorified whore to a man I loathed and then have to go play nice with his daughter who thought of me as her mother when in actuality she was only six years younger than me? I may have been a queen but I was merely a harlot with a title. I needed to look impeccable so the king could show me off to his powerful friends. I was to warm his bed at night and I was to care for his daughter. Those were my job
requirements, Em-ma. If I did not fulfill them I was punished. But by all means, my dear, please tell me how I feel nothing and am a horrible villain that deserves nothing but despair for the rest of my days.”

Emma sits in silence letting this information wash over her.

Regina rolls her eyes at Emma’s silence, “Get out,” she says feeling extremely vulnerable.

“So, that’s it?” Emma asks as her eyes fly up to look at Regina, “You’re just giving up?”

Regina stops and looks at Emma, “What is it you want from me Emma?”

“I-I don’t know. But I don’t want you to throw me out like yesterday’s garbage,” Emma whispers.

“Well, dear, I am not throwing you out and I am certainly not giving up on you. I am simply deciding that until you figure out whatever is going on in that head of yours I will no longer lose any more tears over you.”

“You cried over me?” Emma asks quietly.

“Emma,” Regina sighs, “I cried over us. Contrary to whatever you believe, I do have a heart and I feel things very strongly. I love with my entire soul. Every ounce of my being was put into what I said to you last week and you simply turned around and walked out as if I had not said a thing. You have no idea how much that hurt me. Nevertheless, I cannot continue to push out this effort for you when you want nothing to do with me. So, I have to let you go. But know this Emma Swan, I will never give up on you. I will never abandon you. You’re the one for me. You’re it. But I cannot fight for something you do not want. I will not force you into something. So, no I am not giving up on you, I am simply allowing you to figure things out.”

Emma sighs and throws her head back against the wall, “Okay Regina.”

Regina gets rid of the purple pulsing magic that surrounds the room with a flick of her hand, and with another flick her makeup is again flawless and no one would ever know she had been crying. She opens the doors with her magic and says, “Come along Miss Swan, I will take you to Henry and send you back to your parents’ castle.”

Emma follows silently behind Regina.

Regina can see that Emma is emotionally drained from everything that has occurred today, she looks like she’s getting a migraine. She wants to magic it away but is afraid that Emma will freak out, so she remains silent and walks towards the War Room. She notices Emma staring at all the people milling about the castle. Well of course, Regina muses, everyone is supposed to hate the Evil Queen. Why would so many people choose to live here when I am nothing but a villain hell-bent on murdering a child? Regina wants to roll her eyes but she can see the servants peeking at them through their bowed heads. Emma probably doesn’t understand why they are all kneeling off to the side of the hallway; Regina lifts her head higher and picks up her pace.

They walk into the War Room and see Henry sparring with Kam with wooden swords. As soon as Regina enters the room Kam stops what he is doing and kneels with his head bent and his right fist over his heart.

Henry looks at him in confusion while Regina merely rolls her eyes. “Kam you know that isn’t necessary, especially when there are no foreign dignitaries around.”

“My apologies, Your Majesty. I had only assumed with the White Kingdom’s princess the same
“rules would apply,” Kam says as he stands slowly, giving a minute glare towards Emma.

“It is alright Kam, however, I do believe you make Miss Swan here uncomfortable when you mention that she is a princess.” Emma is not looking at Regina but Regina knows she can hear the smirk in her words. She doesn’t respond and only moves towards Henry who is already moving towards his other mother.

“Mom! Kam is teaching me how to sword fight! He says I can’t use a real sword yet, but that I’m already a fast learner!”

Regina smiles, “That’s wonderful, Henry. I knew you would be a quick study. I’m sure soon you will be the best sword fighter in all the lands.”

“You think so?” he asks as he wraps his arms around her waist, looking up at her.

“I know so, dear,” she says as she squeezes him back. It has been so long since Henry has been this free with his emotions around her and she wants to bask in its warmth just a little longer.

Henry is smiling when they part but then he looks at Emma and it falters, “Is something wrong?” he asks.

“No dear,” Regina responds, “but it is time for you to go-”

Before she can finish her thought Henry interrupts, “Go? But I don’t want to go Mom, I want to stay here.”

“I know dear, but if you stay, your grandparents are sure to think I’ve done something to you and they would charge this castle and I certainly do not want more casualties than necessary.”

Emma scoffs and rolls her eyes, “Didn’t you massacre an entire village just because they wouldn’t tell you where Snow White was?”

Regina straightens to her full height and there’s a fire in her eyes that hasn’t been pointed at Emma since before they started sleeping with each other and it causes Emma to take a step back, “As it seems that you are too dense to see anything besides your own hatred for something you know nothing about, I will remind you again that I am no longer than person. I have not been that person in a very long time, Miss Swan, and I would appreciate if you would not spew this hatred in front of my son.”

Before Emma can say something about the fact that Henry should no longer be around her because she’s too dangerous, Kam steps forward and addresses Emma for the first time, “If I may Princess,” he practically growls the title, “the incident I’m sure you are referring to did happen, but not in the manner you are assuming. Her Majesty had demanded the town tell her the whereabouts of Snow White and as their monarch it was their duty to answer her truthfully. By not answering her questions they were committing treason and were supposed to be sentenced to an automatic death. Her Majesty told her guards to take care of the guilty parties. At that time, her Guard had what you could call some ‘bad apples’ - pardon the pun,” at this Regina gives a small smile but tightens her grip on Henry’s shoulders. Should he be hearing this? She wonders but then decides, it’s too late now anyways. Kam continues his story. “These men were with the queen when she went to the village and they took it upon themselves to dispose of everyone in the village because they had an unquenchable thirst for blood. When the queen found out what had been done, she disposed of those guards and did her best to salvage what was left of the village. Did you know any of this? Or were you too busy assuming everything Her Majesty does is wrong. You probably do not even realize that there was a survivor and the queen spent days with her making sure her
injuries did not become infected and even gave her a position in the castle to make sure she did not suffer the consequences of the guards ineptitude. Your opinion of Her Majesty is disproportionately skewed and if someone as innately good as the Savior cannot see passed things that happened before you were even born then what hope is there for anyone else? I think—"

“That’s enough Kam.” What Regina said was not particularly biting (for her anyways) but Kam immediately stops and takes a step back with his head bowed.

“My apologies if I overstepped, Your Majesty.”

“You are fine. However, I think Miss Swan is entirely overwhelmed. So, why don’t we leave this conversation for another day? You are dismissed. Enjoy your evening.”

“Bramble and Rivers will be taking over your nightly guard this evening,” he says and then moves towards the door.

“Of course, it will be the same routine as it was before the curse, Kam” Regina says as she waves her hand-signaling that she was acknowledging him without actually looking at him.

“Good evening, Your Majesty.”

“Goodnight Kam, thank you for your help today,” and he was gone.

Henry wrapped his arms around Regina again; she was just as startled as every other time it had happened. “I knew you weren’t really evil, Mom. Evil doesn’t save people. I’m sorry I was so mean to you before. Can you forgive me?”

“Oh my sweet Henry, you were forgiven before it ever happened,” Regina says as she wraps her son in a hug.

When they are done Henry turns to Emma and asks, “Do I have to go?”

Before Emma can respond Regina says, “It is probably for the best dear. There are many people still angry about the curse; it is no longer safe out in the open. But you may come back and visit tomorrow if you so choose,” she adds with a small smile.

Henry gives her a big grin, “Yes! Do you think Kam will help me to fight again?”

Regina chuckles, “I believe he would enjoy that immensely, dear.”

“Yes!” Henry exclaims as he punches a fist into the air.

Emma hasn’t said anything but suddenly, she looks terribly frightened. She looks a young foal when its mother is away, Regina considers. Emma grabs onto Henry’s shoulders and says, “Alright, let’s go.” She starts walking towards the door when she stops and looks at Regina, “How do we get back?”

Regina walks over to them and touches Henry’s necklace, “Remember dear, if you want to come back, just hold the necklace and think of me, alright?” He nods the affirmative and she smiles before looking at Emma. “I will send you back so you do not have to walk through the forest at night. Goodnight, dears.” And before either could respond there was purple smoke and they were back in Mary Margaret and David’s castle.
Emma notices that Regina is restless in her sleep again. There are tears falling from her eyes and Emma wipes and kisses away every single one. She whispers reassuring phrases to her wife, but nothing seems to calm her. Emma continues to rub her back and arms and run her fingers through her hair as she kisses her face. “I love you, babe. So fucking much.”

Regina grabs a fist full of Emma's tank top and cries out in her sleep. Emma pulls her closer until Regina pushes her away. Emma lets her go and sits upright. Regina rolls over only to almost fall off the bed. Emma grabs her before she can roll completely off the bed. Regina gasps and her eyes fly open. She sits bolt upright and looks around.

"Gina?" Emma whispers.

Regina turns to look at Emma and flings herself into her wife's arms. "Oh Emma!" she cries as she buries her face in Emma's neck.

"Shhhhh, it's okay. You're safe. I'm right here. I love you." Emma rubs her wife's back as she cries.

"It was so horrible. It was like it was happening again," Regina mumbles into Emma's skin.

"What happened babe?"

"It was the day the curse broke and our day in the Enchanted Forest." Regina starts crying softly again.

"What?" Emma asks. "Why was that a bad dream?" she asked.

"Because you hated me," Regina sobs. "It felt so real, I couldn't get out. I didn't even know I was dreaming so I couldn't try to wake myself up. I felt so alone." Regina sniffles and pulls Emma even closer. They are now completely wrapped around each other. Legs tangled together, arms securely around the other and heads laying next to each other so they were breathing each other in.

"Well welcome back to Happy Town, babe. Where I love you more than life itself and you never have to be alone again."

Regina laughs at her wife, "I love you too darling and thank you, for holding me."

"Hey." Emma reaches under Regina's chin and coaxes her head up so their eyes meet, "you never have to thank me for this. I want to do this. I love you so much, Gina, it hurts sometimes, but in a good way. Like a wow-who-knew-my-heart-was-this-big kind of hurt."

Regina laughs and snuggles into her wife again, "Always so eloquent, darling."

"What can I say babe? You bring out the best in me," Emma says with a grin and kisses her wife's temple.

"Well, I am simply the luckiest girl around," Regina says with a smirk.

"Glad we're on the same page babe."

Regina rolls her eyes and pulls Emma closer - if that's even possible. "I love you, Idiot."

"I'm only an idiot for you babe."

"Good." Regina closes her eyes and lets rest take over once more.
Sankofa

Chapter Summary

sankofa:
(n.) (phr.) "go back and fetch it"; we must look back to the past so that we may understand how we became what we are, and move forward to a better future.

Chapter Notes

Hello!!! My deepest apologies for the long wait in between updates, my muse seemed to go into hiding for a few days and then I had to return to the adult world instead of living in this lovely little fantasy world this story lives in, but I'm back and I have a longer chapter for you all. I believe my muse is back but I cannot say when the next update will be because it is the start of midterm season and my exams will have to come before this story (being an adult is the worst) I would like to point out that I do not have much of a plan for this story aside from mental thoughts on where it could possibly go, I do not map out stories in advance. So, if you guys have anything you would like to see in this story feel free to comment or inbox me and I will do it! Hugs and Such
-IrishBella

But enough about me, here's chapter 9!

Trigger Warning: There is a section in this chapter that talks about marital rape, if this affects you, you can skip the part. I have marked where you should skip and where the story picks back up.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“Nothing like baby alarm clocks, huh babe?” Emma asks as she pours them each a cup of coffee.

Regina laughs and says, “You know that I absolutely love this, dear, even if you are a dreadful morning person.”

Emma grumbles and then gives a fake smile, “I love mornings, Gina!”

Regina laughs and shakes her head as she takes a sip of her coffee, “You know, for all your claims about knowing whenever someone is lying, you make a terrible liar.”

“There’s a difference between lying and sarcasm, Gina.”

Regina simply rolls her eyes and looks into the living room to see her daughters asleep in their swings. She starts moving around the kitchen as she starts to prepare breakfast. “You are able to
take Henry to school today?” she questions as she places a pan on the stove.

“Yes, babe. I’ll be taking Henry and he’ll be on his own to get home because I’m only working a half day today, remember.”

“Very well, Thomas has a Parent-and-Me group this morning and we will be going to park but we should be back by lunch.”

“Oh, I forgot about that thing. I’m so glad you deal with that, I couldn’t deal with all those suburban mom’s judging me,” Emma says as she helps Regina with breakfast.

Regina laughs and says, “Well dear, I was the Evil Queen, I think I can handle a few peasants and their gossip driven lives.”

“It’s okay babe, I know you secretly love to judge them. Even before you remembered the whole Evil Queen thing, you were able to handle them so much better than me.”

“That’s because you are more of an action first, think later person, darling. I, on the other hand, am always thinking three steps ahead.”

“More like 12,” Emma mumbles as she reaches into the fridge.

“Yes, dear. Well, being a queen in the Enchanted Forest was difficult enough but to be a queen without a king to ‘take care of me’ was practically unheard of. I had to stay ahead of everyone else lest they try to overtake my kingdom.”

“Yeah, babe, I can’t really see you standing down and letting someone else take over your kingdom.”

“Not a chance,” Regina says with a smirk, “I was more likely to overtake than to be overtaken.”

“Bad ass!” Emma exclaims, causing Regina to chuckle.

“Well, I’m glad you approve, darling.”

They work silently preparing breakfast for their family. Regina cannot help the grin that takes over her face. This is all she’s ever wanted. The domesticity of all of this causes her heart to grow in her chest. Emma notices the grin and asks, “What?”

Regina turns to look at Emma and moves towards her, kissing her resolutely on her lips. “I love you,” she whispers when they separate.

Emma wraps her arms around Regina’s waist and leans her forehead so it rests against her wife’s, “I love you too, babe. Any specific reason you chose now to remind me that I’m the luckiest person in the world?”

Regina smiles as her heart feels like it’s growing again, “This is all I’ve ever wanted Emma. A family; this easiness, it’s all I’ve ever wanted. I used to think I deserved it when I was younger but after everything that happened with Daniel I thought I would never get back to being this person, and then you waltz into my life and flip everything upside down. And I couldn’t be happier that you did. I love you more than words can describe.”

“You know, Regina Mills, you sure are sweet when you want to be,” Emma says with a smirk. Regina rolls her eyes, but Emma continues, “I love you too, babe. I’ve always wanted a family and you gave me that, even before you knew it. You’re home for me, babe.”
“Well, dear, you can be sweet when you want to be as well,” Regina smirks, “and I can say you are my home as well darling, even if you continue to use childish terms of endearment.”

Emma gasps as she pretends to pull away from her wife, “Oh, you wound me, my darling,” she snarks. This causes Regina to laugh out loud and Emma smiles, “Gina! I love you like sooooooooo much babe,” Emma drags out her words like the child her wife just claimed her to be.

Regina rolls her eyes, “You’re impossible.” She pulls her wife closer and kisses her again.

“You like it,” Emma says back against her wife’s lips.

Regina doesn’t even give a response; she simply pulls away and moves back to check on their breakfast. Emma doesn’t even have a chance to say something snarky before she hears footsteps start on the stairs before she hears an angry, “Henny!” The footsteps stop, there’s a grunt, and then the footsteps begin again. Then Henry is standing at the entrance of the kitchen with Tommy in his arms. He grunts again and walks to the chairs on their island where Emma and Regina are standing.

“Well good morning to you too, dear,” Regina says with a smile. She receives another grunt and Henry puts Tommy in a chair before he falls into the chair next to it and lays his head on the counter.

“Mownin’ Mommy!” Tommy greets cheerfully as he tries to crawl onto the counter.

“Good morning, my little prince, did you sleep well?” Regina asks as she hands him a glass of juice, hoping it will keep him in his seat until his plate is ready.

“Yes, but Henny didn’t. He’s cwanky,” he says as he pokes his older brother’s head. He takes a sip of his juice and looks at the food his mothers are making.

Regina smiles at him and says, “Yes well he takes after your Momma on that, dear.”

“Momma no like mownins eiver?” he asks with wide eyes.

“No baby, Momma does not like mornings either,” Emma says as she walks around the island to give her youngest son his plate, "but I do love spending them with you."

“Henry dear, head up or no breakfast,” Regina says as she holds the plate in front of her son's face. The only response she receives is another grunt. “Now, Henry, or you will be late to school. Head. Up,” she repeats sternly.

Henry grunts again but raises his head so his mother can put down his plate. She kisses his forehead and moves to do the same to her youngest son. “Mommy?” he questions when she pulls away from him.

“Yes, Thomas?”

“What we do today?” he asks as he takes a bite of his breakfast.

“You have a playdate with your friends, remember?” Regina says as she pushes his hair out of his face.

“Yes!” He pumps his fist into the air, causing his mothers and his brother to chuckle. They make small talk about Henry’s plans for his school day, about Emma’s caseload (child-friendly of course); and they’re only interrupted by the twins once where Regina simply has to go
and place Evy’s pacifier back in her mouth. Once breakfast is finished and the dishes are placed in the dishwasher, Emma and Henry finish getting ready, say their goodbyes and make their way out the door. When they’re gone Regina takes Tommy upstairs and helps him get dressed, brush his teeth, and brush his hair. Regina takes him into her bedroom and places him on the settee with a toy as she gets ready herself. Once she is dressed for the day, in simple jeans and a button down with a cardigan, Regina grabs an outfit and a diaper for each of her daughters and takes their things downstairs to dress them. They are ready to go and make it to the park with 5 minutes to spare.

“It always makes me laugh that you and your wife are such polar opposites when it comes to timing, Regina.” Regina turns towards the voice and sees Cynthia sitting on a park bench smiling.

Regina smiles back and says, “Ah yes, Emma has always been unintentionally fashionably late her entire life.”

She pushes the stroller with her daughters over to the bench as her son asks, “Mommy can I pway?”

“Yes, dear. Be careful.” But Tommy is already gone. She just smiles and shakes her head. She turns to see Cynthia laughing with her hand over her mouth “Are you alright dear?”

“Yes, yes,” she manages in between laughs, “I just love your explanation for Emma’s tardiness.”

Regina smiles again, “Well, she has been that way for as long as I’ve known her and I doubt that will ever change.”

“You guys are just so stinking cute!” Cynthia says as she claps her hands together.

“I am not cute,” Regina says with a curled lip. No one has ever called me cute. Beautiful maybe. But cute? Absolutely not. I had people filleted for less. No one would dare call the Evil Queen “cute” without fear of repercussions. I suppose no one ever was close enough to call the Evil Queen “cute,” Regina muses, I mean, one does not get that moniker by being cute.

Cynthia just laughs and shakes her head, “Of course not, Regina. How dare I even entertain such an idea,” she mocks.

Regina simply shakes her head and refuses to respond to such sarcasm. Cynthia smiles at her friend and fellow mom as they turn to watch their sons. Within half an hour the entire playgroup was there. Every week this group got together (at least once) to get their children outside and for the parents to partake in actual adult conversation. Each week each family brings something to their play dates. This week Regina had drinks for the kids, for which she packed juice boxes - apple of course. Brogan brought the coffee; Cynthia had snacks for the kids, Anna baked breakfast scones for the adults, Heather had the kids’ second snack, and Aubrey brought extra water bottles for the kids. This had become a bit of a bonding ritual for the parents and it definitely helped when all of the kids had the same snacks/drinks as everyone else. As Brogan handed out the coffee and the kids ran off to play, the adults sat back with the littlest children and made small talk while supervising the children.

“Hey Thia!” Brogan yells as he hand Cynthia her coffee, “just how you like it.”

“Thanks Brogan,” Cynthia says with a smile as she looks down at Evy in her arms.

Regina smiles at the sight and Brogan says, “and for you Regina,” handing her the coffee.

“Thank you, dear,” she says as she turns toward the park to see her youngest son.
“Tommy sure seems to be enjoying himself today, finally feeling better?” Aubrey asks coming over to sit next to Regina and Cynthia, resituating her 10-month-old daughter on her lap.

“Yes, Aubrey. I believe he is getting over that bug that had been going around,” Regina says looking at Lottie in her arms, “and thank goodness it did not spread through the entire house.”

“Oh you certainly are lucky! When Everleigh brought that bug from school, everyone got it, Enzo even spent one day at home,” Aubrey says looking over at their children running all over the park.

“Oh no!” Cynthia exclaims looking at Aubrey, “If Ryan ever missed work I believe I would immediately call an ambulance, the man is as stubborn as a mule and refuses to acknowledge when he actually gets sick.”

Regina laughs and says, “Oh Emma is very similar. She could be too sick to stand up straight and she would insist she was fine.” She rolls her eyes and looks of the kids, mentally counting everyone.

“Really?” Anna asks as she comes to sit near the other moms, “I would assume if she had you to take care of her she would milk it for all it’s worth.”

Regina laughs again and rolls her eyes, “Oh no, the last time she was sick I had to physically stop her from leaving the house. She could not even walk, but she expected to go and hunt down a murderer.”

“Oh my goodness,” Heather says as she joins the circle of parents with Brogan, “that must be terrifying for you.”

Regina notices the condescending tone and raises an eyebrow as she pulls Lottie closer to her.

“Well, I just don’t know how you can allow her to put herself in danger like that everyday, if that was my Corey, I don’t think I would let him out of my sight.”

Regina tries to laugh it off, “Well, Emma has never been very good at following directions.”

“Awww,” Cynthia cooed. Regina rolls her eyes and turns back toward the playing children but Heather did not let it go, “I think I would do everything in my power to change Corey’s mind.”

Regina raises an eyebrow; “I would never prevent Emma from doing something she loves.”

“Oh, o-of course not,” Heather stutters at Regina’s tone.

Everyone in the group can see that things are about to get tense. Regina has always been polite to everyone, but they all know she has a quick temper and will use her words to end you. In fact, that’s why she and Cynthia get along as well as they do, they have the same sense of humor and quick wit. Heather, however, is much more like Emma, acting or speaking before she thinks. Perhaps that’s why the blondes got along so well.

Cynthia smiles at the awkward silence her friend has created before she changes the topic to things the school-aged children had been up to and the tension quickly dissipated.

The rest of the morning pass by uneventfully. The kids come back and forth when they're hungry or thirsty and the adults drink their coffees, eat their scones and either made small talk, or tended to their younger children that were too small to play on the equipment by themselves.

Regina truly enjoyed these mornings. Being able to talk with other parents about the joys of
parenthood was something she looked forward to every week and seeing her son light up when he was able to play with children his own age warmed her heart. And of course Cynthia and her sense of humor always provided a few laughs for the brunette. Regina definitely enjoyed the company of the other parents but she and Cynthia had certainly connected because she never expected anything from Regina. *I was never very good at the people skills, Regina muses as she thinks back to before they left the Enchanted Forest, I never had a lot of “friends”. Acquaintances - yes. Friends - not so much. But there was something different about Cynthia,* she actually reminds me quite a bit of Kathryn, now that I think about it, Regina considers as she looks at her friend making faces at her daughter.

Regina smiles as Cynthia helps her buckle the twins back in and walks towards their house together with Tommy and her three youngest sons.

By the time Regina got Tommy and the twins back inside the house, after bidding goodbye to Cynthia and her sons, with a promise of getting together for dinner soon, she realized how late it was and that Emma would be home for lunch soon.

She placed her daughters on the floor in the living room and gave Tommy a few of his toys while she prepared lunch. She had just finished and walked back into the living room when the door opened and she heard, “Honey, I’m home!” ring through their home.

Regina rolls her eyes and stands to greet her wife. “There is no need to bellow dear, we are merely in the living room.”

“Hey babe! I missed you today!” Emma says, kissing her wife.

“I missed you too darling,” Regina smiles, “are you ready for lunch?”

“What kind of question is that?” Emma asks with a grin, “I’m always hungry, especially for anything you cooked up babe.”

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

Lunch was incredibly relaxing for the two women, and after they had finished they put their youngest three children down for their naps and walked into their bedroom.

“So I was thinking,” Emma started as she sat on the bed.

“Oh, my dear, I hope you didn’t hurt yourself,” Regina jokes as she sits next to her wife.

“Har har,” Emma mocks. “I was thinking that maybe we should look into those magic books and see if there’s anything in there that could help us find a way back to the Enchanted Forest.’”

Regina is shocked at this. *I thought she didn’t want to go back. Of course she doesn’t want to go back, but she’s the Savior,* Regina rolls her eyes at the thought of that weight on her wife's shoulders, *she will absolutely go back, even if it is just to calm herself and her family.*

“That sounds like a good idea, darling,” Regina says as she looks at her wife. “should we get started now so that we have some time before the children wake up?”

Emma shakes her head, “I can think of something much better for us to do while our children are asleep.” Regina raises her eyebrow, but remains quiet. Suddenly Emma pushes her back onto the bed and straddles her hips with a wicked smirk on her face, “it’s much more productive, babe.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Stop talking,” as she leans up to kiss her wife.
“Babe?” Emma whispers, checking to see if her wife is asleep.

“How?” Regina asks as she lifts her head to look at her wife.

“We should go into the basement and look at those books and see if you recognize them. They might have some clues on how to find the gateway back.”

“Mmmmm,” Regina groans as she buries her face in her wife’s neck. Emma chuckles as she wraps her arms tightly around her wife. No one else ever gets to see this side of Regina - the human side of her. To everyone else, Regina is this untouchable ideal of perfection. Of course she’s always perfect, Emma thinks to herself as she draws patterns on her wife’s back, but to see her lose herself, to come undone, and with messy hair and unable to form a coherent thought, that’s just for me. Emma couldn’t be happier that she was the only one privy to this side of Regina, it makes her feel extremely special that Regina trusts her enough with this.

Emma kisses Regina’s forehead and whispers, “Come on babe, you know that you’ll end up doing it anyway because now you’re a hero.” Regina rolls her eyes. Even without feeling Emma’s lips brush against her skin she could hear the smirk in her voice. “I just want to help,” Emma says with another kiss.

“I believe you will only prove to be a distraction dear,” Regina whispers.

“Well then, my queen, allow me to be your personal jester while you read your magic books.” Emma rolls out of the bed and mock bows toward Regina who sits up and giggles at her wife’s antics. Emma gives her a goofy grin and says, “I love when you giggle.” Her grin morphs into a smirk as she says, “who knew the Evil Queen giggles like a schoolgirl.”

Regina glares at Emma as she stands in front of her, “No one will believe you, dear. The Evil Queen is much too powerful to feel such childish things.”

Emma touches a finger to her chin in thought, “Hmmmm, now that you mention it, no one would believe she squeals like a little girl either.”

“I do not squeal,” Regina huffs indignantly.

Emma raises a challenging eyebrow before she jumps at her wife. She picks her up in a fireman’s hold and spins her in a circle before throwing her down on the bed.

“Emma!” Regina exclaims when her wife initially grabs her, but by the time she is dropped gracelessly onto the bed she is laughing. Emma smiles down at her wife who is poised on her elbows, hair tousled, and Emma has never seen a more beautiful sight.

“You definitely squealed,” Emma says with a satisfied smirk. Regina rolls her eyes and looks up at her wife with hooded eyes. Emma groans, “Damn woman, how do you do that? Even when I win, you still win!” Regina laughs as Emma crawls over her, wife “God you’re beautiful.”

“I love you,” Regina says with a smile.

“I love you too,” Emma says as she kisses her wife.

“How the hell do you read these?!” Emma exclaims as she looks over Regina’s shoulder at the
book she’s reading, “What the fuck is that? Is that even a language? Looks like fucking pictures to me?”

“Language,” Regina chastises as she continues to read over what the books say.

Emma groans and throws her hands up in the air as she retreats from her wife. “What the hell is that?”

“It’s Elvish, dear, and had you practiced more back in the Enchanted Forest, you would be fluent by now,” Regina says, not looking up from her book.

“We were leaving!” Emma exclaims, “Why would I put in all that effort to learn a language I would be forced to forget anyway?”

“For a situation such as this, darling. We had discussed this as a possibility before we left. You are their Savior after all, we talked about their lack of knowledge about anything and that they would probably look to you to save the day,” Regina says as she looks up to see her wife’s reaction.

Emma slumps against the wall, “I don’t want to be their Savior. I want to be Emma. Why is that not enough?” she asks dejectedly.

“It is enough, darling,” Regina says as she walks in front of her wife, “you are more than enough. Look around you. You have friends in this world who know nothing of your status as Savior, you have a job you love, you have a family who loves you, and children who think you hung the moon.” She places a hand on Emma’s cheek so they are looking into each other’s eyes.

“And a smoking hot wife,” Emma says with a small smile.

“Oh of course, that is the most important part,” Regina says with a laugh.

Emma wraps her arms around Regina’s waist and leans their foreheads together, “It’s not enough for them. I’ll always be their Savior. Someone they look up to when I know nothing. I kind of just wing things and hope for the best.”

Regina pulls back in mock surprise, “What?” she exclaims, “The Savior from the World Without Magic does not actually know what she is doing when it comes to saving the day?”

“Har har, I could do without the sarcasm, Your Majesty,” Emma says with an eye roll.

Regina smirks and kisses Emma’s cheek, “They will understand if you choose not to go back Emma. We do not owe them anything. This is our happy ending. If you do not wish to go back I will certainly not make you. I do not want to subject our children to that unless this is absolutely what you want.”

“That’s just it, I can’t just leave them. They’re my parents. My family is there, and even if they weren’t my family, I would still want to go, at least to see if they’re alright,” Emma says quietly as she looks at her hand drawing circles on her wife’s waist.

“Very well. We will all go check to see if everything is alright.”

“All of us?” Emma asks as she looks up at Regina’s face.

“Yes, dear. I’m certainly not leaving our children behind, and they deserve to know their family now that we remember.”
“We could leave them with Zelena and Robin,” Emma says with a shrug. She really did not want to take her children to the Enchanted Forest, it was certainly very different from this world the last time they were there, and if there was danger she didn’t want them around it.

“Do you honestly believe Zelena is going to pass up a chance to get back to her magic, even for a small amount of time?” Regina asks with a raised eyebrow. “And she would love to have a fight on her hands again. She called me this morning and she has been feeling antsy since regaining her full memories because she no longer wants to harm me and is apparently feeling upset that she does not have an outlet to channel any anger she feels.”

“Crazy Bitch,” Emma mutters.

“You!” Regina exclaims.

Emma simply shrugs, “Do you think it’ll be safe for them?”

“Emma, they will be with 3 of the most powerful magic users in all the realms. I cannot think of a safer place for them.”


Regina rolls her eyes, “I think that the 3 most powerful sorceresses would have to disagree, at least this one would, and I do not believe I could leave our children behind, darling. I know Henry would be angry if we even tried such a thing and Thomas, Evelyn, and Charlotte deserve to meet their grandparents, and the rest of our godforsaken family.”

Emma smirks, “I knew you loved them.”

Regina rolls her eyes and moves back to the magic books.

“We should start looking for the Gateway in this realm. Do you remember where we came in?” Emma asks as she moves next to Regina.

“I do not. That is why I am looking at these books; hopefully there is a clue.”

Before Emma can reply, crying comes through the baby monitor on the table. “I’ll get them and bring them down here,” Emma says as she walks towards the stairs.

Regina turns back to the book she’s reading; there is nothing in here! This book is not even talking about other realms, or travel at all. It is merely mentioning simple spells like levitation. Where is the history of magic? Where are the notes about traveling between realms? Why send us these useless books? If we are meant to go back to the Enchanted Forest, we need to find the gateway, without knowledge on how to find it we cannot get back and then all of this will be for not. This has the Charming’s idiocy written all over it, Regina growls thinking of her arch nemesis - turned reluctant ally, she was always inept. Especially when it came to magic. I blame her father. Incompetent baboon. He never could run the kingdom. He could not even take care of himself and raise his daughter alone. He needed a girl young enough to be his daughter’s sister to raise her for him, be lovely and gorgeous at all times (in case he needed to show me off), Regina internally scoffs, and of course be there to warm his bed whenever he should choose to use me. Regina shudders at the memories currently flooding her brain. Being forced into a marriage she did not want, not being allowed to leave without her “husband”, being ready at his beck and call for whatever he needed her for - no matter how ridiculous or degrading-
She’s sitting in her chambers. It’s her wedding day, she should be happy, but all she’s feeling is dismay. She never wanted this wedding, she wanted freedom, she wanted love; and now she has nothing. She may be a queen, but she has nothing. She has a new husband who wants her as a shiny new mother for his daughter. His daughter who happens to only be 6 years younger than herself. How can she be a mother to someone who could be her sister? She’s shaken from her thoughts as her maids move around her. Maids. Who would have thought she’d ever have her own personal maids? Well, besides her mother, who only wanted the best for her - who only wanted her to be queen.

She has been sent to her chambers to ‘prepare for the king’ whatever that means. She wonders if he wants to talk about her mothering his daughter. That is the reason she’s here anyway. Snow is in need of a mother and Regina saved her life without even knowing her - logically the king must assume she will only love her more now that they are family. Her maids are taking off her dress. She will never be used to this, other people doing everything for her. She may have had a governess growing up that would help her in and out of a dress or two, but never multiple maids moving around her completely undressing her until she stands in nothing - not even her corset or undergarments. She’s never been in such a state in front of so many people, it’s humiliating. Well, she supposes she’ll have to get used to it if she is to be queen. She was shown her wardrobe earlier. What a strange thing to think - her very own wardrobe, made especially for her from the finest fabrics in this realm. Modesty was not something incorporated in this wardrobe, but she knew that she was very young and very attractive, so perhaps the seamstress thought it fitting to accent these things. She doesn’t give it much thought as she is handed a thin robe and is escorted to the king’s chambers and is told to wait there for her husband. She’s only in her robe! She should not be in such a state of undress to see the king-her husband! Her husband. She shudders to think that she is married to a man old enough to be her father. She sits on the chaise and waits for the king. She’s not sure what to expect, why would he want to meet with her in his chambers? That seems a bit personal, even if they are man and wife.

Regina honestly doesn’t understand what’s going on, her mother was always vague when it came to what happens in a marriage, never explaining anything more than “always do everything to please your husband. Do not ask questions, simply do what he says. You are here to serve him.” Regina has no idea what that means, perhaps she can ask one of her maids later. The maids always seem to know what is going on. Suddenly, the doors are flung open and the king stumbles in. She immediately stands and bows respectfully - she wonders if she is supposed to still bow now that she is queen. Better to be safe than sorry she thinks before she is forcefully flung backwards. She is shocked, what was the king doing? Was he going to hurt her? He just married her; he wants her to take care of his daughter, why was he pushing her. The king pushes her again and she stumbles backwards, almost to the bed.

“You are astounding, my precious,” he mumbles. Regina can tell that he is drunk.

“Thank you, my king,” she says respectfully; she does not want him to be angry with her so she uses his proper title.

“I do enjoy when you say that. Say it again,” he tells her.

“Thank you, my king,” she says in a confused voice. What was he doing? He was pulling her close by her robe. Oh my, he must think her incredibly disrespectful to be in such a state of - wait. Was he pulling at the fabric holding her robe closed? She immediately pulls away from him and clutches the fabric shut, “What are you doing?”

“Oh do not be coy, my precious,” he says pulling her close again.
“Stop this!” she says trying to get away.

“Will you truly deny your husband - your KING - what is rightfully mine?!” he exclaims, “you will do your queenly duty and you will keep quiet.” He grabs her again and roughly throws her onto the bed. Before she can get away he has removed his clothes and is top of her. He smells of alcohol and he’s so heavy! Oh god she can’t breathe. She turns her head away from him and stares at the wall. Tears fall down her face. He pants against her cheek and whispers, “Eva.” Tears fall harder. She has never felt so dirty. He rolls off of her and whispers, “Well done, my precious, now go back to your chambers.” She decides that her earlier thought was wrong; this was a new level of disgust for herself. She has now never felt so dirty. She leaves the bed as quickly as she can, wrapping her robe tightly around herself as she runs down the corridor back to her chambers. When she gets there, she closes the door and sobs against the door. She slides to the floor and curls into herself. She can see blood in the moonlight from her window but she refuses to move. What had he done to her? She sobs harder. He didn’t even know her name, he remembered his dead wife, how humiliating is that? He called for his late wife, his true love. Regina’s sobs slowed and eventually stopped until all that remained were hiccups. She raised herself off the floor and stumbled to the bed. She had never felt such pain; she could not even walk straight. She fell into her bed as new humiliation rolled over her - she had run through the castle with tears on her face and people must have watched her. They will know what has happened; new tears fall until she hears her doors being opened. She tries to stop her sobs - she pulls her blankets up higher on her body to cover herself more. Then she hears a quiet voice ask,

“Your Majesty?”

She doesn’t respond, perhaps the maid will leave if she assumes Regina is still sleeping.

“Your Majesty, I have been sent to clean you up before you start your day.” Regina gasps, so people did know what had happened. She peeks her head out of the blanket cocoon she finds herself in and looks at the middle-aged maid before her. The maid smiles sadly and says, “Come along dear, I will draw you a bath.”

Regina sits silently in the bath while the maid moves around her. Cleaning her body, washing her hair, combing her hair. When Regina is done, the maid helps her out, dries her, and dresses her in a simple dressing gown. Regina looks puzzled but the maid simply answers, “You will not be receiving any guests today, Your Majesty. You are to remain in your chambers unless the king summons you.” At this, Regina’s eyes grow wide. The maid notices and places a gentle hand on her arm, “It will get easier, Your Majesty. Just do not anger the king and it will be quick.” Regina cannot believe what she is hearing; she will have to go through that again? The maid moves to leave the room but Regina stops her.

“I didn’t catch your name,” she says quietly. It’s the first time she’s spoken.

“Louisa, Your Majesty,” she says turning back to look at Regina.

Regina smiles and says, “Thank you, Louisa. You are the only person to be so kind to me.”

“It is my duty, Your Majesty.”

“Oh, of course. Well, you are very good at your job,” Regina says trying not to look hurt. Of course the only time people were nice to her was when they wanted something. Louisa here simply wanted to keep her job.

Louisa smiles sadly at Regina and reaches out to touch her arm again, “I would do it even if it were not my duty, Your Majesty, you are very kind and do not deserve what will certainly happen
to you during your life at court.”

Regina looks shocked but only responds with, “You do not have to call me Your Majesty, Louisa. Please, call me Regina.”

“I think not!” Louisa exclaims in an outrage, “how very disrespectful to speak to a queen in such a fashion.”

Regina smiles sadly, “I am no queen, Louisa. I am just a girl.”

Louisa squeezes her arm and says, “If it would please you so, when it is only us I shall call you by your given name.”

“Thank you,” Regina says with a smile. She does not wish to be queen. She wants to be Regina.

Louisa smiles again and says, “Your breakfast shall be up soon. I will make sure the maids are on their best behavior and I will be up in the evening to help you rewash and prepare for bed.”

Regina nods her head.

“I also took the liberty of preparing your room with books, Your Majesty. I hope you do not think me forward, but I overheard someone mention your love of reading and I assumed that you would not want to be left inside your own head today.”

Regina smiles. No one had ever been so kind to her. She follows Louisa to her chaise and looks over the books. She smiles again at the kindness Louisa has shown her. “Thank you-“ but before she can finish her sincere gratitude the doors to her chambers are flung open and Snow runs in.

“Regina!” she exclaims as she crushes Regina in a tight hug. Regina can’t breathe again, she’s still in a lot of pain and she certainly wasn’t expecting the girl to hug her so tightly. She feels tears burning behind her eyes and she remembers what this girl’s father had done to her. “I missed you at the end of the wedding. Did you and Father talk? He said he was coming to visit you. Are you going to fall in love now? Shall we go to breakfast? I thought we could perhaps go riding today. I want you to see how far I’ve come!” Snow pulls back to look at Regina and gives her a puzzling looks but before she can ask why she’s sad Louisa steps forward and causes the young princess to turn away from her new stepmother.

“Your Highness, the queen will be indisposed today because she is weakened and extremely exhausted from yesterday’s events. Perhaps we should leave her to rest and you may spend time with her another day.”

It is then that Snow sees Regina is not wearing an outing dress and is in her dressing gown. “Oh! Well, perhaps I can take care of you Regina! It will be a sort of thanks for saving me from that horse!”

Louisa shakes her head before Regina can respond, “No, Your Highness, the queen needs to rest in the quiet and my dear princess, quiet you are not,” she says with a wink.

Snow looks down dejectedly and says, “Alright, but I wish to see you when you are feeling better Regina.”

“Of course Your Highness, you will certainly be the first to see the queen when she is feeling better, now run along before you miss breakfast with your father.” Louisa orders as she turns away from the princess to look at the queen. Regina is clutching her dressing gown tightly to herself and staring glassy-eyed toward the wall. Snow gives a final look and leaves the room.
Louisa guides Regina to the chaise and gets her a glass of water, “Here,” she murmurs as she steps away from Regina. “Rest, Your Majesty, I will send your breakfast and I will see you this evening. If you need anything simply ask the guards outside your room to fetch me.”

“Guards?” she asks.

“Yes, Your Majesty, the king thinks you need extra protection now that you are queen and he wants to make sure no harm comes to you.”

“You mean he does not wish me to run away,” Regina says with tears forming in her eyes, “I am a prisoner here.”

Louisa smiles sadly and shakes her head but does not respond to that. She simply murmurs, “Claude and Kam shall be outside your doors until I come this evening, should you need anything do not hesitate to ask.” Then she moves closer to Regina and whispers, “Claude is loyal to the king, but Kam is loyal to those he protects, he will do anything you would ask of him, Regina.”

Regina smiles and thanks Louisa for all her help. Louisa leaves and does not return until evening.

Regina also remembers other times when the king had humiliated her. When he would make her leave an event to ‘prepare herself for him’ or when he would parade her around other nobles like some sort of prized animal. Her wardrobe eventually changed to be more conservative, never too conservative, but she was no longer allowed to show much skin. The king became extremely possessive; she was guarded every moment of every day. She had heard whispers wondering when she would bear a child. She could not fathom the idea of carrying that vile man's child so she sought out Rumplestiltskin to prevent that from ever happening. Eventually, the king’s visits grew fewer and though her clothing never became less conservative, he did show her off more and compliment her beauty to the visiting nobles. It always made her sick, the way he talked about her, but he usually did not say such things in front of her daughter. It was shocking to Regina, that although all she wanted was to cause harm to Snow White for ruining her life, suddenly, she was her only saving grace at royal events. As long as Regina stayed close to Snow and chose to leave with Snow to ‘help her prepare for bed’ her husband stayed away. She even realized that the king would not visit her chambers if Snow was there. She found this out when Snow felt ill one evening.

Regina is sitting in her chambers reading a novel Louisa had dropped off when her doors are opened and Kam steps in, “Your Majesty, the princess is requesting your presence.”

Regina rolled her eyes, but marks her page and stands. Before she can leave her room the princess runs in with tears streaming down her face.

“Snow?” Regina questions as Snow stands in front of her.

“I shall die,” Snow says dramatically.

It takes all of Regina’s willpower not to roll her eyes at the young girl’s antics and instead asks, “You shall not die, Snow. What is the matter?”

“I am bleeding.”

“Where?” Regina asks looking her over, not seeing any wounds she looks back to Snow. Realization dawns as Regina sees Snow’s hands over her stomach, “Oh, Snow, you are not dying.
You are becoming a woman.” Regina is struggling to figure out how to explain this to Snow. She is sure this falls under her responsibilities, but she was never told what happens during this process, her mother merely told her she was now a woman and needed to find a king to produce heirs for.

“What?” Snow asks as she grips her stomach, “I fear I will not make it through the night, Regina.”

Regina laughs and this causes tears to form in Snow’s eyes, “No, no, Snow, you are not going to die. Here, come lie down while I get you a warm rag and I shall explain things to you.” Snow obliges and lays in Regina’s bed as she grabs some rags.

After Snow is cleaned up Regina sits next to her, leaning against the headboard and Snow lays her head in Regina’s lap. Regina absentmindedly runs her fingers through her hair as she explains what is going on with her body. Then, Regina is forced to explain why this happens when Snow questions what she had done wrong to deserve this punishment. Eventually, Snow runs out of questions and relaxes further into Regina’s lap and falls asleep. Regina does not seem to notice as she continues to read her book. She hears voices outside her chamber but tries her best to ignore them. However, she hears the king and feels fear course through her body. Will he make a scene in front of his daughter? Abruptly, the doors are opened and the king stumbles in. How that man can drink so much and still run a kingdom is beyond Regina, however she had peeked into the treasury and she cannot fathom how he still has a kingdom to run with his decreasing funds. He stares at her and she does not move her hand from his daughter’s hair. He turns and leaves as quickly as he had come. Regina lets out a breath she did not know she had been holding. Perhaps keeping Snow close would not be as terrible as she had originally thought. Perhaps the positives would outweigh the negatives.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“Regina?” she’s pulled from her memories to see her wife standing at the bottom of the stairs with two bassinets, “what’s going on?” she asks as she sees her wife gripping the table as if it’s the only thing holding her up.

“It seems I was lost in thought, Emma,” she says as she turns back to the book she had been reading. Emma sets the bassinets down and moves towards her wife. She does not say anything; she simply wraps her arms tightly around Regina’s waist and lays her head on her shoulder. No words are said but Emma can feel Regina taking deep breaths. “I was lost in another lifetime,” Regina whispers after a few silent moments.

Emma kisses her shoulder and whispers, “We don’t have to go back if it’s too much.”

“No, no, dear. It will not be a problem,” Regina says closing the book, at least I hope it won’t be a problem, she thinks quietly to herself.
Gezelligheid

Chapter Summary

gezelligheid:
(n.) the coziness, warmth and comfort of being at home, or being together with friends or loved ones sharing time in a pleasant and nice atmosphere.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Regina invites Zelena over for dinner. Again.

“Two nights in a row, Sis?” Zelena says as she walks into the kitchen, “people might actually think you care about me.” She smirks as she sets down a tray of rice crispy treats on the island.

Regina rolls her eyes but quietly says, “Just because we have our memories back doesn’t mean anything has to change, Zelena.”

Zelena stares at Regina with a questioning gaze but before she can question her Kelly runs in, “Aunt Gina!” she screams as she runs to her aunt and wraps her arms around her waist.

“Hello dear. How was your day?” Regina asks as she brushes her niece’s unruly red locks out of her face.

“It was alright,” she shrugs, “can I go play with the boys?”

Regina smiles, “Of course dear.”

“Play nicely,” Zelena reminds. Kelly rolls her eyes on her way out of the room. “I blame you for that,” Zelena says as she turns back to her sister.

Regina smiles. “The eyes may be mine, but the attitude is most definitely yours, Lena.” Zelena rolls her eyes. “See?” Regina points out.

“You know, I feel like such a childish nickname should offend me, but it makes me feel oddly calm, and almost warm inside,” Zelena says with a scoff.

“That’s happiness, Z,” Emma says with a smirk as she walks into the kitchen with a baby monitor, “and I’m truly shocked that your angry black heart can feel such an emotion.”

Zelena merely rolls her eyes and Regina reprimands, “Emma.”

Emma simply smiles and says, “Just kidding Z, you know I tolerate you.”

“Awwww! How sweet,” Zelena mocks. Emma smiles wider, sets the monitor on the counter, and walks out of the room.

“Why must you two antagonize?” Regina asks exasperatedly.
“It’s what we do, sis. I thought it would please you that this has not changed. We were like this while your memories were gone.” Zelena says as she moves around the counter to help her sister finish dinner.

Regina sighs, “Of all the things that stay the same from our time here, that’s what has to stay?”

“I’m not following Regina,” Zelena says as she stops putting together the salad to turn towards her sister.

“It’s nothing.” Regina tries to go to the fridge but Zelena steps in front of it.

“You know. I liked when you were under the curse and I only had partial memories. I thought I was a terrible person for trying to kill you-“

“Well…” Regina says with a shrug.

Zelena rolls her eyes and continues, “But I actually felt guilty, I didn’t feel guilty in the Enchanted Forest because you were so happy and I felt that you were happy because you had the life I deserved and then I went into the past and everything became jumbled and I didn’t have time to process before I met Robin and I guess it was just simpler to pretend I didn’t feel anything towards you. That couldn’t have been further from the truth. I hated you but then I saw that I loved you and I was so confused and so I just pushed everything aside. When we came to this world, it was just so pleasant to have those fake memories, even if I still remembered bits and pieces, I still had all of the fake memories as well. It was - well for lack of a better word - nice.” Regina gave her a watery smile. “Oh. Don’t go getting all sentimental and foolish on me now, Sissy,” Zelena adds with a wink and the tension dissolves.

Regina laughs and shakes her head, “That speech was sentimental itself, Zelena. Should I be worried about all of these feelings you’re showing?” Zelena shoves her as she laughs, turning back to the salad. Regina walks towards the fridge, or so Zelena thinks until Regina wraps her arms around Zelena from behind and rests her head against her shoulder, “Thank you,” she whispers.

“Well, I knew you were not going to say anything, so I figured I would step up and do everything. Again.” Zelena says it haughtily, but Regina knows there’s no bite behind it. She can practically hear the smile in Zelena’s voice.

“Mhm,” Regina murmurs, “always the best big sister, Lena.” She lets go and turns to open the fridge.

“Don’t you forget it,” Zelena sasses, not looking up from the salad she’s preparing.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

There’s just as much laughter at tonight’s dinner as there was last night. The kids each talk about their day at school. They eat, they laugh, and they reminisce. Apparently Robin’s memories returned entirely during the night and Roland remembers bits and pieces of his old life, but he was very young, so initially he assumed they were just dreams. The adults (and Henry) do their best to keep quiet about the old world because the younger two get upset when everyone is talking about something they are not a part of, not for long, Regina muses to herself as she thinks to their impending “family outing” back to her homeland. What are they going to think? She wonders, will they love it? Of course they’ll love it, there are dragons and ogres and knights in shining armor. Every child’s dream and my nightmare wrapped up with one giant helping of crazy. Zelena nudges her under the table and Regina looks over to see Tommy falling asleep with his face getting too close to his dessert plate. She smiles and goes to pick him up. When she gets him in her arms, he
sits straight up and says, “Not tie-yahed, Mommy.” Which is followed by a huge yawn and he rests his head on her shoulder.

“Of course not darling,” she says with a smirk as she moves to the stairs. She changes him into his pajamas, while he stays asleep, leaning against her chest. She helps him into the bathroom with a gentle, “it’s bedtime Querido, which means bathroom time. Go to the bathroom, wash your hands, and brush your teeth darling. Then I will tuck you in.”

“Song?” he asks as he stumbles into the bathroom.

“Once you are in your bed, tucked under all of your blankets, I will sing one song,” Regina says with a smile.

“Onwy one?” he whines.

“Now Thomas,” Regina says semi-sternly. He hangs his head and shuts the door.

When he crawls into his bed, Regina tucks him in and kisses his forehead. “Song,” he reminds with a big yawn.

“Of course darling, I have not forgotten,” Regina says with a smile as she sits next to her son and brushes his hair away from his face.

He snuggles into her side and says, “I wuv you, Mommy.”

“And I love you, my little prince. Now it’s time for a song.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.
Black and bays, dapples, grays,
All the pretty little horses.
Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.
I love you, my little prince,” she whispers as she kisses his forehead before standing and leaving the room. He was so tired he did not even make it until the second round of hush-a-bye’s. Regina is still smiling when she gets to the bottom of the stairs and looks to see all of the dishes are cleaned off of the table and it seems the food has been put away and the dishes placed in the dishwasher. But where is everyone? She listens and hears voices coming from Henry’s game room. I wonder
what they’re doing in there; she walks towards the door and sees it shut. The voices are getting louder and she can make out bits and pieces:

“Boo ya!” she hears her wife say and can’t help but smile.

“-a sore loser!” Henry says with a smile evident in his voice.

“Haha sucka! In your face!” Robin yells.

“I will end you.” That’s definitely Zelena.

Regina pushes the door open and the first thing she notices is that Kelly and Roland are laying upside down on the couch - their heads hanging off the edge while their feet dangle in the air - giggling at the adults doing their best to win at Mario Kart. Regina shakes her head and watches as Henry and Emma elbow each other to throw the other off as they race towards the finish line. Kelly notices her and rolls off the couch and stands in front of Regina, arms outstretched. Regina reaches down and picks her up before moving to the couch behind the “adults” and places Kelly on her lap. Kelly immediately places her head under Regina’s chin and snuggles in. Regina leans back against the back of the couch and Roland moves next to her, tucking under her arm. Together they watch cars race on the television and the players' trash talk back and forth.

“Care to actually join the race, Z?” Emma taunts as she flies past Henry.

“Ugh. This juvenile game is utterly ridiculous,” Zelena says with a dramatic eye roll. Regina tries to hide her smirk, but cannot. *Seems that it was Mother’s side of the family that has a hard time losing. Not surprising.*

“That’s just because you’re losing Aunt Z,” Henry says as he tries to pass his blonde mother.

“Even Robin is beating you,” Emma adds with a laugh.

“Hey!” Robin says in an offended voice.

Everyone starts laughing and Henry crosses the finish line first, “Woo-hoo!” he cheers as he throws his hands in the air.

“Shhhh, kid!” Emma hushes, “babies.”

“Oh right,” he says, looking ashamed as he glances at his sleeping sisters.

“Well, as entertaining as that was,” Regina says drawing attention to herself, “I believe there was a reason you are all here, and it certainly was not to play these trivial games you so enjoy-“

“Oh. Don’t be such a killjoy,” Zelena says dramatically, “you’re just upset because you are worse at this dreadful game than myself.”

Regina rolls her eyes and looks down and her sleeping niece and nephew, “That is untrue, Zelena. I just choose not to play something that is determined to burn away my brain cells.”

“Drama Queen,” Emma sings. She starts laughing when Regina sends her a death glare.

“She is right however,” Zelena concedes. “We have to look for the Gateway.”

Regina stands and gently places a sleeping Kelly down on the couch and Zelena resituates a sleeping Roland so he is in a more comfortable position before they cover them with a blanket. “Henry? Will you stay here with your sisters and your cousins while we go read the rest of the
books downstairs?”

Henry looks like he is about to protest when Robin steps up and says, “I’ll stay up here with you H,” clapping his hands onto Henry’s shoulders. “I’m sure I’ll only cause problems if given a book in a language I do not understand.”

Henry gives a tight smile in thanks to his uncle trying to distract him and says, “Fine. It’ll give me another chance to wipe the floor with you in Mario Kart.” Robin gives a hearty laugh as he moves to sit on the couch once again. Henry follows suit with one last look at the three women in the doorway.

“Shall we?” Regina asks as she leads the way to the basement.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

It’s been hours, Emma thinks in a whine as she leans away from the book she’s been attempting to read. Thank God Regina found a book written mostly in English or I’d be just as useless as Forest Boy upstairs. Emma is sitting on the floor leaning against the wall of their basement. She rests her head against the wall as she looks up at the other two women reading at the table. Emma sighs and glances down at the book in front of her, how can The History of Magic help us? Not once does it talk about The Gateway, or anything remotely close, not even realm travel. She sighs again.

“If you have something to say, just say it,” Zelena says with an eye roll.

Emma glares at the back of her head but doesn’t move away from her spot against the wall.

Finally, she looks toward her wife who has abandoned reading her own book and is watching Emma closely. Emma gives a fake apologetic smile and sets her legs flat against the floor, Regina raises an eyebrow and asks, “I take it there is nothing of use in that book either?” Emma shakes her head as she pushes the book away. Regina shakes her head and says, “I would like nothing more than to blame your parents incompetence and leave it at that. But since this is the only way we can get back to the Enchanted Forest we need a book that is actually helpful.” Emma stands up from her spot and starts pacing. Why does this have to be so damn difficult? If they wanted us back wouldn’t it have been easier just to send up a signal? Like Batman? Emma shakes her head at her own stupidity. Of course her parents couldn’t send up a signal because they hadn’t even remembered until a few days ago. And who would know if we even had a magical book that pointed the way to the Gateway in this realm. How do we know if the Gateway is nearby? What if it’s on the other side of the world? Emma stops in front of the bookcase in their basement, was that here when we moved in? She starts looking at the titles of books and one catches her eye because it is different than all the rest Attracting True Love: How to Find and Keep Your Soulmate she watches it as if it has suddenly grown eyes and is watching her. All of the other books are classics Wuthering Heights, Leo Tolstoy (which Regina had read before and translated it to Love can be a train wreck for Emma), A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Sense and Sensibility, and Pride and Prejudice. Emma knew Regina had exquisite taste in literature but it didn’t seem that Attracting True Love would be something she would buy, let alone put on a bookshelf with the rest of her collection. And why does it look so old? Emma wonders. Is it a part of the shelf itself? Maybe it doesn’t even come off the shelf. I bet it’s some kind of inside joke Regina has because of my parents always finding each other. But why is it here to begin with? She didn’t remember. Is it new?

“Gina?” Emma asks as she stands in front of the bookshelf.

“Hmm?” Regina answers without looking up from the book she was reading.
“Was this a gag gift from Christmas or something?”

“What are you talking about darling?” Regina asks, finally looking up to see her wife across the room.


Regina raises an eyebrow, “That sounds like something more suited for your parents, dear. It certainly would never be among the *real* literature on my shelf.”

“Ummmm…then why is it here? Are you sure it wasn’t some kind of gag gift?”

Regina moves around the table towards her wife, “Emma. I have never even *heard* of such a book. Why on earth would it be on my shelf?”

Emma shrugs. By now Zelena is intrigued and has moved behind her sister to see what Emma is talking about. “It looks really old, babe. Why is it here?”

Regina sighs, “I do not know how many different ways I can say this for you, darling, but I do not own such a book.”

“It’s right here!” Emma exclaims and she tries to pull the book down. Instead of coming off the shelf, it pulls halfway out and stops. There is a puff of purple magic and the shelf moves across the wall to the side and a passage is revealed.


Chapter End Notes

We are headed back to the Enchanted Forest soon. I'm curious to know if you guys have any thoughts on *why* they're needed back in the Enchanted Forest and *who/what* is waiting for them. Leave your thoughts/assumptions in the comments and maybe you'll see them in the coming chapters ;)

Hugs and Such
-IrishBella
Matutine

Chapter Summary

matutine:
(adj.) just before the dawn

Chapter Notes

Happy March Lovelies!!!!!
You have no idea how excited I am right now! I recently received the great news that I got the job I applied for and will be a counselor for the Crisis Text Line (which you should all look up because it is super helpful if you're ever feeling low and want to talk to someone).
I have also had my daily dose of caffeine and totally dominated my early morning exam today. AND IT'S ALMOST ST. PADDY'S DAY! and for an Irish girl like me with a gigantic Irish family-it's literally the best holiday EVER! ;) So to celebrate I have a 7000+ chapter for you! And perhaps I will have time this evening to continue writing this story. I'm very excited that we're getting back to the Enchanted Forest and this chapter includes the dream that actually started this entire fic-it's the last section (and yes I know it took 11 chapters to get here-but I hope it was worth it)
I'd like to give a shoutout to barnabus67 for leaving a review over on fanfic and giving me the idea for some of these flashbacks

Much love,
IrishBella

Apologies for any typos-I'm posting this during my lecture (oops) and I haven't had a chance to spellcheck

Enjoy!!

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“A secret lever,” Emma whispers in awe, “that’s so COOL!”

Regina rolls her eyes at her wife’s child-like wonder, “Now that we can get there, we’ll have to pack.”

“Glad finding The Gateway hasn’t pulled that stick out of your ass, Gi,” Zelena says as she rolls her eyes, “wouldn’t want you to get excited when we finally figured it out!”
Regina glares as Zelena puts on the fakest, most innocent smile anyone has ever seen. They both wait for Emma to add her two cents but nothing ever comes. The sisters’ turn and see Emma still standing in front of the passage staring into the dark corridor.

“Emma?” Regina asks as she moves closer.

“We didn’t even need those damn books! The Gateway was here the entire fucking time! Has this been here the entire time we’ve lived here? Did we unconsciously buy this house without knowing there was magic in the basement? Was this another fucking trick of fate? UGH! Why didn’t we find this sooner? Now we have to wait until morning to leave! What if something terrible is happening? They could all be dying right now or being slaughtered as we speak. We should go now. We have to go now. It’s only logical to leave right now. I’ll go get the kids and we can-“

Regina steps in front of Emma and cuts off her rant by putting her hands on Emma’s cheeks and turns her head so their eyes meet. When Emma stops talking and stares into Regina’s eyes she smiles and whispers, “Breathe,” to Emma.

Emma gives a shy smile and says, “Sorry. I just ramble when I’m nervous and I’m definitely nervous.”

Regina smiles, “I know dear, but we will figure it out. It would not be logical to leave tonight. We have to pack things for our children and it would be best to let them get at least one more restful night’s sleep before we turn their lives upside down.” She leans in and kisses Emma’s cheek.

Zelena rolls her eyes at the display and says, “Robin and I will have to go home and retrieve our things.”

“Of course,” Regina says as she faces her sister, “if it would be easier, you can leave Roland and Kelly here while you pack your things.”

Zelena nods and says, “That will undoubtedly be easiest.”

Emma has tuned out the sisters and is looking back at the entrance to The Gateway. She doesn’t know how she’s going to be able to wait until morning.

“Emma?” Regina questions as she tries to pull her wife out of her thoughts.

“Earth to the Savior,” Zelena says snapping her fingers in front of Emma’s face.

She is shaken out of her thoughts and glares and Zelena, who merely smirks and walks towards the stairs, “Z,” she waits until Zelena turns around “we leave at dawn,” she says as her voice drops an octave.

Zelena laughs and Regina rolls her eyes, “Must you be so dramatic?”

Emma smirks and puts an arm around Regina’s waist, “No, but it’s much more fun this way, babe.” This earns her another eye roll and Regina pulls away to walk towards the stairs.

“Come along dear, we should tell Henry the good news and at least attempt to get some sleep before our departure.”

They walk up the stairs to see Robin and Zelena carrying Roland and Kelly up the stairs to place them in the guest room. Henry is practically vibrating with excitement as he runs towards them.

“Aunt Z wouldn’t say anything but they’re taking the kids upstairs. What’s going on? Did you find anything?”
Regina and Emma look at each other and share a smile before turning back towards their son. “We found it,” Regina says with a smile directed at her oldest child.

“You found it?” Henry asks in disbelief, “Where?”

“Behind the bookshelf in the basement,” Emma says with a chuckle. It truly does sound ridiculous.

“Behind the bookshelf? Are you kidding me? That’s awesome!” Henry screams until he realizes everyone is sleeping and immediately gives a sheepish smile. “When can I see it?”

Regina gives a soft smile as she sees the resemblance between the look Henry just gave her and the look that Emma gave her earlier in the basement. It warms her heart to know that their children truly have both of their best qualities. “We’re leaving in the morning,” she says as she looks between Henry and Emma.

Henry turns to Emma and asks, “We leave at dawn?” in the same voice she had used in the basement with Zelena.

Regina laughs and shakes her head as Emma high-fives Henry and says, “Yeah, kid, and please tell your other mother that that is the only correct saying when you leave for battle.”

Henry looks at his brunette mother and says, “Well, duh Mom, what else would you say?”

Regina looks taken aback, “Did you just say ‘duh’ to me, young man?” She raises her eyebrow.

Henry smiles sheepishly again and says, “I mean, come on Mom, of course you have to quote that. Nothing else compares.”

Regina shakes her head and says, “Why don’t you go pack some things while your mother and I grab your sisters. Pack light but smart, Henry. We do not know what we will find when we get to your grandparents’ castle.”

Henry nods and walks up the staircase and Zelena and Robin come back down.

“They’re asleep in the guest room,” Zelena says as she moves toward Regina. “We shall see you in the morning.”

“At dawn,” Robin adds with a grin.

Emma is so impressed she even gives him a fist bump. Respect, she thinks to herself, who knew Forest Boy understood the reference.

Zelena and Regina merely roll their eyes. Zelena and Robin make their leave and Emma and Regina take their daughters upstairs.

They silently pack things for Tommy and the twins. It’s a somber event. Few clothes are taken since they know modern clothing is not exactly cut out for the Enchanted Forest. They mostly take onesies for the twins and pajamas for all three of the children. They pack an entire bag of diapers and a container of wipes, but they know they will not last very long and that upsets Regina more than she’s willing to let on. I want to give them everything and here I am taking them to the old world where they will not know anything, where the world is dangerous - more dangerous than anything they have ever experienced - and I’m not even batting an eyelash. I am obviously losing my mind. It’s Emma. I would do anything for her. Even checking on her idiot parents. I wonder what they possibly could have done now to need their precious Savior back in their lives. Honestly, I’m surprised they have lasted this long. It’s been four years, that’s 3 years, 11 months, and 28
days longer than I anticipated. If I’m being honest, I expected them to follow us over…

“Emma you can’t be serious.”

“Dead serious,” Emma says without batting an eye.

“Emma-” Snow sighs.

“No, Mary Margaret. This is not a discussion.”

“But-”

“No!” Emma shouts and then flinches at her own volume and the attention she’s drawn to herself. “I’m sorry,” she mutters, “I just- I don’t want you to talk me out of this, okay? I need to do this. We need to do this.”

“We?”

“Yes, we,” Emma says with a sad chuckle, “Regina and I are going to do this, but we’re going to do it back there. A place where Henry can grow up with a semi normal life. A life where no one will judge him because his mom cursed their family. Where he can be safe and we won’t have to worry about fairy-tale issues every other day.”

“He deserves to know where he comes from, Emma,” Snow tries to reason.

“He’s from there Mary Margaret. I’m from there.” Before Snow can jump in she raises her hand. “I know, I know. I was born here and this is where you’re from, but I grew up there. Henry grew up there. That’s what we know. And it’s where we belong. It’ll give us a fresh start.”

“You’ll forget everything! Is that the only way you can be with her?” Snow accuses.

“Of course not!” Emma yells defensively. She looks around at the onlookers and lowers her voice. Again. “Of course not Mary Margaret. We are working on our issues. But it’s pretty hard to do that when you’re constantly fighting off magical attacks. We all need this Mary Margaret. A fresh start is going to be good for us. Regina won’t have to worry about constantly protecting us from people who see her as the enemy. Even after all the times she’s saved their asses they still don’t want to believe she’s changing and it’s frustrating for everyone. Regina’s upset because it’s hurting Henry, and Henry and I are upset because Regina’s trying to pretend it doesn’t affect her. But she’s not some object without feelings. She’s a human being and it does affect her, whether she’s showing it or not.”

Mary Margaret is shocked into silence. She never imagined her daughter would fall for her former stepmother-turned-arch-nemesis-turned-ally. She smirks as she thinks about how Regina would react to being called an ally. She’s always tried to be a bit aloof about the whole thing, but Snow knows better. She’s always been able to see through Regina’s acts. Well, almost all of them she thinks bitterly. Except the time she was plotting my father’s murder and trying to kill me. I did not see that coming. She shakes herself out of her dark thoughts. She was not the same back then. She was consumed by grief that manifested into anger. She needed someone to love her and everyone used her. I should have tried harder, it would have been different, but it could have been better. No. I refuse to believe that. Without her I wouldn’t have met Charming. Without her there would be no Emma, no Henry. That world seems dull and loveless. I have my family now, and that is because of Regina - that includes Regina.
She suddenly nods her head at her daughter. Her precious daughter. Oh! How it hurts her heart to know she had no part in raising her, but she can’t change that, all she can do is love her now. But if she leaves… no, I have to let her make her own decisions. She’ll do what’s right. It’s what she does. “I want you to be happy, Emma.”

Emma gives a shy smile, “Regina and Henry make me happy. They’re my family. My safe place. And I will do everything in my power to make them happy. If that means going back and starting over, then that’s what we’ll do.”

Snow gives a sad smile as she places a hand on her stomach. Emma looks down and something in her eyes change. Snow gives her a quizzical look and suddenly it all clicks into place, “Oh Emma,” she says as she walks toward her daughter. Emma takes a step back and Snow freezes. She doesn’t want me to comfort her? I can’t even comfort my own daughter. Snow’s eyes fill with tears but she needs to get this out. “Emma. I love you. I love you more than anything. You know that, right?” she whispers the last part but she knows Emma hears her.

“Of course. You gave birth to me. Your blood runs through my veins, I guess that’s pretty important huh?” Emma says, never looking up from the floor.

“Emma. Look at me,” she waits until she has Emma’s attention. “Being family is not about genetics, it’s about love, Emma.” She grabs her daughter’s hand and holds tight. “We did what we thought was right. It hurt me more than you know to have to give you up. I was supposed to go with you, you know.”

Emma gives her a shocked look, “You were?” she whispers.

Snow nods because she can’t control her voice. She pushes through the emotion to convey exactly what needs to be said. “Of course Emma! You were an entire month early! We were supposed to travel through the wardrobe together. I was supposed to raise you, to teach you things about our world and prepare you for your destiny, but you came early. And the curse - oh the curse was upon us before we had a chance to breathe. I would have done anything to go with you. You have no idea how hard I cried, how I tried to think of any other option.”

“You could have kept me,” Emma whispers.

Snow’s throat closes against the emotion threatening to take over, “Oh Emma, I thought of that. Of course I wanted to keep you, but we also had to think of the kingdom. Was it truly selfless to keep their one chance at their happy endings for my own selfish reasons? Would their suffering be overruled by us being together? And who knows what the curse would have done to us. We just didn’t know.”

“We would have been together. Which curse is worse?” Emma mumbles looking away.

“Emma, I wish more than anything that things were different, that things didn’t happen the way that they did. But there’s nothing I can do about that. Things are the way that they are and we can’t change that. What we can do is change our future. Spend our time together learning about each other and being a family.”

Emma shakes her head, “I want that, I do, but I’m going back with them. I have to.”

Snow feels the tears now, “I understand. You’ll do anything for your family.” She gives a sad smile.

Emma squeezes her hand, “You’re my family too Mary Margaret. You and David and the
“Unborn,” she smiles.

Snow smiles back, “I want you to know that we are not replacing you Emma. You’re our daughter and we love you more than anything.”

“I know,” Emma whispers, “you didn’t even remember you had a daughter when you found out you were pregnant. Oh god,” she says as she looks at Snow with wide eyes, “we talked about our sex lives together. We told stories. Oh God we compared notes.” Emma covers her face with her hands.

Snow laughs out loud and pulls Emma’s hands away from her face, “Not quite the mother-daughter bonding I was expecting, but any time I get to spend with you is special, Emma.”

“ Weird.” Emma says, shaking her head.

Snow laughs again and asks, “Can I give you a hug?”

Emma smiles and nods. They hug each other and they’re both Sobbing, clutching to each other like a lifeline they’ve never utilized.

“I want to go with you,” Snow whispers when they finally pull a part.

Emma shakes her head, “You can’t. You have a kingdom to run. I won’t deny it and say that I don’t want you to come, but if we lost our memories we wouldn’t even remember that you were my mom and I’m not sure if I could handle any more awkward sex conversations.” Snow laughs as she continues, “This is your home. You and David belong here. You’re the queen. Which is super weird by the way. But it’s kinda cool, and your people need you to stay and take care of them.”

Snow shakes her head, “They don’t matter as much as you.”

Emma smiles and places her hand on Snow’s stomach, “That’s why they need you. And you need to raise my little sib in their rightful home.”

“They deserve to know their sister,” Snow says as the tears fall again.

“Well, I happen to know for a fact that you tell some pretty awesome stories, and the fact that their sister saved the entire world is probably the best story ever,” Emma says with a laugh.

Snow laughs along and shakes her head, “And suddenly you have saved the entire world? This story keeps getting bigger and bigger, Emma.”

“Gotta give the people what they want,” Emma says with a shrug.

Snow smiles and says, “I just want you to be happy, Emma.”

“I know. You being a queen and all will make me happy because it’ll make you happy. And maybe that’s a little backwards because I’m your daughter and all that, but oh well, our whole situation is a little backwards.”

“That it is,” Snow says quietly as she squeezes Emma’s hand, “but I don’t think I would want to change it. You’re an amazing person, Emma. I may not have had the chance to raise you but I would certainly like to know more about you.”

Emma nods and with a watery smile says, “I’d like that.”
Regina smiles at the scene and waves her hand in front of the mirror, making it disappear. Maybe it’s not the best to be spying on her girlfriend, but she doesn’t care. She was merely making sure they didn’t hurt each other or Snow didn’t try to brainwash Emma into believing she was under a spell. Yeah, that’s it she thinks wryly.

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Regina shakes her head at the memory and looks back to see her wife standing in the middle of the nursery with a hand over her stomach.

“Penny for your thoughts?” Regina asks as she stands next to Emma.

“Just thinking about when we moved in, how Z and Forest Boy helped set everything up, how we couldn’t decide on a color for the walls, how we took turns freaking out about having twins. Just - everything,” Emma says with a sigh.

Regina wraps her arms around Emma’s waist and rests her head on Emma’s shoulder. “I know,” she whispers, “this place has plenty of memories.”

“But we’ll be back,” Emma says surely. She poses, “right?” as a silent question.

“I believe so,” Regina says, “I would like to believe that we will continue to stand by our decision to raise our family here, but if that changes I’m sure we’ll discuss that when, and if, the time comes.”

Emma nods, “But will we remember?”

Regina smiles and kisses Emma’s cheek, “We’ll remember our love for each other and our children, and if that’s all we remember then that’s enough for me.”

Emma smiles and turns in Regina’s arms so they’re face to face. “Thank you. For not letting me freak out and for reminding me that I have everything important to me and that’s all that matters.”

“Of course darling,” Regina says with a smile, “I love you.”

“I love you too,” Emma says as she leans in to kiss her wife.

They look around the nursery one more time and then grab the bags they have packed and move to their bedroom. They hardly pack anything of their own - they know that there’s a limited amount of things they can carry and that should be devoted to their children. They also know that once they get back into the Enchanted Forest, they’ll have access to magic and can use that.

Once everything is packed, they move the bags to the top of the staircase and move back into their bedroom. They lean against the headboard with their arms wrapped around each other.

“What do you think we’ll find?” Emma whispers as she leans her forehead against her wife’s.

“I honestly do not know dear, but whatever it is I hope we can resolve it quickly and get back to our lives here,” Regina says as she runs her hand soothingly along Emma’s upper arm.

Emma nods, “I’m sure work will keep piling up for both of us.”

“At this point, that is the least of our worries darling. We have both been given time off and we will figure everything else out upon our return,” Regina says.

Always the voice of reason, Emma thinks with a smile. “I love you,” she whispers.
“I love you as well darling. Perhaps we should try to catch whatever sleep we can before the sun rises.”

Again with the reasoning, Emma kisses her wife’s forehead and they lay like this until sleep overcomes them both.

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

“You’ll what dear?” Regina asks as she materializes in front of the Charming’s, causing them to jump backwards. She grins widely as she asks, “You’ll huff and you’ll puff and you’ll blow my house in? I did not realize you brought your pet with you to the party.” Regina turns to see Red looking incredibly uncomfortable a few steps behind Snow and her shepherd. “Oh right, she’s not that wolf.” Snow’s face is redder than Regina has ever been privy to see and she takes satisfaction in knowing that she is the cause, her smile gaining teeth.

They are standing in front of Regina’s castle, on the other side of the gate. Snow and Charming’s knights are armed and standing at the ready while Regina’s own guard’s are behind the gate, ready to protect their queen at all costs.

Regina rolls her eyes at her former stepdaughter and says, “I do hope you didn’t make a trip here just to see me, Snow, because I do believe you have wasted your time. Enjoy your trip back.”

Regina turns and walks away from the couple.

“We are entering that castle, Witch, and we will cut you down in the process if necessary.” Charming moves closer to her.

Regina merely sneers at him, “Oh Snow! You didn’t tell me your shepherd had a voice!” she coos, her voice takes on a condescending tone when addressing the princess, “And as for you, Shepherd,” she sneers the name, “you have nothing. This is not your castle and you have never been to these parts, even in your short, short time as a king. You have no right to come here demanding I let you take over. You banished me remember? You do not have any reason to come here making demands you cannot control. You may see yourself as a leader now, but believe me Shepherd, a leader you are not. You and Snow were in charge of running the kingdom for an incredibly short amount of time and you had already run all of my hard work into the ground. Your kingdom was in ruins. Now that we are back, you can pick up where you left off, but I will not allow you to drag my subjects and myself down with you.”

“Your hard work? HA! That was thanks to Snow’s father, Witch, do not give yourself so much credit.” Charming says with the point of his sword pushing towards Regina.

She does not back down, “Oh you naïve little shepherd. Where do you think Snow learned to run a kingdom? That blubbering baboon could not run a kingdom any more than he could grow hair on his head. It took me years to bring that kingdom back to its glory and you, in mere months, ruined everything. So, yes, my hard work, Shepherd. And I will not allow you to ruin this castle and its inhabitants either.”

“We are entering that castle, Witch, and we will cut you down in the process if necessary.” Charming moves closer to her.

Regina merely sneers at him as if he is beneath her, she turns to Snow as if Charming is not even there, which immediately causes him to glare. “Snow, I am warning you, you do not want this
fight. It will not be an easy fight. I have my subjects, I have my entire Guard, and I will not allow you to just waltz in here and take what you please.”

“Regina....” She starts.

“No. Haven’t you taken enough?” Regina asks, hating how her voice trembles.

Snow doesn’t respond but suddenly Charming can’t take any more, “Enough of the riddles, Witch! You spent years trying to kill her and why? Did you not get enough satisfaction out of killing her father, the King? Was that not enough for your blood thirst?”

“You didn’t tell him?” Regina asks, directing her question at Snow, “No, of course not,” Regina shakes her head, “that would mean taking responsibility for something and that’s never been a strong point for you, has it?”

Snow wants to say something but again, Charming jumps in, “I say no more. You should have died already but I am not above killing you myself to save my family!”

“Enough Shepherd!” Regina yells and she brings forth a fireball. Everyone in the White Guard draws their weapons and Regina’s own guards prepare theirs. “You forget that your darling grandson happens to be my son! I raised him and loved him for 10 years. He is my son and I will not have you fill his head with lies. You will return to your kingdom and no harm will come to anyone. If you choose to stay, I cannot extend the same courtesy.”

Charming raises his sword and Snow yells, “Wait!” He lowers it and looks to his wife with a puzzled expression.

Regina turns to Snow with a smirk, “Ah, so you do speak dear. And here I was beginning to wonder if you had gone mute.”

Snow does not respond as she walks around her husband to stand in front of her former stepmother. “Why are you doing this?” she asks.

“What am I doing? You show up to my castle - where you banished me and expect me to just allow you access? You are prepared for a battle you will not win, dear.”

“We do not wish to fight,” Snow whispers. This gives Regina pause; she lowers her hands and extinguishes the flames until Charming jumps forward.

“What?!” he yells. “You cannot be serious Snow? This is our castle! We have every right to be here.”

“Enough,” Snow says. She’s exhausted. The trip back had been hard for her, hard on the baby, and she just wants to sleep. Their castle is in ruins; it is no longer safe there. She turns to her former stepmother and gives a small smile, “Please Regina, we just need a place to stay.”

“You are not here to ‘take back the castle’?” Regina asks dubiously.

Snow shakes her head, “I just want a safe place to sleep.”

“You’re having trouble sleeping, dear?” Regina asks with a smirk, “I believe I have something for that.”

“Ha ha, Regina. I’m being serious.”
“As am I dear.”

“What is going on?!” Charming demands, “You!” he yells at Regina, “you will not joke about casting curses.”

“Or what Shepherd? You have no power here.” Regina barely gets her sentence out when Charming jumps toward her, pinning her against the gate with his sword to her neck.

“Hey!” A voice calls from the back. Suddenly there’s a flash of blonde and red and Emma is standing in front of them.

“We’ve been here already Shepherd, looks like you falling behind.” Charming pushes his sword harder against her neck.

Emma grabs his arm to pull him back without thinking and the blade breaks the skin of Regina’s neck. “Regina!” she yells as she moves in front of her. Regina pushes away from her and touches her hand to her neck only to come away with blood.

“Mom!” Regina’s head snaps up as she sees Henry run up to her and wrap his arms around her waist.

“You brought my son to a battle?” Regina hisses as she glares at Emma, “What were you thinking?!”

Emma has the decency to look ashamed but Henry draws Regina’s attention back to him, “I came because I don’t want you to get hurt, but you already did.” Regina magics away the evidence of her cut. It’s as if it never existed. Regina gives a reassuring smile to her son and rests her arm around his shoulders.

“Henry step back,” Charming says as he moves forward again.

“NO! You can’t hurt my mom! She said she wouldn’t hurt you. You’re the hero, you shouldn’t hurt her!” He yells as he squeezes Regina tighter.

“Henry,” she whispers as she runs her fingers through his hair, “you should not be here dear. It’s not safe.”

“I don’t care. I’m not leaving. I’m staying with you, Mom.”

She sees Charming make a move towards him and she raises a fireball in her free hand, “Come near my son and I will not hold back, Shepherd.”

“That is my grandson, Witch, and you will not take him away.”

“He is my son and he is choosing to stay.”

Charming takes another step closer and says, “You have him under a spell. It’s not actually him choosing.”

Regina rolls her eyes and distinguishes the flame in her palm. In the same movement she flicks her wrist and Charming goes flying backwards. “Stop talking about things you do not understand, Shepherd.” She turns to Snow, who has remained quiet, she rolls her eyes and turns to face Emma, “This is utterly ridiculous. I am taking my son inside. If you wish to join, fine.” She turns back to Snow and actually feels compassion for her former stepdaughter, where is this coming from? she wonders, I cannot feel bad for her. So, her castle is in ruins and she’s having a hard time with her
pregnancy. I do not care. Nope. Not even a little bit. But it’s no use. Regina sighs and says, “If you were being truthful about not being here for attack I will grant you access. And a place to rest,” she adds as she sees Snow moving from side to side in discomfort, “when is the last time you had some sleep, Snow? You look haggard.” Snow looks down at her feet like a scolded child. Regina sighs, “Come along dear, you may keep two armed guards with you if you feel the need, but all other needs to relinquish their weapons before entering the castle. I will not allow a coup to happen under my nose.”

“Thank you Regina,” Snow says with a smile. She turns to address her knights but she doesn’t miss the eye roll or the small smile Regina sends her.

“Come along Henry, Miss Swan,” she acknowledges Henry’s other mother, “I suppose it is time to set up the other chambers.”

“Can I pick out my own?!” Henry asks bouncing on the balls of his feet, his hand never leaving his mother’s.

Regina smiles down at his excitement and nods, “Of course dear. I would prefer if you were to choose chambers near mine, but you are free to choose wherever you like.”

Henry smiles, “I want to be by you Mom! Will Kam be there? Can he teach me more sword stuff?”

Regina smiles, “Kam will be near as well, and I’m sure he is just as excited about your swordsmanship as you are.”

“Doubtful,” Emma murmurs. She’s shocked when she notices Regina staring at her; she hadn’t expected to be heard. Upon seeing Regina’s eyebrow reaching her hairline she explains, “well, it’s just that Henry hasn’t stopped talking about Kam and his lesson since we last left. I think it actually hurt David that he hadn’t been the one to teach Henry about swords.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “The Shepherd’s feelings of inadequacy are the least of my concern.”

Emma chuckles and watches as Henry sees Kam and immediately runs up to him. Kam bows to Regina and then acknowledges Henry, “Hello, Young Prince.”

Henry wrinkles his nose and turns to Regina, “Does he have to call me that? It’s weird.”

Regina smiles and says, “You may call him Henry, Kam.”

But Kam shakes his head, “My apologies, Your Highness, but I will not be one to assume such a formality in front of visiting dignitaries,” he sneers the word and Regina smirks. “When we practice your sword skills, I will call you Henry, but in front of your mother the queen, and your other family, I will address you by your title.”

Henry’s face contorts in thought, “I guess,” he finally admits.

Kam smiles and rests a hand on Henry’s shoulder, “You will become accustomed to our ways soon enough.”

Henry nods and then asks excitedly, “When can we train again?”

Kam contemplates and then looks to Regina, “Perhaps today yet?”

Regina nods and says, “After dinner.”
“Thanks Mom!” Henry practically squeals as he throws his arms around his mother. He smiles up at her and asks, “Can we go look at my room now?”

Regina smiles and kisses his forehead, “Of course dear. Come along Miss Swan, your room will be in this wing as well,” Emma smiles because that means she’ll be near both Regina and Henry and she didn’t even have to put up a fight about it. “Right next to your parents,” Regina adds with a grin that could only be described as sadistic. Emma’s good mood is immediately ruined.

“See you after supper!” Henry says to Kam.

Kam bows to Henry and then bows lower to Regina, “Your Majesty,” he acknowledges. He turns to Emma and barely inclines his head, “Princess,” he mocks.

Regina rolls her eyes and admonishes, “Kam.”

He gives a smile that is anything but innocent and straightens his spine, immediately back on guard. If Emma didn’t know any better she’d assume he was merely a statue placed against the wall for decoration. “Your Highness,” he addresses Snow with a small bow (that looks like more of a nod) as she finally joins the group.

She nods at him and then looks to Regina, “My knights have been given their orders. These two,” she points to two directly behind her, “will stay with David and I, and the rest will give up their weapons.”

Regina nods and turns back to Kam, “I trust you will be able to handle the knights from here?”

“Of course, Your Majesty,” Kam says with a nod of acknowledgement.

“Very well. Come along Snow, I was just about to show everyone to their quarters. Will your charming little shepherd be joining us this evening?” she asks with a smirk.

Snow merely rolls her eyes and sighs, “He’s taking some time to cool off.”

“Hot head,” Regina mutters, earning a chuckle from Henry and a smirk from both Kam and Emma. “Alright then,” she says louder, “let’s get this over with.”

“So positive,” Emma remarks, earning a glare. She simple smirks and follows after Henry.

Everyone is shown their rooms. Henry is ecstatic that his room is “so big!” and the fact that he’s right next to his mother is definitely a plus for him. He would never admit it, but he missed his mother and knowing she’s close again and will protect him from everything (including the nightmares no one knows about) is a huge plus. She never said anything in front of Emma or Snow but as soon as she showed him his room she pulled him over to the wall and pointed out a brick to him.

“What’s this?” he asks.

“If you push this brick right here, the wall will shift and you can enter my chambers without having to leave your room. No one will see you and no one will have to know you had a nightmare. It can be our little secret,” she says with a small wink.

“I won’t need it,” he says looking away.

“I know. But just in case,” Regina says as she brushes away hair from his eyes.
“Perhaps—um—perhaps it’ll be good to know...in case...I have to check on you or something,” he stutters as he looks at the wall.

“Yes,” Regina concedes, “that would be very beneficial for us both.”

Henry smiles.

She winks and wraps him in a hug. “Do you want to talk about them?” He shakes his head against her stomach and holds her tighter. She rubs his back and kisses his forehead, “Alright then, but you need to sleep dear.”

He doesn’t say anything for a minute and then quietly asks, “How did you know?”

“I am your mother Henry, it’s my job to notice these things about you. I raised you, I know all of your tells.”

Henry smiles up at her, “Thanks Mom.”

“Of course darling. Now, let’s go see if Miss Swan and Snow have settled in.”

“Then dinner?”

Regina smiles, “Yes dear.”

“Then sword fighting lessons?”

“Yes,” Regina says with a chuckle.

Henry moves away from Regina and fist pumps the air, “Yesssssss!” he exclaims as he turns to run out of his room.

She smiles and shakes her head as she heads out of the room in time to see him run up to Emma. Miss Swan, she reminds herself. They’re laughing and Henry is showing her what he learned the last time he practiced with Kam. Regina smiles at her son and then turns to see where Snow is.

She finds her in her chambers sitting on the chaise with tears in her eyes. This is no longer my job, Regina thinks as she moves to leave the room when she notices the sob go through Snow’s body. She rolls her eyes but moves further into the room, “Snow?” she questions.

Snow jumps and immediately rubs away the tears from her face. “Sorry,” she mutters.

“For what?” Regina asks.

“This. Everything.” She sighs, “I know you don’t want us here and there are bad memories here and you’re only doing this from Emma and Henry.”

“There were always bad memories here, Snow, that hasn’t changed since the beginning, and what Miss Swan wants is none of my concern,” Regina says haughtily.

Snow rolls her eyes, “Okay Regina. Whatever you say.”

“You know nothing. You have not changed from the petulant little child you were when I first met you,” Regina says and adds an eye roll for good measure.

“And yet you saved my life,” Snow gives a smile.
“An unfortunate oversight,” Regina says but it lacks its usual bite.

Snow smiles, “And here we are.” Regina raises an eyebrow in a silent question. Snow’s smile brightens and she continues, “Did you ever think this would happen?”

“What Snow? My curse breaking, finding out my son is actually a descendant of your unfortunate bloodline, being sent back to this god-awful world, being forced to live in this castle yet again? Take your pick dear. What would you like me to answer?”

Snow shakes her head, “Us. Being on the same side again.”

“We are not on the same side. We are not a team. So get that idea out of your head immediately or I will throw you and your knights out on your asses.”

Snow smiles again, “No you won’t,” she says quietly.

“Excuse me?” Regina challenges.

“You won’t do that because no matter what you say, you care. Whether you brush all of this off as your feelings for Henry or not, you care. You care about Henry - obviously, but you also care about Emma, and even about me and my unborn child.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Well it won’t be their fault that they’re born with the genes you’ve stuck them with.”

Snow chuckles, “Whatever it takes to make sure you sleep at night Regina, but I know the truth.”

Regina scoffs, “You truly are delusional, Snow. I merely do not wish for your death to be put on Henry at this point in time.”

Snow nods sarcastically, “Of course, and we wouldn’t want my unborn child to suffer either.”

Regina nods along and then abruptly stops, “I do not care what happens to you or your spawn.”

Snow smiles, “Okay Regina, I’ll stop teasing you. Even if you deny how much you care, I know.”

Regina rolls her eyes again, “Enough of this Snow, I do not care. Now, let’s go to the dining hall. I had them prepare a special meal that hopefully will not upset the baby and your stomach should settle.”

“I thought you didn’t care?” Snow asks with a smirk.

“I don’t,” Regina says as she storms out of the room, but she’s not quick enough. Snow sees the tinge of pink in her cheeks and it makes her smile. She always loved Regina and she’s glad that the feeling is kind of mutual. Regina taught her so many things during her time as her stepmother. Even if she hated her, and Snow knows she did, she still took care of her. Snow smiles and follows her out of the room.

Regina is already down the hallway speaking to Henry and pointedly making an effort to ignore Emma. Snow sighs and wonders when they’ll get over themselves and realize they both deserve love and that they have found it with each other. Henry is smiling and nodding and then Regina smiles back. Henry jumps up and down and grabs onto each of his mothers and drags them down the hallway towards Snow.

“Grams guess what?”
Snow looks shocked by the term of endearment but does her best to mask her surprise and smiles and asks, “What Henry?”

“Mom says I can practice riding a horse tomorrow! Wanna come watch?” He doesn't notice the way his mother stiffens, but Snow does.

“Oh-um-I don’t know Henry,” she starts. How does she explain that she probably shouldn’t be near the stables with Regina?

“Oh right, the baby. Duh.” He says, “wow. That’s a little weird, I’m going to have an aunt or uncle younger than me.”

Snow smiles and nods, “I suppose you’re right.”

“Cool,” Henry says, “I’ll be able to teach them so much stuff.”

Regina smiles this time and she notices the other two women doing the same. Henry truly has a gift, she thinks, bringing people together is what he does best.

“Come along, dinner is ready,” Regina says as she moves to walk to the dining hall.

Regina smiles in her sleep. Her dreams were actually calming her fears, for once, instead of manifesting them into something dark and dreadful. However, the woman lying next to her was not as lucky. Unbeknownst to Regina, her wife was suffering in her own dreams.

She’s running. She doesn’t know where she is and there are only tunnels. She brushes aside a spider web before it flies into her face. She feels a small hand in hers and smiles down at the little boy, “just a little further, baby.” He nods and tries to keep up with his mother.

The tunnels are damp, dark, and made of stone. Emma looks at the torch holders along the walls that shine enough light to see to the next torch, but not much more. She keeps pushing forward until she can see the end in sight. “Come on baby,” she encourages her young son.

They run towards the stairs and Emma stops to push the grate off of the ceiling so they can climb through. She pushes her son through and pulls herself up to follow.

The first thing she notices is that it’s lighter here. They’re still in the tunnels, but she can see more, and they’re not as cold and damp as before. There are actually decorations on the walls she can see now. Nothing too extravagant, but a rug here, another tapestry there, tables with candelabras and suits of armor with silver and black details. She thinks it feels familiar, but she feels a sense of dread because she doesn’t know why it’s familiar. It shouldn’t be, she doesn’t know why she feels calm seeing the armor, so that makes her uncomfortable. She holds the little hand in hers a little tighter, “Ouch Momma,” her son whimpers.

“Sorry, sweetie,” she murmurs as she loosens her grip a little.

“There yet?” he asks.

“Almost.” Her answer is met with a groan and she smiles sadly, “we’re almost there, just a little further and we’ll be safe. Can you make it?” He nods and she pauses to quickly kiss his cheek, “there’s my little knight in shining armor.” They continue on and both study the walls. Eventually
Emma notices there’s a door up ahead. They get to the door and pause. She notices a little curly-haired head looking up at her expectantly and she smiles, “here goes nothing,” and opens the door.

It takes a minute to adjust to the bright light and while she’s adjusting she moves her son closer to her. With one hand clasping tightly to his she pulls him close and wraps her other hand protectively over his back. She blinks until her vision returns and smiles down at her son.

“Let’s do this,” he says with a grin and narrowed eyes that show his determination.

She smiles and together, they walk away from the door they just entered. She notices a man wearing a red and blue turban, and an open vest with nothing underneath sitting at a table with a bunch of papers and a computer that looks like it’s from 1985. What have I gotten myself into, she wonders as she walks up to the man.

“E-Em-Emma Swan,” the man stutters as he immediately stands.

“Yes?” she asks confusedly. She pulls her son closer to her, hiding him behind her slightly, “how do you know my name.”

“Oh-uh-you don’t remember?” the man asks.

“Remember what? What is going on here?”

“Oh, nothing. I apologize,” the man stutters out as he reaches for his papers, “I happen to have a list of names and made an assumption that your name would be Emma Swan, it’s the only name on the list not crossed off.” He shows her the paper and she sees that he is telling the truth. Well at least part of it, anyway, Emma thinks dryly.

“Of course,” she mutters. “Care to explain what the hell is going on here?”

“That’s not part of what I do here. You'll have to find someone else to explain everything, Emma,” the man says with a sad smile. It’s then that he looks at the young boy with her and he smiles. Emma immediately tenses and steps in front of her son protectively. The man looks up and holds his hands up in surrender, “my apologies if this is a bit much for you.”

Emma nods and relaxes, “It’s a lot to take in, that’s for sure. Anyway, this is my son.” She looks at the 4-year-old clinging to her leg and peeking around to look at the stranger in front of them. “Daniel.”
Whelve

Chapter Summary

whelve:
(v.) to bury something deep; to hide

Chapter Notes

So sorry about the wait! Here’s a bit of a filler chapter while I figure out how I want this story to continue. Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

Emma wakes in a cold sweat. She lurches forward in the bed, causing Regina to stir.

“Emma?” Regina questions in a voice laced with sleep. When there’s no response Regina sits up and sees Emma staring away from her, out the window. “Emma?” she asks again, “What’s the matter?” she asks. Now she’s completely awake and worried.

Emma doesn’t respond. She can’t. *What the hell was that?* She wonders as she stares blankly ahead, searching for answers she doesn’t have. She can hear Regina calling to her, but everything sounds muffled, almost like she’s under water. She grabs at her chest trying to relieve the pressure that’s building there. It feels like there’s something on her chest. Oh god, why does she feel nauseous? Suddenly, having even her T-shirt on is too much. It’s touching her neck and she can’t breathe. She feels like someone is pressing on her chest, her lungs won’t take in any more oxygen, even though she’s taking gulps of air. Her heart feels like it’s going to pulse right through her chest. *Maybe that will make this easier* she thinks as she claws at her skin. She feels a hand on her back and jumps from the bed putting distance between the body the hand belongs to and her. *I can’t breathe*. She starts pulling at her chest again. She falls against the wall and slides to the ground, bringing her knees to her chest. *I can’t see anything, what the fuck is going on?!* She can feel her lungs trying to pull in oxygen but her breathing is too erratic. She hears Regina’s voice again *she’s here. She’s safe. I’m safe. Come on Swan, listen to her voice. Focus.*

Regina grasped for Emma while she was on the bed because she wasn’t answering. *She was going to break open the skin with the way she was scratching herself.* As soon as her hand made contact with her wife’s back, she was off the bed and against the wall with a far off look in her eyes. *Why is she pulling at her shirt? Her breathing is too heavy and coming in too fast. Oh no, she’s panicking. She’s having a panic attack.* Regina watches Emma back into the wall and slide gracelessly to the floor. Regina carefully leaves the bed and walks around to her wife, “Emma?” she asks quietly, “Can you hear me, darling? I need you to come back to me. Take a deep breath, Emma. Just keep breathing. Yes, just like that, in and out slowly. Very good. You’re doing great, darling, keep breathing. Slow down. Listen to my voice. Good job. Come back to me.” Regina gives a small smile as Emma’s breathing slows and her hands stop trying to claw through her shirt. Regina waits
until Emma’s breathing is almost back to a normal rate and watches Emma slowly let her legs slide
to the ground, laying them flat out in front of her. She crouches between Emma’s legs and looks at
Emma’s face. “Darling, can you hear me?” Emma nods but her eyes are still glassy and far away.
“Where are you Emma?” Regina asks as she tries to get Emma’s eyes to focus.

“I-I don’t know, I can’t see Gina,” Emma sobs.

“It’s alright, darling. You’re here, in our bedroom, you’re safe.”

Emma shakes her head, “Nothing’s ever safe.”

“What do you mean?” Regina asks as she tentatively reaches out to touch Emma’s face. She tries
not to show her hurt when Emma jerks away. It’s not her fault. She’s just scared.

Emma shakes her head furiously and starts repeating, “No, no, no. Not okay, not okay.”

“Emma? What’s going on? Where are you?”

“Dark, Gina. It’s so dark. And cold, why is it so cold?” Emma asks as she wraps her arms around
herself.

“Do you want me to turn the light on?” Regina asks as she starts to stand.

“NO! Don’t leave!” Emma yells as she grabs Regina’s wrist in a vice-like grip. Regina winces but
lowers herself back to a squat in front of her wife.

“Okay Emma, I’m not going anywhere, I’m right here, in our bedroom. I need you to come back to
me, okay?”

“No, no, no. Not okay, not okay,” Emma repeats.

“Emma?” Regina asks.

Suddenly Emma blinks away the fog and launches herself into Regina’s unsuspecting arms.
“Gina,” she sobs as she buries her face in Regina’s chest.

Regina is pushed backwards, falls into a sitting position and immediately wraps her arms around
her wife, pulling her closer. “Shhh, you’re safe, darling,” she coos as she brushes hair away from
Emma’s face and soothingly rubs a hand across her sweaty back. “You’re safe,” she repeats as
Emma clutches her nightshirt and sobs. She keeps rubbing her back and whispering calming words
until Emma’s sobs slow to hiccups.

Regina is sitting on the floor with Emma half laying on her and half tangled in her legs. Emma
slides her head right over Regina’s heart and listens to her heartbeat, trying to calm herself the rest
of the way. She holds Regina tighter and tries not to start crying again. Regina is still whispering in
Emma’s ear as she holds her close, completely wrapping her body around Emma’s. “Gina?” Emma
finally whispers once she’s calmed again.

Regina whispers back, “I’m right here.”

“I know. Thank you,” Emma says as she buries her head in Regina’s chest.

Regina smiles sadly and kisses the top of her wife’s head, “I will always be here, Emma.” Emma
nods but doesn’t move her head. Regina kisses her again and asks, “Do you want to talk about it?”

Emma shakes her head, causing Regina to chuckle as she grasps blonde hair and holds her wife
close.

“I love you, Emma. You can tell me anything.”

Emma turns her head so her ear is resting over Regina’s heart again and whispers, “I don’t know what to say.”

Regina kisses her forehead and brushes the hair from Emma’s face, ”Just start with words.” She smirks as she sees Emma’s lips purse and her eyebrows crease in an adorable pout. Emma tries to glare but it ends up making Regina laugh because Emma refuses to move her head to properly look at Regina.

Her lips shift to a small smile as she whispers, “I love your laugh, Gina.”

“Well, I love you Emma, but you do not get to change the subject.” Emma huffs but Regina continues, “You have not had an attack like this in a very long time, what changed?”

“My memories came back.”

“You’re memories have been back for days now, what changed?”

Maybe it just took a while to come back to me,” Emma whispers unconvincingly.

“Emma.” Regina tries to gently pull Emma’s hair so she can look her in the eye but Emma just clutches Regina tighter, refusing to move away from her heartbeat. It was the only thing grounding her at that moment and she refuses to lose it. Regina huffs and rolls her eyes, but doesn’t force Emma to move. She starts running her fingers through blonde locks and says, “Please tell me.”

“I can’t.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“Emma.”

“I don’t really remember, Gina,” she can feel the distrust radiating off of her wife so she continues, “honest.”

“Well tell me what you do remember then, Emma.”

“I…..ugh. Fine,” Emma says, but she doesn’t say anymore.

Regina waits, but when Emma doesn’t continue she prompts, “Where did you go?”

“The Gateway,” Emma says quietly. She can feel Regina trying to look at her but she can’t face those eyes right now so she clutches Regina’s sides tighter and squeezes her eyes shut.

Regina’s fingers stall for a moment when she tries to lean back to look at Emma’s face, but when Emma’s grip tightens, she shakes herself out of it and returns to running her fingers through Emma’s hair. Emma’s still sweaty, but Regina doesn’t dare try to move again. “What were you doing?” she whispers quietly.

“Running.”

“From?”
“I don’t know.”

My goodness. It’s like pulling teeth. I don’t remember her being so uncommunicative in the past. “Emma,” Regina chastises with a sigh.

“I really don’t know Gina, I don’t even know if I was running from something. I think I was running towards something.”

“Towards what?” Regina’s mind is racing, usually Emma’s panic attacks stem from memories, not something that hasn’t happened. What the heck is going on?

“I don’t know.”

“Oh. Do you remember what you saw?” Regina asks, she realizes she’s not going to get anymore about the running aspect, so she moves on, hoping to figure out why Emma is so worked up about The Gateway. I understand being nervous, but she hasn’t had a panic attack since we left the Enchanted Forest. Why now?

Emma shakes her head but before Regina could say anything she says, “It was dark, really dark, and I was running. There were stones, like a castle, big gray stones; and torches; they were the only light fixtures. There were tables, I think. Oh! And I don’t think was alone.”

Regina allows this information to bounce around inside her head as she tries to process. I do not remember The Gateway like this. Perhaps it really was just a nightmare. “Who was with you?”

Emma takes a shaky breath and says, “a little boy?”

“Is that a question, Emma?” Regina asks with a raised eyebrow.

“I don’t remember. I don’t think the person with me was tall anyways; maybe a kid? I felt really protective.”

Regina nods and scratches Emma’s scalp gently with her nails, “Were you protecting Tommy?”

“I don’t think so,” Emma says.

Before Regina can ask another question Emma starts laughing. “What?” Regina asks. Why is she laughing? Oh no, she’s lost her mind. I can’t allow her to go back to the Enchanted Forest if she’s lost her mind. But Emma doesn’t respond, she just keeps laughing. Regina is getting worried now, what if she’s really lost it? “Emma?” Only laughter in response, “Darling, what happened?”

Emma pulls one hand away from Regina to wipe away a stray tear from her eye as she tries to calm her laughter. Regina raises an eyebrow but waits for her wife to calm. “I knew it,” Emma finally chokes out between laughing fits.

Regina is now even more confused, “What are you talking about Emma?”

Emma tilts her head up so she can see Regina’s face while still keeping her ear over Regina’s heart. Regina looks down at her wife. Emma laughs again, rolls her eyes and says, “This is ridiculous.”

Regina raises an eyebrow, “What is?”

“We’re laying in the middle of the floor in our bedroom before we go realm hoping to check on my parents because we got a magical equivalent of the bat signal; and we have a perfectly good bed
right there.” She points to their bed, but doesn’t make to move.

Regina stares at her wife for a moment before letting out a sound between a laugh and a cry. “Well, when you put it that way, it does sound pretty ridiculous darling.”

Emma smiles as she looks up at her wife. Regina smiles back. “Do you want to move?” she asks.

Regina shakes her head, “I will wait until you’re ready.”

“Thank you,” Emma says with a smile that lit up the whole room.

Regina smiles back and kisses her wife’s forehead. Emma starts laughing again, causing Regina to roll her eyes, “Now what?” she huffs.

“Oh, nothing new, I just want to know why you fight those nicknames so hard.”

Regina raises an eyebrow and asks, “What are you talking about?”

“You said Tommy.”

“I did not.”

“Yes, earlier. Yes you did.”

“No, I did not.”

“Okay babe, you keep thinking that, but you did. I heard it.”

Regina pulls her head back to look down at Emma, who gives a shit-eating grin. She rolls her eyes and says, “Darling, I am glad to know you are paying attention to the words I was using - perhaps that was why I said it in the first place, but I think you are mistaken.”

“Whatever helps you sleep at night babe.” Regina rolls her eyes at her wife. “I know the truth,” Emma whispers conspiratorially.

Regina chuckles and leans closer, her mouth stopping right next to Emma’s ear. “I’ll deny it.” She smirks when she sees Emma shiver. “Forever,” she breathes into her wife’s ear.

Emma lets out a chuckle and shakes her head, “Fine babe. I’ll let it slide, but I won’t forget. You’ll slip again, and I’ll be ready.”

“I do not slip, darling,” Regina says haughtily.

Emma widens her eyes comically, “Careful babe, your Evil Queen is showing.”

“I think you like it,” Regina smirks.

“Oh definitely, without a doubt.”

“Are you ready to get up dear?” Regina asks as she runs her hand through Emma’s hair.

“Hmmmmmm,” Emma scrunches up her face in mock thought, “I don’t think so. I want to stay here with you.”

Regina smiles and kisses her forehead, “Alright.”

So there they lay, in the middle of the floor between the bed and the wall, wrapped up with each
other. It had not even been a full minute of silence when their bedroom door was thrown open and the hallway light flooded in.

“Mommy?”

Emma lets out a sigh as she whispers, “Here we go.”

“MOMMY?! MOMMA?!” he screams.

“We’re right here baby,” Regina calls.

“Mommy? Where are you?” Tommy asks frantically.

Regina raises a hand so her son can see her from the other side of the bed. Emma refuses to move, snuggling further into Regina’s chest.

“Mommy!” Tommy says, relief evident in his voice as he jumps onto the bed and climbs over to his mothers. “Momma?” he asks as he slides down the bed next to his mothers.

“Hey champ,” Emma says with a small smile.

“What wong?” he asks still standing away from his mothers but clutching his teddy bear tightly in his arms.

“Nothing buddy, I just needed some Mommy snuggles,” Emma says with a more convincing smile.

He looks at both his mothers for a minute before caving and running to them. “Me too,” he whispers as he snuggles into Regina’s side, trying to burrow between them. He puts his head on Regina’s shoulder and tries to put the rest of his body on her lap - finding it difficult because his blonde mother was already there. Regina laughs as she is pushed to lean farther back. Emma laughs as well as she moves one arm from around Regina to include their youngest son.

Regina decides to scoot back so she can lean against the bed only to be met with identical sounds of protests. She just laughs and leans back against the bed. She is met with grumbling as the two get resettuated, Emma resting her head right over Regina’s heart and Tommy burrowing into her side/stomach. She just smiles and runs her hands through their hair, smiling when they both nuzzle in. She rolls her eyes at the identical gesture and says, “Alright,” but she stops the rest of her sentence when she notices a change of light entering the room. Someone’s standing in the doorway. “Henry?” she questions.

Henry looks at them laying on the ground and bursts out laughing, “Oh no, what happened?” he asks between laugh attacks.

“Momma and me want snuggles Henny,” Tommy says, not bothering to look at his older brother, but instead snuggles further into his brunette mother. She smiles down at him and rubs her hand from his head to his back and back again.
Henry raises an eyebrow and says, “On the floor?”

Emma gives him a half shrug and asks, “Are you going to judge us for our snuggling position or are you going to join this snugglegasm?” Henry opens his mouth to respond and she jumps in saying, “Or are you too old to snuggle with your mothers?” Regina swats her head for antagonizing their son but turns to look at him for his reply. Even Tommy shifts his head so he can look at his older brother. Regina raises her eyebrow and Emma turns on the puppy eyes.

Henry rolls his eyes but moves to sit next to his brunette mother sitting right next to his little brother. He lays his head on her shoulder and smiles at the comfort he gets when she lays her head on top of his.

“Why are you in here, Little Man?” Henry asks his little brother.

Tommy hides his face in Regina’s stomach and shakes his head.

“Did you have a nightmare, darling?” Regina asks as she soothingly rubs his back.

Tommy shakes his head again, but doesn’t move away from his “hiding” spot.

“It’s okay if you did, bud. Momma did too,” Emma whispers.

Tommy peeks out of one eye and looks at his blonde mother, “You did?”

Emma nods as she lays her head back on Regina’s chest, right over her heart and whispers, “Everybody has nightmares. Even Mommies.”

Tommy’s eyes widen and he looks to his brunette mother who nods her head. She leans in and kisses his forehead and says, “You can tell us anything, Querido.”

Tommy remains quiet as he looks at his mothers. Then, he turns towards his brother and asks, “Henny has scaries?”

“Sometimes Little T. Sometimes I get really scared and come and talk to Moms and they can make it better.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, of course. Like Ma said, everybody has nightmares, Little T.”

He nods his head and looks back to his mothers, “I had a scary.”

“Do you want to talk about it?” Regina asks as she kisses him again.

“It was so scary Mommy,” he says as he buries his face in Regina’s stomach again. He continues to talk but it’s muffled and no one understands.

Regina runs a hand through his hair and whispers, “Querido? You need to move your head so we can hear you.”

Tommy moves his head to look at his blonde mother as he clutches tighter to the brunette. “The bad man,” he whispers.

Regina raises an eyebrow and looks to her wife who looks just as confused. She turns to look at Henry when he sighs and he says, “Again, bud?”
“Again?” Regina and Emma ask simultaneously.

Henry sighs again, “Tommy woke me up the last time we stayed at Aunt Z’s about a bad man with a scary face taking him away.”

“He had a nightmare at Zelena’s and we never heard about it?” Regina asks.

Henry looks sheepish, “Well it was in the middle of the night and he crawled under my blanket and told me a bad man was gonna get him. Did you do what we practiced, Little T?” he asks looking to his little brother.

Tommy nods and sits up. “It worked but tonight I forgotted Henny.” He lowers his head and Henry nudges him until he looks up at his big brother.

“It’s okay dude, wanna work on it again?” Tommy nods enthusiastically and lets go of his brunette mother and climbs onto Henry’s lap.

Regina and Emma share a confused look before looking back to their sons.

Henry smiles at his brother and leans in to whisper, “Mommy taught me how to do this when I had scaries.”

Tommy gasps, “Nooooo!”

“Yes!” Henry smiles at his brunette mother who smiles back.

Regina looks down when Emma squeezes her tighter and they share a smile. Emma wraps her arms tighter around her wife and smiles as their sons talk.

“Alright Little T, how are we gonna stop the bad man this time?”

“Momma?” he questions looking at his blonde mother.

“Does he need to be arrested?” Henry asks, drawing his brother’s attention again.

Tommy nods but that looks sad, “Yes, but dey can’t gettem.”

“Hmmm….okay, did you see his face this time?”

Tommy nods. “He was sca-ie Henny! Ickies on his face.” Tommy’s nose scrunches in disgust.

“Ickies?” Henry asks.

Tommy nods. “Hair all over his face. All black. All of it was icky.”

“Alright, how did he get these ickies?” Henry asks.

Tommy shrugs, “Dey just dere.”

“They’re just there? Like a beard? Like Uncle Robin?” Tommy nods. “Okay. How do we get him to leave?”

“I don’t know!” Tommy yells as he buries his face in Henry’s chest.

“Hey, Little T, it’s okay. I think we should use some dream magic to get the bad man to leave. How does that sound?”
Tommy lifts his head and looks at Henry skeptically, “Magic?”

Henry nods, “Do you think that’ll work?”

Tommy scrunches his face up in thought and finally nods, “I do.”

“Good. What kind of magic should we use to control the man? Should we make him do tricks?”

“Tricks?” Tommy asks.

“Yeah. Like, does he do back flips?”

Tommy shakes his head, “No, Henny, he a bad man.”

“But maybe he doesn’t have to be bad, right?”

Tommy looks at his brother like he’s grown a second head. “He can be good?”

“Sure, maybe he just needs a little help.” Henry can see Tommy thinking about it so he continues, “Maybe you can get a special remote to control the man? Maybe the remote has special buttons that makes the man do silly things?”

Tommy nods and says, “no wee-mote Henny, my teddy,” he says holding up the Teddy Bear in his arms.

Henry scratches his chin in thought, causing his brother to giggle. “Hmmm…Mr. Bear has magical control powers that I didn’t know about?”

Tommy giggles again and nods, “Teddy berry smot.”

“Yes, I knew Teddy was smart, but I didn’t know he could control people. Maybe I need Teddy to sleep in my bed for a while.”

“No!” Tommy says with a giggle, laughing at his older brother’s silliness.

“Alright, alright. Teddy can stay with you. So, what are you gonna have the man do?”

“Stand on his head,” Tommy says with a giggle.

“On his head?!” Henry exclaims. Tommy nods and giggles again. “Anything else?”

“He gonna tickle himsef.”

“Oh my goodness, this man sounds very silly.”

Tommy nods, “Teddy tink so.”

“Still scared?” Henry whispers.

Tommy shakes his head and whispers in his bear’s ear, “Teddy knowed what to do now.”

“Good. You should try to sleep, we have a lot to do tomorrow,” Henry says with a smile.

“We do?” Tommy asks excited.

Henry nods, “But I can’t tell you. It’s a secret.”
Tommy gives the stink eye before crawling back over to his mothers and resting his head on Regina's stomach again.

They lay on the floor like this for a while. Regina notices that Emma and Tommy both fell asleep. Before she can say anything there’s movement and the light in the room changes. “Gina?” a voice whispers.

Henry sits up to look over the bed and says, “We’re over here.”

Suddenly, there are two more bodies between Regina and Henry. “What’s the matter?” Regina asks looking between Roland and Kelly.

They both look down until Roland whispers, “Kelly got scared.”

“Nuh-uh! Roland was scared!” Kelly says.

“Shhhh,” Regina quiets, “it’s alright if you were scared. I believe everyone has had a pretty scary night. Did you have any nightmares?”

Kelly and Roland both nod.

“Do you want to talk about them?”

They shake their heads but one look at Regina and Roland whispers, “The Bad Man was here.”

“The Bad Man?” Regina asks looking over at Henry whose eyes have blown wide.

They nod. “He tried to take us,” Kelly says.

“In your dreams?” Regina asks.

They both look at her and then each other. Then, they nod.

“What does he look like?”

“Scary eyes” Roland says at the same time Kelly says, “scary face”

They sit quietly as Regina thinks about everything. Why are all the children dreaming about the same man? “Do you know this man?” They shake their heads. “Have you seen him before, outside of your dreams?” Another set of shakes. “But it’s always the same man?” Nods.

Henry jumps in, “Would you like to use magic to stop him?”

Kelly giggles while Roland says, “That’s what Mommy tells us.”

“She does?” Henry and Regina both ask.

Roland nods, “She says magic makes the bad man scared and he won’t take us because she’s too strong and that makes us strong.”

“Well she is very right dear. Our father used to tell us the same thing when we were little,” Regina says with a smile, “Your mother is very strong and we will all protect you, okay? Good. Now, why don’t you two get comfortable so you can get some sleep before your parents come back in the morning.”

They lay down, Roland squeezing between Henry and Regina, resting his head on Regina’s thigh.
and Kelly curls up with her head on Henry’s chest.

“Aunt Gina?” Roland whispers.

“Yes dear?” she whispers back, looking down at him.

“Why are we on the floor?”

Regina laughs quietly, trying not to jostle the sleeping figures laying on her, as she says, “Your Aunt Emma thought it would be fun.”

“Auntie Em is silly,” Kelly says with a smile.

“That she is dear, but we’ll tell her that when we wake up again, alright? Close your eyes and go to sleep.”

“Okay, night Aunt Gina.”

“Goodnight Kelly.”

“Night Aunt Gina.”

“Goodnight Roland.”

After goodnights are said to Henry, the room grows silent again.

“Aunt Gina?”

Regina sighs, “yes Kelly?”

“It’s too quiet, can you sing your song?”

“Sure Sweetie,” she says with a small smile.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,

Go to sleep my little baby.

When you wake you shall have

All the pretty little horses.

Black and bays, dapples, grays,

All the pretty little horses.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,

Go to sleep my little baby.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,

Go to sleep my little baby.

When you wake you shall have

All the pretty little horses.
Regina finishes her song quietly and hums it through before she notices that Roland and Kelly are both asleep. She turns to see Henry staring at the wall, arms wrapped around his young cousin and she whispers, “When did you get so grown up?”

Henry shrugs and smiles, “You used to do that with me, Mom. I just want to help. They don’t need any nightmares.”

“No one does,” Regina whispers as she looks at the sleeping figures wrapped around her. Henry scoots closer to his mother and lays his head back on her shoulder, effectively squishing Roland between them. “Have you had any?” she asks.

Henry shakes his head, “Nope. You stopped them.”

Regina smiles, “You stopped them Henry.”

“You stopped them.”

Regina kisses his forehead. “I love you Henry.”

Henry yawns, “I love you too Mom.”

“Rest, dear, we do have a very big day tomorrow. You’ll need your strength.”

Henry nods but his eyes are already closed.

Regina looks at her family, wrapped around her, and she’s never felt so strong and so scared at the same time. She pushes all thoughts of tomorrow away and closes her eyes, willing sleep to take over. It doesn’t, but she’s content to sit and watch her family dream happier dreams.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

At some point Regina must have fallen asleep because she wakes to a snapping sound. She blinks away the remnants of sleep as she tries to figure out why her butt hurts and why she feels so heavy. Then last night’s “festivities” come back to her. She lets out a quiet groan as she tries to resituate. She can’t feel her butt and her legs are starting to tingle but looking at the sleeping figures of her family make her want to never leave. That’s when she notices she’s not alone.

“Morning, GiGi. I was wondering when you would decide to wake up.”

“Zelena?” Regina asks, her voice thick with sleep. She blinks her eyes to adjust to the darkness of the room, the only light coming from the hallway.

“Yes. Imagine my surprise when I show up to your house and I cannot find anyone anywhere. I check in the spare room: my children are missing. I peek into Tommy’s room: he is missing. I go to Henry’s room: he’s nowhere to be found. I go into the nursery, the twins are cooing at each other.” Regina’s eyes grow wide and she leans forward only to stop when Zelena raises a hand. “They’re fine. Robin and I dressed them in the outfits that were laid out and he is downstairs with them now.” Regina nods and relaxes back against the bed. “Care to explain what happened here last night?” Zelena asks with a raised eyebrow.

Regina gives a smile, “We had an eventful evening.”

“I would say so. What happened?”

“It seems everyone was plagued by nightmares,” Regina says as she looks at everyone laying on
her. At some point during the night Henry had snuggled closer to Regina, squishing Roland even
tighter against them and Kelly had moved her head so she was laying on Henry and resting her
head on Regina’s arm.

Zelena raises her eyebrow further into her hairline as she says, “This does not explain why
you are all on the floor instead of in your bed.”

Regina lets out of chuckle and gives a shrug for her answer. Changing the subject away from how
they wound up on the floor she asks, “Did you know about the bad man the children have been
dreaming about?”

Zelena nods. “Yes, Kelly and Roland have told me about their nightmares periodically within the
last few months, why?”

“Did you know they’re dreaming of the same man?”

Zelena shakes her head, “No, why would you think that?”

“Thomas had the same dream last night and Henry said that it happened when they were at your
house before.”

Zelena’s eyes grow wide, “Do you think…?”

Regina nods solemnly, “I would expect nothing less.”

“Oh, that bastard.”

“We can deal with this once we get there, Lena,” Regina tries to calm down her sister.

But everyone knows there is no calming down a Mills sister. “I will end him,” Zelena says, her
voice laced with venom.

“Zelena-“ Regina starts.

“No, Gi,” Zelena growls, “he went after my children, and your children. That’s unacceptable and he
needs to pay.”

“Do you really think he has something to do with this?” Regina asks looking at the sleeping bodies
around her.

“We get summoned to go back to the Enchanted Forest right after our children start having
nightmares? I don’t believe in coincidences, Sis.”

Regina nods. “Alright, when we get back we figure this all out. He does not get to scare our
children.”

Zelena gives a nod in return, “He’s messed with the wrong family.”

This causes Regina to chuckle, “Who consciously picks a fight with a family of sorceresses?”

Zelena shrugs, “An idiot.”

They roll their eyes simultaneously and both burst into giggles at the insanity of their conversation.
“Are we going to be okay?” Regina whispers as she looks up at her sister, who’s leaning against
the wall opposite the figures on the floor.
Zelena nods and goes to sit on the bed to Regina’s left. Zelena runs a hand through Regina’s hair and whispers, “We’re going to be better than okay, Gi.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.” She leans forward and kisses the top of Regina’s head and then laughs as Emma nuzzles further into her wife’s chest. Regina chuckles too and she lays her head against Zelena’s thigh.

“What time is it?” Regina whispers.

“We’ll have to wake them soon,” Zelena says with sadness in her tone.

“I wish we didn’t have to do this. We’re going to turn their worlds upside down.”

“I know, Gi, but you know the little ones will adjust and will be in love with the ideas of Princes, Princesses, and knights in shining armor. It’s the bigger ones you should be worried about,” Zelena says as she looks at Emma, sleeping peacefully.

Regina sighs, “I am, but there’s nothing I can do to ease her mind. She tries so hard to be the ideal Savior everyone wants her to be, she forgets how to be Emma.”

“Don’t let her forget,” Zelena says.

“I do my best,” Regina says as she tries to lift her head away from her sister’s leg. Who does she think she is? Telling me what I already know. Obviously I don’t want to let her forget but what good does that do when she has a hard time letting me in?

Zelena puts her hand back on Regina’s head, stopping her from moving away. “I know, Sissy, I know you do. But I also know that you’re a Mills, and your best is never good enough for you, is it?”

Regina gives a small smile and relaxes as Zelena plays with her hair, “I suppose you know this from experience.”

“Takes a Mills to know a Mills.”

Regina smiles again and quickly soberes up as she remembers what they have to do. “We should wake them.”

“Unfortunately, you’re right. I guess we can’t avoid this any longer.” Zelena doesn’t move but she feels Regina becoming withdrawn as she mentally prepares to go back to a place she never wished to return to. “Come on GiGi, let’s go kick some ass.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “You sound like Emma, Leni.”

Zelena visibly cringes, “Oh no, not that. Make it stop!”

Regina laughs, “Alright, Lena. Let’s get everyone up and ready.”

Zelena stands only to crouch next to Regina, nearly at the same height but she’s still higher up than Regina, “I love you, Sissy.”

“I love you too,” Regina says and they wrap each other in a tight hug. Quite the feat since Regina is involved in a tangle of multiple other humans and their limbs.
Zelena stands back up and brushes off invisible lint of her traveling outfit which consists of leggings and a long shirt, “Alright, enough of these emotions and such, we have work to do and asses to kick.”

Regina smiles and shakes her head, “Of course.” She looks at all of the sleeping people around her and then back up to her sister, “Let’s do this.”

Chapter End Notes

Any thoughts on who the bad man is?  
Little Side Note: cute scenes between Emma and Regina are always fun to write but my favorite scenes to write are between Zelena and Regina, this show could have done soooooo much with this relation but hasn't so I'll just keep my little head canon safe and online and all will be well ;)

Happy Once Day (for everyone still watching the show)
Much love, Lovelies.
-IrishBella
**Querencia**

Chapter Summary

querencia:
(n.) a place from which one's strength is drawn, where one feels at home; the place where you are your most authentic self.

Chapter Notes

SUPER short, mostly fluff chapter (I know, I know-apologies) but I wanted to get this out before I leave for Spring Break tomorrow. Hopefully I feel the urge to write more before I leave and I can update again tomorrow, but I make no promises.

Happy St. Paddy's Day Lovelies!

-IrishBella

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

“Mommy?” Tommy questions as he pulls on Regina’s hand.

“Sí Querido?” Regina asks as she crouches down to look him in the eye.

“Where we goin’? The sun’s still sweeping. Momma says to stay in bed when sun in sweeping.”

Regina gives her youngest son a smile, she’s heard this question all morning and she still cannot find an accurate answer that will soothe her young son entirely.

“We are going on a secret adventure mission, buddy,” Emma says as she steps over to her wife and son.

“An a-ventour?” he questions. When Emma nods his eyes bulge and his face lights up with a smile that looks like it could split him in half. Emma smiles back and nods when Regina mouths a silent ‘thank you’ as she stands. “Like when you go work?” he asks moving his attention to his blonde mother.

Emma gives a thoughtful look and says, “Not quite buddy, but we can play pretend if you want,” she adds at his unhappy look.

He nods enthusiastically and says, “My badge!” and he takes off running.

Regina is about to stop him when Emma reaches for her arm and shakes her head, “It’ll be easier babe.”

Regina doesn’t protest but asks, “How are we going to explain your parents?”
Emma shrugs, “We’ll figure it out.”

Regina rolls her eyes at her wife’s aloofness but doesn’t question further, *if she wants to push it off then she can deal with the questions later.*


Regina raised an eyebrow, “That’s quite a description of this look, *my silly swan.*”

Emma smirks and says, “Well you do use it quite often.”

Regina rolls her eyes at her wife’s antics but the soft smile on her face tells Emma that she’s not actually upset, only amused.

Emma’s smirk turns into a giant smile, the exact smile their son gave them a minute ago, as she wraps her arms around Regina and whispers, “Love you Gina.”

Regina smiles and rests her forehead against Emma’s while she says, “I love you too, *my silly swan.*”

“I knew you’d like that,” Emma smirks as she pulls back to look her wife in the eye.

Regina rolls her eyes again, but before she can respond she hears Tommy bound down the steps, “Thomas, slow down,” she warns as she looks towards the staircase.

“Sorry Mommy,” Tommy says as he makes his way to his mothers, head hung low with badge in hand.

Emma lets go of Regina to pull Tommy to them and hoist him into her arms. “You know, Mommy only does that because she doesn’t want you to fall and get hurt, buddy.”

“I know Momma,” he says without looking up at either of his mother’s.

Regina gives a small smile and holds her hand out, “Here, my little deputy, let me attach your badge to your shirt so you can finish getting ready for work.”

At this, Tommy lifts his head to beam at his mother. He hands off the badge and once it’s attached he puffs his chest out and proudly says, “I just like Momma!”

“Just. Like. Momma.” Regina says as she bops his little nose, loving the giggles that erupt from him.

“K, Momma, now what?” he asks looking at his blonde mother. She shifts him in her arms so she has one free and uses that to tap her finger against her chin, “Hmmm…I believe my newest deputy should go and see if his bag is packed and ready to go.” He nods enthusiastically and let’s his mother set him down before sprinting out of the room. Regina lets out a chuckle and turns to her wife.

“What?” Emma asks, seeing an unusual look on her wife’s face.

Regina shakes her head with a smile, “Nothing dear. I’m just so happy he has such a great role model.” Off of Emma’s confused look, she continues, “You’re Tommy’s superhero, darling, and it makes me incredibly happy.”
“I am not,” Emma says, “Batman is.”

Regina smiles again and walks to her wife, “It’s alright dear,” she says as she wraps her arms around Emma’s waist, pulling her close. She leans up so her lips are right next to Emma’s ear, “You’re my superhero, too.”

Emma pulls back to grin at Regina, “Superhero and White Knight? Must be pretty spectacular, huh?”

Regina nods her head sarcastically, “And incredibly humble, too.”

Emma laughs and quickly kisses Regina. She pulls back and says, “We should finish getting ready. We have to get going.”

Regina nods and walks towards her daughters. Once they are both safely in their wrap against her body, she started to walk through the house, checking to make sure lights were off, windows were closed and locked, and they hadn’t forgotten any essentials. She is walking back down the stairs where Emma is waiting; wearing two backpacks, smiling.

“Did we forget anything?”

Regina shakes her head and says, “I do not believe so.”

Emma smiles and says, “all the doors and windows are closed and locked down here. I also sent an email to our security officer, Bob, to let him know we’d be out of town for an undetermined amount of time.” Regina nods as Emma continues, “Emails were also sent to both our workplaces last night. Our neighbors were informed of our ‘vacation’ and will help keep an eye on things. I also sent a text to the Suburbia Bitches letting them know we wouldn’t have the kids at Parent-and-Me for a while because we’re heading out of town for some family stuff and that we’ll text when we’re back in the area.”

“Emma!”

“Suburbia Bitches,” Emma giggles at her own joke, “Sounds like a badass punk rock band.”

“Emma!” Regina gasps again.

“Yes, I know. Don’t swear, dear, you’ll set a bad example for our children,” Emma says as she mocks her wife’s voice.

Regina looks affronted, “I do not sound like that.”

Emma snickers and says, “You kinda do babe.”

“They are not that bad,” Regina huffs.

“Look. Babe. I get it. I know that they’re your friends and all, but they are totally the Suburbia Bitches.

Regina rolls her eyes and says, “I hope you realize that we are a part of those ‘Suburbia Bitches’ as you so cruelly put it.”

Emma gasps, “We are not!”

Regina laughs and nods her head.
“You take that back!!” Emma says, making Regina laugh even harder. “Let me tell you something, Gina. If you weren’t wearing our babies right now, I’d tackle you so hard.”

“Duly noted,” Regina says with a chuckle as she tries to move past her wife.

Emma wraps around her back and whispers, “I guess I’ll just have to wait ‘til later.”

“Good luck trying, darling,” Regina says as she turns in her wife’s arms to look Emma in the eye.

“I don’t need luck, babe.” Emma smirks and kisses the twins’ foreheads, then quickly kisses Regina’s unsuspecting mouth. She pulls back and smiles at how Regina is frozen in place, arms resting underneath their daughters, eyes half closed.

Regina opens her eyes and shakes herself out of her thoughts. She gives a breathtaking smile and says, “Come along dear, we need to get going.”

Emma nods and follows her wife to the basement steps. She reaches out and grabs Regina before she starts descending and pulls her back a few steps from the door. Regina raises an eyebrow and Emma says, “We’re gonna be okay, right?”

“Pardon?” Regina asks.

“Are we gonna be okay? Are you okay with this?”

“Emma, if I was not okay, we wouldn’t be doing this. If I thought there was another way, I wouldn’t be here with you and our children. With Zelena, Robin, and their children. If I were against this, you would be the first to know. I am okay. We are better than okay. We are taking our family on a vacation. We will go, check on everyone, and come back to our lives.”

“Craziest family vacation ever,” Emma mumbles.

Regina chuckles and kisses Emma’s cheek, “I agree, darling, but now that we have our memories back, and with everything that’s been going on, I believe this is necessary. We need to check in, and the children deserve to meet their family.”

“Even if they’re completely insane?”

“Well, they already deal with their Aunt Zelena,” Regina says with a sly smile and a shrug.

“Hey! We can hear you, you know!” Zelena yells from the basement.

Emma rests her forehead on Regina’s and chuckles. “I love you,” she whispers.

Regina winks and says, “And I you. Now, let’s go. We are already behind schedule.”

“You got it boss.” Emma gives a mock salute. Regina shakes her head but turns around and starts walking down the stairs.

“Come on Moms!” Henry exclaims.

Tommy runs over to his mothers and tugs on Regina’s arm, “Mommy, Mommy, WOOK!” he points to the tunnel leading through their basement wall.

“I see darling, now I need you listen very carefully,” Regina starts as she crouches in front of her son, mindful of her sleeping daughters, resting on her chest. At the serious tone in his mother’s voice Tommy looks away from the secret passage and gives her his full attention. “I need you to be
on your best behavior, alright?” When Tommy nods she continues, “we are going to a very special place, but I need you to always stay with your mother and I, Zelena or Robin, or Henry, alright?” Tommy nods again. “Very good. No running in front or lagging behind, alright? You need to always be holding someone’s hand.”

“Got in Mommy,” Tommy says with a smile. He leans into his mother as she wraps her arms around him and kisses his cheek.

“Good, because I have a very special mission for you,” she says before she whispers in his ear.

The smile that grows across his face lights up the dark basement. He nods enthusiastically and then says, “You got it boss.” Everyone in the basement laughs at this. Regina kisses his cheek again and stands back up. Everyone faces the Gateway and takes a deep breath.

“Aunt Gina, can I walk with you?” Kelly asks.

“Of course darling. Come here,” Regina holds out a hand that Kelly immediately latches onto.

“Here we go,” Emma says as she walks forward. Her gun is holstered at her hip but it’s unclipped. Ready to be used if need be. Robin was right behind her. He had gone out and bought a bow and arrow when his memories came back, his life as a thief in the World Without Magic, but he also had a gun from this life.

Henry and Tommy were next. Henry having a secure hold on his little brother’s hand says, “Alright, Little T, let’s start our special mission.”

Zelena is standing to Regina’s left, with Roland next to her. She squeezes his hand and says, “Go ahead darling, you may walk with your cousins.” Roland smiles, gives her a quick hug and runs up to latch onto Henry’s left hand. Zelena squeezes Regina’s left hand and says, “I can’t wait to have my magic back.”

Regina gives a small smile and says, “Of course that’s all that matters to you.”

Zelena gives a wicked grin and together - with Kelly holding onto Regina’s right hand and Evy and Lottie sleeping soundly in the wrap - the two sisters enter the Gateway.
Family

Chapter Summary

family:
(n.) two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another and usually live under the same roof; a group of persons sharing common ancestry.

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry! This is much later than I originally wanted to post this. However, life (and school) got in the way. But here is the next chapter. Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“I’m tired.”

They’ve heard this before. It’s been playing on repeat like a broken record for at least the last hour.

“I know baby,” Zelena coos as she brushes Kelly’s unruly red tresses out of her face, “but we have to keep going. We’re almost there and then we can rest.”

“But Mommy! My legs hurt!”

Kelly groans and runs up to pull on Regina’s arm. “Aunt Gina, can we rest please?”

Regina shakes her head, “I’m sorry Kelly, but your mother is right, we need to keep moving.”

“Aunt Ginaaaa!” Kelly whines. “Please?!” She stomps her feet.

Regina stops walking and looks at her niece. Emma has stopped at the front of the group, causing everyone else to stop and watch the spectacle. Emma sees the same fire in her niece’s eyes as her wife’s. Oh this should be interesting she thinks with a smirk.

Regina raises an eyebrow at Kelly, “Kelly. You have asked your question and we have given you an answer. I am sorry that it is not the answer you wish, but you do not get to throw a fit because you do not get your way. We are walking until Emma says otherwise. Now, finish your tantrum if you must, but keep up dear, we will not keep waiting.”

Kelly’s jaw drops, her aunt has never talked to her that way. She turns to her other aunt and puts on her sweetest, most innocent smile, “Auntie Em? Can we please stop?” Emma’s eyes widen, caught off guard by the sudden change in attitude and looks to her wife, who merely rolls her eyes and
gives a minute shrug. Before Emma can answer Kelly speaks again. “Just for a minute? I want to rest my legs and fix my hair. Pretty please?” Emma just nods; too shocked to say anything else. Henry laughs as he lets his brother down from his back. During their time in the Gateway, Tommy grew weary and Henry was quick to hand his backpack to Robin and place his brother on his back.

Robin shakes his head at his daughter but places their backpacks on the ground against the wall, takes off his bow and places it next to the packs and leans against the wall to rest. Emma places both of her packs next to Robin’s and walks over to her wife to help remove their daughters’ now awake - from the sling.

When both of her daughters’ are out of the wrap, one in Emma’s arms and the other in Zelena’s, Regina looks to Kelly with a raised eyebrow. Kelly merely shrugs and smirks.

“Oh that’s definitely a Regina look!” Emma thinks as she tries not to laugh out loud.

Regina just shakes her head at her niece and says, “Alright dear, you’ve gotten your way, now come over here so I can fix your hair.”

Kelly gives her a megawatt smile, exactly like her mother, and walks towards her aunt. She sits on the floor in front of Regina.

Regina rolls her eyes and kneels behind her niece to manage her wild locks, “What are we doing, Kelly?”

“Braids!” the little girl squeals with excitement.

Regina chuckles and starts braiding Kelly’s bangs down the side of her face and adds them into a full braid that goes halfway down Kelly’s back.

Zelena groans from behind Regina, “How do you do it, Sissy?”

“What, Lena?” Regina asks without looking up at her older sister.

“Tame that mane? You’re the only person who’s ever been able to fix my hair and now you do the same to my daughter’s. Teach me your ways, Oh Wise One.”

Regina lets out a laugh. A laugh so genuine and rich, it causes everyone in the group to smile, “Oh Lena, you just don’t have the patience to fix your hair. You never have.”

Zelena huffs and mutters, “Even in the Old World, no one could fix my hair like you. Not even with magic.”

Regina moves all of Kelly’s hair into her right hand and reaches up to grab Zelena’s hand with her left. She squeezes it and smiles up at her sister. Zelena smiles back and says, “Alright, too much sappiness for me to feel comfortable, I have to walk away now.”

Regina chuckles and watches Zelena turn around with Lottie in her arms, “Love you Lena!” she calls to the retreating form.

Zelena merely lifts a hand and waves backward in acknowledgement, causing Regina to laugh harder as she turns her attention back to complete Kelly’s braid.

When she’s finished, she secures it with a hair tie and stands up to check that everything is in its place and that it won’t immediately fall out. She finds everything satisfactory and taps Kelly on the shoulder to signal that she is done. Kelly immediately reaches up to touch her hair and squeals
again. She launches herself at Regina and wraps her arms around her middle, “Thanks Aunt Gina!”

Regina chuckles and wraps her arms around her niece, kissing her forehead. “You’re welcome, my
dear. Now are you ready to continue our journey?”

Kelly groans, but one look from Regina has her looking down and shrugging, “I guess,” she
whispers.

“Good. Then let’s get our things resituated and move along.” She turns around and sees her sons
and nephew sitting on the floor against the wall whispering quietly. “Boys?” They all look up, “Is
everything alright?”

Henry and Roland nod while Tommy jumps up and says, “Yeah Mommy! Henny says we go to
place with da Keen and da Knight!”

Regina chuckles and picks up her son. She kisses his cheek and says, “That’s right, Querido.
Where we’re going there are lots of queens and knights.”

“Are you a keen, Mommy?” Tommy asks as he tilts his head to study his mother.

“Mommy has always been a queen, buddy,” Emma says before Regina can answer. She walks over
and wraps her free arm around her wife’s waist. She leans in and kisses Regina’s cheek, causing
Tommy to giggle.

“Duh Momma,” he deadpans, enunciated with an eyeroll that was all Regina. "Mommy my keen,
but Henny and Rowand say she a weal keen. For eweybody.”

“And they would be correct, I used to be a queen for everyone,” Regina says with a tight smile.

Tommy gives her a huge, genuine smile and looks to his blonde mother, “Den you da knight
Momma?”

“You betcha, bud. And a knight always protects her queen,” Emma says with a wink.

Tommy giggles again and gets down from his mother’s embrace. “Come on,” he yells at his
brother and cousin.

“Thank you,” Regina whispers, looking at her wife.

“I only said the truth, babe. You’ve always been a queen. My queen. The only one that matters.”

“I’m sure your mother will love to hear that,” Regina says sarcastically.

Emma laughs and shrugs, “You’re my wife. I don’t think she’ll be all that surprised.”

“They don’t know that,” Regina mutters as she turns away from Emma.

Emma gives her a quizzical look before handing Evy to Henry and shooing the boys toward where
Zelena and Robin went to rest. She turns back to Regina, “What are you talking about, babe?”

“You parents do not know we are married.”

Emma stares at her wife long and hard before she makes the connection. They did not get married
in the Enchanted Forest. They were married after they came to the World Without Magic. “Gina,
we left to go to another world together. With the son that we share. We were together before we
left. I think it’s safe to assume they know we’re married.”
“We became married under a curse, Emma,” Regina spits out as she turns to face her. Emma notices the same fire in Regina’s eyes that Kelly had possessed earlier. The fire that demanded to be shown, demanded to be heard. “It’s hardly something your parents will consider real, let alone true.”

“Is that why you’ve been so quiet? You’re afraid I won’t want to stay married to you once we are back?” Emma asks.

Regina scoffs, “I believe that you’re parents have a way of taking everything I hold dear and ripping it from my grasp.”

Emma is shocked at the venom she hears in Regina’s voice. She hasn’t heard it like this in such a long time. She is momentarily speechless until she realizes that Regina is waiting for a response and silence is certainly not helping her irate wife calm down. “Gina,” Emma says quietly.

“Do not patronize me, Miss Swan.” Regina bites out.

“It’s Mrs. Mills,” Emma bites back, but where she lacks the same venom Regina possesses, she makes up for in her sarcastic smirk.

Regina stares at Emma, tilting her head in the same manner that Tommy had done to her earlier, trying to process everything going on in her head. Finally, she lets out a smile; and not just any smile. She lets out the world-stopping, earth-shattering, make-Emma-lose-the-ability-to-speak-because-her-wife-is-so-damn-perfect smile. “Emma…”

Emma smiles back and shrugs, “It’s okay Gina. I know that it’s hard for you to go back. If you want to turn around I will totally understand. We could take the kids back and maybe then I’ll just go and check on everyone-“

Before she can finish her sentence Regina takes the final step between them, making the gap between them nonexistent. “We are doing this together. I’m not changing my mind on that.”

“And our marriage?” Emma asks quietly.

Regina stares at her like she doesn’t understand what Emma is asking.

“Are you doubting the validity of our marriage still? Because I swear Regina, I will take you back right now and marry your ass again. I will do it in any world for that matter. You think that because we didn’t remember everything that I didn’t actually want to marry you? Of COURSE I wanted to marry you! I wanted to wake up next to you every morning. Be able to kiss you all the time. I wanted to have your babies. And guess what? I did all of that. So what if we didn’t have all of our memories intact? We had all of the important ones: the ones that told us how much we loved each other. Don’t you ever brush off our marriage as anything less that the perfect, important reality that it is.”

Regina is dumbstruck. She can’t think of a single thing to say. She had no idea that Emma would react like that. “I’m sorry.”

“Our marriage is the most important thing about us besides our kids, Gina. Don’t degrade it like that ever again.”

“Okay,” Regina whispers looking down.

Emma hooks her finger under Regina’s chin and lifts it until they are looking at each other.
“I love you, and that’s never going to change. Ever.”

“You can’t promise that,” Regina whispers.

“I just did. Now, you can just accept this and allow our marriage to thrive like it has been for the last 4 years. Or you can fight this and pretend that what we have is not real, and I will be forced to prove it to you again and again until you finally accept it. So? What do you choose, Your Majesty?” Emma asks as she steps back and raises an eyebrow.

Regina rolls her eyes and smirks at her wife, “Well played, Emma, well played.”

Emma smirks back and shrugs, “I learned from the best, babe. Now, stop doubting everything and let’s get back to the land of fairy tales and save the day. Again.”

Regina chuckles and takes Emma’s hand, “I’ll try,” she whispers.

“Good.” Emma leans in to kiss her, “and I’ll try harder to prove it to you.”

Regina lets out that smile again, the smile reserved solely for moments of true appreciation, “I love you.”

Emma smirks, “Duh babe.” Off of Regina’s eye roll she continues, “I love you too, Gina. Now come on. We better head back before they send in the cavalry.” She winks and drags her wife down the corridor toward their family.

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“Gina, why are you upset?” Emma had just asked Regina to marry her and this was not the reaction she was expecting.

Regina pulls her hand out of Emma’s grasp and looks at the floor. “I never planned to marry again,” she whispers.

Emma looks at her, trying to decipher what she’s trying to convey. Finally, it hits her over the head like a ton of bricks. She’s not sure exactly what she knows, but she can feel it in her gut that it’s not good. She knows Regina’s been married before and that it was terrible, but for the life of her she cannot think of any details. “Oh God, Gina, I didn’t even think. I’m such an idiot.” Regina lets out a noise between a chuckle and a sob. Emma wraps her arms around Regina and pulls her close. Regina clutches Emma’s sides and tries not to let the tears in her eyes fall. “Do you even want to get married?” Emma whispers. Regina pulls back to look but before she can respond Emma continues, “I mean, with everything that happened the first time, I would totally understand if you never wanted to marry again. I shouldn’t have asked. I’m sorry.”

“I’m not,” Regina whispers as she looks up at Emma.

“You’re not?” Emma asks carefully.

Regina shakes her head and says, “I do not regret things, Emma. Everything I’ve ever done and everything that has ever happened to me has led me to this place. I’m the happiest I have ever been. Do not think that I do not want to be married to you. Being married to you will be the best decision I ever make.”

“Really?” Emma wonders.

“Absolutely. I want you Emma, and to be able to call you my wife. Nothing would make me
happier.”

Emma gives Regina her special smile, a smile reserved for only Henry and Regina. “It’s nice to feel wanted, Gina. After growing up without parents, I never thought I would know that feeling, but now with you and with Henry - and even with your crazy-ass sister and her family - yes I include them in our family, Gina. I now know what it’s like to feel wanted and I never want to be without it again. I never want to be without you again, and I’ll put up with your crazy sister every day to be with you. This is a hard feeling to get used to, but I like it.”

“Good. You better get used to it because it’s never going to change, Emma. I love you.”

“Yeah?” Emma asks, her face breaking into a hopeful grin that makes Regina’s heart soar.

“Yes, Emma. And I would love nothing more than to be your wife.”

“Just so we’re on the same page. This is you saying yes to my proposal, right?”

Regina rolls her eyes and lets out a sigh with a smile full of love, “Yes, Emma. Now put that ring on my finger and kiss me.”

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“Are you two done being weird?” Henry asks as they turn around the corner, walking right up to their family.

“Probably not, Kid,” Emma says with a shrug as she takes Evy from his arms. Henry laughs and rolls his eyes. That’s so Regina. Ugh. Genetics be damned. This kid is Regina through and through.

While Emma is laughing at how much her children have in common with their brunette mother; Tommy runs up to Regina and wraps his arms around her neck.

“Mommy!!”

“Yes, baby?” Regina asks as she stands back up and runs a hand along his back.

“We go now?”

Regina gives him a smile, “Yes, we are going to go right now. Would you like to carry your own backpack for a while?”

“Like a big boy?” His eyes light up.

Regina chuckles and kisses his cheek, “Exactly like a big boy.”

“Yay!” he squeals as he hops down and runs to his backpack. “Come on Henny! Come on Wowan! Kewwy? You come too?”

“Ok” Kelly says as she puts her own backpack on and walks over to her brother and her cousins.

Emma walks to Regina and hands her Evy. She then goes and places both of her packs on her back and looks down the long corridor. Zelena walks over to her sister and helps her situate both of the twins in the wrap. Regina secures the wrap and smiles at Zelena who returns the smile, squeezes her sister’s arm and goes to get her own things ready. When everyone has their things, they continue on their previous path through the Gateway.
“Is that…?” Emma trails off and stops moving. Everyone behind her does the same. Regina walks up next to Henry, who has a sleeping Tommy in his arms. She rests a hand on his back and when he looks at her she gives him a smile and a kiss to his temple before moving up next to Emma. She passes Robin and Zelena who are talking quietly with Kelly asleep in Zelena’s arms and Roland clinging tightly to his parents’ hands.

“Emma?” Regina asks quietly as she moves to stand next to her wife.

“Hmmm?” she asks distractedly.

“Are you alright darling?” Regina asks as she rests her hands on her daughters’ backs, both of them sleeping soundly against her chest.

Emma shakes out of her trance and turns to Regina. She gives a small, fake smile and leans down to kiss each of her daughters’ heads. “Ready to go?” she asks.

Regina gives her a disbelieving look, “Emma….”

“Don’t. Please, not now. We need to go.” Emma turns back toward the end of the corridor to look at the stairway, the stairway from her dream.

“Emma,” Regina sighs. She ducks her head to catch Emma’s eye. When Emma turns to look at her, Regina sees tears in her eyes. “Emma?”

Emma shakes her head and wipes viciously at the tears threatening to fall down her cheeks. “I don’t think I can do this Gina,” she finally whispers.

“Oh Emma.” Regina says as she grabs her hands and pulls her into her side. Emma hides her face in Regina’s neck and wraps her arms around Regina’s waist, careful not to wake their sleeping daughters. Regina soothingly rubs up and down Emma’s back as she sees Robin and Zelena move the kids around the corner and farther away from them. She makes eye contact with Zelena and mouths, “thank you.” Zelena nods and follows her husband and the boys.

“It’s just like my dream Gina,” Emma whispers into her wife’s neck after a few minutes.

“What?” Regina asks as she pulls her head away to look down at her wife.

Emma just shakes her head and pulls Regina closer. Her hands tighten at Regina’s sides, twisting the fabric of her shirt. Regina relents and rests her head on top of Emma’s.

“Emma?”

“My dream; from last night? I dreamed about the Gateway.”

“Yes, I remember,” Regina whispers when she realizes that Emma will not continue.

“When I was running, we came to a stairway and I took the grate off the top and we climbed through. There’s rugs on the walls up there, and suits of armor. Just like the ones that used to be in your castle.”

“Yes, I remember them from when we first went through,” Regina says cautiously. Where is this going? Did she finally remember her dream?

“But in my dream I was with a little boy. One that wasn't our son.”
“You didn’t tell me that,” Regina says quietly.

“I just remembered.”

“Well, it’s understandable, Emma. Henry was with us the first time. Maybe it was a memory?”

“No, this little boy was little. Like, Tommy or Kelly’s age, little.”

Regina is silent, but her eyebrows have moved closer to her hairline as she tries to process this. *What is going on?*

“And there was a door. But it wasn’t the same door as before; when we left. It was darker, and a different kind of wood; with really odd designs.”

“What did they look like?” Regina asks with caution. *What the hell is going on here? Why did her dream change things? Henry wasn’t that young, the door wasn’t the same and I don’t remember there being too many tapestries on the wall.*

“Like the designs on that pot Z gave us at the wedding. The one you were asking about when you had your memories and I didn’t.”

“Hmmm,” Regina made a noise as she processed this information, *what could this mean?* She shakes herself out of her thoughts and instead decides to calm her wife so they can enter the castle and actually rest. She runs her hand soothingly up and down Emma’s back and waits for her to say when she’s ready.

It takes a few minutes but between breathing in her wife’s calm and being able to look at her sleeping daughters, Emma came out of her hiding spot in Regina’s neck. She smiles shyly and mumbles, “Okay.”

“Okay?” Regina asks with a raised eyebrow.

Emma nods, “Okay.” She continues to listen and watch her daughters’ breathing, using it to calm her own racing heartbeat and erratic breathing.

Regina smiles and leans in to kiss Emma softly, “Okay.”

This causes Emma to chuckle and she says, “Let’s do this.” She turns to face the stairway and waits for Regina to call the rest of their family to join them. Zelena and Henry come around the corner first, each carrying Kelly and Tommy respectively. Robin follows, carrying a now-sleeping Roland.

“Ready to go Swanie?” Zelena asks with a smirk when she stop next to her sister-in-law.

Emma rolls her eyes but answers, “You betcha, Z. Are you ready? Need anything?”

“Oh God! I thought you’d never ask,” she says with a relieved sigh as she hands Kelly over to Emma.

Regina chuckles as Emma merely resituates Kelly against her shoulder. Zelena stalks forward and heads up the stairs.

“Z, are you sure you want to lead?” Emma asks as she follows her sister-in-law.

Zelena chuckles as she reaches the top of the stairs and turns around to see everyone else at the bottom. “As soon as we pass through that door, I will have access to my magic, and I will no longer
be helpless, *Savior.*”

Emma rolls her eyes and says, “I never thought you were helpless Z, I remember how you throw a knife.”

Zelena throws her head back and lets out a cackle, causing all of the sleeping children to jump.

“*Lena,*” Regina hisses as she immediately places a pacifier in each of her daughter’s fussing mouths. They immediately latch on, snuggle further into her chest, and fall back asleep.

Zelena gives a shrug and says, “Come along family, we have a realm to save.”

Regina rolls her eyes and her older sister’s antics and mumbles, “We don’t know anything yet.”

“I heard that Gi!” Zelena calls behind her. She turns around and says, “and we all know that we’re here to save the day.” She pauses and gives a contemplative look, “well, actually, you and Emma are here to save the day, Robin and I simply decided to tag along for a fun family vacation.”

Regina rolls her eyes again and makes a shooing motion towards her sister, “Just go,” she huffs. Zelena winks but turns around and continues on once everyone else reaches the top.

Robin and Henry walk ahead and Regina reaches out and grabs Emma’s free hand. Emma glances over and gives her smile while squeezing her hand. They turn to the doorway hand in hand.

They watch Zelena cross the threshold and immediately grab onto the wall, taking deep breaths. They see her smile and let out a giggle as she brings a fireball forth in her hand. Emma and Regina smile at her giddiness and watch as Robin and Henry both carefully enter through the doorway and smile at the fact that nothing happened. Regina takes a deep breath and squeezes Emma’s hand.

Emma nods and they walk through the doorway together. They both feel it; the rush of magic being released inside of them. It takes their breath away, causing Regina to squeeze Emma’s hand again and Emma to hold tighter to Kelly so she doesn’t drop her.

Regina smiles and releases a fireball into her hand. She takes a deep breath and sighs, *just like riding a bike* she thinks as she watches the fireball burn until she closes her hand and extinguishes it.

Emma smiles and shakes her head at her wife, *those Mills sisters are more alike than they realize* she thinks with a smirk. She squeezes Regina’s hand, causing her to look up and Emma motions to the corridor and they walk ahead of their family, only pausing when a tiny voice calls, “Mommy?”

Regina immediately stops and turns to see Tommy peeking through lidded eyes off of Henry’s shoulder. She gives him a smile and touches his cheek, quietly whispering, “Go back to sleep, my darling, we will talk when the sun’s awake.”

“Mmmmkay,” he mumbles as he shuts his eyes and snuggles into Henry’s neck. Henry gives her a smile and motions with his head for her to lead. She touches his cheek and a similar manner to what she did Tommy and gives him one more smile before turning around and walking with Emma.

They reach the final door, their last step before leaving the Gateway and entering the castle. Emma takes a deep breath, looks at Regina and waits for Regina to reach forward and push the door. She enters first, with Emma and Kelly close behind. Emma and Regina are still clinging to each other’s hands. Regina glances behind to see Henry behind Emma. He sends her a smile as he shifts Tommy on his shoulder. Robin and Zelena are behind him, talking quietly. Zelena makes eye contact with Regina and sends her a wink of encouragement.
Before they can even completely make their way through the doorway the rest of the lights are thrown on and the group immediately freezes, adjusting to sudden brightness.

“Emma?” a voice calls.

Emma tries to blink away the brightness and turn towards where the voice of her mother came from.

Zelena comes up beside Emma and gently takes Kelly from her arms. “I’ve got her,” she whispers when Emma tenses up. Emma relaxes her arms, letting Kelly be moved from her arms and releasing Regina’s hand.

Emma moves forward and can see her mom rushing towards her and only has a second to prepare before she’s engulfed in a hug.

“Oh Emma! You came!” Snow cries and she wraps her daughter in her arms. She immediately pulls back to look her daughter over. She smiles in relief, seeing her daughter look so healthy. She then makes the connection that she was holding a young girl earlier and turns to look at the rest of the people with Emma. The first one she sees is Regina. She smiles and moves toward her, only to stop when she notices that Regina is wearing a child. She looks back to Emma and whispers, “You had another child?” She looks back to Regina and notices not just one, but two babies. “Twins?” she asks as a smile breaks out over her face.

Emma gives a shy smile and says, “We actually have four kids now.”

“Oh Emma!” Snow wraps her daughter in another quick hug before releasing her and wrapping Regina in a similar hug, mindful of the sleeping babies. *My grand babies,* she thinks with a watery smile.

Regina is caught off guard by the affection of her former stepdaughter, but quickly snaps out of it and awkwardly pats her on the back.

Snow pulls back and smiles down at the sleeping babies and whispers, “They’re beautiful.” Regina smiles. But before Regina can say anything and before Snow can ask about the other children another voice pipes up.

“Mommy?”

Regina turns to see Tommy sitting up in Henry’s arms with wide eyes, staring at the unfamiliar brunette.

“Is this your son?” Snow whispers. She still has an arm around Regina’s back and is looking between the young boy in Henry’s arms and the babies sleeping soundly against Regina.

Regina looks to Snow and gives a nod before moving over to her sons. She stops next to him and whispers, “You should be sleeping, Querido.”

Tommy gives a timid smile, rubs his eyes, and reaches for his brunette mother.

She carefully pulls him to her side and avoids waking her daughters. He snuggles into her neck and sighs.

Henry moves around and stands in front of Snow, who is practically bouncing with excitement, “Hi, Grandma.”
“Henry!” Snow pulls him into her arms, “Oh how you’ve grown,” she runs her fingers through his hair and tucks his head under her chin, squeezing him tight.

He chuckles and squeezes her back. He pulls back and asks, “How’s everything?”

Snow smiles and rests a hand on his cheek, “Things are fine for now Henry, but let’s finish visiting before sending you all to rest. I’m sure you’re all exhausted.” Henry nods and steps back next to his blonde mother. Snow sees Zelena and Robin. She gives a smile and says, “Welcome.”

Zelena gives a curt nod while Robin mumbles his thanks.

“Is that Roland?” Snow asks with wide eyes. When I last saw him he was so much smaller! And who is the little girl? She can’t be too old since they haven’t been gone for too many years. Well, too many years to be away from their family, but-

Snow’s ramblings are interrupted when Zelena answers, “Yes, and this is our daughter Kelly.”

“She’s beautiful.” Snow gives a genuine smile that Zelena reciprocates.

“Mommy, who dat?” Tommy asks, drawing attention back to him.

Snow turns and smiles at her grandson. I don’t even know his name, she thinks as Regina answers, “That’s your grandmother, Thomas.” Thomas she thinks with a smile, what a beautiful name.

“Gwama?” he asks as he looks at Snow.

She smiles again and says, “Hello Thomas.”

He smiles shyly and says a quick “hi” before hiding his face in Regina’s neck.

Regina chuckles as Emma comes up next to them and pokes Tommy’s side. He giggles and pops up, “Momma!” She holds her arms out and Tommy hops into them, giggling as she spins him in a circle.

“Emma.” Regina chides, “Do not rile him up, he needs to sleep.”

Emma immediately stops and holds her arms out in front of her, putting Tommy away from her body and letting him dangle in the air. She raises an eyebrow and says, “You gonna sleep, Tommy?”

He shakes his head and giggles.

“Whaaaaat?!” she exclaims and she throws him up in the air. He giggles again. Emma holds him out in the same manner and says in a mock stern voice, “You will go to sleep, young man.” He giggles again and shakes his head. Emma gasps and sets him on the floor, leaning to fake-whisper, “You’re making me look bad in front of my mom, Bud.”

“Yowa Mom?”

Emma nods and turns him to face Snow, who smiles again. Her heart is soaring at hearing Emma call her mom. “That’s my mom.”

“Gwama?” he questions as he looks to Regina who nods with a smile.

“Yeah bud. I guess so,” Emma chuckles. She turns Tommy back to face her and lowers her voice an octave, “You will sleep, son.”
Tommy giggles again and says, “You siwwy Momma.”

“Yes she is,” Regina says as she moves forward and takes Tommy’s hand. She turns to Snow and says, “As fun as this is, we really need to rest before we take on whatever evil you’ve decided to bring upon yourselves.”

Snow smiles at Regina’s snark, I’ve missed her, she thinks as she moves forward, “Of course,” she says with a smile. “Follow me and I will show you all to your quarters.”

“Mommy?” Tommy asks as he pulls on Regina’s hand.

She stops and looks down at him, “Sí, Querido?”

“Dis a castle?”

“Sí,” she nods.

Henry walks forward and kneels down next to Tommy. He waits until Tommy looks at him to say, “Hermanito, nuestras madres son realezas.”

“¿Qué?” Tommy asks as he tilts his head, waiting for his big brother to explain.

“Mami” he points to Regina, “es una reína.”

Tommy’s eyes bulge; he points to Emma and asks, “¿Y Mama es una dama?”

Henry nods and continues, “Sí, Mama lucha contra dragones y también es una princesa”

“Noooo!” Tommy exclaims with raised eyebrows. Henry chuckles and nods.

Snow watches the interaction with a smile. She remembers being Henry’s age and Regina trying to teach her Spanish. It was right after her father’s wedding and he had wanted them to bond. She never quite caught on to it, but she understood enough to know what Henry was telling Tommy. She smiles at her grandsons and then continues up the stairs.

She walks and stops in front of a set of doors, “These are your chambers. I will leave you to get settled and rest, and we will talk more in the morning.” She smiles and once more and walks down the corridor.

Emma couldn’t sleep. She tried, she really did, but she could not turn her brain off long enough to rest. She looks at her wife laying next to her, sleeping peacefully. I’m jealous, she thinks, she’s sleeping like nothing is wrong, and damn she’s so beautiful. How did I get so lucky? Focus Swan! She berates herself for becoming distracted. She rolls to her back and stares at the ceiling. Alright, let’s do this. I am in a bed, staring at the ceiling of a castle - my parents castle - in the Enchanted Forest. I’m Emma Swan, Savior, Princess, and daughter to this world’s power-couple. Shit! My parents are like the Brangelina of the Enchanted Forest. She throws her arm over her eyes, blocking out the nonexistent light, but it doesn’t block out her thoughts. I’m getting distracted from my original distractions. Dammit. Maybe I should count sheep. Do they count sheep in this world? She throws her arms down by her sides as she contemplates this new development in her rambles. Maybe they count dragons. Oh my god, I killed a dragon. Maleficent to be exact - who just happened to be my wife’s friend. What the hell kind of wife does that? I mean, granted we weren’t married at the time and I thought I had to do it to save Henry, but still! UGH! Why is everything so fucking complicated? I just can’t-
“Stop thinking so hard, darling,” Regina’s sleepy mumblings cut in to Emma’s internal rant, “I can feel your brain working in overdrive, and I wouldn’t want you to pull a muscle or anything.”

Emma turns to see Regina lazily smirking at her. She rolls her eyes at her wife’s attempt at levity. “Is that a subtle way you point out my idiotness?”

Regina scoots over closer to Emma and rests her head next to Emma’s on her pillow, “I’m not very good at being subtle, dear.” She kisses Emma’s cheek and moves her head to rest on Emma’s right shoulder. She feels a chuckle reverberate through Emma as she leans down to kiss the top of Regina’s head.

“Don’t I know it, babe.”

Regina smiles even though she knows Emma can’t see it, “Do you want to talk about what you were thinking so hard about?”

Emma turns her head to look back up at the ceiling. She’s silent for so long, Regina assumes she’s fallen asleep but then she blurts, “Did you count sheep when you were little or did you count dragons or some other crazy ass creature from this world?”

Regina lifts her head to look at Emma’s face. When she sees only honest curiosity, she bursts out laughing, “Is that really what you were thinking so hard about?” she asks between giggles.

Emma gives a smile, _God she has a wonderful laugh._ She shakes her head and answers, “Well, not initially, but it did come up.”

Regina shakes her head before placing her head back down on Emma’s chest, “You were rambling in your thoughts again weren’t you?”

“Yup.” Emma answers as she accents the “p” with a pop.

Regina just shakes her head and then moves back up to rest on the pillow next to Emma’s. Emma turns her head to the right to look at her wife and they’re so close their noses’ gently brush against each other with the movement. Regina smiles and runs a hand along Emma’s cheek before letting it rest against her ribcage. “I never counted sheep when I was younger. Dragons either,” she adds with a small chuckle. “If I had trouble falling asleep, I would sneak into the kitchens and warm some milk. My governess used to do it when I was very young and I guess I continued believing in it even after she was let go.”

Emma looks into dark brown eyes and whispers, “I never knew you had a governess.”

Regina gives a wry smile, “Yes, when mother still found it acceptable for someone to take care of me.” She pauses and then dryly adds, “Well, Mother certainly didn’t care for me herself.”

Emma offers Regina a look. Unimpressed with the sarcasm. “Was she nice?”

“She was.”

“What was she like?” Emma whispers, not wanting to disturb the tranquility the darkness provided.

“She was nice,” Regina replies with a smirk.

This causes Emma to roll her eyes and wrap her arms around Regina, squeezing her tight enough to elicit a grunt.
“Too tight Emma,” Regina groans.

Emma chuckles, but releases her tight hold on her wife. She shifts back into her previous position of laying on her back with her right arm securely around Regina’s back, reaching around to rest it on her hip. Regina is lying on her side and lets out a sigh as she rests her head on Emma’s shoulder again. She brings her hand back up to Emma’s stomach and starts drawing random patterns on the skin exposed between her tank top and shorts. Emma again breaks the quiet of the night by whispering, “Will you tell me about her?”

Regina is silent. Silent enough that Emma thinks she has fallen asleep when she says, “Her name was Tatiana.” Emma smiles at the wistfulness in Regina’s voice, but remains silent, waiting for her to continue. “She was wonderful. She had this platinum blonde hair that went down to her knees. She always had it styled in the most intricate and beautiful coiffures. She’s actually the reason my hair was so well taken care of. She used to brush my hair all the time and I learned to love styling my hair and Zelena’s from the very beginning.” Emma smiles at the happiness in Regina’s voice; she can tell Regina is smiling at the memory. “She was very beautiful. Her eyes were a shocking blue-gray and she was always smiling. She had flawless skin that was so pale. I can remember my mother’s early lessons on how my skin needed to be fairer in order for me to be a good queen—“ Emma scoffs, interrupting Regina’s story. Regina lifts her head to see Emma looking sheepish. With an unimpressed look she continued, “I know now that that is not true. However, Child-Me believed my mother hung the moon and that she always spoke the truth. So, when I noticed Tatiana had fair skin I wanted to be like her even more. I remember she used to give wonderful hugs. She used to pick me up and twirl me around or just sit with me on her lap when she would braid my hair and then hug me. Sometimes, she would sit with me and watch the colors outside. I loved the colors,” Regina says with a content sigh. Emma can’t help but smile at how excited Regina sounds to be talking about such a happy memory from her childhood. Regina continues, “She was my governess from the day I was born until I was five. I guess - now that all of my memories are back - she was with our family when I was born because she was Zelena’s governess as well. Now that I know this I remember it differently. For the longest time I thought that the reason Tatiana was let go was because Mother thought she was coddling me, which is a little true, but I guess Mother took all of my memories of her when she took away my memories of Zelena. I did not remember Tatiana until I remembered Zelena and our shared childhood.” Emma’s smile fades a little when she realizes just how few happy memories Regina has from childhood. She’s angry that Cora would take away something like this away from Regina but when Regina smiles up at her, her smile is put firmly back in place.

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

Regina is running through the meadow with Zelena and Tatiana. It’s a beautiful day, the first day of warm weather since the snow melted and the ground thawed and turned from mud to grass. The girls had been bouncing in their seats during their lessons. So afterwards, Tatiana said that they needed to run some of their energy out before dinner.

Regina felt that she had never been happier. Granted, she was five and in any given moment she was feeling an extreme emotion, but she knew that this was a special memory. Zelena runs up next to her, poking her shoulder and says, “Gotcha Sissy!”

They chase each other until they both fall to the ground in a fit of giggles and start to roll down the small hill.

“Girls!” They hear Tatiana yell to them.

They jump up and Regina runs towards her, “Tati! Tati! Did you see us?”
Tatiana laughs as she lifts Regina up and swings her in a circle, causing the dark haired child to giggle, before resting her on her hip. “I did, Princess, I did!”

Regina giggles again, “You’re silly Tati!”

Tatiana pokes her belly, eliciting more giggles, “And you are an angel, Miss Regina.” She winks and walks to where Zelena is still lying on the ground, staring at the sky. “Miss Zelena, what are we looking at today?”

“Look Tati! The clouds!” Zelena says as she points to the sky.

Tatiana puts a hand to her eyes to look up towards the sun and notices how big the clouds are, “I see Zellie! Are we going to spend some time finding pictures in the sky?”

“Yes!” Both girls scream. Regina squirms in Tatiana’s arms until she sets her down. She immediately runs over and lies opposite of Zelena, their heads next to each other and their bodies going in opposite directions.

Tatiana smiles at the girls and goes to lay next to them, her head coming to rest near theirs and her feet going away from them. “What do you see girls?”

“A horse!” They both squeal and point toward the sky.

Tatiana giggles and says, “Do we have a story for it today?”

Both girls turn their attention to their governess who is now sitting cross-legged facing them. They look to each other and give a smile before scrambling to a sitting position and weaving a tale about the horse in the sky.

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

Regina smiles at the memory, “She used to have us create stories about everything. From pictures in the clouds, to a random villager we would see on our “adventures”, to the toad near the creek, everything had a story to her and she always made sure we knew it and appreciated what was around us - even if some of our stories were quite…interesting.”

“She sounds wonderful,” Emma says quietly when she’s sure Regina has finished her story.

“She was,” Regina whispers as she snuggles further into Emma’s chest.

Emma kisses the top of her wife’s head but before she can comment further there’s movement at the foot of their bed. Both women glance down to see a head of blonde hair flop onto the bed and start crawling towards them. “Kid needs to work on his stealth,” Emma whispers in Regina’s ear.

Regina pokes Emma’s stomach and says, “He’s three Emma.”

“Mommy?” he whispers loudly as he crawls in between his mothers and flops his head onto Regina’s stomach and flings his arm over Emma.

“Querido,” she whispers, “you should be sleeping. The sun is still sleeping.”

Tommy groans, “But Mommy!” he whines, “We needs to explore!”

“No. We are not going to explore this morning, Momma, your Aunt Zelena, and I have work to do. Perhaps Henry can take you later, but right now we need to sleep.”
“Ugh!” Tommy buries his face in Regina’s stomach, “Not tired,” he adds with a yawn.

“Mhmm,” Regina enunciates with an eye roll as she sees Tommy shut his eyes. There was not even a minute of silence before Evy woke up. Tommy immediately opens his eyes and asks, “Up now?”

“Stay with your mother,” Regina says as she gets up to grab her daughter.

“Momma,” Tommy whines.

“Tommy,” Emma whines back as she wraps Tommy in her arms, laying him on her chest. Regina walks back over with a content Evelyn in her arms, “I swear I have five children,” she says with an eye roll.

The four of them lay in the bed until they are joined by Henry soon after. When he walks in he stops and picks up Charlotte to join them. The family lays in bed listening to Regina tell stories about the Enchanted Forest, allowing the young ones to drift in and out of sleep. This continues until Zelena, Robin, Roland, and Kelly enter the room, “Ahh, are we being bums this morning?” Zelena asks.

“Good morning to you too, you ornery ray of sunshine,” Emma grumbles as she rubs her eyes. Zelena chuckles and indicates the doorway with her hand, “Are we not supposed to save the world today?”

“Mmmmm, maybe later,” Emma mutters, “I need breakfast.”

“Me too!” Tommy squeals as he hops off the bed and runs to the door. “Come on, come on!!” he says jumping up and down.

Emma grumbles again and mutters, “Definitely not my kid. I swear.” Everyone laughs as she rolls out of bed and takes a sleeping Charlotte from Henry’s arms. She releases a grunt of discontent as she resituates to fall back asleep, “Now this one’s mine,” Emma says as she walks to the door.

Regina rolls her eyes, but does not comment as she gets up from the bed. She flicks her wrist, changing her outfit and fixing her hair, all while not disturbing Evelyn - who’s still fast asleep in her arms. “I’ve still got it,” she says smugly.

The adults and Henry collectively roll their eyes, while Roland, Kelly, and Tommy gasp in awe, “Whoa, Mommy,” Tommy says.

Regina chuckles and says, “Come along. After breakfast perhaps I’ll show some more tricks.”

They three take off out the door. Henry groans and says, “I’ll make sure they make it to the dining hall.”

The four adults mutter their thanks and head to the dining hall at a much slower pace, none of them quite ready to face the reality of why they’re here in the first place. After a few moments of silent walking, they stand in front of the dining hall where they can hear children laughing. Emma takes a few deep breaths, takes Regina’s hand, and heads in to see her family.
Soooooooo, I really wanted to bring Charming into this chapter and have Emma's talk with her parents, but the characters weren't having it. Until next time, Lovelies.
Happy Once Day!
-IrishBella
Geborgenheit

Chapter Summary

geborgenheit:
(n.) to feel completely safe, like nothing could ever harm you: security, comfort, trust, satisfaction, acceptance, and love from others

Chapter Notes

Hello Lovelies!
I actually had the bulk of this chapter written for most of the week, but the editing process took a bit longer than usual because I decided to write a lot of it at an ungodly hour and I happened to fall asleep while still writing, so none of that section made any sense and I had to re-write it, but it's here now!

All mistakes are my own.

Enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

She pushes the door open and the muffled noise becomes much louder. She blinks to clear away the sudden onslaught of sunshine. The dining hall windows were uncovered, allowing sunshine to stream in and across the floor. Her grip tightens around Regina’s free hand as she steps in the room, pulling her wife with her. She instinctually tucks a still-sleeping Charlotte closer to her body and notices that Regina does the same with Evelyn.

Zelena and Robin are right behind them, clinging to the other’s hand while studying the room they step into.

Emma slowly looks around and notices the room is full of people. She doesn’t allow her gaze to linger on the adults and instead turns to the children chasing each other in the far corner. Which ones are my siblings? Whoa, this is so weird. I don’t even know my own siblings. Oh god, Henry is older than his aunts/uncles. Tommy could be older than his aunts/uncles. Oh my god. WEIRD!! I wonder who all these other kids are. They’re not all my siblings are they? Oh no, there’s no way my parents could have this many kids, could they? No, Emma. You’re being ridiculous now, there’s no way someone could pop that many kids out in such a short amount of time. That’s just ridic-

“REGINA?!” Emma glances in the general direction that the scream came from and sees another blonde running towards them. She looks over and sees her wife just as startled by the outburst and quickly bounces side to side to calm a suddenly screaming Evelyn. “Oh my gosh! REGINA! You’re back!!” Kathryn squeals as she stops directly in front of Regina. She reaches out to wrap Regina in a hug but immediately stops when she notices the screaming infant in her arms, “and you
have a baby?” Kathryn asks in a much more subdued tone, her eyes light up at her brunette friend who is quietly cooing to the fussing baby in her arms. Kathryn takes a minute to actually study her friend and notices her free hand is still securely in Emma’s grasp; the same Emma that is holding a baby and rocking in a similar fashion to Regina. Neither notices that their hands are still connected, but they are rocking and bouncing their babies in sync so as to keep their connection. “Twins?” Kathryn squeaks out.

Regina lifts her eyes to look at her blonde friend. She nods and smiles warmly. Kathryn squeals again and is practically bouncing up and down with excitement, causing Regina to chuckle and roll her eyes and her friend’s enthusiasm.

“I haven’t seen you in years and suddenly you show up and with babies?!” Kathryn draws out the “s” and motions with her hands between Emma and Regina. “Don’t judge me, dear, I’m excited! And now I’m going to hug you, okay? I’m not taking no for an answer.”

Regina just laughs again and removes her hand from Emma’s to hug her friend back.

Kathryn immediately pulls back when she feels an infant squirming between them. She smiles down at the baby and says, “That was surprisingly easy, considering how your mom usually is with affection” she coos and runs a finger along Evy’s cheek.

Regina rolls her eyes again and says, “Har Har,” she says dryly, “It’s good to see you again Kathryn. I take it you’ve been well?” She picks up her bounce/rock pattern to keep Evelyn content.

“Oh Regina!” Kathryn exclaims, “We have so much to catch up on!” She enunciates this with a nod toward the smiling baby in her arms.

“Of course dear,” Regina says with a smile.

“But first, breakfast,” Emma jumps in with a small nudge to her wife.

Regina affectionately rolls her eyes, “Oh of course darling, wouldn’t want to forget that. Come along then, let’s get you some food.”

Emma smiles and leans in to kiss Regina’s cheek, “You visit. I’ll handle the monsters.”

Regina pauses and looks at her wife, “Are you sure?”

Before Emma can answer, Zelena steps forward and holds her arms out for Evelyn, “Oh for the love of everything, you two are absolutely disgusting with your sweetness, give me my darling niece and go visit.” She looks over to Kathryn and gives a nod of acknowledgement, “Kathryn.”

Kathryn looks startled for a moment but quickly recovers and says, “Hello Zelena.”

Emma laughs at the shocked blonde before she covers again and says, “I’ll catch ya later Kat,” as she walks away.

“You better, Em.” Kathryn says with a laugh and sends a wink to her brunette friend. She chuckles at Regina’s expression and says, “Come along dear, I believe that was our cue to catch up.”

Before Kathryn can take Regina over to the table, she sees a small blonde boy latches onto her leg. “Mommy! I goed explorin’!”

“You did?!” Regina asks excitedly as she lifts Tommy up on to her hip. “And what did you find when you went exploring?”
“A knight in a suit. Henny says it wike Momma.”

“Really? It sounds like you had fun.”

Tommy nods his head enthusiastically, “Henny says we go agained afta we eat.”

“Well then, I think you should go over by Momma and get some breakfast.”

“You no come?” Tommy tilted his head.

“No, Querido. I’m going to go visit with my friend Kathryn here.” She motions toward Kathryn who waves at the little boy.

He kicks his feet and wiggles around, a sign that he wants to be put down. Regina smiles and sets him down. He immediately faces Kathryn and puts out his hand, “I’m Tommy.”

Kathryn raises her eyebrows and gives a smile, “Well hello Tommy. I’m Kathryn.” She shakes his small and her smile grows when he lets out a giggle.

“Mommy doesn’t like it when Momma calls me Tommy,” he giggles again and motions for the blonde to move closer. Kathryn raises an eyebrow again, but obliges and bends over so her head is at a height that Tommy can reach. He grabs her cheeks and pulls her closer to “whisper” in her ear, “So you shou’ say Thomas when Mommy heya.”

Kathryn laughs and pulls away to look at the little boy. She pokes his belly and says, “You certainly act just like your Momma. But I’ll be sure to call you Thomas when your Mommy is with me,” she adds with a wink.

“Good,” he nods and turns to Regina who quickly covers her laughter with a mock stern look. Tommy smiles innocently and motions for her to come closer. She laughs at her son’s antics but accommodates and bends over only for Tommy to wrap his arms tightly around her neck. She grunts but wraps her arms around him and lifts him into her arms. “I wuv you Mommy,” he whispers into her hair.

“I love you too, Querido.” She kisses his temple and sets him down saying, “Now go get some breakfast so you can go exploring again.” She doesn’t get a response as her son is already running to his blonde mother and the rest of their family at the table.

“Regina!” Kathryn squeals, causing Regina to snap her head towards her blonde friend. Kathryn quickly loops her arm through Regina’s and pulls her in the other direction, “He is adorable! My goodness, oh! How is Henry? Where is Henry? And I want to hear all about those beautiful babies you were holding earlier. And Zelena, when you did you two become all buddy-buddy? And how’s Robin? And Roland? Is that little girl theirs too?”

“Breathe, Kathryn,” Regina says with a chuckle as she pulls her friend closer to her, effectively stopping her from leaving the dining hall. “Henry is great, he’s over standing next to Emma right now.”

Kathryn’s jaw drops as she looks over to Emma, “That’s Henry ?” Regina chuckles and nods, “Oh gosh! He got so big!”

Regina nods again, “Yes, unfortunately my children have this idea in their heads that it is alright for them to grow up,” she huffs with a smile.

“Regina! Did you just try to make a joke? My, my, my, things certainly have changed! But we’ll
talk about that and a certain blonde I know is the reason for this change, but first, tell me about your babies!!"

Kathryn is squealing again. Regina rolls her eyes but indulges her since they haven’t seen each other in years. “Alright, alright, settle down. Henry is doing wonderfully. He enjoys the other world so much. He’s excelling at school, obviously,” she adds with a smirk, causing Kathryn to laugh out loud. “He’s officially a teenager and is always ready to remind Emma and I of this fact when he believes we are hovering.” She laughs and moves on to her next “baby”. “Thomas is three and the sweetest and most caring soul I have ever met. He definitely takes after Emma in how considerate he is of other’s emotions and he’s quick to smile and give out hugs. And he loves to “save people”.” She uses finger quotes and laughs at Kathryn’s expression. “He pretends he is Batman or he will dress up like a police officer and rescue things around the house.”

“He’s precious Regina.”

Regina smiles and nods as she continues, “And you wanted to know about my littlest babies?” she asks with a smirk as Kathryn nods enthusiastically. “Well, their names are Evelyn and Charlotte and they are three months old.”

“Gosh Regina! I can’t handle all of this! I can’t believe you were away for four years! And look at all you’ve accomplished! You kids are perfect!”

Regina smiles at her friend, “I’m very lucky,” she says with nod, “and honestly I cannot believe we were away for four years either. I assumed that we would have been brought back within days, if not hours, of our departure.”

Kathryn throws her head back and lets out a laugh. “It’s not like we didn’t want you here, dear. I know Snow tried to bring you all back the minute you stepped through that door, but David kept her distracted with fixing up the castle and with the babies.”

Regina nods, “Well, either way, once our memories were back we knew we couldn’t stay away. We had to come back and make sure everyone was alright.” She pauses to see if Kathryn was going to explain why they were “summoned” but all she received was silence. She sighs and moves on, “So, we started searching for the entrance and once it was found we came.”

Kathryn nods and then asks, “So, you really lost your memories?”

Regina nods, “We had no memory of any of this.”

“Really? What did you know then?”

“Well, that’s a lot,” Regina says dryly. “We knew that we were in love, so we immediately got married-“

“You’re married?” Kathryn squeals. She immediately reaches out and grabs Regina’s left hand to look at her ring, “It’s beautiful,” she whispers.

Regina chuckles at her friend and says, “Yes, Emma did a wonderful job. So, we got married and started fertility treatments and had Thomas.”

“You can call him Tommy,” Kathryn interrupts.

“Pardon?” Regina asks.

“I know you want to call him Tommy. I promise not to tell your wife,” she adds with a smirk.
Regina rolls her eyes but concedes, “Very well. We had Tommy. We already had our lives set up by then. Emma works with the police department and I work as a human rights lawyer.”

Kathryn whistles, “Fancy lady,” she draws out with a wink.

Regina can’t help but shake her head at her friend’s antics. “And you Kathryn? How have you been?”

“Well, my life has not been quite as interesting as yours but I, too, expanded my family.” She motions to the cluster of children that has moved to the table for breakfast.

“There’s Daniel right there,” she motions to a small blonde boy trying to swipe a roll from an older brunette.

When the curse was initially broken Kathryn and Frederick were reunited and quickly remembered they had just found out they were expecting before the Dark Curse washed over the land. Kathryn could not believe at how much had changed in those 28 years. She had never been particularly close to Regina in the old world. Granted nobody was, but the only problem she had with her was that she was constantly attacking Snow White, who became her friend by default through David. However, she and Regina had become friends during the Dark Curse. Regina liked Kathryn. She had always thought of Abigail as nothing but an airhead in the Enchanted Forest, but Kathryn was the one person that broke down the Mayor’s walls and became a close confidant. As soon as they were back in the Enchanted Forest, Kathryn sought out Regina to inform her that she was not upset and that she wanted to continue their friendship. Regina was initially shocked because honestly, who wants to be friends with the Evil Queen? But Kathryn would have none of it. They even spent their evenings talking about everything from their old lives as well as their cursed lives. One night, after a few too many drinks, Regina revealed the story of Daniel and Kathryn immediately knew if she were to have a son, she would want to name him after such an important man. When she broached the idea to Regina when her son was born, Regina was so overwhelmed she actually initiated a hug - this was the first time that had ever happened.

Regina gasps and turns to Kathryn, “He’s so much bigger than when I last saw him.”

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“Regina?” Kathryn calls out as her head lolls back against the pillow, exhaustion lacing her voice.

“Hello Kathryn. I was told you were calling for me?”

“Yes, I want you to meet someone,” Kathryn says with a smile. She looks down at the baby swaddled in her arms and her smile grows. “Come over here?” She phrases it as a question because she knows how much Regina hates feeling forced to do something.

Regina smiles at the sight of mother and baby and takes a few steps into the room, stopping next to Kathryn’s bed.

“Would you like to hold him?” Kathryn asks.

“Oh, I don’t know, Kathryn,” Regina starts but is cut off by Kathryn.

“Please?”

Regina pauses and then nods at her blonde friend. Kathryn smiles weakly and hands over her beautiful baby. Regina carefully wraps him in her arms and smiles, immediately in love. “Hello, Little One,” she coos.
Kathryn smiles as Frederick moves to her other side, kissing her forehead. “Regina?” Kathryn whispers.

Regina looks up from the baby, her finger still tightly in his grasp, “Yes?”

“I have something to ask you.”

Regina waits for her to continue but when Kathryn merely looks at her, she raises an eyebrow and says, “Are you going to ask or do I have to guess?”

Kathryn smiles and says, “I want to ask you about a name.”

This causes both of Regina’s eyebrows to lift, “Before the naming ceremony?” Kathryn nods and Regina asks, “You want my opinion?” in clear disbelief.

Kathryn smiles, “Regina. We are friends - best friends - when are you going to get it through that thick skull of yours?” Regina chuckles, causing Kathryn’s smile to soften as she adds, “but that’s not what I want to ask. I want your permission.”

“Permission for what?” Regina asks, clearly confused.

So dense, Kathryn thinks, guess I’ll have to spell this out for her. “I want your permission before I name him.”

“Me?” She asks as she looks down at the baby in her arms, a smile upon her face.

“Yes,” Kathryn says as she looks at her best friend holding her baby, her husband by her side. She thinks her heart has never felt so full. Her smile widens at the feeling but then her heart sinks with the fear that Regina will reject her idea. “We want to name him Daniel,” she whispers quickly and quietly.

Regina freezes and quickly looks up from the baby to her best friend’s blue eyes. “What?” she whispers in disbelief. Clearly she had heard wrong, Kathryn certainly wouldn’t want to name him after her lost love, right?

Kathryn nods and gives a soft smile, “He was very important to you, and that makes him important to me. Without him, none of this would have happened. And I believe that that deserves recognition, yes?” Kathryn ends in a question because now she doubts her initial thoughts. Maybe this was a bad idea. She looks up to see Regina with tears in her eyes, a very bad idea.

But Regina is smiling and looks down at the sleeping baby in her arms. “I think Daniel would be honored.”

Kathryn smiles with happiness and relief, she and Frederick hadn’t thought of any other names if Regina had said no. “Are you okay with it?” Kathryn asks tentatively.

Regina looks up at her friend and gives her a genuine smile, “Yes dear, I think it’s a wonderful idea. No one has ever done something so wonderful and thoughtful for me. Thank you.”

“Of course, Regina! You’re the most important friend I have and that’s why we want you to be Daniel’s Godmother.”

Again, Regina is caught off guard and snaps her head up to look at her friend, “Pardon?”

“We decided to keep that tradition from the other world, it’s important to us, and who better to
trust our child with than my best friend, who just happens to previously be one of the most feared women in history." Kathryn smirks at her own joke.

Regina rolls her eyes. There are not many people she would allow to say something like that, but Kathryn makes that very short list, so she simply smirks and says, “Ah, so I will become more of a personal bodyguard for your child.”

“Essentially,” Kathryn quips back.

Regina laughs and looks down at the baby in her arms, Daniel. She can’t help the smile that makes it way to her face. She’s so happy. She’s happy for her friend - her best friend - who’s starting her family and who wants her to be a part of her baby’s life but also wants to name her son after her first love. “Thank you,” she whispers, glancing up at Kathryn with tears in her eyes.

Kathryn opens her arms and Regina hands her Daniel.

Before she leaves she wraps her arms around Kathryn, shocking her. Regina was never one to initiate contact with others, unless it was Henry, but she wrapped Kathryn in tight hug and whispered, “Thank you,” again into her hair. She pulls back and adjusts her outfit and brushes her hair away, a coping mechanism to fight her emotions and keep them locked away, she gives a final smile and says, "Let me know if you need anything else."

“Come back and visit us soon,” Kathryn calls with a smile as her friend leaves the room.

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“Yes, you’re children aren’t the only ones who insist on growing up,” Kathryn says with a chuckle. “And he has definitely been missing his Godmother lately.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “I highly doubt he even remembers me dear. He was only an infant when I left.”

“You may have lost your memories, but we all remembered you, and we tell Daniel all about his Fairy Godmother,” she adds with a smirk.

Regina glares at Kathryn, “You didn’t.” She shudders to think she is in any way similar to the blue moth.

“Oh, but I did.” Kathryn smirks again and then turns back to the table. “And there’s Abigail and Ashley, causing trouble as usual.”

Regina looks to see two blondes crawling under the table, tickling legs. She smiles and asks, “Both yours?”

Kathryn shakes her head, “Abigail is, but Ashley belongs to Ella and Thomas.”

“I see,” Regina muses.

“Yes, I prefer to go by my name given to me in the curse, but Abigail was an important name, so I gave it to my daughter and Ella chose to go back to her given name, before the curse. She thought that Alexandra would need a strong partner in crime and so she named her daughter Ashley.”

Regina smiles softly but doesn’t say anything. Kathryn continues, “We were pregnant at the same time and we knew that our daughters would become fast friends. And boy did they ever! They’re constantly causing trouble.”
Regina gives a sly smile and says, “I see the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

Kathryn gasps and throws a hand over her heart. “I’m appalled at that insinuation.”

Regina laughs and says, “Oh please, Kathryn, I may not have known you personally here in the Enchanted Forest but I certainly heard stories about Midas’ daughter.”

“All lies.”

“Mhmm,” Regina mutters, unconvinced.

Kathryn grabs Regina’s hand, making sure she has her undivided attention before she says, “I hope you know that no one here blames you. Not anymore.” Regina raises both of her eyebrows in shock but Kathryn just chuckles, “Oh please, your face is easier to read than a book, Regina.” Regina doesn’t say anything, so Kathryn squeezes her hand and says, “I truly am happy you found happiness, but I missed you, my friend.”

“As soon as I had my memories back, I knew I missed you. I had hoped you would be here so we could catch up. You always knew what to say, I didn’t know what I was missing until my memories were back.”

Kathryn smiles at the compliment. “How was that?” she asks, “The whole ‘not remembering thing’? Was it rough?”

“Well, not remembering was not hard, but getting our memories back and realizing what we were missing? That was hard. Is hard.”

“Do you have friends there?” Kathryn asks innocently.

Regina sees through the act and says, “None like you Kathryn.” She smirks and shakes her head fondly.

Kathryn laughs and says, “I wasn’t fishing for compliments Regina, I am honestly curious.”

“I have acquaintances there, yes. I am close with parents in Tommy’s Parent-And-Me class, but truly, none quite like you dear. Honestly, I have never been much of a people person.”

Kathryn throws a hand over her face dramatically and pretends to swoon, “Gosh, Regina, you sure know how to make a girl feel special.”

Regina lightly shoves her and says, “Oh stop it.”

“Are you two behaving over here?” A voice calls from behind them.

“Absolutely not,” Kathryn says with a smirk.

“Hello Frederick,” Regina says with a smile.

She jumps when Kathryn’s husband wraps her in a hug. “Hello Regina. Welcome back.”

Regina gives a small smile and says “Th-thank you.”

“I see you’re scaring my wife, Fred,” Emma says as she stops next to Regina and wraps an arm around her waist.

Frederick smiles at Emma and says, “I don’t think it’s fear, just shock, Em.”
Emma just smiles and turns her head to look at her wife, “Breakfast? I think you should eat something before we decide on our next step.”

Regina nods and starts to move when Kathryn touches her arm, “Talk later?”

“Of course. We have much more to catch up on,” Regina says with a smile.

“I’ll hold you to that,” Kathryn says with a smile as she and Frederick turn away and make their way to where the children have congregated after breakfast.

Regina smiles as Emma turns her toward the table.

Once seated with a plate in front of her, she looks across the table and Zelena and Robin both holding one of her daughters. She smiles and Zelena asks, “When are we saving the day?” She laughs and adds, “Who would have thought the Evil Queen and the Wicked Witch would be the ones saving the day?”

Regina laughs with her sister, but before she can answer she hears a voice call, “Emma?”

Emma lifts her head and sees her father standing in the doorway. She stands up and is immediately wrapped up in her father’s arms. She tenses for less than a second before she relaxes into his arms. Her heart warms when she feels him rest his hand on the back of her head. She takes a deep breath, and realizes just how much she had missed this. Her dad always made her feel safe when she was in his arms, always protected. She goes to pull back but it stuck in place, David squeezing her tighter. “Dad,” she mumbles as she pats his back, trying to signal that their hug is over.

“I hope you’re not trying to suffocate my wife, Charming.” Regina drawls as she stands from the table.

David reluctantly lets Emma go and steps back to look at her. Before Regina has time to respond, she finds herself wrapped up in one of David’s famous bear hugs. It does not go on as long as Emma’s did, but when he releases her, Regina is frozen in shock.

Emma laughs and goes to put an arm around her wife’s waist, “I think you broke her Dad,” she says with a chuckle.

“That was not my intention, Em. I’m just so glad you’re both back, and safe. I saw Henry this morning and met Tommy, but I’d like to meet my granddaughters now.”

Emma smiles and motions over to where Zelena and Robin are holding the babies. “Zelena’s holding Lottie and Robin’s got Evy.”

Introductions are made and Snow and David meet their grandchildren when Emma gets to meet her little siblings.

Regina can tell that Emma is nervous. After her initial shock over David’s greeting, she’s focused on making sure her children are safe, her sister is not causing too many problems, and her wife does not lose her mind. “Emma, are you alright?”

Emma nods distractedly, looking at all of the kids playing at the other end of the room.

Regina steps into her line of sight and says, “I need you to breathe, darling. Everything is going to be fine, take a deep breath.”

Emma nods, this time keeping her eyes on Regina’s, allowing them to ground her. She smiles and
whispers, “Thanks.”

Regina winks and says, “Anytime,” causing Emma to chuckle.

“Emma?” Snow calls.

Emma turns around to face her mother, quickly reaching out to grab Regina’s hand. When it’s safely enclosed in her own, she moves toward her mother.

“Emma. This is Ruth and Leopold,” she says as she puts her hands on the kids’ shoulders, “and this here is Eva,” she points to a dark haired toddler running towards David.

Emma smiles tentatively at her siblings and notices Regina go rigid. She turns to quickly glance at her and sees her eyes have become glassy. “Regina?” Emma whispers as she tugs on her hand.

Regina snaps out of her trance and immediately looks up to Emma, putting on a tense smile. “Sorry dear, I believe Charlotte and Evelyn will be hungry soon. I’m going to go change them and then feed them. You stay here with the others. I won’t be long.” And with that, she was gone.

Emma was shocked, why did Regina run out of here so fast? Maybe she really felt the need to nurse? No. Maybe she just needed to get away from everyone for a while? I don’t blame her. Now let’s look at my siblings. Oh shit. My siblings. Weird…they’re the same age as my kids. What were their names again? Ruth, Leopold, and Eva? Weren’t those their parents’ names? Leopold and Eva were my Mom’s parents’ and Ruth was my Dad’s mom. Fuck! LEOPOLD? No wonder Regina freaked. That’s the man who forced her into a marriage and then hurt her, repeatedly. FUCK! “I gotta go,” she mumbles as she moves to the door Regina just walked through with their daughters.

“Emma?”

“I have to go check on Regina.”

“I’m sure she’s fine,” Snow says and she grabs onto Emma’s arm, “She told you to stay down here and visit.”

“If Dad had asked you to stay when he took off, would you? I didn’t think so,” she says as she starts to leave.

“Emma?” Snow calls.

“No, she needs me. I think hearing that name triggered something.”

“What name?” Snow asks clearly confused.

Emma quickly glances at Leopold and back up at Snow, but Snow doesn’t catch on. Emma sighs and says, “It probably has something to do with the fact that you used the name for someone who hurt her very deeply.”

“Regina didn’t even know my mother! Why would that affect her?”

Emma sighs again and says, “It’s not your mother.”

Snow looks at her and then her eyes light up with the answer but then confusion sets in once more, “But she’s the one that took him from me. That’s why she did it, she wanted to hurt me.”

Emma shakes her head, before Snow can continue, “No, she did that so she didn’t have to hurt
anymore. And no, I’m not going to say anymore, it’s not my story to tell.”

Emma turns toward the door once more and is gone. She runs up the stairs back to their chambers to find Regina sitting against the headboard, in the middle of the bed with a baby on each side of her.

“Gina?” she whispers, trying not to scare her wife.

Regina lifts her head, tears on her cheeks and sighs, “You were supposed to stay downstairs.”

Emma shrugs and says, “I didn’t listen.” She moves to sit on the bed next to her wife, moves Evy to the other side next to Lottie and wraps Regina in her arms, “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s not your fault dear, I’m sorry I overreacted.”

Before they can continue their conversation a small voice enters the room, “You’re Emma?”

Emma turns toward the door to see Leopold in the doorway. Her brother.

Oh great, she thinks as she stands up, this is exactly what I need. A nosy brother who reminds my wife of her abusive ex-husband. Fantastic. “Yeah kid?” she asks as she stops in front of him.

“My Emma?” he questions again, this time with a tilted head, giving off a thoughtful expression.

Emma gives him a quizzical look. “I’m not sure what that means, but if you mean that I’m your sister, then yes.”

“Mom and Dad talk about you a lot. You’re in all the bedtime stories.” The young boy gives a small smile and peeks around her to see her wife, “Regina?” he whispers quietly, waiting for the former queen to lift her head.

When she finally does, he moves forward slowly.

“I’m sorry if I upset you in any way. I didn't mean to. Is there anything I can do to make you feel better?” he asks with a gentle smile, genuinely concerned. Emma cannot believe how articulate he is for such a young boy. Must be the princely lessons, she thinks with an internal smirk. My little brother’s quite the charmer. Look at his little smile; it’s just like mine. Oh he’s totally going to make Regina melt - she’s a sucker for those puppy eyes. Well done little bro, well done. Emma smiles with pride at the little brother she just met.

Regina gives a small smile and shakes her head, “You have done nothing wrong dear, I was merely a little preoccupied.”

Leopold nods and moves closer to Regina. He looks her straight in the eye and rests a hand on her knee to say, “You can call me Leo if it helps,” and then he was walking out the door, stopping only to wrap his arms around Emma’s waist, “Hi Emma. I’m going to go back by Mom and Dad, but you should take care of Regina. I like her and she’s practically my sister,” he adds with a cheeky grin.

Emma chuckles as she rests her hand on her brother’s head. “Got it, kid. I’ll take good care of her,” she whispers with a fond smile. He takes off out the door, Emma still smiling, only to look up and see Regina staring oddly, “What?” she asks.

“That was strange,” Regina starts, “but I think that might help. Leo,” she says as she tries the name out, seeing how it sounds as it rolls off her tongue. She had never called Snow’s father anything but
Your Majesty, My King, or Sir; so maybe it wouldn’t be a bad thing to distance herself from the name and focus on creating/fixing her own family. She smiles up at Emma and says, “I’m sorry I left.”

“It’s okay,” Emma shrugs, “I know how hard it is for you to be back here.”

Regina smirks and says, “Well there are some perks.” She waves her hand and both her daughters’ diapers were changed.

“Giiiiiiiiinnnnnnaaa,” Emma whines, “you’ve been holding out on me! You have got to show me how to do that.”

Regina laughs at her wife and shakes her head fondly, “You should begin practicing your magic again, darling. Whoever we are fighting certainly won’t take pity on you because you’re a novice.”

“Consider me you’re magical battery, babe. Let me recharge you,” she adds with a wink.

“Emma,” Regina sighs, “you need to be able to control your own magic.”

Emma dramatically flops onto the bed at Regina’s feet and looks up to see her wife adjusting herself against the headboard to start nursing. “I know, babe, but it seems easier for you to just control it for me. Like in Neverland!”

Regina shakes her head, “Emma. I did not control your magic in Neverland, you did. I may have helped guide it to move the moon, but you were in control of your magic the entire time. It was you.”

Emma stares at Regina in confusion. She shakes her head to bring her back out of her memories of that hellhole and says, “Then you can guide my magic. Whatever way you phrase it, that’s what I want you to do.”

Regina shakes her head, “I don’t remember you ever being this lazy, dear.”

Emma sits up on her left elbow to look at Regina and throws a hand over her heart saying, “I am appalled babe, I am not lazy, I’m merely saying that you are a much better magic wielder than a mere novice like myself. So, in the interest of safety for our family and friends, you should take the lead.”

“Flattery will only get you so far, Emma.”

Emma raises an eyebrow in challenge, “And how far did it get me this time?”

Regina smiles and says, “Far enough for you to start you lessons after I feed our daughters. I suppose I can teach you instead of pawning you off to Zelena.”

Emma shudders, “I don’t think I want Z teaching me magic. She’d probably have some crazy techniques to bring forth my potential,” Emma mocks in a terrible accent.

A smirk forms on Regina’s face, “Yes, I’m sure my thoughts on how to jumpstart your magic are much more pleasurable than my sister’s.”

Emma groans and falls to her back, staring at the ceiling, “How do you do that? That was so hot.”

Regina smirks and says, “I’m glad you approve.”

“Most definitely babe, one hundred percent. When do we start?”
A chuckle leaves Regina’s mouth at her wife’s sudden eagerness to learn magic. She looks down at her daughters attached to her breasts, “As soon as they’re done feeding, dear.”

Emma groans again, “How am I supposed to wait when I know something amazing is going to happen?”

“Good things come to those who wait, Em-ma,” Regina says enunciating Emma’s name in a way that has the blonde practically panting.

“God Gina. You keep talking like that and I won’t be able to wait.”

“Are you two talking about sex?” Zelena asks walking into the room.

Emma groans and covers her eyes, “Not anymore Z.” She turns to look at Regina and declares, “It’s no longer just our children that are hell-bent on cockblocking us, now it’s your crazy sister too.”

“Play nice, you two,” Regina chides.

Zelena rolls her eyes and scoffs, “Are you sure I can’t have just a little fun, Gi?” She flicks her wrist and watches green sparks fly out of her fingertips.

“Positive.” Regina looks over to see Emma staring at her hands, “Emma?”

Emma shushes her, which earns her a raised eyebrow from her wife and a chuckle from her sister-in-law; both of which she misses because she is staring so hard at her hands. Finally, she lets out a sigh and throws her hands out to the sides on the bed.

Regina reaches out and grasps the hand that landed on her lap, careful not to jostle her nursing daughters too much. “Try again,” she encourages. Zelena opens her mouth to say something but a quick glare from Regina silences her and she merely watches as Emma brings her free hand back in front of her face. “Focus your emotions dear. Think about what you want to happen and allow your magic to do the rest.”

Emma closes her eyes and feels her magic in the center of her chest. She takes a deep breath and calls it forth just like she learned when they were in Neverland. She exhales and imagines in moving toward her hands. She sees the magic running down her arm almost like a golden string being pulled out of her. She imagines it flowing into her fingertips and creating a rainbow of sparks. She hears a gasp but she’s concentrating too hard to figure out what it meant.

A whispered, “Emma,” from her wife brings her out of her stupor.

Emma opens her eyes and looks at her hand, which had a miniature show of golden fireworks leaving her fingertips. Emma’s grin is contagious as she looks from her hand to Regina. Regina smiles back and Emma whispers, “I did it.” Her smile grows as Regina motions to the ceiling. Emma looks up to see the ceiling covered in what looked like stars. “I did that?” she questions.

Regina chuckles and nods her head.

Zelena scoffs, drawing attention to herself. She shrugs at the pointed look from Regina but looks to Emma and says, “So much potential. Wasted,” and she storms out of the room.

“Ignore her,” Regina says with an eye roll. “She’s just upset that you figured it out so quickly. She wanted to tease you some more.”
Emma smiles and crawls up next to Regina. “I’m sure she’ll have plenty more opportunities.” She looks up at the ceiling and repeats, “I did that?”

“You did,” Regina praises.

“You helped,” Emma assumes.

Regina shakes her head and says, “You did that all by yourself. I did not guide your magic in anyway.”

“Hmmm,” Emma muses as she lays her head on the pillow next to Regina’s hip. “This is so cool!” she squeals.

Regina laughs and moves her right hand to caress Emma’s hair, “You’re a child, dear.”

Emma leans up on her elbow to look at Regina and says, “I am not,” which was enunciated by her sticking her tongue out.

“Obviously,” Regina snarks with a raised eyebrow.

“Obviously,” Emma agrees. She falls back on her back and stares at the ceiling again. “Will it stay like that? Or will it go away?”

Regina smiles and hands Lottie to Emma. Emma immediately shifts to a sitting position, shoulder to shoulder with Regina, and lifts Lottie to her shoulder. Once Emma is situated, Regina leans her head against her shoulder and says, “It will probably stay for a while, but it will fade without a constant stream of magic.”

Emma rests her cheek on Regina’s head as she muses about this information. “What else do I have to work on?”

“Everything,” Regina deadpans.

Emma silently laughs and says, “Very helpful, Your Majesty; as always.” Emma glances down to see Regina smirking.

Regina sits up and lays Evy on her lap to adjust her shirt. When that’s taken care of, she gets off the bed and says, “Come along dear, let’s go find your family and save the day.”

“What about my jumpstart you promised me?” Emma pouts.

Regina smiles and asks, “Didn’t I already do that?” She points to the ceiling and says, “Looks like it worked.”

“What?! THAT was my reward?” Emma is practically whining.

Regina laughs and walks to the other side of the bed and bends over so her mouth is next to Emma’s ear. “I believe I can arrange for a better reward after we defeat whatever evil is currently plaguing this realm and we are back in our own home.”

Emma groans as Regina stands up straight again. “I don’t know babe, I think I might want to try some magic sex before we leave.”

Regina throws her head back and lets out a throaty chuckle. She lowers her head again to look at Emma still on the bed, “You couldn’t handle it, darling,” and she turns and walks out the door.
Emma throws her head back, knocking it against the headboard and growls. She looks down at Charlotte who is staring up at the stars on the ceiling. “What am I going to do Lottie? You’re Mommy will be the death of me.”

“Don’t dawdle, darling,” Regina calls from the hallway.

Emma groans and drags herself off the bed and walks to the door with Charlotte cradled in her arms.

Chapter End Notes

I’m hoping we can meet our villain in the next chapter but these characters do not usually follow my same thought process ;) anyway, there probably aren’t too many chapters left in this story. Thanks for sticking with me on this journey and have a happy rest of your day!
Much love,
-IrishBella
Qui vive

Chapter Summary

quoi vive:  
(n.) heightened awareness or watchfulness

Chapter Notes

Yay! Happy Update Day!! I had quite an epiphany when I woke up this morning. I've been facing some serious writer's block for this chapter and when I woke up this morning I knew what I wanted to write. IT'S A ONCE DAY MIRACLE! ;) Just kidding, if anything I need to give credit to the fanfic writers I was obsessing over along with their stories that I read before bed last night! Anyway, most of this was written on my phone, because I was too lazy to get up out of bed and grab my computer-so if there are more typos than usual I'll blame it on that.

Trigger Warning: mentions of child abuse and manipulation in the flashbacks of this chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

They make their way back to the dining hall to find more people have arrived. They are immediately greeted with a chorus of “Hello” and “Welcome Back” that they nod to. Regina and Emma are quickly separated as Ruby whisks Emma in one direction and Kathryn quickly pulls Regina in the other.

“Ems!!” Ruby squeals as she wraps the blonde in a tight hug.

“Hey Ruby,” Emma responds, hugging her friend back just as hard.

They spend the time catching up about their lives. Ruby immediately takes Lottie into her arms and coos at the content infant. Emma find outs Ruby and Billy have two daughters, Jade, who’s 3 and Jasmine, who’s 18 months. Emma also finds out that Jasmine is the same age as her little sister Eva and Emma can’t help but laugh at the two toddlers trying to keep up with the big kids.

Emma and Ruby continue to talk and Ruby continues to coo over Lottie.

“Yes, you are just the cutest little thing, aren’t you Lottie? Yes you are!” Ruby peppers the baby’s face with kisses, causing her to release a series of baby giggles. Ruby lays Lottie on her legs and looks at Emma, who is looking around at everyone else chatting. “Earth to Emma. What’s going on in that head of yours?”
Emma turns to look at her friend; she smiles and says, “It’s just hard to think that we’ve missed four years. *Four years, Rubes.*”

“I know,” Ruby says with a small smile, “but you’re here now, and that’s important. Almost as important as me loving on your kids right now!” she adds with a chuckle as she starts kissing Lottie’s cheeks again.

Emma looks over to the last place she saw Regina, “What do you think is going on over there?” she asks as she notices a group forming.

Ruby shrugs, “Don’t know Em, wanna check it out? Looks like Jade and Jazz are over there with Billy. I see Henry too, actually it looks like everyone is congregating over there.” Ruby stands and shifts Lottie up toward her shoulder as she extends a hand to her friend, “Come on. Let’s check it out.”

They walk over to the group and Emma sees Regina sitting cross-legged on the floor, with Kelly on her lap, sending magical sparks between her fingertips. Emma looks behind her to see Kathryn holding Evy and smiling at Regina. Kathryn looks up and sends a quick wink to Emma before she turns her attention back to Regina’s light show. Emma sees Tommy sitting directly in front of his mother, jaw slack; Ruth, Leo, and Eva are sitting next to Tommy, all equally enthralled. Henry and Roland are sitting back a ways, behind the other kids. The adults form a ring behind the sitting kids and are watching the former Evil Queen put on a magic show for the children. Emma can’t help but smile and how happy Regina looks. She’s laughing at something Kelly said and the sparks burn a little brighter.

“Auntie Em!” Kelly squeals when she notices her blonde aunt make her way next to them. Regina looks up at smiles bigger at her wife.

“Hey Kells, what’s going on?” Emma asks as she sits next to Regina, sending a wink her way.

“Aunt Gina has *magic*!” Kelly yells.

“She does?!” Emma plays along, equally excited.

“Momma!” Tommy yells as he launches himself into Emma’s lap.

“Hey Monkey,” she chuckles as she resituates him. She then looks up at Regina and they share a smile before Regina looks at all the kids and fake-whispers, “Did you guys know Emma has magic too?” A collective gasp goes through the crowd and Regina sends Emma a wink and holds her hand out for Emma to take. Emma reaches for her magic once her hand is safely encompassed in Regina’s, surprised at how quickly it responds and shoots forward through her hand and into Regina’s. *She’s doing that? Damn, that’s cool.* She looks at Regina who is smiling at all of the children. They’ve never known her as the Evil Queen. Here she’s just Regina, a mother, married to their precious Savior. But she’s always had a soft spot for children and she loves that she can interact with them without them cowering in fear. She also loves that she can teach them about magic in a way that doesn’t bring about fright like it did when she was a child. Her mother always used magic as a punishment; everything with her mother was a punishment. Regina was always doing something bad, something wrong. She never got it right in her mother’s eyes, and she was always severely punished for her transgressions.

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“*Mother no!*” Regina begs as she feels the branches wrap tighter around her body. She tries to take a deep breath, knowing it may be the last one for a while. Her body starts shutting down.
your happy place, she thinks to herself as she tries to dissociate.

Cora sees it happening and flicks her hand, causing the branches to shake Regina like a ragdoll. Cora has her daughter brought down so she’s directly in front of her instead of above her and Cora gets in her face “You ungrateful little girl, how dare you?” she sneers.

“Mother please” Regina begs. The branches are still snuggly wrapped around her body, but at least they’re not suffocating, Regina thinks as she tries to appease her mother. “I’m so sorry Mother. I’ll be better. I promise.”

Cora looks contemplative for a moment, not making eye contact with her daughter as she “thinks”. She turns her gaze to Regina and watches her daughter tremble. “I don’t believe you,” she says, sounding aloof.

“Mother please,” she pleads again, sounding more and more desperate.

“ENOUGH!” A slap rings through the air and Regina feels the sting immediately.

Regina places her tongue to the corner of her mouth and tastes blood, but this is not the first time this has happened. She hangs her head in submission, knowing what her Mother wants from her. She feels the sting of tears in her eyes, but she knows better than to show such a weakness, especially in front of an angry Cora.

Cora lets out a sigh of disappointment and hooks two fingers under Regina’s chin, gently guiding it up so she can see her eyes. “Regina darling, why do you make this so difficult? Are you trying to make me the bad guy?”

Regina tries to look at the ground in submission but Cora keeps a tight hold on her chin.

“No Mother,” she whispers. She knows how this is going to go. This is not the first time Cora’s hit her. Usually she uses magic so she doesn’t leave a mark, but some days are different. Sometimes she lets her anger get the best of her and today, Regina finds herself with an angry-red handprint across her left cheek.

“I am not the bad guy Regina. I just want what is best for you. Why do you not understand this? Why do you make everything so difficult?” Cora asks softly.

“I’m sorry Mother,” she whispers again.

Cora rolls her eyes. “Enough, Child. One day you will Queen. You already know how to rule. I have made sure of that by giving you the best tutors in all the lands.” Cora pauses and gently runs her thumb over the handprint she has left, knowing it will bruise if she doesn’t heal it. She merely hums and moves her thumb back to Regina’s chin. “Now, you must learn how to be a queen to your king. A queen is the most powerful woman in the kingdom; she is the person behind the king. She plays the part of doting wife in public and runs the kingdom in private. But,” Cora pauses as she raises her other hand, one finger in the air to show this is important, “she must be conniving, she must make it seem like her ideas are actually the king’s. He is who is in charge. She must convince him that he came up with her ideas. But a queen does NOT apologize and she certainly does not beg.” she spits the word, “unless her king asks her to.” Regina looks at her confused, but she does not voice her question. She knows her mother is ranting, and to interrupt would only make everything worse. So, she waits to ask one of the maids about what her mother means later. For now she lets her continue, “When you marry your king, you must know what his mood is and adjust your own accordingly. His needs come before yours. He needs something; you will take care of it. You will make him dependent on you. Make yourself irreplaceable to the king and your position
will be secure forever. Do you understand?"

Regina tries to hang her hand again, when Cora’s grip merely tightens, she raises her head and looks into her eyes, “I do not wish for that life, Mother. I want a quiet life of happiness. Not this life of lies you speak of.” Her defiance streak is gone in a huff. Her arms are still wrapped in the branches, stuck at her sides and she completely immobile. She tries to look away but Cora shakes her chin, jostling her slightly.

Cora clicks her tongue, “I do not know where such insolence comes from, My Daughter. But I will not stand for it. You WILL be queen and you WILL learn your place.” And with that, Cora pats Regina’s cheek, right over the fresh handprint, causing Regina to release a hiss. Cora leans in close to her ear and whispers, “Maybe this will remind you to learn your place and drop this defiance act.” She waves her hand, the branches are gone - as if they were never there - and Regina is falling. She lets out a noise between a grunt and a scream as she falls, landing on her hands and knees. Before she can catch her breath, Cora drags her up to a standing position by roughly pulling the braid from Regina’s back. Regina gets to her feet and bites back a hiss as her hair is pulled, knowing it could get far worse and she needs to tend to the wounds and aches she already has. Cora takes a step toward Regina, noticing how Regina subconsciously flinches. She can still be taught, she thinks with a grin. She grasps Regina’s hand and says, “do not be late for dinner dear.” She kisses Regina’s left cheek, directly over the handprint and allows her magic to momentarily take away the sting. Regina closes her eyes and leans into her mother’s soothing touch. Cora steps back and Regina opens her eyes to see her mother disappear in a cloud of purple smoke.

Regina sighs and starts making her way back to the estate. No need to make her mother angrier by being late for dinner. She has to change out of her riding clothes and now she has to fix her face in a way that hides the bruise that is certainly forming as she walks. She takes stock of what hurts and she realizes her neck and lower back hurt from the shaking branches and her hands are covered in dirt and blood from her fall. Her pants have grass stains and she sighs as she realizes she looks like a mess. Definitely not the queen Mother wants me to be, Regina thinks bitterly. She gently brings her fingers to her cheek and runs them along the heated flesh until she touches the corner of her mouth and pulls them away with a hiss. She looks down to see blood on her fingers and she sighs again. Mother had been wearing her rings today. They always leave marks, she thinks as she continues her walk to the estate.

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Regina shudders at the memory, she remembers how much her cheek had stung, even after her mother removed the mark the next day when she found out they would be expecting guests that afternoon. Regina had always thought her mother had not allowed the maids to help her hide her bruise, but now that she has her REAL memories, she knows that’s not true.

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She comes back to the estate and sneaks in the back door, knowing no one will be around and she can get to her room without anyone seeing her. She did not take into account that someone would already be there.

“Oh Sissy,” Zelena coos as soon as she sees Regina walk in. Within seconds Regina is in her sister’s arms, clutching the back of her riding jacket and sobbing into her chest. Zelena wraps her arms just as tightly around Regina’s back and rubs soothing circles. Allowing Regina to catch her breath, she whispers soothing phrases. Within a minute, Regina has gone from sobbing uncontrollably to merely hiccupsing. Mother always told her to not show weakness and she’s
certain crying is considered a weakness. So, she takes a moment to be comforted by her older sister and then she pulls away.

She motions to her clothes and says, “Mother will not be pleased if the maids cannot clean these out.”

Zelena nods her head and gently takes Regina’s face in her hands, “Sissy,” she whispers quietly as she sees the blood and the red handprint that’s turning a purple/blue color quickly.

Regina pulls away and says, “I angered her again. I should know better.”

Zelena wraps her in another hug that lasts only a moment before she pulls back and says, “You change out of those clothes and I will go retrieve some warm water and a cloth to clean the blood off.” And she’s out of Regina’s room.

Regina sighs and starts removing her ruined clothing. She is able to remove all of her clothing by herself, but not without realizing just how many aches she has. Before she can start putting her corset on, Camilla walks in and immediately whispers, “Oh Princess.”

Regina knows her mother must have spoken with her if she’s referring to her as Princess, so she merely turns to look in the mirror and sees that her body is covered in red scratches and welts from the branches scratching through the fabric of her riding clothes and squeezing too tightly. She immediately takes a deep breath, reminding herself she’s no longer being held and she can breathe on her own.

She hears Camilla sigh again. She watches Camilla shake herself in the mirror. Then she watches as she tries to form a sentence. Finally she hears, “I have drawn you a bath dear. Come along,” and she’s moving into Regina’s adjoining washroom.

Zelena comes back and sees the rest of Regina’s body, but she knows better than to comment. Regina doesn’t want to listen to her; she doesn’t want to talk about what happened. Perhaps tonight will be different, Zelena thinks as she enters the wash room, doing her best not to look at the bruising, scratches, and welts that litter her sister’s body.

She and Camilla help Regina enter the water and listen as Regina hisses when the water comes in contact with the scratches.

Once Regina is submerged up to her neck, the stinging lessens and she feels the water working out the tension she feels in her neck and back. She sighs as she sits back against the wall of the tub, mindful of her scratches so she doesn’t rub them along the surface. She relaxes further into the tub and allows Camilla to start washing her hair. Zelena comes next to her and silent starts washing the blood and dirt from her face, being careful around the already formed bruise on her cheek.

Regina smiles at Zelena when she’s finished cleaning her face and lifts a hand to show her the bloodied scratches that made an appearance when she tried to catch her fall.

Zelena looks at her with an understanding gaze and she takes the hand and gently starts cleaning the cuts. When she’s finished with that, she moves to the other side and does the same to Regina’s other hand.

Regina looks at the water she’s sitting in. What was once clean and clear is now murky and is changing color as blood, dirt, and grime are washed from her body. She sighs and tries to relax her muscles in the warm water; this is the time she needs to forget what happened, Mother would not be happy if she’s not the perfect princess. It’s time to find the ‘mask of indifference’ she always
Eventually, Camilla deems her clean and she and Zelena help her out of the water and pat her dry. Camilla then sends Zelena to her own chambers to prepare for dinner. Zelena leaves with a final squeeze to Regina’s fingertips, she doesn’t want to irritate scratches on her palm. Camilla helps Regina into her corset and apologizes when it rubs against Regina’s scratches.

Regina nods at Camilla’s apology, but doesn’t speak; she fears that if she were to open her mouth, a sob would escape and she would not be able to keep her tears at bay. She knows that crying this close to dinner would not be in her best interests, she would not be able to hide the tear tracks from her mother and has no interest in her mother calling her weak again.

Finally, her corset is set and her dress is on. She sits at the vanity and allows Camilla to finish her hair. Zelena comes in just as Camilla is putting the finishing touches on her loose fishtail braid, allowing her natural curls to frame her face and her long hair to fall over her left shoulder, attempting to hide the ugly bruise that blemishes Regina’s face. It doesn’t completely work but Regina thanks her for the attempt anyway.

She and Zelena head to the dining hall arm in arm and Regina clings to her sister as she tries to prepare for the long night ahead of her.

“You can do this Sissy. Just don’t anger her okay?” Zelena quickly kisses her left cheek, careful to avoid the bruise, and enters to the dining hall before Regina. They both have learned that Cora hates when they enter together, so Zelena goes first and Regina follows shortly after. Regina takes a deep breath and follows after her sister.

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Regina can’t help but internally smile. Now that she has her true memories, it’s nice to know that she did have someone who cared. Zelena was always in her corner. She knew what Mother wanted, but she also always had Regina’s best interests at heart. She always protected Regina to the best of her ability and after going so long thinking no one cared, Regina’s heart warms at that fact. She thinks, had Mother never taken my memories, perhaps the Evil Queen would never had been created. She shakes herself from those thoughts, without the Evil Queen there would be no Emma, no Henry. And those are thoughts Regina will not entertain. Now she has a loving wife, she has wonderful children, a loving sister, and she has her early memories of said sister. Her family is wonderful and her heart is full. Everything worked out in the end, she thinks with a smile, it was all worth it.

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Regina mentally shakes herself from those thoughts and focuses on the magic coursing through her body. She still cannot believe how quickly Emma’s magic reacts with hers. True love has its perks, she thinks with a smirk. She guides their magic out of her free hand toward the ceiling where it bursts into miniature fireworks across the ceiling, racing across it and falls down the walls in bursts of gold and violet.

There’s a chorus of “oohs” and “aahs” as the people in the room watch the magic show.

Suddenly, the doors magically fly open and everyone turns to see who would make such a dramatic entrance. There are gasps as people realize who has just made an appearance.

Regina and Emma release each other’s hands and moves the children off their laps as they rush to a standing position and move to the front of the crowd when they hear the gasps. When they make it
to the front Emma sees her parents with a protective stance and her dad with his sword out.

Zelena, Regina, and Emma stop and stand next to Snow and Charming in a line in front of the others.

“Sorry I’m late,” the man sneers.

Regina raises an eyebrow, “No original material left for second-hand villains these days?” she mocks.

“I mean no offense, my dear,” he says with a raised hand, the other holds a staff, “I was merely paying homage to you, Your Majesty.” He ends with a dramatic bow.

Regina rolls her eyes, “Who are you?”

The man stands tall, “You do not know me?”

This earns him another eye roll, “If I knew who you were, I would not have asked. I do not make it my business to know about people I do not consider a threat.”

“Well, Your Majesty,” he sneers with his nose in the air, “I do believe you should consider me a threat - a very big threat - considering you were ripped from your peaceful life in the other world to come back and have your wife save the day.” He looks over to Emma and lets his eyes roam over her body, causing Regina to growl and take a step forward.

“I do not have time for petty games.”

“Oh! But you do not make the rules this time,” he says with a wink.

Regina is disgusted, but before she can respond she hears a timid, “Mommy,” from a voice full of tears.

“Oh!” the man says as he claps his hands together and looks beyond the self-identified “heroes” to see Tommy holding onto Henry’s pant leg, “I see this has turned into a family vacation. How wonderful! And how are you, dear Thomas?”

Regina takes a menacing step forward, “How do you know my son?”

The man looks affronted and puts a hand to his chest, “Well, I thought you knew. I’ve been visiting all of your children in their dreams.”

Emma puts a hand on Regina’s forearm before she can take another step forward. Regina bares her teeth, but stays in her spot.

The man wags his finger and says, “Uh-uh-uh, that’s not the example you wish to set in front of the children is it?”

Zelena steps forward next to her sister and sneers, “I don’t think they’ll be too upset that the man from their nightmares is stopped but their mother’s. I think it would make quite the heroic bedtime story, don’t you think so, Sis?”

“I would have to agree,” Regina responds as she looks at the man. Together Zelena, Regina, and Emma raise their hands, green, purple, and gold magic glows respectively across their palms. “I believe it’s time for you to leave,” Regina warns.

The man looks back and forth between the sorceresses before saying, “This isn’t over.”
“It better be,” Regina sneers as she, Zelena, and Emma let their magic flow from their fingertips toward the man with the staff.

He taps his staff on the ground once and is gone is puff of red smoke.

Zelena growls as she puts her hands down, knowing that their magic missed him. Emma and Regina put their hands down and share a look and a sigh.

A chorus of “Mommy” “Moms” and “Momma” rings out as the three women find themselves attacked by their children, who wrap their arms around them. The women hug their children and then smile at each other as they find themselves in one big family-group-hug.

They separate and Regina clutches Tommy to her hip tighter as Zelena does the same with Kelly. Emma smiles at her parents as they look up at her. Leo runs up to her and pulls on her sleeve until she bends over so her head in next to his. He whispers, “That was really cool,” and he takes off back by the other kids. Emma chuckles, shakes her head, and turns back to wrap an arm around Regina’s waist.

Emma and Regina immediately turn to see Kathryn and Ruby there with their children, husbands, and Evy and Lottie.

Regina kisses Tommy’s head and hands him to Henry and signals with her head for him to take the kids elsewhere. Henry nods and says, “How about a game?” and moves to the other end of the hall. The other kids quickly follow him and as soon as they are out of earshot everyone is whispering questions. “What was that?” “He got in?” “Is it still safe to stay here?” “What does he want?” “Why is he doing this?”

Snow raises her hands to halt the questions and turns to see Regina and Emma now holding their daughters in their arms. She smiles and nods when she sees Regina debating on whether to voice a question or not.

“How was that?” she asks as she shifts Evy to one side so she can grasp onto Emma’s free hand.

“Jafar.”

Chapter End Notes

And there you have it, our villain is finally revealed. If you have any questions, comments, or predictions please post them below :)

Much love,

-IrishBella
Chapter Summary

nunchi:
(n.) the subtle art of listening and gauging others' moods; the ability to know what not to say in a certain social situation

Chapter Notes

I am SOOOOOOOO sorry about the length between updates but I've had a bit of writer's block for this story so this is kind of a filler chapter that I wanted to touch on because I brought a character into this story near the beginning and I wanted to talk a bit about the relationship between her and Regina. Anyways, I hope you like this chapter and hopefully after my last final I will be able to focus more on finishing this story!
I did start another story from a plot bunny I had after last night's episode called A Mother's Love if you wanna check it out. (Yes that was a shameless plug ;)

A/N: In case it wasn’t clear in the previous chapters, Emma, Regina, and their family left through the Gateway in Regina’s castle, and reentered through the Gateway into Snow and Charming’s castle. So, they are currently in the castle that Regina stayed in while she was queen before she killed the King.

TRIGGER WARNING: mentions of past trauma

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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“What the fuck?” Emma asks. She hisses and looks sheepishly at Regina when she squeezes Emma’s hand warningly. “Sorry,” she mutters, “Jafar is real? Seriously?”

“Your parents are Snow White and Prince Charming, you’re married to the Evil Queen, and you didn’t realize that Jafar being real was entirely possible?” Regina asks disbelievingly. Before Emma can respond, Regina shakes her head and looks at Snow and Charming, muttering, “I blame your genes.”

Charming looks offended but Snow just shakes her head fondly. “Yes, Jafar is real Emma. He’s from another kingdom though.”

“Yeah. Agrabah,” Emma says.
“That’s right,” Snow praises, “but he was banished before the curse was activated. That’s why he wasn’t in Storybrooke.”

“What was he banished for?” Emma questions.

Snow looks to Regina and Emma’s eyes follow.

Regina looks down at her daughter and sighs before looking back up at her wife and mother-in-law she shudders at the thought. Oh how things have come full circle, she thinks with a mirthless chuckle. She shakes out of her confusing thoughts and looks back at her family. “He tried to control the Sultan,” she says with a shrug.

“Like in the movie?” Emma asks.

Regina smiles fondly, “Not exactly like the movie, but similar yes. He worked in the palace as an advisor to the Sultan and he let his quest for power get the better of him. He manipulated the Sultan into believing he was the best match for the princess. When the princess chose to marry the Street Rat instead, Jafar lost it and went power crazy; doing everything he could think of to prevent the marriage from happening. He lost and I had assumed he was still banished but apparently things have changed.”

“A lot has changed Regina,” Snow says with a smile.

“I thought you said you didn’t know him?” Emma asks.

“I don’t. I knew of the story when Princess Jasmine reached out to her father’s allies to wage a war.”

“You fought against him?” Emma asks. Off Regina’s nod she responds, “I thought all of the Disney villains stuck together.”

“I am not about to sit by and watch as someone is forced into a marriage against their will,” Regina bites out.

Emma looks down at the ground and Regina squeezes her hand in apology for yelling.

Snow jumps in when she watches the exchange, “I didn’t know you helped Jasmine.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Of course I did. Why wouldn’t I? They were valuable allies.”

Snow shrugs, “I didn’t know you kept any of the allies.”

Again, Regina rolls her eyes, “Did you think I fixed the kingdom with only my strong will? I’m flattered dear, but of course I kept allies. I knew as a single female monarch, people would be out for my head. Even if I was the Evil Queen,” she sneers at the end.

“I’m surprised heroes still wanted to be your ally,” Snow adds with a cheeky smirk.

Regina lets out a smirk of her own, “Oh, I don’t think you would be surprised by how many people wanted to be on the good side of the Evil Queen.”

Snow laughs, “And here I was thinking I had so much support to overthrow you.”

Regina shakes her head at Snow’s lack of understanding, “You had your minions. I had the power of many kingdoms at my disposal.”
“Why didn’t you take advantage of that?” Snow asks quietly.

Regina sighs and shrugs, “It was my fight. I didn’t want anyone else to have the satisfaction of killing you. After the whole debacle with the Huntsman I knew I had to off you myself.”

Snow smiles, “Well, I know it’s probably shocking, but I’m glad you didn’t ‘off me’. ”

“I am as well,” Regina smiles at Snow before looking at Emma who is still looking at the floor. “Emma?” she asks softly.

Emma suddenly looks up and notices her wife and parents staring at her. “Oh sorry. Got lost in my head there for a minute.”

“Terrifying, I’m sure,” Regina murmurs with a fond smile.

Emma squeezes her hand and bumps their shoulders together, “Har har. Now what are we going to do about Señor Psychopath?” she asks in a goofy voice. Regina shakes her head and Emma smiles, “What?” she asks innocently, “That’s one of my favorite lines!”

Regina just smiles and then grows serious, “If you start singing the songs, you will be sleeping on the couch for the foreseeable future.”

“You’re bluffing,” Emma snarks. Off of Regina’s raised eyebrow she back tracks, “Alright, alright. No Disney tunes. For now,” she adds with a mischievous smile.

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

“Come on Monkey, you need to rest so you can play later,” Emma tries again. She’s been trying to get Tommy to sleep for the last 15 minutes; and he is not cooperating.

“Nope.” He says, popping his lips on the ‘p’. Emma groans and Tommy folds his arms over his chest.

“Okay,” Emma says holding her hands up in front of her, “you look too much like your mother right now. It’s terrifying.”

“Should I be offended?” Regina asks as she walks into the room with Evy and Lottie in her arms.

“Of course not,” Emma starts, “I just had a ‘genetics be damned’ moment because he is giving me the look.”

“The look?” Regina asks.

“Yes, the look. The one you give me when you are unimpressed with whatever I have just done.”

“Oh, well I can see why he picked it up, I use it often,” Regina says with a smirk.

Emma rolls her eyes and smiles fondly.

“Mommy! No sweep!” Tommy cries as he grabs onto Regina’s leg.

“You’re not going to sleep?” Regina asks, “Hmmm, well, I’m going to go feed your sisters and sing them to sleep. Do you want to come sit with me?”

Tommy gives her a look that shows he knows she’s up to something but he’s not entirely sure what.
Regina chuckles and says to Emma, “That look is all you darling.”

“Really? I do that?” Emma asks as she looks at her son tilting his head and examining them.

“Absolutely. You know something is going on, but you feel like you’re missing an important piece of information so you stare until you figure it out.” Regina says as she goes to sit on the bed.

Emma follows her and takes their daughters from Regina while she crawls to the middle of the bed and sets up their pillow. Emma lays them on the bed and starts making silly faces, causing them both to release high pitch giggles while shoving their fists in their mouths. “Are you hungry?” Emma coos, she makes another silly face and bops both girls on the nose. Their giggles causes Regina to smile and let out a laugh as her wife starts peppering their faces with kisses.

“Alright dear,” Regina says with another smile.

Emma looks up and smiles at her wife before picking up Evy and handing her to Regina. She does the same with Lottie and looks over at Tommy who is standing by the door, unmoving. “Come on Monkey, Mommy’s gonna sing her song to your sisters.” She pats the spot next to Regina on the bed. She moves around to the other side and sits next to Regina.

“No,” he growls. His eyebrows push together as he frowns.

Emma opens her eyes wider and looks to Regina. “Thomas,” Regina warns with a raised eyebrow.

Tommy glares for another moment before dropping his hands to his sides. He hangs his head and shuffles to the foot of the bed. He stands there and glances up at his mothers quickly. Through thick eyelashes he sees them both patiently looking at him. He sighs dramatically and flops onto the end of the bed. Emma chuckles and Regina does her best to hide her smirk.

Emma coughs out, “Nurture,” and Regina swats her playfully.

“Come now Thomas,” she says as she pats the bed with her right hand.

He crawls up the bed and sits back on his knees looking at his mothers and then his sisters, “Babies hungwy?”

Regina nods and says, “They are, and they are very sleepy. Should we sing our song to help them sleep?”

Tommy shakes his head, “No sweep. Not tiyad.”

“You’re not?” Regina asks skeptically.

“Nope,” Tommy shakes his head again.

“Well alright, I’ll just sing it for your sisters then.” Regina looks down at her nursing daughters and starts singing.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.
She sings softly and before she can start the refrain, Tommy crawls up and lays his head against her arm. She smiles softly and continues singing.

Black and bays, dapples, grays,
All the pretty little horses.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.

When the song is finished she looks down to see Tommy staring up at her. He smiles and whispers, “Again.”

She smiles and kisses his forehead. “Alright, my little prince.”

Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.
Black and bays, dapples, grays,
All the pretty little horses.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.

Tommy yawns and snuggles closer into Regina’s arm, “Momma’s turn,” he sighs.

Regina looks to Emma, who had put her head on Regina’s other shoulder during the second round of the lullaby. Emma perks up as Tommy calls for her and mumbles, “Huh?” She hasn’t really slept all that much in the last few days, and listening to her wife sing that lullaby always makes her sleepy.

“You sing now,” Tommy says back and he peeks around his brunette mother to look at Emma.
“I have to sing?” Off Tommy's nod she asks, “what song?”

Tommy shrugs and places his head back against Regina’s arm.

“Hmmmm,” Emma mutters as she taps a finger against her chin. She grins like the Cheshire cat and says, “Alright Monkey, here’s a song.”

Somewhere over the rainbow way up high
There's a land that I heard of once in a lullaby
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue
And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true
Someday I'll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far
Behind me
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops
That's where you'll find me
Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly
Birds fly over the rainbow. Why then, oh, why can't I?
If happy little bluebirds fly
Beyond the rainbow why, oh, why can't I?

“I wike dat song,” Tommy mumbles around a yawn.

“Me too, Monkey,” Emma says with a grin. Regina shakes her head at the song from her sister’s movie but smiles at how happy Emma looks.

“Nudder one,” Tommy says as he yawns again.

Emma and Regina share a smile before Emma turns around on the bed so she is facing her family, with her back to the door. She thinks for a second and then smiles.

Here comes the sun, do-do-do-do, here comes the sun
And I say it's all right
Little darling, it's been a long cold lonely winter
Little darling, it feels like years since it's been here
Here comes the sun, do-do-do-do, here comes the sun
And I say it's all right
Little darling, the smiles returning to the faces
Little darling, it seems like years since it's been here
Here comes the sun, do-do-do-do, here comes the sun
And I say it's all right
Little darling, I feel that ice is slowly melting
Little darling, it seems like years since it's been clear
Here comes the sun, do-do-do-do, here comes the sun
And I say it's all right
Here comes the sun, do-do-do-do, here comes the sun
It's all right, it's all right

She sings the song softly and watches her son’s eyes droop lower and lower until his breathing evens out and he’s sound asleep.

She smiles and gently lays him out so he’s flat on the bed and not curled awkwardly around Regina’s arm.

Regina smiles sleepily at her wife and says, “That was beautiful.”

Emma smiles at her wife through batted eyelashes, “Thanks babe.”

“You should sing more,” Regina sighs as she resituates her now sleeping daughters on the pillow.

Emma leans up and kisses Regina’s cheek, “I’d rather listen to you, but if you want, I will sing to you more.”

“Good. I do,” Regina mumbles with heavy eyes.

Emma chuckles and kisses Regina’s forehead, lingering a few extra seconds, “Why don’t you rest here with Tommy, I’ll move the girls.”

Regina shakes her head and sits up, causing her blouse to fall further to her sides, “I’m fine, dear.”

Emma shakes her head but does not say anything as she takes Lottie from Regina and walks her over to the crib that Regina had magically created the night before. She gently lays her down as Regina does the same with Evy. They smile down at their sleeping daughters. Emma reaches a hand around Regina’s waist and pulls her close. Regina rests her head on Emma’s shoulder, her shirt still wide open, hanging at her sides. Emma’s hand starts wandering around Regina’s side until it hits bare skin and starts drawing random patterns. Goosebumps pop on Regina’s skin and she involuntarily shivers. She lifts her head and kisses Emma’s cheek, just missing her lips.

Unfortunately, the moment is ruined by a knock at the door. Regina slowly pulls away and walks to the bathroom with an extra sway in her hips. She looks over her shoulder when she reaches the door to see a slack-jawed Emma. She smirks and says, “I’ll draw us a bath, get rid of whomever is at the door, darling.” Emma shakes her head to clear her thoughts, and rolls her eyes as she moves to the door.
When she opens it she stares with confusion at the woman on the other side, “Yes?” she asks, not moving to allow the woman in.

“Good afternoon Princess,” the woman says with a small curtsy. “I was wondering if the queen is in?”

Emma looks suspiciously at this woman, trying to place her. “She is, but she is busy at the moment.”

“Oh of course,” the woman says as she lowers her head to look at the floor. “I did not wish to intrude. Please forgive me, Your Highness.”

Emma looks confused again, who is this woman and why is she so formal? Before she can ask the woman who she is, Evy whimpers and Emma involuntarily groans. She’s never going to be joining her wife in the bath if they keep getting interrupted.

“May I?” the woman asks quietly; her eyes never leaving the floor.

Emma cautiously opens the door further, allowing the woman into their chambers. There’s something about this woman I should know.

The woman immediately walks to the crib and smiles down at Evy, “Hello Princess,” she murmurs.

“Emma?” Regina questions as she opens the door from the bathroom. Emma turns to see her wife’s shirt half-buttoned and she unconsciously licks her lips, eyes drawn to Regina’s ample cleavage.

Regina raises an eyebrow at her wife’s staring, but doesn’t get a change to comment on it since another voice breaks the silence, “Your Majesty.” Regina freezes at the title. It’s then that she notices a figure behind Emma. Emma gives an apologetic smile and steps to the side. Regina’s breath catches as she sees the woman behind her wife.

“You- Your- You’re here,” Regina stumbles over her words as her brain processes the new information.

“Of course,” the woman smiles shyly.

“But.” Regina shakes her head to clear her thoughts and asks, “For how long?”

“I came to the castle shortly after you left.”

Regina stares for a moment before letting out a choked sob, “I’m so sorry.”

Emma freezes at her wife’s admission, but doesn’t have a chance to go to her because the woman is already across the room and wrapping Regina in her arms. Emma is stunned at how quickly Regina falls apart in her arms, wrapping them securely around the woman and buries her face in her neck. Emma is pulled from her shock when Evy whines again. She quickly walks to the crib and pulls Evy to her chest. “Shhhh, Baby Girl, it’s alright. You’re okay. Go back to sleep baby,” she coos as she glances over to see her wife still clutching to the woman. Who is she? Emma wonders as she gently bounces Evy back and forth in her arms.

Regina sniffs again and pulls back to smile at the woman.

The woman puts her hands on Regina’s cheeks and smiles, “You did nothing wrong. It was not your fault I ended up in the middle of nowhere after the curse broke. You did everything you could
for me in this world and in Storybrooke, and I will be forever grateful, Your Majesty.” Off of
Regina’s exasperated sigh she corrects, “Regina,” with a smirk.

“Thank you, Louisa, for everything,” Regina says hugging the woman again.

Louisa! Emma thinks, mentally slapping her forehead. Of course! Who else would have such a hold
on Regina? I thought she died. “I figured it out Evy,” Emma whispers, smiling down at her
daughter. “Who knew your detective Momma would take so long to put the pieces together huh? I
even knew her when she was your mommy’s secretary. She looks much different now.” She smirks
and bounces Evy gently, noticing how heavy Evy’s eyelids have become. “Oh? Are my lack of
skills boring you? Hmmmm, well I suppose I can let you sleep Baby Girl. Momma loves you,” she
whispers as she continues to bounce her sleepy daughter.

“Do not mention it, my dear. But,” Louisa starts as she moves to Regina’s side, looking at Emma
bouncing Evy, still keeping an arm securely around Regina’s back. “Now, I would love to meet the
lovely little family you have created for yourself.”

Regina smiles and looks to see Emma quietly talking to Evy. “Well, you have already met my wife,
Emma.”

Louisa nods and says, “Your wife is as lovely as ever.”

“Yes she is,” Regina murmurs with a smile.

“How was the wedding?” Louisa asks quietly.

“One of the happiest days of my life,” Regina says, wistfully remembering that day.

SQSQSQSQSOSQ

“Sissy!” Zelena whines impatiently, “You’re going to be late to your own wedding if you don’t
hurry up!” She dramatically drops onto the chaise, watching her sister touch up her makeup in the
vanity.

“Oh hush, you,” Regina chides, “If anyone is going to be late it’s going to be Emma. You’re sure
she’s ready?”

“Yes, Gi. You’re the one who’s not ready!” Zelena exasperates as she rests her head on her fist
that’s resting on the back of the chaise. “Worse than a queen,” she mutters.

Regina looks at her with a gleam in her eyes, “Well, as Julie Andrews says, ‘a queen is never late,
everyone else is just early,’ Lena.” Regina chuckles when her sister just sighs.

“Gi! I swear to God, I’m going to have to drag you to your own wedding!”

Regina takes pity on the state her sister is in, “Lena, I’m not going to be late, I promise, but if you
don’t let me finish my makeup we will be late and then I’ll have to kill you.” She adds the last part
with a smirk.

“Har Har Gi.” Regina gives Zelena a look and Zelena raises her hands in surrender, “Alright.
Fine, Your Majesty, finish your face so we can get you hitched and off on your honeymoon.
Honestly, a week without you and your crazy attitude will do us all good.”

Regina merely smirks at sister through the mirror.
After less than 2 minutes of silence while Regina touches up her eyes and lips, Zelena sighs dramatically, “Regina,” she draws out in a whine.

Regina sighs back and turns to face her sister. “Honestly Lena, we have plenty of time.” She moves over to where her sister is laying on the chaise and brushes a loose strand of her fiery mane from her face.

“I know. I know,” Zelena says as she grabs her sister’s hand and holds it close, “I think this baby enjoys making me overreact.” She places a hand on her barely protruding stomach.

Regina laughs and says, “You can blame the little blip all you want but you’ve always been dramatic Lena.”

Zelena groans and throws her head back, staring at the ceiling, “I know. But now I can’t control it!”

“Could you ever?” Regina asks with another chuckle.

Zelena groans out something intelligible, causing Regina to laugh again.

“Do not be blaming my little niece or nephew for things that you are doing,” Regina murmurs as she places her free hand next to her sister’s on her stomach. “They’re already perfect.”

“They’re not already pressing on your bladder like it’s a toy.”

“Perhaps they’ll be a professional soccer player,” Regina says in a helpful tone that makes her sister groan again.

“They better be,” Zelena mutters as she sits up and puts her feet down on the ground. “Enough about my pregnancy problems. Let’s get you married!”

“By the sounds of it, you can’t wait to get rid of me,” Regina says with a good-natured smirk.

Zelena grabs onto both of Regina’s hands and looks into her eyes, “Never Gi. I’m always going to be here for you. Your number one fan actually, no matter what. You could never get rid of me.”

“I wouldn’t want to, Lena,” Regina says softly, squeezing her sister’s hands. “We’ve been together for too long. I wouldn’t know how to function without you.” Tears fill her eyes and she tries to blink them away as she looks up to the ceiling.

“Oh Sissy,” Zelena sighs as she wraps her arms tightly around Regina’s waist and rests her head on Regina’s shoulder. “You’ll never have to. We’ve been together from the start and that’s how we’ll stay, got it?”

Regina nods and then more tears fill her eyes, “Everything’s changing Lena. You’re having a baby; I’m getting married. What’s next?”

“You go on your honeymoon.” Zelena says matter-of-factly. “And then you’ll come back and nothing changes. We still have our lunches together, we still have family dinners with Robin, Emma, Henry, and Roland, we talk constantly, we avoid adult responsibilities together, and we take our sister time, okay?” Regina lets out a wet chuckle and nods her head. “Good. Because honestly, just mentioning food has this baby going crazy.”

Regina chuckles again and places her hands on Zelena’s stomach, “I wonder if you’ll be able to keep up with your aunt and cousin in how much food you can stuff into your mouth at one sitting.”
Zelena shakes her head vehemently, “Oh no! This baby will have grace that Emma and Henry could not possibly handle while eating.”

Regina shakes her head while smiling fondly, “They are quite the animal pack.”

“And let’s get you finished up so you can finally marry that animal pack.”

“My animal pack,” she smiles as she turns toward the vanity.

“Yes, yes,” Zelena mutters, “your animal pack, Sissy. Now save that wistful look for when you see your wife.”

Regina laughs and allows her sister to touch up the makeup that smudged from her held-back tears and fix the stubborn hair that won’t stay in her updo.

Henry walks into the room as Zelena finishes pinning Regina’s hair and breathes out a “Mom.”

Regina turns around and lets out a megawatt smile for her son. “Henry,” she says with a smile, “you look wonderful.”

“Mom,” he repeats. “You look beautiful.”

“Thank you darling,” she says as she picks up the bottom of her mermaid-style dress to move toward her son. Before she can take a step, he launches himself at her and wraps his arms around her middle. She tries to catch herself by putting one foot behind her, but the heel of her shoe catches on her dress and she feels herself start to fall before Zelena puts her hands on Regina’s shoulder blades, stabilizing her. Zelena lets go with her left hand and resituates her dress so she can stand on her own feet. She sends her a grateful smile as she wraps her arms tighter around her little boy.

“Mom,” he whispers into her stomach.

“Yes, darling?” she asks rubbing his back.

“I love you.”

Regina smiles and kisses the top of his head. “I love you too, my dear. More than you will ever know.”

Henry steps back and looks at his mother again. He smiles and says, “Ma’s gonna stop breathing.”

Regina chuckles and says, “Well I certainly hope not or else this would have been a complete waste.”

Henry shakes his head at his mother’s attempt at levity. “Come on, Mom! We’ve got to get you down the aisle and married off to Ma!”

Regina smiles and wraps him in another hug, “Between you and your Aunt I’d swear you were trying to get rid of us.”

Henry pulls back and smiles innocently up at his mother. “And live with Aunt Z and Uncle Rob for a week? With nothing but junk food and playing video games all night? Pssht, come on Mom.”

Regina immediately stiffens and looks up at her sister who merely rolls her eyes, “Come on, Gi. Do you really think I’d feed him only junk food for a whole week?” When Regina continues to stare at
her with a raised eyebrow Zelena scoffs, “How rude. I do know how to cook, Sissy. And I keep my boys plenty well taken care of.”

“Yes, but your pregnancy brain has you craving junk too often, Lena.”

Zelena scoffs but doesn’t say anything. She starts moving Regina’s dress and says, “Whatever Gi, let’s head down and get you to your wife.”

“Not wife, yet. Not until after the ceremony,” Regina says as she puts her left hand in Henry’s outstretched arm. How chivalrous, she thinks with a smile, my little prince. She grabs the bottom of her dress with her right hand and lifts it so she can walk through the door. Zelena follows, making sure Regina’s dress doesn’t get caught on anything and brushes nonexistent lint off of Henry’s shoulders as they walk.

When they make it to the first floor and are standing outside the room where the ceremony will take place Henry finally says, “Aunt Z!” exasperatedly and looks over his shoulder at her, “We’re good. Take a breath and get ready to walk.”

Zelena straightens up and looks down at her nephew, “Quit acting like your mothers and show me some love, boy.”

Henry smirks and leans his body to the left the give his aunt a side hug, never once letting go of his brunette mother’s hand. “I love you Aunt Z, but you’re mothering again.”

Zelena takes a deep breath and kisses Henry’s head whispering, “I’ll tone it down.”

“Not too much,” he says with a smile, “just a little.”

“Just a little,” she repeats with a smile so full of love for her nephew. She lets him go and stands in front of Regina, “I can’t believe my baby sister is getting married.”

“No tears, Lena,” Regina warns, but it’s too late and Zelena has her wrapped in her arms and is taking deep breaths trying to calm her emotions.

“I love you so much Gi, and I’m so happy you’re finally tying the knot with your blonde.”

Regina chuckles and squeezes Zelena tighter with her right hand, while her left is still firmly in the crook of Henry’s arm. “I know you know her name is Emma, and I know that even when you deny it, you like her.”

Zelena chuckles through her tears and pulls back, “Well, she makes you happy, and that makes me happy. She’s insufferable otherwise.”

“Mhmm,” Regina hums, not believing her sister in the slightest, “that’s why you spend so much time with her.”

Zelena sighs and wipes under her eyes, “All for you and Henry, Gi. And because she always brings the booze.”

“Of course Lena,” Regina replies sarcastically but rubs her hand up Zelena’s arm, “Ready?” she asks looking between her sister and her son.

They both nod and Zelena walks over to where Robin and Roland have been waiting. Roland walks up to Regina and says, “You look pretty Gina.”
“Thank you Roland,” she says with a smile as she bends over to kiss his forehead, “you look very handsome.”

He gives her a megawatt smile and throws his arms around her neck, squeezing her tightly. She wraps her arms around his waist and hugs him back. He pulls his head back to look at her, still keeping his arms around her neck, “Go by Em now?”

Regina chuckles and kisses his cheek, “Yes, we’ll go by Emma now.” She stands up and is engulfed in a hug by her brother-in-law.

“You’re beautiful, Gi.” She smiles as he kisses her cheek before letting go and moving back next to Zelena.

“Alright, Ro, are you ready?” Zelena asks as she moves Roland in front of the door.

He nods enthusiastically and she opens the door, watching him walk down the aisle towards Emma with the rings placed safely on a pillow. She sees Emma smile widely and hold out her hand to Roland when he makes it all the way down the aisle. He quickly latches on and stands next to her, Zelena catches Emma’s eye and winks before she moves back and gives one last kiss to Henry, murmuring, “Hold her steady.” When he nods his understanding, she moves and hugs Regina one more time. Before letting go she whispers, “Daddy would be so proud, Gi.” Regina clutches her tighter, her hands holding tightly to the dress fabric clinging to Zelena’s back and releases a shaky breath before letting go and putting on a smile. She places her arm back in Henry’s and nods for Robin to take Zelena’s hand and walk down the aisle.

Finally it’s Henry and Regina’s turn. She takes a deep breath and Henry squeezes her hand, “It’s gonna be great Mom. Let’s go get your forever.”

“I love you so much, Henry,” Regina says as she quickly leans over and kisses his temple. She turns to face forward again and whispers, “Our forever.”

The smile on her face could outshine the sun. When the doors open and she sees her future wife waiting at the end of the aisle she can hardly contain herself. Henry squeezing her hand tightly grounds her so she doesn’t float away as she stares into the blue/green eyes of her love.

“Welcome to our family, Regina,” Louisa says honestly.

Regina squeezes the arm she has wrapped around Louisa and smiles, “Thank you Louisa.”

“Does she treat you well?” Louisa asks, suddenly protective.

Regina chuckles lightly and rests her head on Louisa’s shoulder, “Like a queen. Even before we had our memories back, she always treated me like a queen.”

Louisa smiles, “You deserve it all and so much more my dear.”

Regina smiles again and turns Louisa to the bed where Tommy is now sleeping spread-eagle in the middle of the bed. This causes them both to chuckle as Regina murmurs, “He sleeps just like her.”

Emma huffs out a disgruntled, “I can hear you, you know?”

Regina turns her head to see her wife behind her. She winks and blows her a kiss, causing Emma’s face to redden and look down at their sleeping daughter in her arms. Regina smirks at her wife’s
reaction and turns back around to face their sleeping son, “This is Thomas, he’s three.”

“What a beautiful prince,” Louisa smiles, her voice shining with pride.

“I’m sure he’ll be excited to learn of his princely status,” Regina says with a smile, “Right now he
shifts between wanting to be a knight and wanted to be a police officer just like his Momma.”

Louisa smiles, “Both strong professions for a strong boy.”

“Absolutely.” Regina can’t help the smile getting bigger on her face as her son mumbles something
in his sleep and moves around the bed trying to get comfortable again.

“And your other son? How's Henry?”

“Wonderful, even when he thinks he is too old for his mothers. He’s such a bright young boy,
always has his nose in a book. He is like a sponge when it comes to learning things.”

“A trait from you I’m sure,” Louisa says with a smile. Regina playfully rolls her eyes and Louisa
continues, “Oh my dear, do not think I forgot how many books you could read in a single sitting.
You could never get enough.”

“They were my escape,” Regina says quietly.

Louisa grows somber and squeezes Regina closer to her, “You no longer have to do that, but I hope
you have continued to read.”

Regina scoffs, “Of course, I am always eager to learn something new.”

“Good,” Louisa says with a nod, “Now how about those darling princesses I have yet to meet.”

Regina turns with Louisa and walks them over to the crib where Emma is still holding Evy. “This
is Evelyn here, and Charlotte is sleeping soundly.”

“Now that she gets from me,” Emma says with a smirk. She motions with one hand to Tommy and
says, “I definitely do not sleep like that.”

Regina chuckles and kisses Emma’s cheek, “Of course not, dear.”

“You’re mocking me,” Emma grumbles.

Regina laughs and kisses her cheek again, “Only a little, darling.”

Louisa laughs, causing them both to look at her, “You two are absolutely adorable.”

They both blush and look down to see Evy open her eyes slowly and a smile grow across her face
when she sees her two mothers above her.

“Hello my angel,” Regina coos as she runs a finger along Evy’s cheek. She looks up to Louisa and
asks, “Would you like to hold her?”

Louisa nods eagerly and Emma steps forward to hand Evy to her.

Louisa looks down at Evy with a smile, “Well hello, Princess.” Evy starts cooing and grabs onto
Louisa’s finger in front of her, squeezing it and bringing it toward her mouth. Louisa laughs and
shakes her finger back and forth, “Quite the grip, my darling girl.” She continues to coo at the girl
and starts rocking Evy back and forth.
Emma steps behind Regina and wraps her arms around her waist, resting her chin on Regina’s shoulder, “Are you okay?” she asks, feeling Regina relax into her.

Regina sighs and wraps her arms over Emma’s. She tilts her head so it can rest against Emma’s and smiles, “Better than okay.”

Emma turns her face to kiss Regina’s cheek, “I’m glad she found you.”

“So am I,” Regina whispers. “She was one of the very few who ever looked out for me in the castle. Her loyalties were to those she cared for, not the King simply because he was king.” Emma nods and allows Regina to continue her whispered confession. They watched Louisa continue to walk with Evy and coo over her until Regina whispered, “She was like a mother to me during that time. She used to make sure I was where I needed to be as the queen - never late, never rushing, because a queen cannot be late - but she made sure I never missed out on my queenly duties. And she always made sure I had time to be Regina, and not just the King’s wife.”

“You’re so much more than a title Regina,” Emma whispers as she brushes her nose against Regina’s neck.

“I know, but back then, she was the first to show me I could be more than a title. I never had that growing up. I was always the would-be queen to my mother; my father saw me as his perfect little girl, doing everything mother wanted of me; the King saw me as a body to warm his bed and a pretty face to show off; even your mother saw me as a shiny new mother for her. Louisa was the first to show me that just being Regina was okay,” she smiles. "I could enjoy reading and would explain to her what was happening in my latest book. She may never have understood why I was excited, but she always listened. She and Kam would help me sneak away to the royal stable to care for Rocinante," she chuckles softly. "They would help be get away from being the queen, from being the trophy wife, the perfect mother. Everything I could never live up to, they helped me get away, if only for a moment.”

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“Your Majesty,” a voice calls and Regina looks up to see Louisa standing in the doorway.

“It’s just us Louisa,” Regina says with a smile as she marks her spot before closing her book.

“Very well. Regina,” she says with a tilt of her head causing a chuckle to leave the queen’s lips. “She smiles at the sound, “where to today, dear?”

Regina shrugs, how very common she thinks her mother would say. She shakes her head from those thoughts and focuses on Louisa in front of her.

“Will we be leaving the grounds?”

Regina shakes her head and mutters, “You know I can’t.”

“Oh yes, that pesky spell. Well, perhaps just getting you out of the castle will be enough.”

Regina sighs but smiles at the effort Louisa is putting in to make her happy. She nods and Louisa steps outside to speak to Kam. He follows her in and bows respectfully, “Your Majesty,” he murmurs.

“Kam,” she acknowledges with a slight nod of her head. She stands and walks to her armoire to grab an overcoat.
“I believe today would be a lovely day for a ride across the grounds, Your Majesty,” Kam states. Regina nods in agreement and has Louisa help her into her overcoat.

“Would you care for riding clothes, dear?” Louisa asks as she helps button it up.

Regina shakes her head and quietly mutters, “The King does not approve of his queen wearing trousers. I am to remain in dresses at all times.”

“Oh dear,” Louisa says with a small sigh, “Well, then we shall make the best of this and try not to ruin such a lovely dress, yes?” She smirks at Regina and sends her a wink before looking at Kam.

Before they can continue their conversation about where they will ride to, Claude steps into the room, “The King has requested that Princess Snow White join you today, Your Majesty.”

Regina holds in a sigh and nods her head - the King does not make requests, he tells you to jump and you say how high, “Of course, Claude. Where shall I meet her?”

Claude does not have a chance to answer before a rambunctious Snow runs in, “Regina! Are we really riding today?!“

Regina gives a tight smile and nods.

“Yay!” Snow squeals as she hugs Regina tightly.

“I shall prepare the horses,” Kam says as he takes a step toward the door.

“That is not necessary, Kam. Snow and I will do it,” Regina says as she pulls herself from Snow’s suffocating affection.

“We will?” Snow questions as she tilts her head to the side, looking at Regina in confusion.

“Of course, Snow. You need to build trust with your horse. What better way to do it then brushing them out and readying them for a ride.”

Snow smiles brightly at Regina, “If that’s what you think is best Regina, then that is what we shall do.”

“Wonderful,” Regina mutters as she heads for the door. Snow is hot on her heels and grabs Regina’s hand as they walk through the castle. Regina breathes deeply, trying to calm her anger towards the girl. It’s not her fault. It’s not her fault. Regina repeats to herself over and over. It would be easier if she actually believed what she was saying, but the only person at fault here was Snow White. She wanted me all to herself. She couldn’t stand that I wanted to leave her behind and be with Daniel. She told my mother because she wanted me to be her shiny, new mother. Regina takes in more deep breaths. She cannot lose her emotions like this. There are too many people around that could see and would definitely report back to the King, and the gossip rings for sure. The King cannot have a wife who cannot control her emotions, that would certainly backfire on her. So, she lifts her chin, allows Snow to cling to her, and moves toward the stable. Once she’s with Rocinante, everything will be better. He’s always had the unique ability to calm her emotions.

“Daddy!”

Snow’s scream pulls Regina from her thoughts and she looks to see the King walking from one of his many “secret” rooms. She sighs because she knows what kind of “secret” he’s hiding in there but she wouldn’t dare question him on it. When he’s in there he’s not with her and that’s a relief.
“Well, if it isn’t my two favorite girls,” the King says as Snow runs up to him.

She’s far too old to be coddled this way Regina’s inner voice screams as the King lifts Snow up and twirls her in a circle, eliciting squeals of joy from the princess.

“My Precious Queen,” he murmurs as he leans in to kiss her cheek. It takes all of Regina’s willpower not to recoil.

“My King,” she finds herself replying submissively.

The King smiles at her before turning back to his daughter, “And where are my lovely ladies heading off to today?”

“We’re going riding, Daddy!” Snow squeals as she beams at Regina.

Regina musters a smile back, wishing she could fade into the background and not have this conversation.

“Wonderful!” the King says as he claps his hands. “I hope you both have a delightful time and I will see you both at dinner.”

“You won’t be back until dinner?” Snow whines as she juts out her lower lip.

“I’m afraid I have kingdom business to attend to, my darling daughter. But I’m sure you and Regina will be far too busy with the horses to notice my absence.”

Snow looks down dejectedly but nods her head anyway. “Of course, Daddy,” she murmurs as she moves back to Regina’s side and clasps her hand.

Regina automatically squeezes it. She hates seeing Snow sad, no matter how much hatred she feels for the brat, she feels more deeply than anyone else and Regina can relate to that. “Come along Snow, I believe we’ve kept your father for long enough. Let us head to the stables to prepare our horses.”

At the mention of the horses, Snow brightens, “Alright Regina. Let’s go!”

Regina makes to move around the King but she’s stopped when he grasps her forearm. She freezes and looks up at the King with fear in her eyes. “Yes, Your Majesty?” she whispers.

“I want to see you tonight. After Snow is asleep,” he murmurs in her ear before he leans down to kiss Snow’s forehead, “Enjoy your day, Snow.” He stands and kisses Regina possessively on her lips. “I will see you later, my precious queen.”

Regina stands frozen to the floor. She can feel that tonight will not be good and she wishes she had a reason to deny the King. But no one denies the King anything. She thinks bitterly. A tug on her hand pulls her from her terrible thoughts and Snow whines, “Regiiinnaaaaaa! Come on! Let’s go ride!”

“O-of course Snow. Lead the way,” she murmurs as Snow pulls her along. She feels rather than sees Kam fall into step behind her and to her left. This relaxes her, knowing someone is in her corner, instead of always being a possession of the King’s.

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Emma holds Regina tighter as she talks about her past. Emma knows that Regina can get lost in her
memories and she wants to silently show her support as Regina continued to talk about the past.

Regina smiles when she feels the arms around her middle tighten, her whole body filling with warmth. “Thank you for listening.”

“Of course,” Emma whispers into Regina’s neck, “I want to know everything about you Regina. For better or worse, right?”

Regina chuckles, “I’ve got plenty of worse, darling.”

“Hey,” Emma whispers as she turns Regina around in her arms. “No one is perfect Regina. I knew what I was doing when I fell for you. Well, maybe not everything, but I was under no impression that you were a saint. Neither am I. We’ve both done things we aren’t proud of, but we’re here now, making things better for us and our family. That’s what matters.”

Regina smiles and Emma reaches for Regina’s wrists, bringing them up around her neck and pulls her into a tight hug.

“I love you Gina,” Emma whispers, rubbing her back soothingly.

Regina squeezes tighter, wrapping her hands around her own elbows to bring Emma closer, “I love you, too, Emma. Thank you.”

“Anytime babe,” Emma says with a wink as she releases Regina.

Regina rolls her eyes and turns back to see Louisa smiling at them. Regina blushes and looks down.

“Why don’t you two go for a walk around the grounds?” Louisa suggests.

“Huh?” Emma asks.

Both Louisa and Regina chuckle at her lack of eloquence, but Louisa responds, “Take a walk around the castle, I can stay with your sleeping children until you return.”

“Ok,” Emma says with a shrug. Before Regina can object, Emma pulls her from the room. “Don’t question it Gina, let’s just enjoy some us time.”

Regina smiles at Emma’s shy smile and loops her arm through her wife’s, resting her head on Emma’s left shoulder. “Alright,” she whispers as she and Emma start walking slowly through the corridor.

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They had been walking mostly in silence, with Regina pointing out a few places along the way.

“You’re such a nerd babe,” Emma teased when Regina pointed out another library.

Regina weakly swats at the arm enclosing hers, “Ha. Ha. Says the one who - how did you put it - ‘geeks out’ anytime something related to science comes up in conversation.”

“Hey!” Emma says, pausing their stroll, “Science is life, Gina!”

Regina rolls her eyes playfully, “Yes, I know. It’s a part of our everyday life and as such is super important,” she teases.

Emma scoffs, “You joke, woman, but you know I’m right. And by the way,” she pauses and
glances sideways at Regina with a smirk, “Science is better than your libraries.”

Regina’s eyes grow wide. She pulls her head off of Emma’s shoulder and gasps, “Take it back.”

“Nope.” Emma pops the ‘p’ on her lips and her smirk grows into a full-blown smile as she continues their walk.

Regina huffs but allows Emma to keep her arm in the crook of her own, following next to her.

Emma keeps the smile on her face, *she makes this too easy,* “I love you babe,”

This earns her another huff and a mumbled; “You better,” causing Emma to laugh out loud.

“Where are we now?” Emma asks as she blindly turns them down another hallway. She feels Regina tense next to her and she stops walking, looking back to her wife whose eyes are as wide as saucers, “Gina?” she asks quietly.

Regina shakes her head to clear her thoughts, “I-I didn’t realize we had come this far.”

Emma can see her put her walls up, “Babe? What’s going on? Where are we?”

“The royal chambers,” she whispers.

Emma looks around the hallway they are in and notices there’s not a lot of furniture in the hallway: a simple table and an extravagant rug on the wall.

Regina seems to be talking to herself as she murmurs, “It seems your mother has not changed a thing since this became her castle and not her father’s.”

Emma turns and studies her wife now. She notices how stiff Regina’s posture has become, her shoulders pulled back, her chin up, and her arm in Emma’s has grown tighter around Emma’s lower bicep. Regina has a death grip on Emma’s elbow, like she’s holding on for dear life. Her eyes have glossed over and Emma can tell she’s no longer seeing the same things as Emma. “Gina?” she whispers quietly.

Regina blinks away the fog and looks to Emma who is giving her a worried look, “Sorry dear, would you like a tour of this wing or would you like to move on?”

“Regina. What’s going on? Why are you acting like this?”

“Like what dear?” Regina asks as she feigns innocence, no longer looking at Emma but at the table in front of them.

Emma steps in front of her and bends her neck so she and Regina are eye level, “Don’t do that. Please don’t shut me out.”

Regina gives her a small smile, “I’m sorry dear. I have not been in this castle in a very long time and it’s been even longer since I’ve been in this part of it.”

Emma studies her, tilting her head to the side to figure out what Regina is trying to tell her.

Regina sighs as she realizes Emma won’t just let this go, “This is where I lived when I was queen dear.”

Emma raises her eyebrows but still doesn’t understand why Regina looked so lost in her memories earlier.
Another dramatic sigh draws her attention back to Regina as she begins talking again. She grips Emma’s arm tighter and walks forward a bit, “This is where I lived when the king was alive.”

Emma drew in a deep breath when she realized what Regina wasn’t explicitly saying, “This is where….”

“Yes.” Regina says it simply but Emma can tell that she is trembling.

“We don’t have to continue,” Emma whispers, lifting her right hand to grip Regina’s that is still between her arm and her torso.

“It’s fine dear. I’m sure this is where your parents are staying now anyway. It’s different. I’m different,” she ends in a whisper, almost as if she’s only saying it for herself.

“Are you sure?” Emma asks quietly, studying Regina’s reactions.

Regina looks up at her and gives her a small smile, “Of course.” She turns back forward and continues walking, “These were my chambers right here,” she points to a door on their right. “Snow’s chambers were down the hall that way,” she points behind them, “And-“ she takes a deep breath and says in a tone barely above a whisper, “And the King’s chambers were down there,” she points in front of them.

“Well, I think that’s enough of a tour for today,” Emma says tugging Regina to a stop so she won’t have to continue walking towards the King’s chambers, “I think we should head back to our kids now, yes?”

Regina nods solemnly and says, “I think that’s a good idea.”

They are back in their room talking quietly with Louisa, who is catching them up on much of what they have missed in the past four years since they have left. Apparently, most of Regina’s Dark Guard dispersed after she left because many refused to work under the Charming’s. This caused a smirk to appear on Regina’s face, no matter how hard she tried to fight it. It is always good when you win, no matter whom you beat or how petty it is, Regina thinks smugly. Some of the guard chose to stay with the Charming’s and work on the outskirts of the kingdom. Far away from the rulers themselves, Regina thinks with a chuckle.

“Kam?” she finds herself asking before she can stop herself.

Louisa smiles and says, “He is on the outskirts. He said he could not leave when the likelihood of his queen returning was even a remote possibility. I already sent word to him of your return and he should arrive as soon as possible.”

“Thank you,” Regina says genuinely.

“Of course,” Louisa says with a nod.

They sit in silence for a moment, all three women lost in their own thoughts, Evy sleeping soundly in Louisa’s arms.

Their silence in broken when a strangled cry of “Mommy!” draws their attention.

Regina is out of her seat before Tommy can finish his word and he is in her arms before the first tear falls, “Shhhhh,” she coos as she rubs his back and walks back to where she was sitting with
Emma and Louisa. She sits next to Emma, tucking under Emma’s arm that immediately drops to her shoulder and pulls her closer. “You are alright, Querido.” She kisses his forehead and gently rubs his back.

He buries his head further into her chest and shakes his head, “Bad man say no, Mommy. Bad man,” he mumbles.

Regina looks to Emma, who is turning red with rage, who does Jafar think he is scaring my kid in his dreams? No one hurts my family. No one. Certainly not some second-hand creep with a snake staff. I married the Evil Queen, the Queen of Hearts is technically my mother-in-law, and the Wicked Witch is my sister-in-law. Doesn’t he know that villains don’t scare me? I’m the Savior for Christ’s sake! I am the eldest daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming, rulers’ of the Enchanted Forest. He’s a second-rate villain preying on the dreams of small children. My children! Unacceptable. Emma is pulled from her thoughts when Tommy grabs at her shirt, “Momma?”

“You stop ‘im?” He questions, peeking out from his hiding spot in Regina’s shirt.

She gives a small smile, “Yeah Buddy, I’m gonna stop him.” She puts a hand on the back of his head while Regina continues to rub his back.

“Wike a Supa he-o?” he asks as he moves his head further away from his hiding spot to look clearly at his blonde mother.

She chuckles and kisses his forehead, “Exactly like a superhero, Monkey.”

“Good,” he says as he lays his head back against Regina’s chest, clutching her shirt tightly with one hand, his teddy bear tucked into his elbow, and Emma’s shirt with the other.

Regina smiles down at her son and moves closer to her wife, placing her head back on her shoulder.

Emma’s left arm tightens around Regina’s shoulders, pulling her closer and kissing the top of her head.

A few moments of silence is all they are granted before Tommy bolts upright, scaring both of his mothers out of their serene moment. He gasps and looks at Emma, “Wook?”

Emma raises an eyebrow in question and says, “Huh?”

“Gotta get da bad guys, Momma.”

“Oh! No Monkey, I don’t have to work today. The bad guys took the day off, that’s why we’re visiting my parents today.”

Tommy tilts his head to study her, in the same manner as his blonde mother, causing Regina to smile at the endearing trait. “No powice today?”

“Nope. Just Momma, an everyday superhero.” Emma winks causing Tommy to giggle and Regina to roll her eyes.

Louisa chuckles at the family moment and Tommy turns to look at her, “Who you?” he asks as he puts his head back down on Regina’s chest.
Regina kisses the top of his head and murmurs, “Thomas, this is Louisa, can you say hello?”

Tommy lifts his head and says, “Hi Wisa.”

“Hello, young prince,” she says as she bows her head.

Tommy’s eyes grow wide and he turns back to Regina, he puts both of his hands on her cheeks and says, “I yowa prince Mommy!”

Regina chuckles and says, “That’s right Querido. You’re a real prince here. Everyone knows you are Prince Thomas.”

Tommy never moved his hands from Regina’s cheeks, so her words came out a little grumbled, causing him to giggle, “You siwwy Mommy.”

Regina grasps his little hands in hers and kisses his nose, “You are the silly one, Querido.”

Tommy shakes his head and nudges Regina’s nose with his own. He suddenly pulls back and looks between Emma and Regina, “Pwinces have ho-ses.”

Regina mock gasps and says, “They do?!” Off Tommy’s nod she chuckles, “Well, I suppose we will have to go find some horses then.”

“Yay, yay, yay!” Tommy sings as he bounces up and down on Regina’s lap, causing all three women to chuckle.

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Chapter End Notes

Again, I apologize for the wait. If you have any input on how you want the fight scene to go please comment or send me a message! I'm having a terrible time figuring out how I want to wrap this up and it's giving me severe writer's block.

I hope you enjoy your day Lovelies! :)

-IrishBella
The women sit and continue to visit until Henry walks in. The first thing he sees is his mothers sitting together on a chaise across from- “LouLou?” he whispers quietly in disbelief.

“Henry,” she breathes out with a smile.

“Wha-“ he breaks off speaking and turns to his brunette mother with eyes full of questions.

She gives a smile and nods her head. Emma quickly stands with Louisa and takes Evy before Henry launches himself into Louisa’s arms. Emma raises an eyebrow but moves back to the chaise next to Regina and Tommy. She hasn’t seen Henry look so young in a long time. He has his head buried in Louisa’s chest with his arms wrapped tightly around her waist. Louisa rubs his back in gently circles as she whispers in his ear.

Regina looks over at Emma’s confused face and reaches a hand over to squeeze her forearm. Emma looked over and smiled at the sight of her wife holding their sleeping son against her chest. Regina returns the smile and carefully shifts her body - mindful of Tommy laying on her - and whispers in Emma’s ear, “She used to take care of Henry when he was little.”

“I thought she was your secretary?” Emma asks as she resituates Evy in her arms and shifts so she and Regina are sitting shoulder to shoulder.

Regina nods, “She was; but whenever Henry was with me at my office - which was quite often - she would help look after him,” she says with a fond smile.

“You were that mom weren’t you,” Emma says with a smirk.

Regina gasps is mock outrage but they both turn to giggles when Regina says, “He didn’t deserve
to stay at that daycare any longer than absolutely necessary.”

“And how long was that, Mama Bear?” Emma asks, barely hiding her grin.

“Only a few hours during the day.” Emma rolls her eyes and Regina continues, “I wouldn’t have sent him to that place at all if those books didn’t say it was important to socialize him.”

“You totally are a Mama Bear,” Emma says with a shake of her head and a laugh.

Regina hums and gives a noncommittal shrug as if saying, *you didn’t already know?* “Anyway, Henry usually just stayed in my office and colored pictures or ‘helped me’ run the town,” she adds finger quotes around the words “helped me” and continues, “but if there was ever a time that I had a meeting while he was there or if he was getting too antsy to stay in the room while I finished up, Louisa would take him.” Regina smiles as she sees Henry pulls away from Louisa and sit down next to her; Louisa’s arms still protectively around his shoulders.

“I thought you were dead LouLou,” Henry says as he shakily wipes at his eyes.

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“*Mom?*” Henry calls as he walks into her study.

Right on time, Regina thinks with a smile as she pushes away the book she had been reading. She stands and walks toward him, wrapping him in a hug and kissing his forehead, “Hello dear. How are you today?”

*Henry shrugs his shoulders. Keeping an arm around his mother’s back, he moves toward the couch. Regina raises an eyebrow at being led somewhere, but she merely follows along and sits next to her son. He never lets go and once they’re sitting, he rests his head on her shoulder. Regina smiles at the sudden “snuggliness” of her son and wraps her arms around him, drawing him closer. “Mom?” he finally whispers once she leans back against the chaise and they get comfortable.*

“*Hmmm?” Regina hums back just as quietly as she closes her eyes, content to just sit in this peaceful moment with her son. These moments have happened more and more often since they came to the Enchanted Forest and she will not take them for granted, not after going so long where he wouldn’t even look at her.*

*“Is LouLou dead?” he whispers.*

Regina’s eyes pop open and she glances down at her son whose head is still resting on her shoulder. He refuses to look up at her. “*Henry,*” she whispers quietly. She waits until he looks up at her before saying, “*I honestly don’t know. We haven’t found anything, but I’m not giving up and you shouldn’t either. There’s a lot of land to cover. She could’ve been placed anywhere after the curse.*”

*Henry’s eyes fill with tears as he says, “But there’s no trace. She’s probably dead. There are ogres everywhere.”*

“*Oh Henry,*” Regina says as Henry buries his face in her chest. She wraps her arms tightly around him and whispers that everything will work out until he calms down.

Finally, with a shaky breath Henry sits up and wipes at his eyes. “*I don’t want to talk about this anymore.*”
Regina nods and sits up as well, “That’s alright. Just know that we’re doing everything we can, okay?” When Henry nods, Regina gives a forced smile and decides to change the subject, “Shall we start your riding lesson?”

Henry nods and together they stand and leave the room.

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Louisa gives a sad smile and kisses his temple. “Oh Henry, I am so sorry to have worried you. I was just misplaced when the curse broke. Everything is alright now, Duckling, I promise.”

Henry gives a wet chuckle and says, “I haven’t been called that in a long time.”

Louisa smiles and kisses him again, “Well I guess I’ll have to fix that. Won’t I Duckling,” she enunciates with a smirk.

“I sure hope so.” He smiles and then his face drops, “At least as long as I’m here,” he adds quietly, looking at the ground.

Regina squeezes Emma’s forearm again and they share a look before turning back to their son. He’s still looking at the floor and Louisa is looking at them with concern.

“Henry?” Regina calls out quietly, drawing his attention to his mothers.

He immediately looks back down and mumbles out a quiet, “Sorry.”

“Henry, is there something you want to say?” Regina asks, trying to make eye contact with her eldest son. When he shakes his head and doesn’t look up Regina repeats, “Henry,” is a stricter tone.

Henry raises his eyes and says, “It doesn’t matter anyway.”

“We won’t know that until you tell us,” Emma says as she looks at her son. She thinks he looks smaller than usual when he’s tucked under Louisa’s arm like he is.

Henry looks at the identical looks he is receiving from his mothers and if he weren’t so upset right now he’d probably laugh and tease them about how they spend too much time together. Instead he takes a deep, shaky breath and says, “I know what we said when we moved but now that we’re back and we remember I don’t know if I want to go back. I know I have friends back there and you guys have jobs and friends and even Tommy has friends and his playgroup he goes to but this is our family here. Ma,” he turns to his blonde mother, “you have siblings you don’t even know because we were in another world and Mom,” he turns to his brunette mother, “you haven’t seen Daniel since we left. We all have friends and family here that we don’t even know because we’ve been gone for four years. Grams and Gramps haven’t even met their grandchildren…” he trails off and tentatively looks at his mothers.

Regina and Emma share a look and turn to Henry with apologetic eyes. “Henry-“ Emma starts.

“We had no idea you felt this way,” Regina finishes.

Henry sighs and looks back at the floor before continuing, “Well, like I said, it doesn’t really matter.”

“Henry,” Regina sighs, “your feelings always matter.”

He shrugs and says, “I knew it wouldn’t matter in the long run. We left for a reason and that reason
hasn’t changed. We still are going back there. We’ll go back with Aunt Z and Uncle Rob and the
kids and continue our lives like nothing’s changed when everything has. I didn’t really think about
what it meant to have been gone for four years. I mean I got my memories back and then
everything was thrown into getting back here to stop the wacko trying to hurt our family. Now
we’re here and I don’t want to forget them. I don’t want to go back to not knowing my family. Not
knowing how awesome my moms truly are.” This causes a small smile to form on each other his
mother’s faces but he continues, “I mean, don’t get me wrong, you guys were awesome in the other
world too, but here you’re the Evil Queen and the Savior. You’re my moms and you’re both totally
badasses.” He grins widely as Regina’s eyes widen.

“Henry Daniel Mills, watch your mouth.” Emma snickers but quickly schools her features so
Regina doesn’t admonish her for encouraging the behavior, she mocks in Regina’s voice in her
head.

“Sorry Mom,” he mutters as he leans back against Louisa. Louisa stares shocked at the admissions
she’d just heard. She had never really thought about what it was like for them without their
memories. Everyone in the Enchanted Forest kept their memories of the Savior, the Evil Queen
and their son. That was the reason they had left in the first place. Many people were not okay with
trusting the Evil Queen and the trust placed in the Savior was only there because of her title and
the fact that her parents were Snow White and Prince Charming.

“Henry, we really didn't know you felt this way,” Emma repeats as she shifts Evy slightly to move
closer to her wife.

Henry shrugs, “I know. I guess I didn’t really know I felt this way until we got here. I don’t know
if I want to leave.”

Before Emma and Regina can respond, the door to their chambers opens and Zelena rushes in
holding a red eyed Kelly. “He’s doing it again. I swear I’m going to fireball his ass.”

Regina and Emma share a look and look back to their son.

“I know. I know,” he says as he holds up his hands, “We’ll talk about this later.”

Regina and Emma give apologetic smiles before looking back to Zelena, “We know,” Regina says
as she gestures to Tommy who is still curled against his brunette mother’s chest. “Tommy woke a
while ago saying the bad man was back.”

“We need to stop this,” Emma says, her anger flaring again.

“Yes, I agree. That’s why I sent your mother to prepare a war room to discuss our plans,” Zelena
says as she shifts Kelly in her arms. “It should be ready now.” She looks back to the corridor
behind her.

“Very well,” Regina says as she attempts to stand and then looks down at Tommy, debating on
what she should do with him.

Henry sees the look on her face and says, “I’ll stay with them.”

Regina looks up and studies her son, “Are you sure?” she asks, “you don’t have to. We can figure
something else out.”

“I’ve got this, Mom.”

Regina still looks dubious so Louisa steps in, “I will stay as well Your Majesty. It will give me
Regina smiles and nods, “Alright then.” She places Tommy on the chaise next to Henry and he immediately curls into his side. Henry rests his arm around his little brother’s shoulders and smiles gratefully at Louisa. Emma watches the interaction and stands to place Evy back in the crib next to her sister.

“Thanks LouLou,” Henry murmurs once Tommy is comfortable and stops moving, his breathing evening out. She sends him a wink and he smiles before turning to his aunt. “Hey Kells, wanna stay in here until Tommy wakes up and then we can play a game?”

Kelly looks unconvinced for a minute before she shrugs and drops her legs from around her mother’s waist until Zelena sets her down on the floor. She walks over and stands in front of the chaise until Henry pats the place Louisa just vacated; she moved over slightly to allow Kelly to sit there.

“Who are you?” she asks as her eyebrows draw together.

Louisa smiles but it’s Regina that answers. “That is Louisa, my dear,” she says as she kisses the top of Kelly’s head before lifting her under her armpits and placing her next to Henry. She unconsciously snuggles closer to him and shoots Louisa a skeptical look. Regina chuckles and kisses her forehead before saying, “You can call her LouLou.” She winks at Kelly, causing her to smile. Regina moves over to kiss Henry’s forehead too and whispers, “We will talk about this, alright? I promise.”

Henry nods and says, “I know. I love you Mom.”

“I love you too darling. Come find us if you have any trouble, okay?”

“Trouble? I have LouLou, what kind of trouble could we find?” he asks with an innocent smile.

Regina is not convinced and merely raises an eyebrow and purses her lips before saying, “You were not as sneaky as you believed when you were younger. I know all about the trouble you two caused.”

Louisa gasps, trying to hide her smirk. Henry smiles a sweet smile, knowing he’s not actually in trouble.

Regina rolls her eyes and kisses Tommy’s forehead, smiling as he smiles in his sleep and she steps back. “Behave you two,” she reminds as she turns as follows Zelena out. Emma smiles at their kids before following the Mills sisters out of the room. Louisa and Henry share a smirk.

Once their chamber doors are shut, Emma and Regina grab onto each other’s hands and follow Zelena to the war room.

Robin, Snow, David, and Granny are already there when Zelena, Regina, and Emma arrive. Granny is sitting with a pair of knitting needles and some purple yarn when they walk in, merely giving a grunt of acknowledgement. Regina smiles at the old woman, knowing just how much of a softie she really is, and takes her seat. Snow is standing behind her chair, with David to her right and Emma to her left. Next to Emma is Regina (obviously) followed by Zelena, Robin and a few empty chairs for the rest of the council. There is an empty chair between David and Granny; assumingly for Ruby. Regina sees 3 of the dwarves standing at the other end of the room. Geppetto and Jiminy Cricket are sitting next Granny and there are knights stationed around the room. The doors are flung open and Ruby, Kathryn and Frederick enter the room. Regina raises her eyebrows, not
expecting Kathryn and Frederick to show up. Ruby sees the look and simply shrugs before she stands behind Granny’s chair and Kathryn sits in the empty chair next to David with Frederick in his armor behind her. Kathryn also notices the shock on Regina’s face and laughs at her friend’s public display of emotion, motherhood has softened her, she thinks with a smile. “Your children weren’t the only ones affected, Regina. We all want Jafar gone. We may not have magic like you three, but we’ll do whatever it takes to protect our children.

Regina composes herself and her emotions are hidden away before she nods and turns her attention back to Snow.

Snow smiles and places her hands on the back of her chair, “What Kathryn said is true. Jafar has been tormenting all of the children and wrecking havoc across the kingdom. We do not know what he wants, nor do we know a way to stop him. That’s where you come in,” she says as she turns to look at Emma, Regina, and Zelena. She smiles at them all and says, “We’re open to ideas.”

Zelena harrumphs and mutters under her breath, “Of course you are. How else would we fix a problem? You wouldn’t know a good idea if it hit you over the head.” She groans as Regina kicks her shin under the table. She puts on a fake smile and says, “We’ll do anything to help.”

Emma can’t help but chuckle before she looks at Regina, “Any ideas?”

“Perhaps,” Regina muses as she looks around the table and at the guards behind them. Idiots she thinks as she sees a shimmer in the mirror behind the guards along the wall.

“Care to share?” Grumpy mutters in annoyance.

“Not with you dwarf,” she mutters haughtily and stands to leave, “if that’s all, this is over.”

Emma’s eyes grow wide as she stares after her wife, who’s walking from the room. She glances at Zelena who instead glances at the back wall. Emma turns and stares at the guards, why are they so absorbed with the guards she wonders and then she sees a shimmer along the mirror. Her eyes narrow but before she can do anything Zelena leans over and grabs her arm, giving her a glare that could compare with Regina’s Evil Queen days. Emma immediately freezes and Zelena murmurs, “Go to Regina,” before turning her attention back to Snow, “As it seems this was pointless on your end; we’ll be leaving now. Good luck.” And with that she stands leaving a still stunned Robin and Emma in their seats. Robin is quick to recover, standing and following his wife. Ruby moves around and nudges Emma out of her seat and soon Emma’s running out of the room only to find Regina and Zelena speaking in hushed tones outside the door. She quickly walks over and Regina is quick to grab on to her arm and drag her into the room across the hall.

“Follow my lead,” Regina says as she starts releasing her magic.

Emma is quick to join her and allows Regina to siphon her magic and shape it around the room. Emma feels tiny beads of sweat forming along her brow but continues to push through the fatigue until Regina deems the room to satisfaction and stops the flow of magic. Emma sighs and slumps forward. Regina is quick to grab her before she falls to the ground.

“Emma!” she exclaims.

Her wife gives her a weak smile and mumbles, “I’m fine babe.”

“You are anything but fine!” Regina can’t help the irritation that bubbles up at her wife’s stubbornness. “You should have stopped when you felt tired.”

“It’s like running, Gina. Gotta sweat to step up my stamina.”
Regina sighs and helps Emma over to a chair, “You stubborn fool,” she mutters as she brushes damp hair from her wife’s face, “Magic is not running. I can see how you were drawn to that conclusion but using too much magic could kill you Emma! Do not let your stubbornness overpower your instinct to survive, understand?”

The powerful look Regina is giving her is enough to give Emma pause. “Sorry,” she murmurs as she looks down, properly chastised.

“We need you alive,” Regina says in a softer tone as she places a kiss to Emma’s temple.

Emma smiles at the affection given so freely and turns to Regina expectantly. When all she receives is a blank stare, Emma sighs and says, “Well? Are you going to tell me what we just did with that magic or do I have to guess? Because if I have to guess, I’m going to need more than 20 questions.”

Regina shakes her head at her wife’s attempt at levity but smiles affectionately. “It was a silencing spell, laced with a protection spell to block all other magicks from penetrating the barrier.”

“So no one can hear us now?” Emma says as she raises her eyebrows provocatively. Regina shakes her head; Emma watches the blush color her wife’s cheeks and smirks. Emma tugs Regina closer to her but before she lands in Emma’s lap the doors are pushed open and Zelena barges in with Snow, Charming, Grumpy, Ruby, and Kathryn close behind. Emma sighs and leans her forehead against Regina’s stomach and murmurs, “I can’t fucking wait until we’re out of crisis and people stop barging in on us.”

Regina chuckles and runs her now-free hand through Emma’s locks, “You still owe me a bath,” she whispers into Emma’s ear before turning toward their new companions.

“Care to explain?” Grumpy asks exasperatedly.

“Not particularly,” Regina says with an air of authority. “But since your dimwitted brain cannot comprehend I suppose I will have to spell it out for you. We were being watched in the War Room.”

“That’s impossible,” Snow says, “Blue put up the wards herself. They should be impenetrable.”

Regina scoffs, “The Moth? Truly? Do you know nothing, dear?” Emma squeezes her hand and Regina pauses. She counts to 10 and softens her tone, “I should have known she’d be behind this.”

“But why now? Why go after the children?” Zelena asks, already on the same page as her sister.

The others try to follow the conversation but are all at a loss. It’s Emma who catches on first when Regina says, “She never wanted me to have children. She gave me a potion. A potion that prevented pregnancy,” she elaborates when she notices the looks of confusion surrounding her.

“But I thought-” Snow started, she had found out about the potion Regina took when she was married to her father; it was in Henry’s storybook.

“The first one was from Rumple, and it was reversible,” Regina says simply. The potion from Blue that she drank when her mother was trying to find her a suitor and produce an heir was not. Regina remembers how much it hurt when she took that potion, physically and mentally; it wasn’t supposed to be permanent. Then she shudders at the thought of how badly things could have gone if she had allowed her mother to get her way and conceive an heir for the throne. No Emma? No Henry? I don’t ever want to be in a world like that again.
“Going after our kids? Our friend’s kids? Our family? Uh uh. I don’t think so,” Emma says, “I don’t care who she is.”

“Now wait a minute,” Grumpy says, “Blue’s a good guy. She wouldn’t do this.”

“Do you have another explanation, Munchkin?” Zelena asks.

“I’m a dwarf,” Grumpy grinds out.

Zelena’s face contorts with disgust as she says, “That’s even worse.”

“Anyway,” Regina steps in, “someone was watching our meeting through the mirror. That’s why Emma and I sealed this ourselves.”

“And how do we know we can trust you?” Grumpy asks warily.

Regina rolls her eyes and says, “I guess you don’t.”

Emma doesn’t let that go. She stands up and faces Grumpy, “Because these are her kids, her family. If you don’t think Regina would go to the ends of the earth - even farther than that - to protect her family, you don’t know her at all.” Emma is trying her best not to show how exhausted she is.

Apparently she is unsuccessful because her sister-in-law grabs her elbow and asks, “Do you need a Gatorade?”

Off of Emma’s glare Ruby chuckles, “You do look like shit, Ems.”

“Thanks guys,” she grumbles.

Regina rolls her eyes but grabs her wife’s hand and shares some of her own magic. She may not have used magic in the past few years, but it’s like riding a bike and you just don’t forget. She’s also not as stubborn as her wife. Emma may be similar to a magical battery, but even she has limits - whether she admits them or not. Regina shares enough magic that the color returns to Emma’s cheeks and she no longer looks like she’s about to pass out.

“Much better,” Emma says with a forced smile, “Now let’s figure out a plan to end this.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the love and support for this story. It really means a lot that people are still reading this and enjoying what’s happening. You guys are amazing.
Hugs and Love,
-IrishBella
Selcouth

Chapter Summary

Selcouth: (adj.) unfamiliar, rare, strange, and yet marvelous

Chapter Notes

Whaaaaaa?!?! I'm back and this story is almost finished!! So sorry I've been away for so long but hey, if you're still reading this, you're the real MVP.
I recently went through and edited this beast of a story and changed a few things but the core of this story remains.
I had quite a bit of free time on my hands to edit and finish this story since I had surgery 5 weeks ago and spent a lot of time laid up on the couch.
This beautiful story holds a special place in my heart and I can't wait to post the remaining chapters.

Enjoy!! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

They plan for an attack; after they allow their magic to replenish. Together, they strategically place wards and set booby traps around entrances. Regina and Zelena moving about the castle, using Emma if they need a magical boost. The three of them set up wards they created while also taking down the ones Blue set up.

“Won’t this tip her off?” Emma asks as they take down another ward.

“Of course,” Zelena says, waving her hand, watching the magic melt away, down the wall and into the floor. “She’ll be headed back here soon; once she realizes we took down her magic and she can’t see in. She’ll be back to see what’s going on. That’s why we’re using your magic to mask our own. She should only check to see whose magic it is. When she sees it’s yours, she will probably stop looking and just head back to celebrate her precious Savior’s return.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Zelena,” she warns.

Zelena simply shrugs and moves onto the next ward.

They’ve got a good system working. Zelena taking down Blue’s wards, Regina setting up new wards (in different places from Blue’s to waste some more time before she breaks into the castle), and Regina using Emma’s magic to mask who truly set the wards.

Finally, they finish the protections around the castle and move back into the Great Room. The three are exhausted; using magic of any kind is troubling now, especially with Jafar running around. They need their magic replenished, and fast. They need to be able to protect their family...and
everyone else in the castle.

Granny fixes them each a plate of food and gives them something to drink before moving back to her chair and knitting. It looks like she’s almost finished the purple blanket she’s working on and Regina can see more purple and pink yarn sticking out of her basket. The women offer their thanks and receive a grunt in response. Zelena and Emma turn away and Granny looks up to smile and wink at Regina before returning her focus to her knitting.

They move to a table and watch all the children playing a game. They laugh at Henry and Kathryn, who seem to be the referees of whatever game they’re playing.

“Blind man’s buff,” Regina says with a smile when she realizes what they’re playing.

“Blind man’s buff?” Emma looks to her wife, “That’s the one where there’s a blindfold right?”

“Yes,” Regina says with a smile.

“I don’t see a blindfold,” Emma observes.

“Of course not, this is the Enchanted Forest version. The blindfold is invisible. You can see their eyes, it looks like they can see you, but they can’t see a thing. Makes it very hard to know who is ‘It’.” Regina explains.

“And how do you know about that?” Zelena asks, “I don’t remember that game from when we were here last time.”

“I should know it, I invented it,” Regina says matter-of-factly.

Emma and Zelena share a look of confusion before looking back to Regina. When she doesn’t give anymore explanation Zelena sighs and says, “Care to elaborate?”

Regina smirks, “It was a game I started with Snow. She always wanted to play games, so I made this one up to keep her occupied for hours. The staff thought she was wandering around with her eyes open, clumsy as usual, but in reality she was blindfolded. No one knew. It gave me some peace while she started in one part of the castle and I disappeared to another.” She pauses as she looks at the children running around each other, not sure who has the blindfold on. “Eventually, she became better at it, and the time between when we started and when she found me became shorter. I had to start hiding in obscure places she would never look. But she looked everywhere.”

She shrugs, “Unfortunately, we had to stop that game when she became better at finding me than I was at hiding.”

A hand falls on her shoulder, “You’re the reason I became such a good bandit. I was able to track someone without my eyesight.”

Regina looks up to see Snow standing behind her smiling. She rolls her eyes, “Great, another thing that ruined my life because of you,” she huffs.

“You don’t believe that,” Snow says. “You don’t have regrets. If I hadn’t been such a good bandit, I wouldn’t have met Charming. Emma and Henry wouldn’t exist. I think what you meant to say was ‘thank you Snow’” she says with a smile.

“Don’t hold your breath,” Regina mumbles as she goes back to eating from her plate.

Snow wraps her arms around Regina’s shoulder from behind, resting her head atop Regina’s, “It’s alright, we both know the truth.” And with that, she’s off to chat with others in the Great Room.
Zelena cackles at the look her sister has on her face. It’s an attempt at anger but comes across as a pout. “Don’t try to look so cross, it no longer fits your personality,” she says with a smirk.

Regina narrows her eyes at her sister before being distracted by a squeal on the other side of the room. She turns her eyes to see Tommy running from Henry’s wiggling fingers. Suddenly, Tommy is running toward them and barrels into Regina’s legs, quickly climbing up into her lap and away from Henry’s tickling hands. “Mommy! Mommy! Hepp me!!! Hepp Hepp!!” He says wobbling on Regina’s lap.

“Alright, alright,” Regina says with a smile, wrapping her arms around Tommy’s middle, protecting him from tickles. She rests her chin over his shoulder and looks across the table at her sister and her wife, smiling.

“That’s a much better look,” Zelena says with a smile.

Regina rolls her eyes and sits up again, keeping her son on her lap as she glances through the crowd, looking for her daughters.

“Louisa and my mom have them,” Emma says, never looking up from her plate of food.

“How did you..?” Regina tapers off, waiting for Emma to answer.

“You sudden worry was palpable, babe. And you haven’t looked up for them for a whole 3 minutes, it was an educated guess,” Emma answers, shrugging.

“Momma siwwy,” Tommy says from his spot on his mom’s lap. He looks to see Henry still standing next to them and leans into his brunette mother a bit more, staying safe.

“Yes. She. Is.” Regina says, smirking across the table to her wife.

It’s Emma’s turn to look unimpressed and roll her eyes. “How about we go back and play that game you were playing before,” she asks, standing up and grabbing all three empty plates and taking them back to the kitchen.

“She’ll never learn,” Zelena mutters. “She’s a princess, there are maids here to clean up after her and she still chooses to clean up herself.”

Regina shrugs, “There are worse things in the world.”

“Come on Tommy,” Emma says, holding out her hands when she moves out of the kitchen and back into the Great Room.

Tommy hops off of Regina’s lap and takes off toward his blonde mother. Henry rests his hand on their other mom’s shoulder and smiles at her when she looks up at us. “Wanna join?” he asks with a smile. When it looks like Regina might say no he says, “Aunt Kat might need another referee.” Regina’s eyebrows draw together in confusion and he laughs, “Someone has to compete against Ma. We’ll need reinforcements to make sure everyone is safe.”

Regina takes his hand and stands up. She turns to see him walk around the table and offer the same had to his aunt. For a moment she’s stunned, but quickly smiles and stands with her nephew. Together, the three of them walk across the Great Room to where all the children are playing. Kat is trying to corral them all so no one walks into anything and hurts themselves but it seems to be too difficult for one person to handle. Regina quickly reaches out and lifts little Eva out of the way as Leo and Daniel go running past, never slowing down.
“Careful boys,” she says as they run by. She sets Eva back down on the floor, fixing her dress and hair. “There you go,” she smiles at the toddler, “all better.”

Eva looks at her and then toddles off. “Impressive,” Kathryn says, “I think Eva gets knocked down at least once every time those two boys take off together. And I don’t think I’ve seen her allow someone other than her parents pick her up without screaming. Sometimes she’ll start crying even when Charming picks her up.”

“I would too,” Regina snarks.

Kathryn laughs, “Even when they’re not here, you still snark.”

“Well, obviously it’s who she is as a person and not who she’s talking about,” Emma says, coming up to stand next to the two women.

Regina turns her glare at her wife and realizes she’s not looking her in the eye. “Emma, did you already get tagged?” she asks with a smile.

Emma puts her hands on her hips, looking at the space to Regina’s right, “I am appalled Regina. Why would you think something like that?”

“Because you usually prefer to stare at me, not next to me,” Regina says with a shrug, moving around Emma to stand behind her, “And you’re usually not so slow,” she whispers into her ear. She smirks when she sees goosebumps spread over the back of her neck.

“Damn babe, we should try this some time. It’s super kinky.”

Regina rolls her eyes and moves away.

“Babe? Regina? Where did you go?” she turns in a complete circle before lifting her hands out to her sides to maintain her balance. Regina sighs. “I know that sigh,” Emma claims as she tries to find out where her wife is. “Oh Giiiiiiina,” she sings. She hears a bunch of giggles and assumes the kids are all watching her stumble around trying to find her wife. She moves toward who she thinks is her wife, only to have someone move behind her, into her personal space and stop her. She’s turned 180 degrees. She puts her hands on their hips and she finds, “I know these curves.”

Regina shakes her head and pulls off the invisible blindfold from around her wife’s head, “Let’s just stop this before you get yourself in trouble,” she says with a smirk.

“What are you talking about babe? Are you embarrassed about something?” Emma teases, her hands still on Regina’s hips.

She laughs and looks over Emma’s shoulder, “You know it takes a lot to make me uncomfortable these days, Em-ma. Your parents on the other hand...I don’t think they expected to hear their daughter use the word kinky.” She smirks, “Or attempt to seduce them.”

Emma’s face turns red as she cautiously turn to see her parents staring at her in shock. She looks back at her wife, “You could’ve said something,” she whispers, frown lines showing.

Regina winks, “But what fun would that have been?” She moves over to Snow, who’s holding Evy. She smiles at her daughter and turns to her eldest son, who is having a hard time controlling his laughter. She hands him the invisible blindfold and says, “Let’s maybe keep this with the kids and away from your mother so she doesn’t cause any more trouble.”

He gives a salute, unable to keep the smile from his face. He turns from his mom and looks to
Kathryn, “Ready for another round?”

She laughs and nods, walking with him, corraling the children to start again. “Regina!” she calls, “I have a question!”

Regina rolls her eyes, “There’s no need to shout Kathryn,” she chides.

“But it worked,” Kathryn says with a smirk as Regina comes to stand next to her.

Regina sighs and glances back at her wife, whose face is still red as she stares at her parents. She smiles and turns back to Kathryn. When she doesn’t say anything, she raises her eyebrows. Still nothing. “Kathryn,” she sighs again, “what did you have to ask me?”

“Oh right,” Kathryn says with a grin, “Have you talked with Daniel yet?”

Regina’s eyebrows draw together, “What do you mean? Does he need something?”

Kathryn’s eyes roll to the back of her head as she sighs, “His Godmother.”

Regina scoffs, “I doubt that. He’s been busy with his friends.”

It’s Kathryn’s turn to scoff, “Daniel darling,” she calls sweetly, distracting her son from running around with Leo and Roland.

“Yes Momma?” he says as he comes to stand in front of his mom.

She turns him around to face Regina, resting her hands on his shoulders. She leans down and says, “This is Regina. Do you remember Regina?”

His eyes grow wide, oh no, Regina thinks, he isn’t frightened of me, is he? I haven’t seen him in nearly 4 years,

“You- You’re Regina?” he asks, blinking his wide eyes.

Regina nods and gives a small smile, her hands held tightly together in front of her.

He takes a step forward, toward her. “My Regina?”

Regina’s not sure, she looks up to her blonde friend but Kathryn merely winks. “Yes, I suppose so.”

He runs the four steps between them to wrap his arms around her waist. She’s shocked. She wraps her arms around his shoulders, one hand coming to rest on his blonde curls. “Hi,” he says as he looks up at her.

She lets out a chuckle, “Hello,”

He lets go of her and looks up at her with wide, inquisitive eyes. “So...you’re my Fairy Godmother?”

Regina sighs and restrains herself from rolling her eyes, “I’m going to kill her,” she mutters as she looks over his head at Kathryn with narrowed eyes. Her eyes glow with mischief before she looks back to see Abigail running toward her older brother. Regina looks back down at Daniel, whose eyebrows are drawn together in confusion. She sighs, “Yes, I imagine that’s me.” She pauses and grits out, “Your Fairy Godmother.”
“I want a Fairy Godmother!” Abigail says, stomping her foot as she stands next to her brother and looks from Regina to Kathryn.

Kathryn chuckles and shoos her daughter away from Daniel and Regina and back to the other children. Regina also laughs and watches the littlest blonde cross her arms in anger.

“Momma talks about you a lot,” Daniel says, bringing Regina’s attention back to him.

“She does?” Regina asks, surprised.

He nods, “And how you saved her and made her smart.” Regina shakes her head, about to interrupt that Kathryn was always smart but Daniel steps close to her and motions with his hand to get her to move down to his level and whispers in her ear, “And she told me about how I got my name. About the other Daniel.” He moves to look her in the eye and sees her smile with tears in her eyes. He tilts his head like a puppy and asks, “Was he a good man?”

More tears form in Regina’s eyes and her smile grows tenfold, if that’s even possible. “He was a great man,” she says with a nod. “And he would be sooooo happy to know you share his name. He would be honored and proud of you, Daniel.” She doesn’t know how long she can keep talking about Daniel. Her Daniel. Even though she has Emma and their family, Daniel was her first love, he will always hold a special place in her heart. Having this darling boy share his name is wonderful and cathartic in ways she never imagined, but it’s still a lot to deal with all at once. “And your mom told me that you love horses as much as he did,” she says, eyes crinkling at that thought.

Daniel’s whole face lights up, “I do!! Momma says I’m as good as she is now!!”

“Wow!” Regina says excitedly, “That’s pretty good!”

Daniel nods vigorously. “Do you ride horses?”

Regina nods back, “I do.”

Danie’s eyes open wide, “Will you go riding with me?” He asks and then pauses, “When Momma says it’s safe to go outside again?” There’s another pause and he looks down at the floor, “Or are you leaving now.”

Regina reaches out and gently touches his chin, lifting it until their eyes meet, “I would love to go riding with you, Daniel,” she says with a smile.

He eyes alight again and he shouts “Yay!” He punches his fist into the air in a way that only a 6-year-old can. But before he can say anything else there is a loud commotion outside the Great Hall.

Seven of the royal guards come running into the room, swords drawn. They face the door they just walked through, flames roar to life in Regina’s hand as she waits. Suddenly, more guards march into the room; and not just any guards, guards bearing her silver sash. They look fierce, as they always do when wearing their uniforms. They march as one, directly toward her. She feels Tommy
move behind her, cowering, and Daniel wraps his arms around her waist. The flames remain in her
hand; she’s not really sure these people were actually a part of her guard since their faces are
covered with their helmets. They stop in front of her, all lift their right fist and thump it over their
heart twice before dropping onto their right knee, heads bowed.

“Mommy?” Tommy asks quietly when the men do not look up from the floor.

“Un momento, Querido,” she says as she extinguishes the flames in her hand. “Up,” she
commands. The guard in the front, the leader, stands and goes to remove their helmet.

“Regina,” Snow hisses from behind her, sounding much closer than she should be, “what’s going
on? We don’t know who they are.”

Regina rolls her eyes, even though Snow can’t see it, “That’s why they’re going to take off their
helmets, Snow.”

“Of course, My Queen,” a voice says, coming from the man at the front of the group.

Regina freezes, “Kam?” she asks quietly.

He removes his helmet and smiles, bowing once more. “Welcome back, Your Majesty.”

She smiles, “Hello Kam, how goes the new job?”

Kam rolls his eyes, smiling growing, “It’s wonderful,” he snarks.

“I see why you kept him,” Snow says with an eye roll.

He gives a small nod to Snow, not saying anything.

Regina huffs, he’s barely acting like a proper guard; giving the bare minimum respect for a queen.

He looks to the boys clinging to Regina, “Yours?” he asks.

Regina smiles, “This is my godson-”

“Oh yes! The prince of the Midas Kingdom,” Kam makes the connection.

Regina nods, “This…” she pauses to look down at Tommy and smiles, “is my son Thomas.”

“Hello, Young Princes,” Kam says, bowing to the young boys, causing them to giggle. “Henry?”

“Over there,” she points to wear Emma and Henry are standing, watching the spectacle.

“I see you kept the princess,” Kam sasses.

Regina cannot control her eye roll, “Be nice” It’s Kam’s turn to huff. He doesn’t get a chance to
respond before Emma steps up, holding Evy in her arms. She must have taken her from Snow
Regina thinks as Emma comes to stand next to her wife.

“What’s this? Is my wife attempting a coup in my mother’s house?” she asks with a smile.

“Hello Princess,” Kam says, giving an even smaller bow that he gave Snow.

“Kam,” Regina berates.

He merely smirks, knowing he’s not really in any trouble, his boss has gone soft.
“Perhaps we could take this spectacle someplace a bit more...private?” Louisa says, coming to stand next to Regina.

Regina nods, “Of course.” She turns to Daniel and smiles, “Would you like to go with your mother?” she asks. He looks unsure, “We’ll be back for dinner,” she adds.

He smiles, “Will you sit with me?”

“Absolutely,” she smiles and watches him scamper off to stand next to his mom. She acknowledges Kathryn with a nod and bends down to lift Tommy into her arms. She places him on her hip and snaps her fingers, “Follow,” she commands.

The other guards wearing her sash stand as one, clicking their heels together. Regina hears Emma chuckle, never used to the guards following her wife’s every order. Her wife turns to look at her, “You look very intimidating, babe.”

Regina looks at her, gauges her wife’s reaction and smiles, showing all her teeth, “You’d do well to remember how dangerous I can be, Em-ma.”

Emma’s mouth puckers together, using all her power not to laugh outright. She sees her wife, wearing one of her tamest outfits from this realm. So tame in fact, Emma’s sure she never wore it during her time as the Evil Queen. It laces in the front, for easier access when she needs to feed the twins. It fits her perfectly, of course it does, Emma thinks as she sees her wife look around, holding Tommy on her hip. “Definitely living up to your moniker right now, Gi, with a baby on your hip and your arch-enemy standing next to you.”

“I no baby, Momma!” Tommy says with a pout.

“That’s right dear, you’re a prince,” Regina says, bopping him on the nose. “Come along,” she calls as she turns and strides away, Kam and the other guards falling into step behind her.

Emma shares a look with Louisa and Henry who follow behind the guards. She looks to her mother and smiles, “Guess we’ve got to go catch up,” she shrugs.

“Be careful,” Snow warns.

“I’ll be fine,” Emma states, “Wasn’t Kam a part of your guard while we were away?”

Snow nods, “He was.”

“So, you trust him?”

Snow bites her lip, “I knew he wouldn’t attempt a coup or start a revolution, but I trust him as far as I can throw him.”

“Do you trust me?”

“Of course I do,” Snow says, stepping forward to grip her daughter’s hand. “Completely.”

“Do you trust Regina?”

Snow rears back, “Absolutely,” she says without pause, still gripping her daughter’s hand.

“Then you have nothing to worry about,” Emma says. She smiles at her mother before letting her hand go and turning to follow the way her family went. She lifts Evy up onto her shoulder and hurries to catch up with them.
She finds them in the new War Room, the one warded by Regina and Zelena themselves. There are 2 guards at the entrance. They give her slight bows as she enters the room and moves toward her wife. She notices the other guards strategically places around the room and sees Regina, Louisa, and Lottie - in Kam’s arms, surprising. She doesn’t usually go to strangers. I mean, she went to Louisa, but Louisa has the kindest soul. Anyone would go to Louisa, she screams safety, Emma ponders as her gaze continues on to her sons. Everyone is standing in the middle of the room conversing.

“Nice of you to join us,” Kam snarks upon noticing Emma’s arrival.

“You know me,” Emma says with a shrug, “Always need to be fashionably late. It’s who I am.”

Kam scoffs, “If only it was fashionable and not a character flaw.”

Emma gasps, drawing her free hand over her heart, “Hey! I married your queen. I birthed her babies. Show some respect, bro!”

Kam can’t hide the smile from his face, “Always a consort, never a queen,” he sighs with a smirk.

Regina sighs, “Kam,” she reprimands.

Emma shifts Evy in her hold and grabs onto Regina’s free arm in shock. “He...he...he jokes? I didn’t know cyborgs could do that!” she exclaims.

“Yes, I joke,” Kam says with a scoff. “Do you not remember me in Storybrooke?”

It’s Emma’s turn to scoff, “You were a different person in Storybrooke; a person who was a lot nicer,” she jests.

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“Hey, Louisa,” Emma greets as she walks down the hallway. She stands in front of Louisa’s desk and smiles down at the secretary.

“Hello, Sheriff,” Louisa exchanges greetings, “You can wait over there, the mayor will be with you in a moment.” She goes back to typing on her computer.

“Well, well, well, if it isn’t Sheriff Swan,” a voice calls from the doorway.

“Hey Kam,” Emma says, greeting the man in front of her. “How are you?”

“Jolly as can be, Sheriff,” Kam jokes, “I’ve got the most important job around. Gotta keep the Town Hall safe from riff raff like yourself.”

“Good luck with that, Kam. I’ve been summoned by the queen bee herself.” She shoves her hands in her back pockets, “Apparently the paperwork still isn’t up to code.”

“How could it be with that chicken scratch you call handwriting?” Kam says with a laugh.

“Har har,” Emma says with a roll of her eyes.

Without time for a response, the door to the mayor’s office opens and Regina steps out, long enough to see Emma, “Are you coming, Miss Swan?”

“No, but I’m breathing fast,” Emma says with a smile.
Regina’s face tenses and her eyes narrow. “Come along, Miss Swan, I don’t have all day.” She turns on her heel and walks back into her office, leaving the door open.

“Whelp, here goes nothing.” She takes a deep breath and runs her hands through her hair. She looks to Louisa, “When’s her next meeting?”

“Not until 2,” Louisa says, not looking up from her computer screen.

“Ugh. Is she going to berate me for that entire time?” She looks to Kam, “If I don’t make it out alive, I leave you in charge, Kam.”

“Yeah right, Sheriff. Like the mayor would ever allow me to leave this job,” he says with a roll of his eyes.

At 1:45 Emma stumbles out of the mayor’s office, fixing her hair and straightening her jacket, “Whatever Regina,” she says looking back at the poised mayor sitting behind her desk with a look that could frighten anyone. “I’m not redoing that paperwork for the umpteenth time. You obviously know what it means. Fix it yourself, Madame Mayor.” She turns around and faces Louisa, “Nice to see you again, Louisa.”

“Take care, Sheriff. I’m sure you’ll be back here again soon,” Louisa says with a smirk.

Emma huffs, “I’ll bet.” She turns to leave the hallway.

She makes it to the end of the hallway before Kam walks around the corner, “Sheriff Swan, you’re still here? Must’ve been quite the meeting. Talk about a lot?” he says with a knowing smirk.

“You have no idea,” she says with a shake of her head.

“Nor would I want to,” Kam says, smirk growing. “Not like there would have been a lot of talking, I presume.”

“Excuse me?” Emma asks, suddenly worried.

“Oh nothing,” He shrugs off-handedly, “Just be glad you didn’t wind up with a concussion,” there’s a pause, “Or was that a different time you were ’discussing paperwork’?”

Emma’s stunned, frozen in place, unable to respond. How did he know? They were so careful.

“Goodbye, Sheriff Swan,” he says with a smile, enjoying how uncomfortable he is making her. He walks away with some pep in his step.

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“You were a lot nicer before the Enchanted Forest as well. Although you weren’t under a curse, so what was your excuse?” Kam asks with raised eyebrows.

“Enough,” Regina commands. Immediately, Kam stops talking and straightens his spine, still carefully holding Lottie in his arms.

Emma merely looks at her wife and raises an eyebrow. If she could slouch more, she would - just to irk her wife.

Regina sighs, “I already have four children, I don’t need you two acting like children as well.” She pinches the bridge of her nose.
“Mommy, mommy!” Tommy shouts and grabs onto her hand, pulling to get her attention.

“Yes, darling?” Regina says, a smile coming to her face as she looks down at her youngest son.

“Can we go back by Auntie Z? I wanna pway with Kewwy and Wowan.”

“Yes, we can go back by your cousins, Querido. Do you remember the way?”

Tommy nods and then looks unsure, “I’ll help you lead the way, Little T,” Henry says, stepping forward and holding his hand out to his little brother.

He looks at his mother and then to Kam before looking back at his mother, “Do you think…um...do you think I could maybe start up sword lessons again? You know, just in case Jafar comes back?”

Kam and Henry both look to Regina who is having a mental battle with herself. Emma reaches out and touches her wife’s elbow, smiling when Regina shakes herself from her thoughts. She turns back to Henry and her most trusted guard, “I think that would be wonderful.”

Henry’s smile could melt even the coldest of hearts. He rushes to Regina and wraps his arms around her middle, resting his head right under her chin. Even after all these years, it still surprises her when someone is so open with their affection. He gets this from his blonde mother she thinks with a smile as she wraps her arms around him, resting her cheek on the top of his head.

“Hey! Me too, me too!” Tommy says as he stands next to Regina and Henry.

“You want a hug too, Little T?” Henry says with a smile as he releases his mom and picks up his little brother and gives him a big bear hug and spins in a circle, making him release the cutest bout of giggles. He stops spinning and Regina tickles Tommy’s neck, right under his chin, causing him to giggle and squirm in Henry’s arms.

“I want wessons too Henny!”


“Yeah, wike you!” He exclaims as he bounces in Henry’s arms.

“That’s a Mommy question bud,” Henry says, turning the choice back to Regina.

Regina looks unsure and looks to Emma who merely shrugs. Regina sighs, “I bet we could set something up,” she says with a small smile.

“Yay!” Tommy says, bouncing so much that Henry has to set him down.

Henry chuckles and holds out his hand to his little brother, “Ready dude? Let’s go back into the Great Room.” Together, they are out the door and heading toward the rest of the family.

Before the adults in the room can move toward the door one of the guards posted outside of the door steps in and bows deeply, saying, “Your Majesty, there seems to be another commotion in the Great Room.”

Regina sighs and looks to Kam, “Are there more of you?”

Kam shakes his head, “We’re done causing commotion for today, Your Majesty.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Don’t make promises you can’t keep.”
Kam chuckles but doesn’t say anything else. Instead he looks at the young girl cooing in his arms.

“You should know, she doesn’t go to just anybody,” Emma says with a smile. “That must mean you’re special, Kam.”

He snorts and rolls his eyes, “She just knows when she’s going to be protected. That is my job, Princess.”

Emma groans and turns to her wife, “Do I have to be a princess? Why can’t I be a knight or something. I’m not cut out to be a princess, Gina.”

Regina smiles and touches her wife’s cheek, “You can be both dear, but you’ll have to keep the Princess title. It’s not my decision,” she placates, “that’s because your parents’ are the royal family.”

“I don’t want to be a princess. Kam said I could be a consort, isn’t that enough?” she whines.

“No,” Regina answers simply. She turns back to Kam who can’t hide the smile from his face.

He steps forward and hands Lottie back to Regina. She is disgruntled, but quickly resettles against her mother’s chest, falling back asleep.

“That’s my girl,” Emma says with a grin.

Regina huffs and rolls her eyes, “Yes dear, she definitely gets her sleeping habits from you, let’s just hope she doesn’t get your other...admirable traits too.”

Emma gasps, “You wound me, Gi.”

Regina just sighs but changes the subject, “Come along dear, we better get back to our sons.” She reaches out a hand and waits until Emma takes it, then they’re out of the room, followed by Louisa and her guards.

They make it back to the Great Room to see the children running around and the adults gathered in a group near the tables. Kathryn notices them walk back in and quickly excuses herself to talk with her friends.

“Quite the posse you have now, Regina,” she says with a smirk.

Regina shakes her head, but snarks, “You know how I like to make an entrance, Kathryn.”

Kathryn laughs, “Very true. Now come this way, there’s someone I’d like you to meet.” They walk over to the group of adults. “Jas, Al, this is Regina and Emma.”

Regina and Emma smile as two people turn around to greet them.

“Princess Jasmine?” Emma asks, jaw dropping to see another Disney princess, a very pregnant Disney princess..

“Sultana,” Regina greets with a slight head bow, squeezing Emma’s hand until she also gives a bow.

“Hello Regina, nice to see you again,” Jasmine says with a smile, “We would have seen you earlier but,” she rests a hand on her bulging stomach, “the baby was not happy this morning.”

“No way,” Emma says in shock, “You were my favorite Disney movie growing up!”
Jasmine and Aladdin give odd looks, “Movie?” “Disney?” coming out of their mouths simultaneously.

Regina chuckles, “Excuse my wife,” she says with a smile.

Zelena quickly steps up and holds her hands out in front of Emma, “Give me my darling niece before she catches some of your crazy.” Emma huffs but hands her sister-in-law Evy.

“And my sister,” Regina adds with a raised eyebrow.

Jasmine smiles and turns her attention to the man at her side and says, “This is my husband, Aladdin.”

Emma looks to Jasmine’s husband, “You!” she exclaims, pointing her finger at Aladdin, “Dream dude!” Everyone gives her an odd look but she looks to her wife and says, “This is the guy that was in my dream. The one I had about the Gateway!” Regina makes the connection but still looks lost.

Emma doesn’t get the chance to elaborate because Aladdin chimes in, drawing everyone’s attention. He wrings his hands together in front of him. “Yeah, Sorry about that. I had to make sure you didn’t take a wrong turn in the Gateway.” He looks down at the ground, “Sorry I couldn’t make it a happier dream. I stole some dream dust from Jafar. He created it for turning dreams into nightmares, that part couldn’t be changed.” He looks up at Emma apologetically, “You probably woke up in fear even though the dream itself wasn’t scary. I’m sorry about that but I had to make sure Jafar didn’t confuse you and send you the wrong way. It would have been horrible if you went to the wrong realm or worse, to his castle. You would’ve walked into an ambush.”

“No worries. We got here safe and sound,” Emma says with a smile. She wants to pull him aside and ask why Daniel was in this dream and why it brought up so many old fears when the dream wasn’t about them at all. Instead she looks to her brother-in-law and smirks, thinking about his direction skills while they were in the Gateway.

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“We’ve been walking for hours,” Kelly whines as she resituates her backpack for the 13th time in the last 10 minutes. And yes, Emma’s counted.

Regina comes to walk up next to her, “The twins are starting to get antsy in this wrap; I should feed them soon.”

Emma sighs and says, “Well, this is as good a place as any to stop for lunch. We all need a break and I need to figure out where we’re going from here.”

Everyone stops walking and takes off their packs. They all sit on the ground in a circle and pull out the food Regina had packed, passing it around. Emma helps Regina unwrap the twins from her chest and lays them on the blanket in front of them. Regina leans against the wall, resting her back for a moment. Emma leans back next to her, smiling as they watch their family pass around food and laugh as they rest their feet.

Zelena and Robin lean against the wall opposite Regina and Emma, helping the kids get their food. Regina lays her head on Emma’s shoulder, “I have a feeling this day is going to be longer than I anticipated,” she whispers, content to watch the kids interact with each other as they tell stories about food characters they create with their imaginations.

“I agree, why didn’t we plan on a break for nap time?” Emma asks.

Emma scoffs and jabs a finger at her wife’s side, causing her to giggle and squirm away. “I can make a plan, Gina.”

Regina captures the poking hand and holds it between her own. “Sure, darling.”

Emma huffs and then rests her cheek against the top of Regina’s head, asking, “What are we going to do?”

Regina sighs, “I don’t know, dear. I don’t think we can stop for them to nap for a few hours. Kelly could probably go without. Zelena told me she hasn’t been napping every day, but it’s been a long day with lots of walking, if she doesn’t nap she’ll be a real bear later tonight. And Thomas cannot go without a nap, that will be ugly for everyone.”

Emma nods, Regina feels it against the top of her head and smiles as her wife thinks aloud. “Well, I could carry him, but then I don’t have my hands free if we come across something...or someone.”

“He could ride on my back for a while,” Regina says. She holds up a hand when Emma inhales to interject. “Carrying the twins makes me walk different, putting Thomas on my back could help even things out for a little bit. And I know we brought an extra wrap in case we wanted to carry the twins separately, so we have the capability.”

“He’ll sleep better wrapped than being carried,” Emma muses aloud. “What if I wear him and you wear the backpacks?”

Regina laughs softly, “What would that change? We’d both be carrying something extra either way.”

Emma huffs, “Yes, I suppose so. But-”

“Yes,” Regina interrupts.

“Yeah, I know,” she sighs. Regina lifts her head to kiss her wife’s cheek. She smiles and lays her head back on Emma’s shoulder. “Let’s eat before the twins get hungry and you get distracted. Don’t think I won’t notice you not eating, Mills,” Emma says with a smirk as she moves away from Regina to grab them both some food before settling next to her wife again. She hands her a sandwich and waits until she opens it and starts eating before she eats her own sandwich.

Everyone eats and Henry starts again with Roland, Kelly, and Tommy to keep them occupied but not wear them out with running. “I guess eye spy was out of the question?” Emma asks, laughing at her own joke.

Regina scoffs, “Only you, Emma,” she says with an eye roll.

Emma kisses her cheek and reaches forward to grab a fussing Charlotte. “Now this child is absolutely mine. She needs her sleep like me AND she loses her mind the minute she’s hungry.” She looks down at Charlotte in her arms, “Yes, Baby Girl, you are absolutely my child.” She leans close and whispers, “I’m not so sure about the other ones, they take after your Mommy too much. But don’t worry, we’ll still be the favorites, it’s kind of our thing.”

“Emma,” Regina chides.

Henry moves over to grab the nursing pillow packed in one of their bags, “Here Mom,” he says, handing Regina the pillow.
“Thank you dear,” she says with a smile as she starts to situate herself to nurse.

Henry looks at Emma and narrows his eyes, “It’s because I’m so much like Mom that I’m the favorite.”

Emma gasps and Regina can’t help but laugh. “Children,” she admonishes.

“Whatevs, Kid,” Emma says as she hands Charlotte to Regina and reaches forward to grab Evelyn and hand her over to Regina as well.

Henry smirks and goes back to keep the kids occupied while Regina feeds the twins. Emma, Robin, and Zelena rest before the next leg of their journey.

Finally, everyone is ready to go, the twins are safely secured in their wrap, fed and ready to sleep. Tommy and Kelly are both ready for naps and Henry and Roland are ready to continue walking. Emma helps secure Tommy onto Regina’s back and as soon as they begin walking, he falls asleep. Regina can feel his breathing slow and smiles as she continues walking next to her sister.

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They’ve been walking for a while again, Roland’s sighs are happening more frequently, and Emma and Robin are trying to decide where they go from here.

“I think we need to go this way,” Robin says, pointing down one hallway.

“No, we definitely have to go this way,” Emma says, pointing down a different hallway.

“Trust the tracker, Em,” Robin says, starting to go down the hallway.

“Rob,” Emma calls, “I know this is the right way.”

“How would you know?” Rob says, challenging Emma.

“Because I feel it. I don’t know how...or why but I’ve seen this before, and I know this is the right way.”

“What are you, Lassie?” Rob asks with a laugh.

“Are you calling me a bitch, Forest Boy?”

“EMMA!” Regina rebukes.

Emma and Robin share a look and cannot contain their laughter. Their laughs fill the hallways of the Gateway, loud enough to startle Tommy in his sleep.

“If you wake these sleeping kids,” Regina threatens. There’s no need to finish that sentence; Robin and Emma both heard the tone loud and clear, the Evil Queen turning into Mama Bear would be pleasant for no one.

“Sorry Gi,” Robin says, trying not to smirk. Good thing Regina was behind him.

“Yeah, sorry babe,” Emma says, smiling back at her wife. Regina rolls her eyes but says nothing else.

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“Aha!” Robin says from his spot next to Zelena. Everyone’s attention turns toward him but his focus is on Emma. “I knew you weren’t Lassie!”

Zelena and Emma start laughing, Regina rolls her eyes, and everyone else stares in confusion. “Whatever you say, Forest Boy,” Emma says through her laughter.

There’s not a chance for anyone to ask what the hell is going on, the doors to the Great Room fly open and Blue walks in. Zelena mumbles, “And I thought Regina was the one that did the big entrances.”

Regina narrows her eyes at her sister before turning back to face Blue. The children froze from their playing when the doors opened and make a beeline for their parents.

Chapter End Notes

Everything is written for this story except the epilogue so I will definitely be posting them regularly until it's all done!! :)
Thantophobia

Chapter Summary

Thantophobia: (n.) the phobia of losing someone you love

Chapter Notes

WOOHOO ANOTHER CHAPTER!

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“Emma!” Blue cries as she rushes to hug Emma. Emma freezes in her arms. She’s never trusted Blue the way her parents have, and she’s definitely not a hugger. She stays frozen and stiff until Blue releases her and smiles. “I didn’t think you’d come back,” she whispers in awe.

Emma shrugs, “I didn’t want to, but family checks on family.” She looks back to her wife and the rest of her family, smiling.

Blue smiles as well, stepping next to Emma to sigh, “Henry,” her smile widens, “You were always so smart.”

Henry shrugs - exactly like Emma just did - “I get it from my mom.”

Blue turns to her attention back to Emma, still smiling widely.

Emma shakes her head, “Other mother,” and points to Regina.

“Oh,” Blue says, face falling, “Regina.”

“Oh this’ll be good,” Zelena says smugly, holding tightly to her niece, her son and daughter standing next to her.

“Oh buts,” Kathryn calls, trying to cut the tension in the room, “Let’s go into the kitchens and pull out the ice cream!” She looks from Regina to Blue and then to Zelena, this isn’t going to end well. She looks to Snow, and sees hurt and confusion. “Now children,” she says quickly, ushering the children away. Ella and Thomas help corral the children, Ruby and Billy go open the kitchen doors. “Henry, bring your brother and your cousins please,” Kathryn calls as she continues moving the children toward the kitchen, all excited to have ice cream before dinner.

“Henry, listen to Kathryn,” Regina says, never looking away from Blue, who’s still standing uncomfortably close to her wife.

“But-”

“No buts,” Regina says evenly. She turns her attention back to Henry and Tommy, standing next to Louisa. She glances to see Zelena still staring Blue down, one hand ready to throw magic if
necessary. She smiles at her sons, “Go with Kathryn and get some ice cream.” She looks to her
niece and nephew, also looking unsure about leaving their parents. She steps forward and places
Lottie in Henry's arms. She holds his cheek in her palm, smiling. She looks down at Tommy and
says, “Go with your brother now, okay Sweetie?” He sticks out his lips in a pout but Regina says,
“You can have 3 scoops of ice cream,” holding up 3 fingers.

He gasps, “THREE?!”

Regina nods and laughs as he grabs Henry’s hand, trying to pull him toward the kitchen.

Louisa smiles and nods at Regina. She turns and takes Evy from Zelena and ushers Roland and
Kelly toward the kitchen as well.

Regina looks behind her and sees Kam standing behind Blue, quiet and ready to attack if needed.
She turns her back to Blue again and watches Louisa and her children disappear into the kitchen.
Bramble and Rivers stand in front of the door and each give her a nod once the door is closed. She
knows they won’t let anyone hurt the people inside the kitchen. She turns back to Blue, who is still
standing too close to her wife, and narrows her eyes. She feels Zelena move to stand next to her and
silently hopes they have enough magic if things go bad.

Snow takes a step forward, Charming next to her, “Blue, what did you do?”

“What do you mean?” Blue asks, eyebrows drawn together.

“To the wards,” Snow explained.

Blue shakes her head in confusion. Her face suddenly goes neutral, “I was helping fix our Jafar
problem of course,” she says simply.

“By letting him watch the plans in the War Room?” Zelena says with nothing less than full-fledged
Mills snark.

“Zelena,” Blue says with a raised eyebrow, “Always a pleasure,” she says, expressionless.

“Watch yourself, Moth,” she spits, green fire bursts onto her hand.

Everything happens at once, Blue’s wand is in her hand and magic is flying toward them. Regina
barely has time to throw up a protection spell before fairy magic is being shoved against her chest.
Blue’s so distracted with knocking Regina out, she forgets that Zelena is there and finds her arm
alight from Zelena’s fire. Regina focuses the majority of her magic at keeping everyone shielded
from any wayward magic. She spares some extra magic to send probes at Blue, just enough to
knock her out of her concentration zone, giving Zelena a chance to gain the upper hand.

Zelena’s alternating between fireballs and orbs filled with lightning. “Anytime you want to join us
would be great, Savior,” she deadpans, putting more force between her magic orbs.

Blue stumbles backward, almost into Emma ask she stares at her hands, trying to jumpstart her
magic. Why won’t it work? She wonders. She notices Blue step closer to her but is focusing on
making her magic work.

“Emma!” Regina shouts. It’s enough to draw Emma’s attention away from her magic, she glances
up and notices Regina and Zelena standing in front of her parents, Regina blocking blows and
Zelena throwing them back. She realizes why there’s magic flying in arcs, Blue is using her as a
human shield, bitch. “EMMA!” Regina shouts, this time with more fear. She connects eyes with
her wife and sees the worry. Emma hits the floor. She felt magic surround her momentarily, right at
the back of her knees and she knew it was her wife’s, she knew that magic almost as well as she knew hers - well, probably better because Regina’s magic was actually working at the moment. She covers her neck with her hands, laying facedown on the floor. She feels more magic surrounding her, protecting her, and she smiles as she thinks about her wife sending extra magic her way. She’s staring at the floor but her eyes are open and she can see two sets of feet moving closer to her and one retreating until the room is silent. No more magic.

She stands up and sees Regina rush to her. They wrap each other in their arms, quickly checking the other out for injuries. “What happened?” Regina whispers, resting her forehead against Emma’s when she finds no injuries.

“I couldn’t make it work,” Emma says, shrugging. “It’s like I couldn’t find it or something.”

“Ummm, Gi?” Zelena starts, interrupting what Regina was going to say, “Hate to break up….whatever is going on over there, but we need to seal her out.”

“Right,” Regina says, pulling away from Emma and nodding at her sister. Together, they start threading their magic together, blocking out all other magic from entering the castle.

“We're going to need your magical battery to finish the spell,” Zelena says, continuing to thread her magic out in front of her, mixing with Regina’s magic to create a blanket-like weave across the ceiling.

Regina sighs and is about to say something but Emma steps forward, “It’s okay, Gina. Let me see if I can find it.” She closes her eyes and looks for her magic, feeling for it in her chest. She opens her eyes, “It’s just not there,” she says quietly.

“Now would be a good time to get it together, Savior.”

“Zelena!” Regina admonishes through gritted teeth. She turns her head toward Emma and smiles, “Come here, please, darling.” Emma steps closer, taking Regina’s outstretched hand.

Emma feels her magic burst out of her body, starting in her chest and flying out of her hands to help Regina and Zelena finish the protection spell. When the spell is done, the women drop their hands to their sides and release a sigh of relief. “That should hold for a little while,” Zelena says, wiping her brow.

Regina smiles at her sister and then turns her attention to her wife who is staring intently at her hands. “Emma?” she asks softly, taking a step toward her.

Emma looks up at Regina in disbelief, “How did you do that?!”

“Practice, darling,” Regina sasses with a smirk.

“Ugh!” Emma exclaims as she throws her head back, looking at the ceiling. “Isn’t my magic innate? It should just happen!”

“That’s not quite true,” Regina starts, “Even when you’re innately good at something, you still have to practice in order to perfect the skill. And your magic will get easier to use, once you learn to control it.”

“Well, if you two are done being disgusting,” Zelena starts, “I’m going to go find my children.”

Snow and Charming nod in agreement, walking through the door into the kitchen. Zelena sighs, she barely tolerates their idiocy, but she knows she has to follow; that’s where her children and
husband will be.

She doesn’t even get the chance to walk toward the kitchen when a puff of red smoke appears in front of the three magic-users.

“Am I interrupting something?” he asks, looking bored. He’s not as sneaky as he looks, he sees the way Emma and Regina are whispering quietly and Zelena’s attempt to leave.

“How did you get in here?” Regina asks in shock, there’s no way he made it through their barrier.

Jafar is smug, “I’m just that good,” he says as he brushes invisible lint from his shoulder.

Regina reaches out with her magic and checks barrier. “Nope. Not broken.”

“Oh, okay,” Jafar says, lifting his hands up, “I was already inside. Can’t keep out what’s already in,” he adds with a smirk.

“Who are you trying to be with those riddles? Yoda?” Zelena asks with a scoff.

“Who?” Jafar inquires, confusion plain on his face with his eyebrows drawn together.

“Ugh. Nevermind.” Zelena rolls her eyes. “You wouldn’t get it anyway.”

Regina and Zelena don’t coordinate their attacks, there are no shared looks, no signals, but they simultaneously throw fire and magical orbs. Jafar deflects these easily, without batting an eye. Zelena growls and puts more force behind her next attacks, Jafar sighs. He’s under Zelena’s skin, she’s not used to being blocked out like this. She’s usually able to land at least one hit, so far, Jafar has blocked all of the magic thrown by Regina and Zelena.

“Enough of this,” Jafar sighs out. He taps his staff against the ground and a shimmery protection bubble springs around him. Zelena narrows her eyes and it takes every part of her willpower to keep herself from stomping her foot and enhancing it with her magic, hoping to knock him off his pompous ass. Jafar pinches the bridge of his nose, as if he were dealing with imbeciles; Regina and Zelena know the look, it’s how any villain behaves when they have to explain themselves. Regina narrows her eyes, we are not incompetent. “Do you know why I showed up in the children’s dreams?” he asks, finally looking up at the three women across from him.

“You didn’t,” Zelena states with venom. “You created nightmares.”

“Wrong. Oh you are so wrong,” Jafar says with a shake of his head, “I showed up in their dreams; it was my link into their subconscious. I got into their dreams and turned them into nightmares,” he adds with a smirk. He turns and starts walking around the Great Room. “You know, I learned a lot about them during my time in their dreams. I learned a lot about you two,” he says looking at the women still standing in the middle of the room, always keeping him in their view. He smirks, he is getting under their skin. “The Mills Sisters,” he says with his hands in the air, as if he’s announcing the main event at a circus. He turns to them and taunts, “You’ve both fallen quite a ways.”

“You’ll have to do better than that,” Zelena sighs out, bored, inspecting her nails. She looks up at him and he is shown the Mills fire everyone with half a brain runs away from. This just causes him to smile even wider. Zelena narrows her eyes and glares before her face relaxes into nothing. He will not get under her skin. She raises an eyebrow, “It’ll take a lot more than that to get under our skin. Do you know who raised us? Certainly no second-hand villain who uses children instead of going after what he wants. Or did you forget who you’re talking to?”

“I didn’t forget,” Jafar says, coming to a stop in front of the Mills sisters, ignoring Emma behind
them - this was never about Emma, it was always about the sisters. “And I know exactly what will hurt you most.” He taps his staff on the ground and disappears in a puff of red smoke.

Regina and Zelena share a look, “THE CHILDREN!” they gasp and are gone in puffs of purple and green smoke respectively.

“How do they do that?!” Emma exacerbates before she takes off running toward the kitchen. “Where are they?” She groans and starts running through the castle.

She finds them in the War Room. She stops in the doorway and sees everyone in the corner directly in front of her. Kam, Bramble, and Rivers stand in their gear, swords out, in front of the rest of the residents of the castle. Robin stands on one side of the guards, Roland behind him. Charming stands in front of his wife, next to Regina’s royal guards, ready to protect his family. If Emma had time to think about what this means, she would smile at the former enemies fighting side-by-side, protecting against a new threat. But she doesn’t have the time.

She barely glances at the people hiding behind the guards before her attention turns to the left, to the center of the room where Regina and Zelena stand, facing the far corner of the room, furthest from the doorway, directly diagonal from Emma and the doorway. In the corner stands Jafar, with Tommy and Kelly being held by his magic in front of him.

“Big. Mistake.” Zelena growls, as her daughter and nephew cry out for their Moms.

“You know,” Jafar muses. “These two were always my favorite,” he says as he places a hand on each of their heads, careful to keep the staff pointed directly at the sisters. “Their dreams were the most...innocent. Being...protected” he enunciates with a raised eyebrow and continues, “from the truths of this world, their dreams were the sweetest. It was so easy to twist and manipulate their dreams into nightmares. They had the most dreams out of all the children,” he sighs wistfully. “They had the happiest dreams.” He sighs happily, “They was sooo very easy to ruin. Who knew that two of the best, most ruthless and dangerous villains in history would raise the weakest,” he spits the word and curls his lip, “most naive and innocent children. Oh how the mighty have fallen,” he says, disgust lacing every word.

“Let. Them. Go.” Zelena grinds through her teeth. “Or you’ll find out exactly why everyone feared us for so long. You aren’t feared by all, considered ruthless and deadly, without earning those titles. And we most certainly earned them. Does the name Cora Mills ring any bells? The Queen of Hearts? The most cruel and sadistic villain ever known? She raised us, taught us her tricks. Let them go or you’ll find out exactly what makes us so dangerous.”

Jafar puckers his lips and tilts his head in thought, “Mmmmm...no.”

“Truly powerful people don’t hide behind children,” Regina sighs, as if she’s the one talking to an incompetent pest now. “They don’t need to.”

Jafar clicks his tongue, “Your mother would be sooo disappointed in how weak you both are.” He spits the words like venom.

Regina and Zelena share a look and laugh - deep, rich laughs that befit the villains they used to be, “If only we cared what Cora Mills thought,” Regina says, mocking him, tilting her head with every word.

“Give our children back,” Zelena growls.

Jafar taps his chin, “Hmmmmm...okay.” He lifts the children in the air, still completely engulfed in
his magic. He tosses them in the air, nearing the ceiling before his magic releases them. Regina and Zelena both use their magic to catch their children and bring them to their arms. Zelena quickly pushes Kelly behind her and feels Robin wrap her in his arms, taking her back behind the row of protection. Regina takes Tommy with her magic directly into Henry’s arms, safely behind the guards.

Emma’s frozen at the door. Watching her son fly through the air, she hasn’t felt fear like that since Neverland. She searches for her magic, but she can’t find it, she doesn’t feel it. She’s frozen and unable to help her wife because her magic is gone. Dammit. She looks for a way to get to Jafar, maybe she can fight him hand-to-hand. If she could just get that staff away from him. She knows Charming wished he would get close enough to Jafar as well; it’s in the way he’s holding his sword, ready to take action. He’s definitely not used to sitting on the sidelines, and it’s bothering him. She sees Ruby, standing next to Robin. Emma notices her eyes gleam, even from the other side of the room; she’s ready to change. If only we could find a hole in his protection spell.

Jafar turns his magic to Regina. Finally on the offense, he takes advantage of her distraction and starts throwing magic from his staff. Zelena blocks his attack and returns fire. Regina spins to see Zelena throwing orb after orb of magic, distracting Jafar from his assault against Regina. Jafar throws a red fireball, nicking Zelena’s shoulder.

“MOMMY!” Kelly shouts, distracting Zelena enough that she loses her repetitive pattern, staggering just enough that Jafar found a weakness. He uses her distraction to toss her into the wall. Zelena crashes head first into the wall, crumpling to the floor, unconscious.

Regina and Kelly simultaneously shout, “Zelena!” “Mommy!”

“Uh-oh,” Emma mutters to herself, slowing edging into the room, careful to stay out of the way and not draw attention to herself but also looking for her chance to get Jafar’s staff. “Do not piss off a Mills, buddy. That’s a sure sign of impending annihilation,” she murmurs quietly.

Regina throws everything behind her next blast, standing between her sister and Jafar. Her purple magic, looking daringly red, wrapping around Jafar’s head and constricting his airway. Her hand squeezes tighter, completely cutting off his access to air.

At this same time, a soft pink smoke shoots out from behind her, going directly toward Zelena. She maintains her grip on Jafar and turns to find the source of the magic. Her eyes widen as she sees her niece with outstretched hands, focused on her mother. Regina follows the magic to her sister and sees the pink smoke wrap around her like a blanket. It spins around her head fast enough to make Regina dizzy and then it’s comforting her as a blanket again. Healing magic, she thinks with a proud smile. Robin rushes to his wife’s side, checking her over for injuries. His eyebrows draw together in confusion but Regina’s attention is distracted from her sister when she realizes her magic slipped while she was watching her niece. Jafar has regained control over his airway and turns his staff toward Regina, it’s eyes glaring red as it prepares to attack Regina.

“No!” a shout comes from behind Kam. A vibrant yellow beacon shoots up to the ceiling and bursts into fireworks, raining down over everyone in the room.

Everyone gasps and turns to look at Daniel, who is staring fearfully at his hands. He looks up at Regina but she doesn’t have time to reassure him because Jafar speaks out.

“I...did not see that coming,” he announces honestly. No one knows what to do, Daniel having magic is a surprise to everyone. He’s the eldest True Love child of Kathryn and Frederick, but he never had magic. Jafar shakes himself from his thoughts how did I miss that he has magic? “Oh well,” he says with a shrug. “Wasn’t enough,” he amuses as he turns back to Regina, pointing his
staff as the snake eyes burn red before pushing out two red lasers that envelop Regina, who was still staring at Daniel.

She’s engulfed in Jafar’s magic and lets out a piercing scream.

There’s a blinding bright light - brighter than a supernova - that causes everyone to shut their eyes tight. Emma feels the light fly out of her chest; she’s never felt her magic so strongly, but she’s not going to stop it; she needs to protect Regina.

The light dims and then clears away. Everyone blinks, attempting to blink away the bright spots in their vision. They look to where Jafar is...er, was. There’s nothing left except a pile of dust and his snake staff laying next to it. Emma doesn’t spare it a second glance, she’s already rushing over to her wife, checking her for injuries.

Regina’s down on one knee, attempting to stand. Emma grabs her elbow to steady her. “I’m fine,” Regina says, woozy. She’s lightheaded but fine. She’s more concerned about her sister. She turns, letting Emma keep one hand on her elbow and the other by her hip, helping her stay upright.

Zelena’s propped against the wall of the room. Kelly’s already in her lap, leaning against her chest, needing the protection of her mother. Roland is next to her, tucked safely under her arm and Robin is hovering, worried she’s hurt, but Kelly’s magic made sure she wasn’t.

Zelena looks up to her sister-in-law, “So much wasted potential,” she mutters. She and Emma catch each other’s eye and Zelena shoots her a wink, causing Emma to smile.

“Moms!” Henry calls as he and Tommy rush over to Regina and Emma. They quickly check on Regina and Henry convinces her to sit on the floor next to Zelena. It’s a lot harder than it should have been, because she’s the bloody queen, and queens don’t show weakness. But, hell, she was just attacked by the magical equivalent of a deathray. She’ll sit on the floor with her family. Roland climbs into her lap as Louisa and Kam come over to stand near Regina, each holding a twin safely in their arms.

“Sooooo,” Emma starts, causing the sisters to turn their attention to her. She’s standing at their feet, “Kells has magic.”

“Astounding observation,” Henry sasses from Regina’s side.

Emma rolls her eyes but it’s Zelena who responds, “Well, of course my baby has magic.” Equal parts proud and haughty.

Aladdin makes his way across the room and picks up the staff, “I should have done this ages ago,” he states as he smashes it into the stone wall, shattering the staff into pieces. Emma feels relief flood into her; she didn’t even realize how much stress she was holding. And now Jafar is gone, everyone is safe, and the children’s dreams will be their own again.

Daniel comes to stand next to Emma, standing at Regina’s feet. She looks up at him and smiles, “Thank you,” she croaks out. Her voice hoarse from the ear-piercing scream earlier and absolutely exhausted from all the magic she’s used today.

Daniel looks between his hands - still trembling - and Regina. “What does it mean?” he whispers in fear.

“It means you are very, very special,” Regina says with a smile as she looks up at her godson.

Kathryn comes up to stand behind her son, placing her hands on his shoulders, “He’s never shown
signs of magic before,” she explains.

“The Moth was blocking all the magical energy here in the castle. She was siphoning it all for herself,” Zelena explained, running a hand through her daughters unruly curls. She gently moves Kelly from her lap and attempts to stand, allowing Robin to help her maintain her balance. When she’s upright and doesn’t feel like she’s going to fall over from her headrush she continues, “We noticed the “damper” here,” she adds finger quotes around damper, “when we first arrived. We had less magic, it felt like there was an elephant pressing down on our chests. But we didn’t want to say anything too soon or to the wrong person; we had to be sure everyone stayed protected. If Blue knew we were onto her too soon, we wouldn’t have been able to properly protect everyone.” She looks from her sister to her sister-in-law and smiles. Then she looks back to the rest of the group, waiting for answer. She shrugs, “We took it down when we finished our meeting earlier.”

“That’s why Daniel and Kelly weren’t able to tap into their powers until now,” Regina elaborates. “They didn’t know they had magic; they didn’t know where to look for it or how to access it. Had they known, Blue wouldn’t have been able to hide it away and use the powers herself.” She tries to get to her feet once again but finds it difficult with Tommy refusing to let go of her neck. With Henry on one side and Emma on the other, she’s able to stand and Tommy never has to leave her arms.

Emma gently turns Regina in her arms so they’re standing face-to-face. She looks into those beautiful brown eyes. The color of the earth right after it rains, Emma feels the rebirth in her soul; they’re ready to begin again. Emma feels if she looks too long, she’ll get lost in their depths. She’s never wanted to get lost in something more. She sees the emotions swirling in the deep pools of chocolate, “Are you-”

“I’m fine, Emma,” Regina says with a nod. She reaches out and touches her cheek, Emma sighs and leans into that hand. “What was that?” she asks searching her wife’s eyes. If her eyes were the color of the earth’s soil right after it rains, Emma’s eyes were emeralds, like when the sun hits grass, fresh with dew in the early morning, promising a wonderful day; Regina feels safe looking into those eyes.

“I have no idea,” Emma says with a shrug. “It just happened. I saw his magic wrap around you, I heard your scream, and then he was gone. My magic didn’t even leave through my hands,” she lifts her hands to stare at them before looking back up to Regina. “It came directly out of my chest.”

“I felt it,” Regina says, “While it was destroying Jafar, it was also healing me.” Emma gives her a confused look so she explains, “Jafar’s magic would have left burns on my skin, it was burning me alive, but when your magic shot out to destroy him, it also reversed the effects of his magic. It was like a cool salve after burning your hand. I’ve never seen anything like that before,” she muses, looking at her skin, still trying to figure out how it happened.

“What can I say, babe? I’m special,” Emma says smugly, lifting her chin and straightening her shoulders.

Regina chuckles, eyes softening. Those sweet chocolate eyes, the type of chocolate that melts with just a bit of heat, were molten as she stared at her wife, “Yes, darling, you are.” She steps forward and kisses her wife. A soft kiss, a promise of her unconditional, undying love. She feels magic surround her, taking away her remaining aches. Regina smiles into the kiss, her wife’s magic is so strong that is reaches out to heal her just by being close to Emma. True Love perks she thinks to herself, smile growing. She feels something poke her cheek and she leans back to stare at Tommy, who smiles widely at his mothers. “All done?” Regina can’t help the chuckle that leaves her mouth.
She smiles at the boy in her arms, “Yes, Querido, it’s all done. No more bad man.”

“Yay!” he shouts as he wraps his arms around her neck. She smiles over his shoulder at her wife, who still has one hand on Regina’s lower back, returning her smile in full. Tommy releases her and turns toward Emma, “Momma did it!!” He lunges from Regina’s arms at Emma. Thankfully, they were standing close enough that he could easily reach Emma. Emma laughs as her youngest son wraps his arms around her neck.

Regina lets him go when she knows Emma has a hold on him. She turns and is engulfed in Henry’s arms, wrapped tightly around her waist. She gasps but quickly wraps her arms around him, holding him just as tightly. She rests her cheek on the top of his head. “I was so scared,” he whispers from his spot resting on her chest.

She pulls back and cups his cheeks in both hands, “I’m fine, darling. Your mother made sure of that.” She smiles widely as she feels her son relax.

“Good,” he states simply, maintaining his grip around her waist.

Regina looks up to find Kam and Louisa holding her daughters, staring at her with smiles on their faces. “I think I speak for all of us when I say, we’re done with magical fights for a while,” Louisa says.

Regina can’t help the laugh that bubbles out of her chest. It’s rare for Louisa to say what’s on her mind, it’s even rarer for her to speak so boldly in front of others. “I agree,” she says with a smile.

Lottie gives a shout from Kam’s arms, drawing everyone’s attention, “Guess she’s hungry,” Emma says while holding Tommy in her arms.

Everyone chuckles as Tommy says, “Me too!”

“Well, let’s go get you some food,” Regina says with a smile.

“The food is ready in the kitchen,” Snow says with a smile, holding tight to Eva in her arm and Leo holding her free hand.

“Yay food!!” Tommy says, kicking his feet until Emma puts him on the ground. He’s running before his feet are down. He starts jumping up and down next to Henry, who is still hanging onto Regina, “Henny! Come on, come on!!”

Henry chuckles and squeezes his mom one last time before releasing her and allowing Tommy to drag him toward the door. “Come on, Henny, Gwama say we gots food!”

Regina and Emma chuckle at their young son. Emma wraps an arm around Regina’s waist and smiles at her. “I suppose that’s my cue,” Snow says with a laugh. “Come along everyone, let’s celebrate!” Everyone follows Snow and Charming out. Charming, carrying Ruth, Snow carrying Eva, and Leo walking between them, holding tight to each of their hands. Kathryn sends Regina a smile, accented with a wink, as she and Frederick walk out with their children, followed by Ella and Thomas with their daughters. Ruby and Billy are the last to leave the room, Ruby squeezes both Emma and Regina’s hands before following her husband and daughters out.

Lottie screams again. Kam starts bouncing her as he looks to his queen, waiting for a command. She notes that the royal guard has left, leaving herself, Emma, Louisa, Kam, Bramble, and Rivers. She can feel other members of her royal guard standing outside the door; she embowed all of her royal guards’ uniforms with her magic, so she always knew where they were; they were an extension of herself. “Yes, alright, darling,” Regina says, stepping forward and taking Lottie from
Kam’s arms. She sets her against her chest as she turns to Emma. Lottie starts rooting around against Regina’s chest, “Will you bring Evelyn?” she asks, “I should feed them before going back to the Great Room.”

Emma nods and picks up Evy from Louisa, smiling at her content daughter.

“Why don’t you go and get some food,” Regina says as she turns from the room.

Bramble and Rivers nod and make their way toward the Great Room. Louisa nods and offers Regina a wink before she, too, heads toward the kitchen in the Great Room. They walk back to their room and Emma grabs Regina’s nursing pillow as her wife settles on the chaise by the fireplace.

“Kam, you can go celebrate,” Regina says again.

“Thank you, Your Majesty, but I’ll wait here,” he says as he posts guard outside the room.

Regina sighs but knows he won’t leave until they move down to the Great Room. She waves her hand to change her daughters’ diapers and listens to Emma talk about her magic and ask Regina how she does the thing with the diapers. Regina laughs as her wife decides to sit upside down on the couch next to her and keeps a steady stream of conversation as she feeds their daughters.
Meliorism

Chapter Summary

Meliorism: (n.) the belief that the world gets better; the belief that humans can improve the world

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!! Finally got a chance to upload this chapter!!

*all mistakes are my own - didn't do a whole lot of editing*

But enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

“This party was so much fun!” Kelly says as she comes to lean against her mother.

“Yes!” Roland says, “Mommy! Can we come back to have parties like this all the time?”

Zelena smiles, “We’ll see. Why don’t you two go by Henry and see if he’ll start another game?”

“Come on!” Roland shouts, taking Kelly’s hand, “Let’s see if Leo and Ruthie want to play too!”

“He calls you Mommy?” Little John asks, sitting next to Robin, his best friend and leader.

“Of course,” Zelena asks, trying not to show her offense. “He’s my son. I raised him.”

“But you’re not his mother,” Little John says. There’s no confusion in his tone. He cared dearly for Marian, she was the kindest soul. He knows Soulmate magic doesn’t lie, but Roland can’t forget about his mother - his real mother. Little John won’t stand for it.

Zelena rolls her eyes, placing a hand on Robin’s knee, silently telling him not to step in and say something. “I didn’t birth him,” she says obviously, with a sigh. “That does not mean I’m not his mother. He has two of us. He knows Marian was his Mama; I’m Mommy. He can have more than one.” It’s like she’s talking to a child, having to spell everything out for him.

Little John dips his chin down, “Of- of course he can,” he stumbles over his words.

Robin chuckles and pats Little John’s shoulder, “Don’t sweat it, you couldn’t have known. But we most certainly tell Roland about Marian. Even without our memories, we knew about Roland’s mother. He knew she died, and that she loved him very much. Having Zelena here,” he says, covering Zelena’s hand with his own and smiles, “is a blessing. A bonus,” he chuckles, “if you listen to the words of the Land Without Magic.”
Little John nods and looks to Zelena, “I’m- I’m sorry.”

Zelena gives a brief nod back and looks to her children, “They’ll never sleep now. There’s been too much excitement.”

Regina chuckles and looks over to her wife, surrounded by so many people thanking her. She can tell how uncomfortable Emma is by how much she’s scratching the back of her neck.

Zelena huffs and leans close to Regina, “Look at them fawn over their precious Savior,” she scoffs. “She only used her magic at the very end. But she’s the one who gets all the credit for saving the day,” she scorns.

“Careful, Zelena,” Regina warns. “Green may be your color, but I’d hate to have to change your skin color so soon.”

Zelena dismisses her sister with a wave of her hand, “Please. I most certainly do not want those awful peasants touching me and hugging me like that. But a little appreciation would be nice.”

Regina places a hand over Zelena’s, resting on her knee, “I appreciate you, Lena.”

Zelena sighs and tips her head toward her sister and gives a tired smile, “Thanks, Mei Mei. I appreciate you too.”

Regina smiles and pats her sister’s hand. “Emma, dear,” she calls, standing from her spot next to Zelena. Emma looks over at her wife and smiles; it’s a weary smile, it’s been a long day, and it’s been even longer since they got a full-night’s sleep. That hadn’t happened since their memories came back. “Could you come here for a moment?” she asks sweetly.

Emma smiles to the people around her and excuses herself. She walks over by her wife and swings her arm over Regina’s shoulders. “Thank you,” she whispers as she kisses Regina’s temple.

Regina smiles widely and lets her arm wrap around Emma’s waist, “Always,” she replies. “Now, we need to calm everyone down.”

“And how are you thinking we do that, Mrs. Mills?” Emma asks with a smile.

“I was thinking a movie, Mrs. Mills,” Regina replies with a smirk.

Emma gasps, “A movie? Why, how would these kids react to a movie?”

“Okay, ew,” Zelena groans, stands up and says, “You two are absolutely ridiculous. Go start the movie or get a room.”

Emma and Regina share a look before sharing a chuckle. “Oh Lena,” Regina starts, “don’t be such a spoilsport.”

“Yeah Z,” Emma adds, “quit being such a killjoy.”

“Just play the damn movie,” Zelena grumbles, enunciating with an eye roll.

“Disney?” Emma offers.

“Hmmm,” Regina muses, “That narrows our options; they redid many tales about the people here, and not always nicely,” she adds.

“The Lion King?” suggests.
“I’m not sure if they’ve met any of Simba’s pride,” Regina ponders aloud.

“Wait. Gina, you’re joking. Simba’s a freaking lion. He’s not real.”

Regina sighs, “Emma. Your parents are Snow White and Prince Charming. You married the Evil Queen, your sister-in-law is the Wicked Witch, your brother-in-law is Robin Hood, your Godmother is the big bad wolf. You really need to expand your beliefs, dear.” Emma’s mouth drops, Regina huffs, “Simba and his pride are shapeshifters. They’re similar to Ruby but they control their turning.”

“And they’re lions,” Emma states obviously.

“Yes, and they’re lions,” Regina agrees with a chuckle.

“Oh, mind-blown, babe. Mind. Blown.” Regina clears her throat and raises an eyebrow at her wife, “Right. Focus. Focusing right now. How about…” she pauses and looks around the room, “Toy Story? Oh god, are the toys really alive? Please don’t let them be alive, I can’t handle that.” Regina laughs and shakes her head, “Oh thank god. Ummmmm….Inside Out?”

“Oooh! The kids absolutely adore that movie,” Zelena adds in.

Regina nods, “Perfect. Let’s go set up.” She turns and moves toward a vacant part of the Great Room. She watches Zelena go into the kitchen, presumably for snacks, and Regina turns her attention back to the task at hand. She waves her hand and everything disappears from the wall. Another wave of her hand and the floor is littered with floor pillows, blankets, and comfy chairs. She smiles as she glances around herself as she snaps her fingers and a projector appears, shining onto the now-empty wall, ready to play the movie.

“Mommy!” Tommy shouts, “We gonna watch a movie?!”

“Sí, Querido” Regina says with a smile. She sees she has the attention of all the children in the room, “We’re going to watch a movie tonight before bed.”

“A...movie?” Leo asks, testing out the word.

“Yes, it’s a moving picture. It’s wonderful,” Regina says with a smile.

“Yay!” Daniel says, stepping forward. “Do we get to lay on the floor?” His eyes grow wide, as do the rest of the children’s.

“Yes,” Regina chuckles, nodding her head as the children’s eyes light up.

They all gasp and rush to claim a pillow on the floor.

Zelena steps out of the kitchen in time to see the kids race to find a pillow. She laughs and walks over to pass out all the snacks she and Robin could grab. Together, they hand out snacks and then settle on one of the chairs, side-by-side.

Regina makes sure all the children are settled as she starts the movie. She can’t keep the smile from her face as the children from the castle ooh and aah at the wonderful technology they’ve never seen.

Regina kisses Tommy’s head, tucking him in and smiling at the rest of the children in the room,
fast asleep in their beds. She checks on her niece and nephew, sleeping next to Tommy, in the room across from Regina and Emma’s. She steps into the hallway and smiles at her sister and brother-in-law as they step into their room, directly next to theirs. Regina takes Emma’s hand and they walk across the hall toward their bedroom. “Think we can make this talk quick?” Emma whispers, Regina gives her a confused look and Emma raises her eyebrows suggestively, “I mean, talk to Henry and then have some alone time?”

Regina rolls her eyes but steps up into Emma’s personal space, staring at her lips. She licks her own and replies, “Perhaps.” She shrugs and steps into their room.

Emma barely holds in a groan but follows her wife into the room and over to the fireplace. She plops down on the chaise next to her wife and looks across at her son who is avoiding eye contact.

“Henry,” Regina starts, leaning forward, closer to her son. “We want to talk about your feelings regarding the other world.”

Henry shrugs, still not looking up, “Look,” he begins, “I get it. We’re going back. I understand why in ways I didn’t before. I just don’t want to go back, you know? Even though I have friends and stuff there and I love my classes, I don’t want to forget our family again.”

Regina raises a hand to stop him from continuing his rambling, he gets that from Emma. She smiles, “Henry, we’re not going to forget.”

“What?”

Regina nods, “When we go back, we won’t lose our memories again. Ever.”

Henry’s eyes are cautiously excited, “For real?”

Regina chuckles, “Yes, we live directly above the Gateway, dear. Of course we’re coming back. We can come and go between the realms freely.”

“We have to stay in touch with our family,” Emma adds, “We have a lot of time to make up for.”

“But how are we going to keep our memories?” Henry asks.

Regina sighs and looks down at her hands, wringing together on her lap. “We were told the Gateway required a fee; a fee that demanded our memories when we went to the new realm.” She shakes her head at herself, “I overlooked it, I should have caught it.” Emma places a hand atop Regina’s, slowing their aggressive wringing. “I was so caught up with leaving and getting away that I didn’t even notice Blue had altered the doorway. It’s only luck that made sure we made it to the new world and weren’t scattered atoms across the universe.”

Emma squeezes Regina’s hands, “You couldn’t have known; nobody knew.”

“I should have. I know how she works. I should have seen this coming.”

Emma shakes her head, “You, Regina Mills, are not to blame for our memories. And now we never have to go through that again.” She smiles at her wife before turning her attention back to Henry. “We don’t have the time to lose our memories. We need to catch up with our family aaaaand,” she adds with a smirk, “Your mom needs to teach Daniel how to control his magic.”

“Your other mother needs lessons as well,” Regina adds with a smirk.

“And your cousin too,” Zelena says as she sweeps into the room, flopping onto the couch next to
her nephew. When she only receives confused looks she adds, “What?” She pauses, staring at all three faces looking back at her. “I’m powerful but I am not a teacher. I’m not good at teaching magic. I just do it. I don’t know how, it just happens. I’ll leave the teaching to you, Mei Mei,” she says with a smile.

Emma stares at the blatant care exuding from her sister-in-law. She’s shocked, “Was...that...a compliment? To your sister?”

“What can I say,” Zelena asks with a smirk, “Know thine enemy,” she replies with a wink. She notices the look that Regina is giving her, “What?” she repeats. She groans, “Don’t make me say it, Sissy.”

Regina simply raises her eyebrows, trying to keep the smirk from her face.

Zelena groans again, flopping back into the couch further, resting her neck against the top of the couch. “I want Kelly to have a deeper understanding of magic than Rumple taught me in my time studying with the Dark One.” She pauses and sighs, sitting up straighter and looking down at her hands. She sighs one more time for good measure. “What I know about magic is dark; it’s angry. I don’t want Kelly to grow up like that. Everything I know comes from a dark place. It’s not good magic. I try to do good things with my magic but it still comes from a dark place. But, Regina knows about good magic. She knows about all kinds of magic - always reading, always learning; that’s my Mei Mei.” She smiles which quickly turned into a smirk. “I’d even a guess that what she knows would rival the knowledge of the fairies.” She’s very proud.

“It most certainly is a deeper knowledge and understanding than the fairies,” Regina agrees.

Henry laughs and looks between his moms and his aunt, “So we’re staying?”

“Well, sort of,” Regina says, glancing at the fireplace before looking back to her son. She sees his face fall and quickly continues, “Our reason for leaving is still the same. We left so you could have a better life, a normal life. We have lives in the other world. Friends, jobs, other commitments in the other world. We’ll certainly come back and forth between the realms on weekends and holidays, and perhaps during the week if we need to. But we’re going back to the other realm. We want you to have an education there; you excel in so much there, Henry. We want your brother and sisters and even your cousins to grow up in the other realm with school and parks-“

“And no ogres,” Emma adds on.

“Or fairies,” Zelena says as her lip curls in disdain.

Henry nods, processing what the women are saying, “But we’ll come back?”

Regina smiles, “Absolutely.”

“Yes!” He jumps off the couch and rushes over to crush his mothers in a hug. He laughs at the shock before they each wrap an arm around his back; he rests his chin between their shoulders, sighing before standing up and returning to the other couch. He sits next to his aunt and wraps his arms around her middle, resting his cheek on her shoulder.

Zelena is caught off-guard, as she usually is when someone showed such blatant affection. She wraps her arms around her nephew and rests her cheek on top of his head, smiling.

Regina rests her hand on Emma’s knee, sharing a tired smile before looking at Henry and Zelena. “Why don’t we all get some sleep? We all need to rest. Tomorrow can be a day of celebration before we head back.”
Henry groans, “Do we have to go back so soon?”

Regina chuckles, “Yes, you cannot keep missing school.” She tilts her head and gives an understanding smile, “We’ll be back dear, we can come back on the weekend.”

“Okay,” he says with a yawn. He stands and heads for the door, “G’night.”


“Goodnight,” Zelena says as she stands, “See you in the morning.” She heads for the door as the other two women bid her goodnight.

Emma rests her head on Regina’s shoulder and sighs, “It’s been a long day.”

“That is has,” Regina muses as she wraps Emma in her arms and kisses the top of her head. “And if I remember correctly,” she continues, catching Emma’s attention, “You still owe me a bath.”

Emma lifts her head and smiles at her wife, “I do.” She stands, pulling Regina with her. Together they stumble into the bathroom, wrapped in each others arms.

“MOMMA!! Lookit!” Tommy shouts from his spot atop a giant horse.

“I see!” Emma responds from her spot on the ground. She raises a hand to her eyes and looks up to see her son, seeing only his shadow. The beast moves a step forward, closer to Emma but before she moves backward, she realizes now she can see, the shadow is now covering her eyes and she looks up to see her wife smiling down at her, with their youngest son securely in front of her.

“Mommy, can we go fast now?” Tommy asks, looking up at his mother behind him, being sure to keep a grip on the horse’s bridle like she showed him.

“Maybe next time, Sweetie. We have to practice staying on by yourself before we can go fast,” Regina says, smiling at her son.

Tommy’s head hangs in defeat but takes a deep breath and looks down at his blonde mother. “Momma I so tall!!”

“That’s right, Bud,” Emma says with a chuckle.

“How nervous are you right now?” Regina asks with a smirk.

“On a scale from one to ten?” Emma asks, “Twelve.”

Regina lets out a laugh, causing Emma to smile. God, she’ll do anything to continue hearing that carefree laugh.

“Mommy!” Tommy shouts, eyes wide, “I gotta potty.”

“I got this Gina,” Emma says, stepping forward to grab her son from the giant beast’s back. Tommy reaches down and wraps his arms around Emma’s neck, letting his legs fall away from the horse.

“Now Momma!” Tommy shouts as Emma sets him on his feet. He holds tightly to her hand and starts pulling her toward the castle and a bathroom.
Regina chuckles and turns her attention to the other people on horses in the field. She sees Leo and Ruth chasing after Snow on her horse, with Eva clapping and laughing in front of her. Snow smiles down at her youngest daughter, holding her tight. Regina looks to see Daniel, Abigail, and Kathryn over at the other end of the field. Kathryn lifts a hand to Regina and Regina can’t help the smile that takes over her face. She turns her horse, a gorgeous gelding, and let’s him trot over by Kathryn. She sighs, happy to be on a horse again. She hasn’t gone riding since Emma found out she was pregnant with the twins. It’d been over a year; she had taken Henry to all of his lessons but she had not been on a horse herself in quite a while.

She feels the horse move under her, the gentle sway as he trots her toward Kathryn. This beautiful buckskin, trusting her and leading her where she needs to go. She reaches down at brushes his mane away from the saddle, rubbing his neck as he comes to a stop next to Kathryn and her children.

“Regina! You came!” Daniel says with a smile, “Did you see my runs earlier?”

“I did,” Regina says with a smile. “You’re a natural, dear.”

“Even faster than Mom,” he says proudly, straightening his shoulders and puffing out his chest with pride.

“Really?” Regina asks with raised eyebrows and a smirk, “That’s impressive.”

“Do you want to race me?” Daniel dares.

Regina tries to hold back a chuckle, “Oh I don’t know if that would be fair, Daniel.” She looks up to Kathryn and sees her friend whisper “beat him” and nods with a smile. He looks like he’s about to protest about fairness when Regina continues, “I’m not sure you could handle losing a race today.”

Daniel gasps and narrows his eyes in challenge. Kathryn can’t help the chuckle that escapes her. She swings off her horse and starts rubbing her neck. Regina does the same thing and she “thinks” about Daniel’s offer. She stares into her horse, Atlas’ eyes.

“Before we race,” Regina starts, “Tell me about your horse.” Daniel gives her a confused look. She says nothing about the look and runs her hand across Atlas’ flank. When Daniel says nothing she explains, “In order to be the best or the fastest, you need to know your horse as well as you know yourself. So, what can you tell me about your horse?”

Daniel straightens his shoulders, unaware there would be a lesson today, but he knows how to respond when a teacher asks a question. He hops off his horse and grasps the reigns, leading him over to stand in front of Regina, who is still focused on her Buckskin. “His name is Eli. He has been my horse since he was born. We started training as soon as he was ready. We grew up together. I know him best.”

That’s a good sign Regina says, noting the bond between the two. “Do you know a lot about all the horses here?”

Daniel nods, “I come and take care of them when I’m done with my studies.” He points at Regina’s horse, “That’s Atlas; he’s older than Eli. Slower too,” he says with a smirk.

“Oh really?” Regina asks with a smirk. He certainly talks like he’s older than 5. Definitely the Princely lessons. Off of Daniel’s nod, “Well, we’ll just have to see about that, won’t we?”
He smirks, a challenge twinkling in his eyes, a look that’s all Kathryn. He hops atop Eli, with a boost from Kathryn.

Regina winks at her best friend and mounts her own horse. “Alright, dear, I haven’t been in this place in a while. Is the stone monument still in the far west corner of the castle grounds?”

Daniel gasps, “No one knows about my monument.”

“I know,” Regina says with a chuckle, "I used to hide out there and think."

Daniel’s jaw drops, “That’s what I do!”

Regina can’t keep the smile off her face. She looks away from her godson to his mother, “Would you start us, Kathryn?”

Kathryn snickers, “Don’t beat him too bad, Regina. Or I’ll send him with you while he’s complaining.”

“No promises dear.”

Daniel scoffs, “I will win, Momma.”

The two move their horses to stand at the edge of the paddock. Kathryn leads her horse, and Abigail’s, to stand next to both riders. “Alright, first one around the monument and back here wins. No cheating, no dirty tricks,” she adds with a raised eyebrow and Regina’s not sure who she’s talking to.

She waits for Daniel to settle further into his saddle. Regina nods at Kathryn as she turns to her daughter, “Do you want to say go, Abi?”

Her daughter nods excitedly. She sits straighter in her saddle and says, “Ready. Set. Go!” and they’re off. Daniel is leading as they head into the woods and disappear from sight.

Kathryn looks up at her daughter as she looks into the woods, waiting for her brother to race back. She smiles, it’s about time things get back to being normal. Together, they watch and wait for the racers to return. They race out of the woods and Daniel is still in the lead.

“Go Danny!” Abigail shouts, clapping her hands and bouncing in the saddle as her brother races toward her.

It’s not over yet. Regina lowers herself so she’s practically laying on Atlas’ back. Daniel is still leading but he’s completely ignoring the fact that Regina is catching up; he’s already celebrating. Regina races past him and crosses into the paddock nearly a full head in front of him. She’s laughing as she walks her horse, calming him down. She has Atlas walk back to where Kathryn and her children are. She hops off of Atlas and raises her hand in front of her, he nuzzles into her hand before he nickers and stomps his front hoof in satisfaction.

“Well done, Regina,” Kathryn says with a barely contained smirk.

“Thank you Kathryn,” Regina smiles back before she turns to Daniel. With a straight back, she nods her head and says, “That was a race well-run, dear.”

Daniel huffs and pouts. Kathryn quickly steps in and says, “Now Daniel, I know you haven’t lost a race recently, but you cannot be a sore loser. You’re better than that.”
Daniel rolls his eyes, causing Regina’s eyebrow to skyrocket into her hairline. Daniel looks at the looks each woman is giving him and his shoulders drop, “Sorry,” he mumbles. He straightens his back and looks up at them, “Nice job, Regina,” he says as he bows his head. Regina smiles and winks at her godson, who smiles in return. “How did you do that?” he asks.

“Do what?” Regina responds as she runs her hand down Atlas’ neck, brushing the black hair of his mane away from his golden body. She makes sure it’s all falling to the same side and the flop in front goes away from his beautiful brown eyes.

“Beat me,” Daniel says, studying his godmother. “You were behind me the whole time. How did you win?”

Regina smiles, “You told me you knew all about these horses. Do you know their names reflect their personalities? Eli stands for “height”, it means he is good at jumping. Atlas is strong, he was a god that had the weight of the world on his shoulders. He is very strong and has stamina.”

“You were always going to win, weren’t you?” Daniel accuses.

Regina lets out a bell-like laugh, “I was hoping to.”

Daniel nods with a smile, “This just means I have to get better.”

Regina chuckles and nods, “Absolutely. Now let’s walk this horses down before we brush them.” She hops back up on Atlas’ back and together, she and Daniel walk around the paddock, chatting as they cool down their horses.

“Do we hafta go back?” Tommy whines as he stands between his mothers.

Regina smiles and cups his cheek, “Sí, Querido. We have to go back to work, Henry has school; but we’ll come back soon.”

“Tomorrow?”

Regina and Emma chuckle at their son, “Not quite tomorrow, Kiddo, but soon.”

“How many sleeps?” he asks with narrowed eyes.

“We don’t know yet, Bud,” Emma says, “We have to go back first and then we’ll decide.” She stands back to her full height and turns to her family and friends. It’s time to say goodbyes.

Ruby rushes and wraps her arms around her friend and goddaughter, “You better come back soon,” she says, squeezing Emma tight.

Emma laughs as she returns Ruby’s hug in full, “You got it, Rubes.”

Kathryn embraces Regina and can’t help the smile that overtakes her face when Regina hugs her back without hesitation. “Don’t be a stranger.”

“Wouldn’t dream of it,” Regina says. “Never again.”

“Promises, promises,” Kathryn sighs wistfully, causing Regina to lightly push her friend’s shoulder with a scoff.

Regina steps back and nods toward Frederick, standing behind Daniel and Abigail. Daniel steps
forward and wraps his arms around Regina’s waist, “You’re coming back?” he whispers.

She bends her neck so she’s closer to his ear, “Absolutely. We’ll be back soon,” she promises, “and then I’ll show you how to race properly,” she adds with a wink.

Daniel giggles and steps away from his godmother. He steps back and wraps an arm around his mother, standing next to his sister and father with a smile.

Regina turns her attention back toward her family and smiles as she sees her sons saying goodbye to their grandparents and Emma’s younger siblings. She sees Robin and Zelena saying goodbye to the Merry Men. Her smile grows when she sees Emma wrapped in the embrace of her parents. No matter what Emma says, Regina knows how much it hurts her wife to have missed so much time with her parents and now her siblings. She watches as Emma relaxes into the hug from her parents and laughs when Tommy pulls her away to whisper something in her ear that has Emma chuckling and nodding her head. Tommy comes running toward Regina and she scoops him into her arms, “Ready Mommy?”

“Just about, Querido. Do you have all of your things in your backpack?”

Tommy nods his head vigorously. “Henny hepped me maked sure I gots my stuffs.”

Regina smiles, “Good,” she bops his nose and smiles wider when that elicits giggles from her youngest son. She sees Snow walking toward them and sets Tommy down.

Tommy runs passed his grandmother saying “Bye Gwama!”

“Bye Tommy,” Snow says, making her way over to Regina.

“Goodbye Snow,” Regina says.

“Come back soon, Regina,” Snow requests as she wraps Regina in a hug.

Regina wraps her arms around Snow and sighs, “Of course. We’ll be back soon.”

“Not four years,” Snow says with a smile.

Regina chuckles and pulls back from the hug, “Not four years,” she agrees.

“Allright you lot,” Zelena says as moves toward the entrance of the Gateway, “No more feelings and no more goodbyes. We’re not leaving forever.” She takes her sister by the hand and says, “Come along now, I miss my wifi and-”

“And your 9am wine call with the other stay-at-home-moms?” Emma asks with a smirk. Zelena huffs and mutters something about not being that kind of mom. “Suburbia bi-”

“Emma!” Regina shouts with wide eyes.

“Watch yourself, Swan,” Zelena warns, eyes narrowed at her sister-in-law.

Emma can’t stop the laughter from bubbling its way out of her. “It’s Mills, Sis,” she says as she holds her sides.

Zelena grumbles about the actual work she does while being a stay-at-home-mom. “Cooking, cleaning, watching my nieces and nephew, volunteering at the kids’ school,” she puffs out an angry breath, “helping you and my sister whenever you need it. But suuuuuuuure, make a joke about the one time I had wine at 9am. Just you wait, Swanie. Just you wait.”
“Love you Z,” Emma calls to her sister-in-law.

Zelena rolls her eyes and looks toward the Gateway entrance. “Mhm,” she hums.

Regina laughs and looks at her sister, “Ready?”

“Let’s drive back,” Zelena states.

“We don’t have a car, Z,” Emma states obviously.

Zelena sighs and rubs at her forehead, “We have magic, Emma.”

“Oh, right.” She chuckles, nervously grabbing the back of her neck.

Regina smiles at her wife before raising an eyebrow at her sister, who shrugs. “Alright, Lena. Let’s get going. The kids have school tomorrow.” Her eldest son, along with her niece and nephew, collectively groan. Her sister chuckles and nods her head. “Emma?” Regina calls.

“No, no, you do it, babe. I’m exhausted.”

Zelena laughs aloud, “Well, that’s not something you’ve ever said before, is it?”

Emma narrows her eyes but takes Regina’s outstretched hand and feels her wife’s magic wrap up her arm and into her chest. She can practically hear what her wife wants her to create. Here goes nothing Emma thinks as she lets their magic flow from her free hand.

She blinks, the magical dots across her vision fade away and in its spot, “It’s a trolley,” Zelena says, disappointed.

“Sorry Z, we couldn’t fit the Cadillac through the arches,” Emma teases, much to her sister-in-law’s chagrin.

Zelena mutters, “wasted potential,” as she gathers their belongs and creates a ramp to get the trolley safely down the steps and into the halls of the Gateway. Zelena loads the bags into the last few seats on the trolley extension of the golf cart before motioning for the children to pick a seat.

Regina looks to Kam and Louisa, holding the twins, and steps forward. She takes Lottie from Kam and smiles as her daughter nestles into the crook of her neck, playing with her necklace as she yawns. “Your Majesty, are you sure you do not require our protection?” Kam asks as he bows.

Regina sighs, “Kam, I’m just Regina now. No need for an entire legion of warriors.”

Kam scoffs, “Always a queen, always a ruler. But if you are sure, I shall wait in this castle until your return, should you need me.”

Regina rolls her eyes, “Of course, Kam, you’re always needed.”

He attempts to suppress his smile as he nods his head, “I will continue the training of my men and will await your orders.”

Regina smirks, “You could always start by listening to Snow.” Kam scoffs, offended once more. Regina can’t help the laughter escaping her as she says, “Or you could help her.”

Kam narrows his eyes in suspicion, “Is that an order, Your Majesty?”

She smiles once again, faintly saying, “If you need it to be.”
Kam nods, “I suppose I could explain to her what she’s doing right. That will be a shorter list than what she’s doing wrong.”

Regina chuckles and shakes her head. She turns to Louisa and says, “I’ll have Henry come and take Evelyn. He hasn’t had much time with either of the twins since we arrived.”

“I can take her,” Louisa says as she steps toward the trolley.

“But we’ll need someone to hold her on the ride back to our house,” Regina reasons as she tries to make eye contact with her oldest son.

“I will hold her,” Louisa says simply.

“You’re- you’re coming with us?” Regina asks in confusion.

“Of course. I miss the other world too, you know,” she says factually. “And I just found you all. I’m not ready to lose you just yet.”

Regina smiles softly, “You’re not losing us, Louisa.”

“I know, because I’m coming back with you.”

The smile never leaves Regina’s face. Before she can respond Henry walks over, catching the end of their conversation, “You’re coming back with us LouLou?”

Louisa smiles and nods, “Of course, Duckling.”

“How will we explain her presence?” Zelena asks as she moves over to join the conversation. “She can’t be our mother, people already know that relationship is antagonistic and toxic.”

“An estranged aunt, perhaps, looking to make amends.”

“Or a stepmother,” Henry adds. “And honestly,” he pauses to shrug at his mother and aunt, “We might not even have to explain her presence. She’s just with us, that’s all that matters.” He sighs, “Yeah, I know how the Suburbians are. They’ll notice and want answers. Hmmm, can I think about it on the way back? Can we talk about it after I’ve thought up some ideas?”

Regina laughs, “Of course, Henry. Now, why don’t you go back to the trolley and get comfortable. We’ll be out of here shortly.” She smiles toward Louisa, “Thank you,” she says warmly.

Louisa smiles and nods before she, too, heads toward the cart.

Snow comes up to stand next to Regina and says, “So, Kam’s going to help with the kingdom?”

Regina nods, “Yes, I’m assuming that since there’s no more immediate threat, you’ll all want to get back to a sense of normalcy.”

“Actually,” Snow starts, “We all seem to be enjoying living together in the castle. It’s plenty big, and close to everything we need. There seem to be less people in and around the castle, thanks to Jafar and his menacing minions, so we might stick together a while longer.”

Regina bobs her head in agreement, “I suppose that’s up to you all.”

Snow chuckles and nudges her elbow against Regina’s, “We’ve all stayed in the area. The royals and our immediate circle of friends all have plenty of space in this castle. They even have chances to travel should they need a break but the ogres seem to have grown in number, so there hasn’t
been much travel.”

“Talk to Kam,” Regina says simply. “He’s helped plan the attacks on the ogres many times. He
knows their weaknesses and how to stop them.”

Snow nods, “I will make sure he’s in the next War Room meeting.” She turns to see her daughter
help situate Tommy between Henry and Louisa. She smiles, “Be safe Regina, and come back soon.
I wish there was a way you could let us know that you’ve made it back to your house safely.”

Regina smiles and waves her free hand. When the smoke clears, there’s a small, compact mirror.
She hands it to Snow and says, “It works similar to Skype. Open it and it will ring through to one
of our phones. Then we’ll be able to show you that we’ve made it safely.”

“I appreciate that very much, Regina,” Snow says as she takes the compact from Regina’s hand and
holds it close to her chest as she smiles.

“See you soon, Snow,” Regina says with a small head nod.

“Bye Regina.”

She heads over to her family and settles into the front seat next to her wife. She turns to see her
sister, brother-in-law, niece and nephew, sons, and Louisa holding Evy all smiling and waving to
their family. Regina turns to Emma and smiles widely. “Let’s go home.”

Chapter End Notes

Only the epilogue remains
Sempiternal

Chapter Summary

sempiternal:
(adj.) eternal and unchanging; everlasting

Chapter Notes

THE EPILOGUE IS HERE!

I've had most of this written since I posted the last chapter but I totally forgot about posting it until some lovely reviewers reminded me.

Thank you so much for going on this journey with me. And who knows, maybe there will be a sequel some day. I haven't ruled it out ;)

Hope you enjoy! <3

SQSQSQSQSQSQ

*6 months later*

“Momma! MOMMA!! Lookit me!” Tommy shouts.

Emma raises her hand to shield her eyes from the sun, “Wow Bud, you’re doing great!” She looks from her son to her daughters, crawling across the grass.

“Emma! Be careful with the horses!”

Emma scoffs, “Do you really think anything bad would ever happen, babe? Three sorceresses, an entire guard, and their grandmothers,” she nods toward her mother and then to Louella. “They’ve never been safer.”

Regina shakes her head and hops off Atlas. She lifts Evelyn into her arms and tickles under her chin, causing her daughter to giggle and squirm.

“Mommy! Can I go by myself yet?” Tommy whines.

“Not quite, Querido,” Regina says to her son.

“How about we go for a walk, T?” Henry says, stepping in to hopefully stop a tantrum.

“Then can we go practice?” Tommy asks from atop the horse.

Henry looks to his mothers, “Yes, dear. You may go practice.” Tommy squeals, “But,” Regina adds, “you have to help brush Atlas and make sure he has fresh water and hay.”
“Okay, Mommy!” Tommy shouts as he slides off of Atlas’ back and into Henry’s arms. He takes Atlas’ reins and they slowly make their way to the stables. Regina nods at Kam, who returns her nod before turning to say a few words to Drexel, another knight who returned to his station after the curse broke. Drexel bows to Regina and follows the boys to the stables to prepare for the sword-fighting lesson.

“Come on Grandpa!” Tommy calls before they head into the stables.

“Me too!” Leo calls as he runs with his father to the stable.

“Your Majesty,” Kam says as he steps forward, bowing to Regina. “An...issue...has arisen in the War Room.”

Regina looks from Kam to Snow, who is sitting on the grass with Eva, Ruth, and Lottie. She looks back to Kam and raises an eyebrow.

Kam shrugs, “This is something you should deal with, or rather, the Evil Queen would be best adept to handle this.” He pauses and then sighs, “But I can let Snow know as well.”

“You’re growing quite bold here, Kam,” she comments at the first name informality.

“My apologies, Your Majesty,” he says, trying to hide his smirk as he bows.

Regina rolls her eyes and shakes her head, “Come along then. Let’s see what all this fuss is about.” She starts walking toward the castle but pauses when Kam clears his throat.

“Perhaps the princess should stay out here, Your Majesty.”

Regina narrows her eyes, trying to figure out what is waiting for her in the War Room. She turns away from the castle and hands Evy to her wife. She receives a confused look but merely shakes her head in response. “Nothing to worry about dear,” Regina soothes as she turns back toward Kam and the castle. “Let’s go then.”

Kam nods and follows Regina into the castle.

Regina leads them toward the War Room until they see Zelena, Robin, and the kids coming toward them. Regina smiles as Roland and Kelly start talking over each other, “We’re going riding!”

“We’re going outside!” as they run pass her and out the door. Robin smiles at her as he, too, walks passed her.

Zelena comes to a stop in front of her and studies her sister’s face, “What’s going on?”

Regina sighs and looks beyond her sister and toward the hall that will lead her to the War Room. She sees Zelena share a look with Kam before turning her attention back toward her sister. “There seems to be something going on in the War Room that I must attend to. Without my children,” she adds as she eyes Kam suspiciously.

Zelena smirks and claps her hands together. “This sounds exactly like what I need today.”

“Are you sure? Maybe you shouldn’t,” Regina adds as she eyes Zelena’s slightly protruding stomach.

Zelena scoffs, “No pregnancy will hold me back, Gi. I am perfectly capable of handling myself.”

Regina looks to Kam who simply shrugs, “Alright then, come along. I suppose we shouldn’t keep
Together, the three make their way toward the War Room. Regina pauses and flicks her wrist, her casual riding attire suddenly changed into an Evil Queen era outfit, one she kept in her wardrobe for possibilities like this. She takes a deep breath and looks to Zelena, who also changed her outfit to a black maternity dress, and then to Kam, in his uniform-as always. They share nods before she opens the doors with her magic.

There, on the other side of the table staring out the window, stood Rumple. He turns to see them and giggles. He draws his fingers to a steeple in front of him and says “My, my, my, you sure clean up nice for some other-worlders.”

Regina pretends to be aloof, unaware that Rumple was brought back during the curse, “Save it Rumple. What do you want?”

“What makes you think I want anything?” He asks with a shrug, “Perhaps I just wanted to see how two of my students were doing.”

Regina scoffs, “Either way, say what you’ve come to say, or get out.”

He tuts his tongue, “Oh my, it seems someone is a bit testy today. Well, I’m terribly sorry to bother you, Your Majesty,” he says with an obnoxious bow.

Regina rolls her eyes, “You know I am not in charge here, why are you not talking to Snow?”

“Well, I had heard you were back in this realm and I wanted to see for myself if it was true,” he explains as he turns his attention back out the window.

“And I suppose you have been too busy terrorizing the locals to come and visit us in the past 6 months?”

“Our schedules never synced,” Rumple says with a shrug. He turns around to face them again and says, “I can’t let the ogres have all the fun, deary.”

Regina sighs and pinches her nose, “Why are you here Rumple?”

“I already told you, I came to see how soft you’ve both become,” he scorns as he narrows his eyes at Zelena’s stomach.

Regina shakes her head, “I don’t have time for your mind games. Go back to terrorizing villagers.” She stands and moves toward the door. She sees Kam reach toward the sword at his side and whips around to see Rumple taking a step toward her. “Good bye Rumple,” she enunciates.

“What?” Rumple asks as he looks at her in confusion, “Do I not get to see my grandson? What about your new children? I hear some of them have wonderful potential.”

Regina rounds back to Rumple and gets directly in his face, “If you go anywhere near those children, I’ll be sure to destroy you, understand?”

“Testy, testy,” Rumple muses.

“You went after our children, Rumple,” Zelena growls as she steps toward her, magic sparking in the air around her. “And you have the nerve to come here and ‘check in’. Go to Hell,” she ends with a shake of her head.
“Well, yes, I suppose that would be a nice vacation. Maybe someday, Zelena. Long after you’ve withered away, perhaps I’ll have the time. But for now I’ll settle on this.”

“How dare you, who do you think you are to mess with our kids’ minds? Hmmm? Tell me that Rumple. Why change your dream dust to hurt the children?” She thinks back to when they were trying to find the Gateway and how she and Zelena only knew one person that created dream dust like this. They were both taught how to yield it and manipulate it, never like this of course, but they both experienced the effects the dust had on others, as well as themselves.

“I was merely repaying a favor, dearie. It was nothing personal,” he says as he checks his cuticles. He looks up to see fire within the eyes of his former students. For an instant he’s unsure what’s going to happen before he sighs, dropping the imp-act. “I truly did not know what Jafar was going to do with the dust. I owed him a favor and you know I can’t break a contract. When he asked from dream dust, I barely gave it a second thought. It’s not usually used for nightmares.”

“Yes, well, Jafar must have altered the dust to turn dreams into nightmares,” Regina states obviously.

Rumple nods and looks back out the window. He sighs, “You know I do not break my contracts. However, when I did find out he was entering the dreams of children and turning them into nightmares, I did what I could.”

“Wait,” Regina says, staring intently at her former teacher, “how did you find out about Jafar’s usage of the dust?” Rumple turns and stares back at her and she gasps, “No,” she lets out in shock.

Rumple nods, “Yes,”

Zelena shakes her head, “Gods have mercy on a child that belongs to the Dark One.”

Rumple narrows his eyes and replies, “Gods have mercy on those who go against the Dark One and his family.”

“So why did you not take care of Jafar the minute he entered your child’s dreams?”

“When I sought him out, he apologized and said it would never happen again. I destroyed the dust I had given him. He must’ve hidden some or recreated the spell. But after that, I did not hear anything, he left my Ethan alone. I was wrong to assume he left everyone else alone as well. I’m sorry.”

Zelena gasps, “Did you jus-” She looks to her sister in confusion before turning back to Rumple, “did you just apologize? You? The Dark One?”

Rumple huffs and flips his hand casually, “I’ve turned a new leaf, started over. Belle gave me a second chance, I won’t screw it up, not with Ethan on the line.”

Regina nods, understanding just how important a second chance is. She thinks of her own children, outside with her wife and extended family. “Henry’s outside training. You may visit with him. But only supervised. And no attempt at testing the magic of the others,” she warns as she turns away from him and toward the door, letting her heart lead the way to her family.

**SQSQSQSQSQSQ**

2 years later

“Looking sharp, kid,” Emma says approvingly.
Regina looks up from the papers in front of her and smiles at her son in his uniform. She stands and moves toward him. She straightens his collar and smooths his silver sash. He shifts from foot to foot nervously, swinging his helmet to his side. “You look wonderful, dear,” Regina says finally.

“Thanks Moms,” Henry says with a wide smile. Now that both his mothers approve he can relax.

“And you’re sure you’re ready?” Regina asks, again.

Henry does his best not to sigh, knights do not sigh in front of a queen, even if it is his mom. “Yes, I went through all the training and all the tests and passed. I’ve fought with your knights for years now, Mom.” Technically, they’re no longer his mom’s knights; but they still address her as their leader, even if they work under the White Kingdom. That’s why they still wear the silver sash, as a sign of allegiance. Henry pauses and realizes the only thing that will make his Mom feel better about this and says, “Kam says I’m ready for my first shift.” He moves on his feet, waiting to be dismissed.

“Well, we won’t keep you, dear. Be safe,” Regina says with a teary smile. “And don’t let those other knights push you around,” she warns.

“Yeah, right,” Henry scoffs, “as if they’d ever mess around with the queen’s kid.”

Emma chuckles and steps up next to Regina, wrapping an arm around her waist, “Go on, kid. See you at dinner. Don’t be late,” she reminds.

Henry nods and with a final smile, steps into the hallway and toward his first shift as a knight.

Emma watches as Regina sits at the desk once again and rubs at her temples. “Babe, why don’t you take a break? You don’t need to solve everything all at once.”

Regina leans back and looks to her wife, “If I don’t do this now, your parents’ coffers will deplete completely and then they’ll have nothing. They’ve never known how to tax peasants, but now there are no peasants. So, I do this while everyone is busy, otherwise I’ll never do it.”

“Never doing it sounds fun, let’s do that!” Emma says. She laughs at her wife’s unimpressed look. “Babe,” Emma sighs, walking toward her, “Come on, have some fun. Let my mom do the math.” She pauses at Regina’s look of disgust, “Okay, maybe don’t do that, but she has other people to do this. Come on, we’re supposed to be on vacation, relax, let’s go outside by the kids.” She pauses and smiles, holding her hand out for Regina to take, “Please?”

Regina sighs, “You’re terrible,” and takes Emma’s hand.

She stands and Emma laughs, “Yes, but I prefer to be the bad influence, it’s much more fun.”

Regina scoffs, “You forget who I used to be. If anything, I am the bad influence.”

“Key word: used to be, babe. Now you’re all goody-goody and make sure the PTA meetings go as planned, Henry gets to work on time, Tommy makes it to soccer practices and the littles have the right snacks when we go to their playgroup. Face it, you’re one of the good guys now.”

Regina rolls her eyes and shakes her head, “Tell that to the ICE agent I had crying in my office yesterday afternoon.”

Emma laughs, “Fine, I’ll give you that. Let’s go see our family.”

They head toward the stable to find everyone running and screaming. Immediately, Regina’s magic
crackles against her skin, waiting to throw balls of fire and whoever’s attacking now.

“Easy, babe,” Emma soothes as she rubs her hand across Regina’s knuckles, “they’re just playing tag.”

Regina relaxes, her magic seeping back into her soul. “Guess I’m a little bit jumpy still.”

Emma chuckles, “We all are, but there are no ogres today, and no magical mishaps.”

“Yet,” Regina adds on.

Emma nods, “Yet. But the day is still young, perhaps I can stir up a little trouble if you’re feeling bored.” She raises her eyebrows suggestively.

“Oh god I walked over here to tell you to come eat but now I’ve lost my appetite,” Zelena says with a gag as she turns and walks back toward the picnic tables set up in the field.

“Hi Z,” Emma says with an eye roll. Together, they approach the tables and are immediately swept up in conversation.

Regina is quickly pulled toward a row of trees by Kathryn. They sit in the sun and watch the children run in terror away from whoever is “it”.

“Soooo,” Kathryn starts. When Regina merely looks over at her, pretending she doesn’t know what she will ask, Kathryn sighs, “How are you all adjusting?”

“It’s new,” Regina starts, “but it’s nothing we haven’t done before.”

Kathryn groans, “Regina,” she warns.

“Alright, alright,” Regina says with a smile, “It’s been wonderful. Everyone is adjusting well. We were glad to get out of the house though, it’s been a while since Emma has seen the sun other than through a window.”

“Yes, I did think she looked paler than usual,” Kathryn muses.

“Well, a possible measles epidemic will do that,” Regina says.

“Measles? I thought there were vaccines. Aren’t they required for school?”

Regina nods, “But parents can refuse. And then they take their child to the doctor when they’re sick, so when we took Bennett to his six week check-up, we were in the the waiting room at a time where the doctor was concerned we could have potentially contracted the disease. So, we all had to quarantine ourselves in the house for 14 days to make sure we didn’t have it.” Kathryn’s eyes widen comically as her eyebrows shoot up into her hairline. Regina chuckles, “Yes, what you’re thinking is exactly how awful it was to be cooped up in a house with 4 young children, a teenager, an exhausted postpartum Emma, and a calm, yet slightly frazzled, Louisa.”

Kathryn shakes her head, “I’m sure it was quite the treat.”

Regina smiles, “I love my children and spending time with them is my favorite thing, but keeping rambunctious children in a house for two weeks will stretch anyone’s patience to the max.”

“But you’re all okay, right?” Kathryn asks.

“Yes, that’s why we came here. We waited the allotted time, everyone is still healthy; no one
showed any symptoms, and we all definitely needed to get out of that house.”

“I’m not sure how you handled that,” Kathryn chuckles.

“Entertaining Thomas was a breeze, he loves everything; Henry played his games or wrote on his computer; the twins were another story, they were constantly into everything, and I mean everything: at one point they crawled on top of the fridge and found my stash of chocolate. I have no idea how they got up there, but I found them giggling, covered in chocolate fudge.” She pauses as Kathryn laughs, daintily covering her mouth and shaking her head. “Emma just wanted to sleep, and so did Bennett. Thankfully Louisa was there too, that made things a bit easier.”

“Thankfully nothing bad happened,” Kathryn muses as she turns her attention to the children playing around them.

“I do not know what I would have done,” Regina says quietly.

“Hell hath no fury like a revered queen protecting her young.”

“Is that you way of saying I would have gone Evil Queen on them?”

“Yes,” Kathryn says simply.

Regina can’t help the laugh that bubbles up from her chest. She shakes her head at her friend and turns toward the children playing in the field, “I’ve missed you Kathryn.”

Kathryn turns and stares at her friend, who refuses to look away from the chaos going on in front of them. She smiles and reaches over and squeezes her friend’s hand, “Me too.”

Together, they sit there quietly, watching the children run around screaming as they play tag. “How has work been?” Kathryn asks finally.

Regina turns to her friend and tilts her head in confusion before responding, “Well I haven’t been there recently, but everything’s going very well. The other world is an absolute disaster, which has, unfortunately, led to my firm having a lot of new clients. We’re constantly working to get someone out of jail or prevent them from ever going into jail.”

Kathryn nods, “You must be great at that. With all the knowledge in that big brain of yours, and your compassionate heart. You’ve got to be superb.”

Regina smiles at her friend, “I enjoy my work, but it’s been a while since I’ve been in the office. I’ve been home with Emma and the kids since Bennett was born. I had 6 weeks of maternity leave set up. And then two weeks quarantine, I’ll be heading back on Monday.”

“You’ve been off this whole time?” Kathryn asks.

Regina nods, “To an extent. I’ve been doing some work from home, some phone calls but it’s mostly been responding to emails. I’ve been trying to spend as much time as I can with the kids. Although I definitely went through more emails this past week because I needed a little break from the kids each day to prevent myself from going crazy.”

Kathryn smiles and shakes her head, “I don’t know how you do it. You have so much going on.”

Regina shrugs, “I’ve always been a multitasker. It definitely comes in handy with five children.”

Their peaceful moment is broken up by the screams of their children chasing each other across the
field. Regina notices Ruby walking over with her son in her arms. Regina smiles as Ruby stops in front of them and says “I think little Benji wants his Mommy,” she says of the fussing baby.

Regina reaches out and safely wraps her son in her arms, Ruby smiles as the baby curls into his mother’s neck. Regina makes sure he is comfortable and no longer fussing before she turns to Ruby. “Did you call my son Benji, Miss Lucas?”

Ruby lets out a laugh, “Whoa, I haven’t been called Miss Lucas in a very long time, Regina. But yes, Bennett James is too much for such a tiny human, so I put them together for Benji.” Regina raises an eyebrow, but Ruby only smiles wider, “Come on, it’s much cuter than Benny Boo.”

Regina can’t help the eye roll as she thinks of the nicknames her wife began using on their youngest child. “Where is Emma?” she asked as she looked around them, searching for her blonde-haired wife.

Ruby shrugs, “She said she was tired, so she went to lie down.”

Regina offers a small nod as she looks to her children chasing one another. She turns to Kathryn and Ruby, “Did the children eat?”

They both nod, “Yes, we had lunch while you were in the library,” Kathryn clarifies.

Regina nods once again. She watches as the children come screaming toward them. She places one hand on Bennett’s shoulders to help stabilize as the twins run right at their chair. “Careful,” Regina says as she runs a hand through Evelyn’s wild hair. She looks between the twins, who are breathing heavily, “Five more minutes darlings, then we’re going in by Momma to take a little rest.” The twins start to whine but one look for Regina has them sighing and saying “Okay Mommy.”

Regina smiles, “Go play for five more minutes,” which causing all the children to take off running once more.

Kathryn snags her attention, “How is Emma?” she asks.

“She’s doing well,” Regina says, “She’s missing work but she loves being with Bennett and the children more. She’s off for another few weeks before heading back part time.”

“Then what?” Ruby asks from her spot in front of Regina and Kathryn.

“Then we’ll both be working three or four days a week for a while and Louisa will have him on any day that we’re both gone. It will just be the two of them most days since the twins have started in one of those “starter schools” where they go a few days a week, one day we take them out with one of our community groups so they can be around children their age and Louisa has all the children one day a week, and she absolutely adores when she has all five children at home with her.”

Kathryn and Ruby share in Regina’s laughter. “She does thrive in that environment,” Kathryn muses as she looks over to see Louisa holding Zelena’s Lila, sleeping against her. “It looks like Miss Lila tuckered herself out trying to keep up with the big kids.”

“She’s always trying to keep up with her siblings and her cousins,” Regina smiles and shakes her head, “I’m surprised she made it through lunch, usually when she’s with us, she falls asleep while she’s eating.”

The three women fall into a companionable silence, until Ruby looks to Regina and asks, “How is
Louisa liking the other world?”

Regina opens her eyes, which were closed as she turned her face into the sun, and looks at Ruby, “She loves it there. She adores our children and is incredibly helpful. She’s their LouLou and they love her as much as she loves them.”

“And there aren’t any questions about her?” Kathryn asks.

Regina shakes her head, “Not anymore. When she first came back with us, our friends and co-workers were a little confused. While we didn’t have our memories, Zelena and I knew how toxic our relationship with our mother was, so the people around us knew Louisa was not our mother. Henry went back and forth trying to come up with the best cover story and he decided that our best bet was to say she was our father’s second wife and that after he died, she went through a tough time and felt she no longer had any connection to us. Then we said we ran into her while we were on our “vacation” here and that we all realized that we were still important in each other’s lives. And there weren’t many questions after that. We received a few “how long have you known her,” “why is she suddenly living with you,” or “why have you never mentioned her” but for the most part, the people around us accepted her quickly and love her almost as much as we do.” Regina can’t help the growth in her smile as she says, “She’s a big hit with our playgroup. They all say she brings the best snacks.”

The women chuckle and again fall into companionable silence. Eventually, Regina sighs and stands from her seat. But before she can call her daughters to head inside to rest, there’s a puff of smoke and Rumple appears. The kids hardly even pause their game except a shout of “Hi Ethan!” and “Wanna come and play?”

Belle steps away from her husband and moves toward the women. “Oh Regina! How are you? How’s Emma? Oh, is this the new little one? He’s precious!”

“Hello Belle,” Regina greets, “Emma is doing well, she’s resting right now; and this right here,” she moves her body so Belle can see her son’s face, “is Bennett James.”

“He’s beautiful,” Belle coos as she steps toward Regina and the baby. Bennett opens his eyes and smiles before closing them again and snuggling further into his mother.

“We brought snacks,” Rumple says, gesturing to the basket in his hands.

“Wonderful!” Ruby exclaims, as she stands. “Come on then, let’s put them on the table over there.”

Regina smiles, who would have thought that they’d be enjoying the company of the Dark One. Or that he liked to make snacks for all the children when they all come together. A disgruntled noise escapes her son’s small body before he shouts his frustration, “Hungry already?” she asks with a smile as he tiny face scrunches up. She turns her attention to her daughters. She calls their names and when she has their attention she calls, “Ven aca.”

They seem to be debating rushing the snack table but realize that won’t work this time. She watches as they hang their heads, but move toward her. They stop in front of her and she smiles, “Come along, dears. Let’s go find your momma.” The twins clap hands and lead their mother into the castle. They make it to their mothers’ room and watch their brunette mother as they wait in the doorway. “Let’s check on Momma,” she whispers. She lifts a finger to her lips, “but we have to be very quiet in case she’s sleeping.” Her daughters nod and move into the room to see their blonde mother sprawled out in the middle of the bed. They share a look and chuckle, covering their mouths with their hands, causing Regina to laugh as well.
Carefully, they climb onto the bed and next to their mom, who opens her eyes and smiles “Well, look at my beautiful daughters.” She bops each of their noses, causing giggles to erupt, “Are you here for snuggles? Did you miss me SOOOOOO much?” Regina rolls her eyes fondly and smiles when she sees she has Emma’s attention.

“The twins are ready to nap and Bennett is hungry.” She waits as her wife resituates herself against the headboard before passing their son into her arms to nurse. Regina turns her attention to her daughters as they reach for their loveys they left in here this morning. Each was gifted a tiny security blanket from Granny on their first birthday. Matching security blankets with the head of dragon, one pink and one purple. They each clasp their loveys tight to their chest and snuggle further into the bed beside Emma. Regina sits, watching her daughters and sharing a smile with her wife.

“Mommy sing,” Evelyn sighs out as she wiggles around to get more comfortable. “Mmm hmm,” Charlotte sighs, already relaxed with her eyes shut.

Regina can’t help the loving smile that cascades across her face, “Of course, my loves.

Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.
Black and bays, dapples, grays,
All the pretty little horses.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
Hush-a-by, don't you cry,
Go to sleep my little baby.
When you wake you shall have
All the pretty little horses.”

She smiles at her sleeping daughters and turns her attention to her wife.

“You look exhausted, dear.”

Emma nods, eyes practically shut, “Mmm hmm,” she sighs out.

Regina can’t help the bubbling laughter that escapes her as she stands and moves next to her wife. She picks up their son and shifts him up onto her shoulder. He’s practically asleep and quickly finds a comfortable spot over her collar bone, burying his face in her neck. She smiles as she notes that Emma, Charlotte, and now Bennett could sleep through just about anything. “So much alike,” she murmurs as her heart threatens to burst.

“Hmm?” Emma asks, barely opening her eyes.
Regina smiles and cups her wife’s cheek, “Sleep, my love. I’ll take Bennett with me to our magic lesson.”

“Mmmm,” Emma hums, “love you.”

“And I you,” Regina replies, “now rest,” she says as she moves out of the room.

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“Ugh I can’t do it!” Daniel shouts as he pushes away from the table they’re sitting at.

“Of course you can,” Regina promises, “you just have to concentrate.”

“I am concentrating. It’s just not working. It won’t ever work,” Daniel says in angry defeat.

“Daniel,” Regina says softly, waiting until he looks at her before continuing, “You can do this.” He groans and she lightens the mood. “Why don’t you bring yourself a bowl of ice cream from the kitchen?” His face lights up and he goes to stand. She places a hand on the table, stalling his movements, “With your magic.”

Another groan.

“I wanna, Gina!” Kelly shouts from beside Daniel.

Regina holds a hand up, “Just wait a moment, Kelly. It’s Daniel’s turn.”

“I can’t,” he pouts, folding his arms over his chest.


“SPRINKLES!” He shouts, bouncing up in his chair.

“Sprinkles!” Regina says with a laugh, “Now, think about it being in front of you right now.”

It takes a moment, but a bowl of ice cream appears in front of him. “I did it,” he whispers in awe.

“Of course you did. I knew you could,” she says with a smile.

The look of delight that crosses Daniel’s face is enough to fill Regina with pride for eternity. She wouldn’t trade that smile for the world.

“Don’t forget a spoon, dear,” she reminds gently.

A look of concentration covers his face as he scrunches his eyebrows. A spoon appears and he happily begins eating his ice cream.

Regina chuckles but turns her attention to her niece. “Alright, my dear. Before you get your ice cream,” she pauses as Kelly groans. She releases a chuckle and says, “Do you remember our levitation spell?” Kelly nods excited, “Alright, get something to levitate and then you can bring yourself a bowl of ice cream.” Kelly turns to Daniel but before she can continue, “Not, people, Kelly,” Regina chides.

A huff escapes her as she instead focuses on Daniel’s bowl of ice cream. It shakes for a moment before slowly wobbling into the air. “HEY!” Daniel shouts as he tries to reach for his ice cream. It jumps higher into the air, almost spilling, before shaking in place.
“Alright Kelly, you’ve proved your point,” Regina says with a shake of her head, “Carefully put Daniel’s bowl back down and you can get your own.”

Kelly smiles as if she’s won the lottery and tries to bring Daniel’s ice cream back to him before magicking her own bowl. Regina laughs at the two children in front of her as they both stare at the bowl in concentration. She watches as it teeters before flipping upside down and falling right for her head. She barely has enough time to release a squeak and throw up a force field before a soft lilac-colored smoke surrounds the bowl and its content and disappears. The children gasp as Regina looks around for the culprit. I’ve never seen magic like that before Regina thinks as she finds the room empty save for them. It’s then that she realizes there’s still a bit of residual magic heading back toward its owner. “Oh, you are joking,” she whispers as she sees the magic traveling back to her infant son, sleeping soundly in his swing beside the table.

The children are equally as shocked. It’s Daniel that recovers first, “Was that baby Benji?”

I see that nickname is quickly taking off Regina thinks with a huff. She nods, “I believe it was.”

“That’s so COOL!” Kelly shouts excitedly.

Regina can’t help the smile that takes over her face, “Yes, I suppose it is. Now, why don’t you both work on your teleport skills and bring yourself new bowls of ice cream. We’ll practice levitation another day.” She releases a breath as she sees both a pink and a yellow puff of smoke in front of each child. Her smile softens when the children are content with their ice cream. She reaches out with her magic to find her sister who comes to the room when she realizes what Regina’s magic is asking.

Zelena enters the room and sees two happy children enjoying ice cream and her slightly frazzled sister, “Mei Mei?” she calls. Regina turns her head and offers a tight smile to her sister as she excuses herself from the children across the table. “What’s wrong?” Zelena says, not knowing why her sister’s magic felt so frantic.

“Bennett has magic,” she states simply.

“I’m sorry?” She’s not following.

“Bennett just stopped a levitating bowl of ice cream from falling over my head. And he never woke from his nap.”

Zelena looks at her youngest nephew in awe, “Is his magic tied to yours?”

“I can’t feel it.”

“But maybe he can?” Zelena asks. She reaches out with her magic to zap her sister’s arm, but before she can, a soft purple wall pops up between them. “Oh brilliant,” she offers with a smile.

Regina huffs, “Enough, let him sleep,” she quietly berates. “This is unexpected.”

Zelena scoffs. “He’s the child of True Love. Equal parts you and Emma. How could he not have powerful magic?”

“I never thought we could. We just assumed…”

“What that there was a magical sperm donor that came out of nowhere? Come on now, Regina. You know better than that.”
“But I can’t-”

“That True Love breaks curses, yes?”

Regina pauses and slowly nods.

“And the moth is gone. Thankfully taking her magic with her. This beautiful baby is yours too, Gi,” Zelena offers with a smile. She watches tears fill her sister’s eyes and can’t help the help chuckle that escapes as she wraps her younger sister in her arms.

“It could also be that he soaked up some magic from Emma while in the womb when we were here in this land. Like Lila,” Regina offers.

Zelena huffs, “Can’t you just believe for once in your life?”

Regina chuckles and shakes her head, “Who knows?”

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Regina looks around as everyone happily gathers for another picnic before they head back to their realm. A realm filled with other friends, jobs, school, and other obligations. But here, with their family, she’s never felt happier. She watches as her children laugh and play, chasing each other across the grass, screaming their delight. Her wife leans her head against her shoulder, “Whatcha thinking?” she asks quietly.

She smiles at Emma and kisses her forehead, “I’ve never been happier.”

“Yeah,” Emma sighs out in agreement, “We definitely hit the jackpot with this place.”

“And these people,” Regina adds off-handedly, turning her attention back to those around them.

“You’re not going soft again, are you?” Zelena asks, picking her nephew up and clutching him close, “Don’t make me cast a curse to wake you up.”

Regina rolls her eyes affectionately, “You talk big, Z,” Emma adds with a laugh. “Don’t worry,” she whispers as if she’s holding the biggest conspiracy, “We won’t tell how soft you’ve gone. Your secret’s safe with us.”

Zelena huffs and takes her nephew with as she moves away from them.

They look around again, surrounded by family and friends (who have become family) and realize just how lucky they are.

There’s a stomp that shakes the earth they stand on. “Ogres,” Kathryn provides as they all stand, watching the children move their game back inside, hardly phased by the ground moving under their feet.

“Never a dull moment with you lot,” Regina mutters as she stands with her wife and sister, magic crackling beneath her skin.

“Why can’t we just have a normal family vacation?” Emma groans as she too brings forth her magic.

“Normal was never in the cards for us.” They laugh and turn to face whatever comes next. Together. Like always.
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