something old, something new (something borrowed, something blue)

by coalitiongirl

Summary

Written for Swan Queen Week Day 6: Trapped in an AU.

Henry blinks at them. “Mom. Mom...Mom,” he says, eyes flickering from Emma to Regina to his future mothers, who are still holding hands. “Mom. Something you want to tell me?”

“They’re from the future,” Regina says.

“They’re married,” Emma says. “To each other.” She’s still standing in the middle of the room, utterly discombobulated.

Henry rolls his eyes. “Duh. Can I go get my Playstation?”

Notes

This was the fic I wrote for SQW when I thought that I wouldn’t be able to finish the other one on time, lol. SO HERE’S TWO.

Thanks to Aimee for encouraging this nonsense and writing with me, to Spark for the read + suggestions, and to Tova, for the ridiculous amount of time on the phone coming up with this title.
It’s Zelena’s fault, which is typical of most crises in the town since Regina and the Queen had been rejoin. Storybrooke has been quiet of late, and Emma has spent more time chasing dogs than she has evil sorceresses, which is always a good sign. Regina had struck down her plan to put up a __ Days Since Our Last Crisis board in Town Hall, but she still keeps it up on the bulletin board in the station, humming as she changes the day count to twelve.

Unfortunately, they’re only up to Day Twelve because, well, Zelena. Or Robyn, rather. Zelena has been insistent that Robyn is just a growing child who will take some time to learn to walk, talk, and stop releasing tornados of demons across Storybrooke. “You’ve been alive for longer than my mom and you haven’t learned that one yet,” Emma has tried pointing out, and Regina takes her arm and murmurs something about letting her redeem herself. Emma can’t remember exactly what, but it had been very persuasive and Regina’s lips had brushed her earlobe twice when she’d said it.

So Robyn continues to wreak havoc, and Emma continues to clean up the remains of small businesses while Zelena coos in the background. Regina has been surprisingly indulgent with her magic, and rebuilding has gone faster than expected, but...still. At least it’s been twelve days.

She finishes writing the two with a flourish and checks her phone’s clock, ducking out the door just in time to join Regina on her walk home from work. “How many days are we at?” Regina asks, fixing the lapels of Emma’s jacket absentmindedly.

“There. We’ve got a new record.” Emma bumps her hand against Regina’s. “I still don’t want Henry babysitting that kid, though.”

“She’s his cousin!” Regina protests. “And she’s calmer around him. Or anyone who isn’t Zelena,” she admits wryly. “They’re a terrible influence on each other.”

Emma bumps Regina’s hand a little harder. “Oh, so you know it.”

“She still gets her chance!”

“I know,” Emma says, indescribably fond. Of Regina, not her hellion of a sister, anyway. “She’s gotten a lot better.”

Regina beams at her, eyes bright and free in a way they so rarely used to be, and Emma grins back at her. This is good. Quiet Storybrooke life is pretty great, these days, and Regina seems to glow with it
“Why don’t you come for dinner?” Regina offers, and that’s another pretty great thing about Storybrooke these days. Family dinner, Henry and Regina and Emma and sometimes Mary Margaret and David all clustered around Regina’s dining room table, a perfect idyll they’ve fought hard for all these years.

But not tonight, unfortunately. “I can’t,” Emma says, wincing. “Killian wants to go out for dinner. That fish place near the docks?”

“Of course.” Regina’s smile gets strained, as it always does when Killian comes up. Emma thinks of Regina in hell, to be honest, you’re too good for Hook, and she doesn’t think Regina will ever adjust to Killian as everyone else has.

“Tomorrow!” Emma offers, a bit desperately. “We could brunch?”

Regina takes her hand, light and comforting as she brushes her fingers along Emma’s skin. “Brunch sounds wonderful,” she says, and Emma bobs her head and hopes desperately for the return of Regina’s real smile.

But it’s gone for now, and they make small talk instead as they walk down Main Street. “I’ve had the Parks Department at war with the Small Business Association all week over that lot on Fifth,” Regina sighs. “It’s been over three decades and they still won’t let up. Both are also claiming damages from the Chernabog last year that entitle them to it.”

“It’s not like we have a shortage of land. Can’t they just–” Emma pauses mid-thought, her eyes growing wide with horror.

“Emma?”

Emma lifts one shaking finger at the door to Granny’s. “She’s out again,” she says faintly, and Regina gasps.

“Oh, god.” But it’s too late. Storybrooke’s greatest threat is just across the street, gurgling as she plays with her Taggie blanket and happily slaps the tray of her stroller. A burst of green magic emerges from the tray, and Robyn wiggles her fingers into it. Zelena smiles fondly down at her daughter.
Around them, townspeople begin to disperse, walking hastily from the street as a tornado grows, and Emma readies her own magic, preparing for whatever might emerge from it. It grows larger and faster, making quick work of a half-dozen tables in Granny’s outdoor cafe, and Zelena pushes the stroller closer to the street. “See?” she calls from across the street. “I’m doing what I can!” The closest fire hydrant pops from the ground, and a stream of water emerges. Robyn giggles.

The tornado is growing, fetching air from around it and whirling faster and faster, and the sky has darkened above them. Granny shouts, “I want this fixed in time for the dinner rush!” and slams the front door, and the tornado speeds up even more. Robyn pops her free thumb into her mouth and flicks the tornado away.

Regina throws up a shield to block them from being hit, but it’s too late; the tornado is right above them, and Emma pushes Regina back to stand in front of her. “It won’t help,” Regina says, nudging Emma out of the way. “Just let it run its course!”

*Running its course* means that a portal is opening now beneath it, roiling green as Zelena claps her hands and says, “Nicely done, poppet!” and two demons drop from the portal and land with a thump on the ground. The tornado dissipates, and Zelena waves at them and says, “See you at dinner!” and continues on as Emma grits out a curse and gathers her magic.

“Wait,” Regina says, seizing her arm, and Emma hesitates. “They’re not demons. They’re...people?”

Emma squints at the figures on the floor as the sky begins to lighten again. They are people. And there’s something oddly familiar about them.

The first one lifts her head, blinking at the sight in front of them groggily, and says, “I’m never babysitting your niece again.”

Emma gapes. The other woman rolls off the first, helping her to her feet, and says, “Robyn isn’t doing it on purpose. She’s just a growing child. And teleporting us to Granny’s is hardly—” She pauses, catching sight of them.

Emma and Regina stare. At Emma and Regina, several years older. “Hi,” Emma says weakly.

Robyn has managed to cross not just space, but time as well. Zelena is beaming with pride. Emma is
curled on the couch in Regina’s study with a stiff drink. “This is just as overwhelming for us,” the older Emma says, perched on Regina’s desk. “For one, Robyn hasn’t been allowed at Granny’s since the dragon incident. It’s a lot to take in.”

“It’s a lot to take in that we survive four years of her,” Emma says dazedly. “Uh. So, the future, huh. We doing okay?”

“Usually. There’s still the occasional Disney villain trying to break the fourth wall, but the four of us manage fine.”

“Four of us,” Emma repeats. “What four?”

Future Emma frowns. “Isn’t there a whole thing about not telling the future to your past self?” She shrugs, dismissing her own concern. “It works itself out usually, I guess. Something about timeline divergence. We foster a kid in about two years. Two, really. The younger one is eight now and she’s as handy with a book as Henry.”

“You...foster...” Emma squints at her. Regina’s cider is getting to be a bit much. “With Regina?”

Future Emma grins. “Well, Henry turned out pretty great, didn’t he?”

“Yeah. Yeah, he did.” Emma peers at Future Emma again, at the way she looks so... happy. Maybe it’s just the glow of getting to be a mom in the proper way. Either way, it’s encouraging. “What about–?”

They’re interrupted by Regina—Emma’s Regina—who ducks her head into the room. “Zelena isn’t sure what to do about this,” she informs them. “She thinks we have to duplicate the time and place that the portal was opened and get into the exact same positions to send you back. So tomorrow afternoon, I suppose.”

“I could do a day in the past,” Future Emma says contemplatively. “This is a pretty quiet period, huh? You haven’t had that incident with Dory yet, have you?” She shudders.

Emma says, “Dory?”
“Never mind,” Future Emma says quickly. They both stare at her. “So we’re…” She glances at Regina. “Are you…?”

“Whole?” Regina offers, and Future Emma nods, moving forward to examine Regina with marked concern. Emma bites her lip, quelling the instant protectiveness she feels when anyone gets too close to Regina. (Mary Margaret has complained, on more than one occasion, about Emma’s propensity to hover and glare. So had Robin Hood, back when he’d been alive.)

Future Emma glides around Regina, pressing a hand to her cheek with the kind of propriety that makes Emma burn a little. “How are you doing?” she says gently, and Regina blinks at her with that easy fondness on her face. Emma’s fondness.

Emma scowls and stalks out of the room, ignoring Regina’s worried look. This time travel situation is getting out of hand if she’s now jealous of herself for being buddy-buddy with Regina. It should be satisfying enough to know that they’re still close, and apparently… platonically raising another child together.

Which isn’t a terrible idea, actually. Boyfriend or not, there’s no one else in the world who Emma would want as a co-parent. A foster daughter. Emma wraps her arms around her waist and shakes her head. It’s too good to be true. It must be.

Her phone buzzes in her pocket, and she takes it out, wincing at the face on the screen. Killian. He isn’t going to like this. “Can we take a rain check on dinner tonight? Robyn’s been up to her usual and it’s going to take a while to pick up the pieces.”

Killian scoffs. “That tyke should be locked up somewhere by now. I don’t know why Regina tolerates her. Or her mother.”

“She does because she’s a good person,” Emma says snippily, cranky at the attack on Regina even when they’re points she’s made herself. “And Robyn is a baby. Anyway, it’s fine. I just don’t think I’ll be able to make it out tonight.”

There’s a pause, a sulky mutter, and then Killian clears his throat. “And where are you now that you can’t possibly make it to our six-month anniversary dinner?” he says, his tone deceptively light.

Their six-month— “Oh. Oh, god, Killian, I forgot.” She doesn’t even know which anniversary they’re counting now. It seems as though there’s a new one every day lately, and she’s been coasting on
nodding and smiling and going along with whatever Killian wants. She bites her lip, feeling his disapproval heavily over the phone. “Why don’t you come by here instead? This is mostly just...babysitting, really.”

“Well,” Killian repeats, and then heaves a loud sigh. “I’ll be right over,” he says, and the phone clicks off before she can tell him where she is.

Somehow, he figures it out, and he’s delighted to discover that there are two of them now. “You should have said something!” he says, grinning lasciviously. “We can celebrate our anniversary with much...celebration.”

Future Emma stares at him with daggers in her eyes, and Killian’s smirk falters and dies. Emma blinks, getting an answer to that question. It isn’t exactly a surprise, though she’s left with more questions than she is answers. “Look,” Emma says hastily. “I don’t think there’s going to be a formal family dinner tonight, so maybe we can hang out here and order something nice? Do a miniature anniversary while–”

“Or,” Killian says, and Emma notices suddenly that he’s gotten on one knee. Future Emma lets out a strangled noise. Future Regina hisses a curse. Killian produces a ring from his pocket. “You could marry me.”

What. “What?” Emma says, her heart pounding and the fight-or-flight instinct stronger than ever. “I... what?”

Killian remains on bent knee, the ring in front of him, and Emma looks, improbably, to Regina. Regina is watching them, eyes narrowed and lips pursed, and Emma needs her to say something, for anyone to say something that might make all of this a bit clearer. But instead, Regina turns on her heel and stalks out of the room. “Marry me,” Killian says again, and there’s the sound of something crashing to the ground behind them.

Emma turns, grateful for the distraction, and sees the other Emma first and the vase on the floor second. Future Emma is whitefaced and horrified, and Emma says, “What is it? What’s wrong?” before she can think to reply to Killian.

“You can’t marry him,” Future Emma says. She looks ill at the thought, and Future Regina puts a comforting hand on her back.
“Emma,” she murmurs, and Future Emma’s eyes are suddenly clearer and more determined.

“You can’t marry him,” she says again in a rush, and she twists around and kisses Future Regina. Hard. Emma stares, flabbergasted. Future Regina lets out a muffled noise and then kisses her back, biting her lip and slipping her tongue into Future Emma’s mouth very obviously, and her hands slide onto her... girlfriend’s back and under her shirt.

She pulls apart from Future Emma, breathing hard, and says, “Right.” She glances back at her Emma, licking her lips. “We’re together. Deeply in love.” The words are dry, but her gaze is soft on Future Emma, betraying the truth behind them.

“And married,” Future Emma jumps in. Emma’s jaw, half-open, drops another centimeter.

Future Regina blinks rapidly at her wife, looking vaguely panicked. Wife. Emma’s mouth is very dry. Future Emma raises her eyebrows and Future Regina sighs, defeated in whatever nonverbal argument they’re having. Future Emma beams at her, still panting a little from the kiss. “Yes. Married. We thought it was best to keep it to ourselves for now, but I will not have rodents in my past self’s house.”

Killian says, clearing his throat, “Emma, you don’t really believe that that’s you, do you?”

“Uh,” Emma says intelligently, her mind still lost somewhere around the image of Regina’s tongue in her mouth.

Future Regina says, “I mean it. Get him out.” She sneers at the ring in its box. “And take your hideous ring with you. My wife has far better taste than that.”

“Damn straight,” Future Emma says, and then laughs. Future Regina elbows her. Emma blinks at both of them and then makes a beeline for the door, fleeing before Killian or either of the future women—wives—can stop her.

She makes it into the bathroom and slams the door, leaning her head against it and breathing hard. Married. Killian has proposed, and all she can think of is that she might marry Regina. It’s...it’s...
It’s a flood of relief as much as it is a flood of new, unexpected emotions, and she’s so overwhelmed that it takes a full minute before she turns and sees that someone else has already been hiding in the bathroom. Regina’s seated on the lip of the tub, her eyes distant on Emma, and Emma backs against the wall of the bathroom and says, “Fancy meeting you here.”

Her voice cracks midway through, and Regina reaches for her. Emma sinks down in front of her, curls onto the fuzzy bath rug, and Regina slips her hand into Emma’s hair, strokes it down to her neck, and leaves her fingers there against Emma’s skin. Emma thinks, *married, wives, the other Emma is—* and she shifts away, staring up at Regina. “Did the other Regina tell you?” she asks hoarsely. They’d had some time alone, and maybe that’s why— maybe Regina knows—

Regina shakes her head. “About the marriage? No, but I could have guessed. It was inevitable, wasn’t it?” She sounds sad, and Emma bites her lip and tries not to feel too affronted.

“I guess it was,” she says, something within her warming at *inevitable* with Regina. “I mean, we’ve always had a connection, right?” She remembers the first time they’d each said *our son*, the rush that accompanies every bit of shared magic. Regina’s always had something magnetic about her that has drawn Emma in, and Emma had thought— until now— that it was only platonic. With a healthy appreciation for how attractive Regina is and a quiet desire to be sure to spend the rest of her life around her, because she’s only human. “Something bigger than just…attraction, you know?”

Regina’s hand is still on her shoulder, her thumb running along the hollow of Emma’s throat, and Emma’s brain is getting fuzzier by the moment. “I wouldn’t know,” Regina says sharply, and then sighs. “I’m sorry, Emma. I really am trying to be…you know how I feel, and it’s hard to be happy about something I despise so much.”

“Do I?” Emma blinks up at her, enough of Regina’s defeated tone sinking through the haze of tonight to make her worried again. Regina doesn’t sound thrilled about their future together, and Emma bites her lip and feels her stomach bottoming out again. “I thought…I didn’t realize you…”

No. She isn’t going to sit here and have this sudden, flaring hope taken from her again while Regina sits beside her and hates everything about their marriage. She stands up, feeling a lump in her throat, and being back out there with Killian is better than facing *this*. “I didn’t realize you *despised* the idea of you and I being together,” she spits out, and lunges for the door.

It’s open and she’s halfway out of it when a hand closes around her wrist. Regina tugs her back, unnaturally pale. “You and I?” she repeats, as thunderstruck as Emma had been minutes before. “What the hell are you talking about?”
“We’re married,” Regina whispers, looking wildly around the room. Future Emma squeezes her shoulder and brushes a kiss to Future Regina’s cheek. Emma is doubly jealous. “You and I are…?”

“Hilarious, isn’t it?” Killian drawls. He hasn’t left the house, as Emma had thought he might. Instead, he’s sitting stubbornly beside her, his hand on her knee. She edges away from him and he shifts to follow her. “These lasses must be from an alternate universe, not the future. Am I married to David in that Storybrooke?” He laughs. No one in the room laughs with him.

“You’re gone from Storybrooke,” Future Emma says, glaring at him with so much loathing that Emma shifts away from him some more. She’s squashed between the arm of the couch and Killian now, half into the cushion. “I kicked your ass to the curb ages after I should have.” It’s a lie, Emma knows instantly, but a defensive one.

“It’s all right, darling,” Future Regina murmurs, wrapping an arm around Future Emma. The other Emma jerks, startled, and then sinks into the embrace. Regina watches them impassively from her spot on the couch, but Emma can see her knuckles white over curled fists. Future Regina turns to address Killian, head high and lip curled with supreme scorn. It’s…really hot, god. “I thought I told you to leave.”

“This isn’t your house,” Killian says defiantly. “When the real Regina tells me to go–”

“She won’t. She’s trying to be noble,” Future Regina says, and Regina clenches her jaw together. “She’d smile through your whole wedding if she thought it’d make Emma happy. I remember.”

Emma glances at Regina, first tentatively and then less so, and she sees the pained acknowledgement in her eyes and hurts with her. “Of course she’ll smile through our wedding,” Killian says, curling his lip. “She’s a good friend to Emma. My fiancée,” he reminds them, and Emma finds her voice again.

“I didn’t…I didn’t say yes,” she says, and he turns betrayed eyes on her. She flushes, the insidious thoughts returning as they do whenever she doubts their relationship. Everything she’d gone through for him– everything he’d gone through because of her– this relationship can’t go to waste. And then Future Emma hums something into Future Regina’s ear, lips tickling her earlobe, and Emma can breathe again. “I’m sorry, Killian. I need to…to process all of this right now.”

“You need to –” Killian’s voice rises and both Reginas are sitting forward at once, their eyes flashing. Future Emma is watching him with a dark gaze, and Emma looks to her pleadingly. She
smiles, tight but with warm eyes, and Emma stands.

Killian rises and shoves past her, snarling something at Future Regina that has her smirk in response, and he storms out the door just as Henry walks in. “He seemed cranky,” he observes. “Was it that tornado earlier?”

“Maybe a little bit,” Future Regina says, her eyes soft as she gazes at Henry. Future Emma seizes her hand, her own eyes shining.

Henry blinks at them. “Mom. Mom…Mom,” he says, eyes flickering from Emma to Regina to his future mothers, who are still holding hands. “Mom. Something you want to tell me?”

“They’re from the future,” Regina says.

“They’re married,” Emma says. “To each other.” She’s still standing in the middle of the room, utterly discombobulated.

Henry rolls his eyes. “Duh. Can I go get my Playstation?”

“Homework first,” both Reginas chorus, and Henry rolls his eyes at them again and vanishes upstairs.

“Killian’s never going to talk to me again,” Emma says, leaning against the cabinets behind her. She’s perched on the counter, watching as Regina prepares dinner. “And…I think my future self thinks that’s a good thing.”

Regina doesn’t look up, her eyes fixed on the vegetables she’s chopping. “Is it really so bad?”

“I don’t know. I… I’ve put him through so much. I can’t just leave him now because…” Emma bites her lip. “Can I?” What had once seemed an insurmountable peak is more and more possible with every moment since he’d stomped out. And coupled with the possibility of Regina, someone she’s never dared to contemplate like this before, it’s easier and easier to see a future without him.
“You said we had a...connection,” Regina reminds her quietly, and then busies herself with the vegetables again.

Emma watches her, crooks a finger and runs her knuckle along Regina’s jaw. She can see a tremor run through Regina at her touch. “Don’t we?” she asks, timid and wanting, and Regina looks up to face her at last.

“Emma,” she breathes, caressing the name with her voice as only Regina can, and Emma shivers and drops from the counter, her fingers splaying out over Regina’s cheek. She’s close, close enough to kiss, and Regina breathes raggedly, head bowed and forehead against Emma’s.

Emma *wants* , wants like she’s never dared want before, and her fingers trail aimlessly across Regina’s cheek, along her neck and to her collarbone and back to her neck again. “Can I?” she says again, this time about something else entirely, and Regina shudders and covers Emma’s hand with her own in response.

But before Emma can angle forward, there’s a noise from the stairs, a heated almost-whisper of, “I *am* not going to leave her with–” It’s the other Emma, and Emma and Regina exchange a glance and head to the stairs together.

It’s a relief and a disappointment to be able to breathe again, Emma reflects, when Regina had been so close. Regina has always been unattainable, a light crush tempered by years of intense, loving friendship. But moments before, they’d nearly crossed that line. Emma had tasted Regina’s breath on her lips, *fuck*. Just another second and they’d have been able to…

They round the corner into the foyer just in time for Future Regina to seize Future Emma into a passionate embrace, a heart-stopping kiss that has Future Emma twist around and pin her to the banister. Future Regina holds on tight, tugging on Future Emma’s lower lip with her teeth and hooking her legs on Future Emma’s hips, and Future Emma groans and lifts her, cupping her ass and peppering her face with kisses.

“They can do that every day,” Regina says, sounding dazed.

“Yeah,” Emma says wistfully, and they’re both a little pink when they look back at each other.
Dinner comes with new tensions, and not just because Zelena and Robyn are around. Robyn perches in Future Emma’s lap and refuses to be held by anyone else, and Future Regina and Future Emma remain in the middle of an unspoken argument. Emma eats in silence, Regina fusses over Henry, and Henry handles the entire situation with astounding aplomb.

It’s after dinner, when Regina is preparing the guest room and Future Emma has been claimed for good by Robyn, that Emma is finally alone with Future Regina. They’re cleaning up the table together in silence, Emma sneaking uncertain glances at the other woman.

This Regina is…different, somehow. Regina always feels like a tragedy in the making, strong and confident but always teetering on the precipice of sadness and exhaustion, and Emma is drawn to her as much to help her as she is out of sheer affection. She cares deeply for Regina but Regina also needs her, and this Regina…doesn’t.

There’s a serenity about her, a calm that suffuses her as she washes dishes and reorganizes Tupperware leftovers. Maybe it’s being married, having a son and two daughters and a simple, good life. Maybe it’s just learning to forgive herself for her sins. But either way, Emma’s utterly intimidated, and she nearly jumps when Future Regina says, “Emma, are you all right?”

“I’m…I’m fine,” she says, smiling uncomfortably at the other woman. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

Her Regina might have made a snide comment that would have felt like home, enough to relax Emma and bring her back to the present. This one says gently, “You just sent the pirate off after he proposed to you.” Emma blinks at her, uncomprehending. Future Regina reaches for her hand, a touch as familiar as Regina’s, and smiles sadly at her. “I might have loathed him, but I do remember what my Emma was like after...after.”

“I…” Emma swallows. “She doesn’t seem to care much now,” she says weakly. She’s wondered about it all evening, how little regard Future Emma seems to have for Killian. No, it isn’t just uncaring, it’s outright dislike, and she doesn’t understand.

Future Regina shakes her head. “It’s been a while,” is all she offers, and Emma itches to know more, to understand every choice that had made this Emma and Regina who they’d become.

Instead, she asks, “How did you fall in love?”
Future Regina stares at her, looking flustered for the first time since she’d tumbled out of a portal. She takes a breath and finds her calm, her eyes distant and as wistful as the Regina that Emma knows. “You came to my door with Henry on your twenty-eighth birthday and said, ‘Hi.’”

Emma raises her eyebrows, rolling her eyes. “Come on. I was serious.”

“So was I,” Future Regina murmurs. “I was obsessed with you that first year,” she says ruefully. “Loathed you, feared you, but I could think of little less. And then we became friends and…my god, Emma, it was the easiest thing in the world to fall in love with you.” Her eyes are shining with warmth and love and all the emotions that are uniquely Regina, and Emma is breathless with her as she is with her own Regina. “There was no moment of realization. There were only a million instants where the thought of life without you was enough to make me forget how to breathe.”

“Oh,” Emma whispers, and hears it echoed behind her. Future Emma. She’s standing beside Regina in the doorway to the dining room, her hand pressed to her mouth, and she takes a jerky step forward and kisses Future Regina. This kiss is gentle where the others had been all-consuming, and Emma can’t tear her eyes away from them, Future Emma brushing kisses to her Regina’s cheeks and nose and lips, Future Regina stroking her Emma’s hair as she leans against her.

When they part, they’re both flushed, and Emma turns away from them to look at her own Regina. Regina is still watching their future selves, and she looks at Emma with soft eyes of her own. “We’re all set up with sleeping arrangements,” she says, and her voice is hoarse as though with unshed tears.

Their future selves are ushered into the spare room where Emma usually sleeps, exchanging glances as they take in the queen-sized bed. Emma frowns. “Do you need a second bed?”

“No,” Future Emma is quick to assure her. “No, this is perfect.”

“It’s…Nani’s room when she visits,” Future Regina explains. “Just…odd to see it like this, I suppose.”

“I suppose,” Future Emma echoes, and they exchange another glance, this one almost shy.

Emma glances between them and decides very swiftly that she doesn’t want to know.
Regina insists on taking the couch downstairs, and Emma is equally adamant that she’ll be the one on the couch. “This is your house,” she says once everyone else is settled. “I’m not taking your bed.”

“I’m offering it to you.” Regina touches her arm, light but still burning into her. “You’ve had a long day, Emma.”

She is getting tired fast of people deciding for her how she’s supposed to feel. “If this is about Killian—”

“I’m trying to do the right thing, Emma,” Regina whispers. “Don’t make it any harder.” She can’t meet Emma’s eyes, and Emma catches her hand, twines her fingers through Regina’s, waits. “Emma, I don’t want you to want me because another Emma does. I’d never forgive myself. If this goes wrong—”

“And if it doesn’t?” Emma lifts her other hand, cups Regina’s chin, desperate to see what’s hidden beneath her ducked face. “Did the other Regina…what she said…is that just her?” She can feel the vulnerability pricking at her now, the uncertainty of losing something she’s only just beginning to find. Regina is an impossibility. Regina is…

“Of course not. Of course it wasn’t just her,” Regina says roughly, dropping Emma’s hand, and Emma rests it against the nape of Regina’s neck and pulls her into a kiss. Regina exhales and falls into it, her eyes fluttering closed and the kisses soft, quiet, with building urgency that Emma returns. There’s a peace to this embrace, Regina’s hands tracing patterns along her back and the room silent but for a light wind whispering through the window and the sound of their mingled breaths.

Regina pulls away and Emma lets out a whine at the loss, stumbling backward and suddenly terrified—terrified—that Regina is going to stop this already when it feels so right. But Regina only closes her bedroom door and locks it, and then she’s beckoning to Emma again. Emma surges forward, pressing Regina against the door, and Regina breathes out an appreciative response and angles her hips to meet Emma’s. Emma moves against her, treasuring every sigh and groan, and sucks hard on Regina’s neck as Regina wraps her arms around her.

“You?” Regina gasps out, and Emma kisses her again, this time harder. “Did you…?”

Emma twists them again, feels Regina’s hands sliding across her back, her eyes dark and gleaming in the night. “I never thought—” She kisses Regina again, and abruptly wants to weep at this happening,
now, for real – “I never believed we could–”

She stops, shaking, and Regina strokes her cheek and gazes down at her with those shining eyes. “Emma,” she breathes, and brushes her lips against Emma’s forehead. Emma trembles, close to tears, and Regina eases her down onto the bed. The mood has shifted, but the desperation remains, and Emma kisses Regina’s cheeks, her shoulder, the clothed spot over her heart.

Please, she wants to beg, please let this last. And there’s an almost-fiancé to deal with in the morning and their future selves are probably doing unspeakable things to the guest room mattress, but Regina is cradling Emma in her arms and Emma can’t think of anything but remaining forever like this, drowning in her arms.

She wakes up and she’s still in Regina’s arms, god. They’d stripped down to their underwear and curled together under Regina’s blanket, silent but for gleaming eyes and stroking hands and lazy kisses. Regina’s hand is still splayed over one of Emma’s breasts, and Emma lies still for an extra moment, unwilling to leave the comfort of Regina’s embrace.

She’d never thought…the thing between them had been unspoken for so long that Emma had just assumed that it had all been in her head. Well, yeah, they’d had a bit of that mortal-enemy sexual attraction for a while, but then they’d been friends and family and Emma had been content to settle for what had been plenty satisfying on its own–

Until now. The reality of what’s been opened up for them comes crashing down on her at once, and she can feel claustrophobia settling in, threatening to smother her. She ducks out of Regina’s arms and finds a shirt in her closet, fingers slipping on the buttons and her breath stuttering in time with her heart.

Because fuck, Regina is forever. Killian has been easy even when the world around them had been hard, a relationship where she hadn’t had to do more than reciprocate to be loved. And that had been enough, more than she’d ever believed she’d have, and he might tend to clingy and condescending and exhausting at times but he’d been simple.

Regina is not simple. Regina is…releasing the lines she’d been hanging onto and toppling headfirst into an abyss she’d never emerge from. Emma had always assumed that she and Killian would part ways eventually, when he’d tired of her, and she’d recover and move on. There would be no recovering, she knows instinctively, from losing Regina. There’s no world outside Regina anymore; Regina is the air itself, and Emma breathes it helplessly and seeks no escape from it. Emma-with-Regina is everything she’s ever dreamed of, and she’s terrified.
She staggers out of the room and closes the door behind her, leaning against it and shutting her eyes as she exhales. When she opens them, it’s to Future Emma across the hall, doing the exact same thing. She jerks to a standing position, smiling uncomfortably at Emma. “Morning.”

“Your Regina’s, um…” Emma breathes in again, studying Future Emma and wondering what she could possibly be so stressed about. “She’s still asleep?”

“Like a log. I always thought she was a morning person before I moved in,” Future Emma says ruefully, and then winces. Emma stares at her, puzzled. “I mean, before the marriage.”

*The marriage*. The guarantee that, in some universe, there’s an Emma who can love Regina and not lose her for another four years, at least. Emma blows out a breath. “Can I ask you a question?”


She scrambles eggs while Emma pours the coffee, formulating the question she wants to ask. How the marriage works, maybe. How Emma and Regina had moved from family to lovers without prodding in the first place. How Future Emma had overcome this very specific fear.

Instead, she says, “Why do you hate Killian so much?” and Future Emma blinks and turns to face her.

“*That’s* your question? We come from the future and you want to know about—” She shakes her head, disbelieving. “Right. Killian.” She shrugs. “You know…I thought he was good for me for a while. Or at least…that he wanted me. And it was nice to be wanted, you know?”

Emma bobs her head. Yeah, it really is. But… “And then you broke up?”

“He dumped me.” Future Emma laughs shortly. “We were engaged for over a year, you know. I couldn’t pick a date for a long time, and by then, Lilo and Nani had wound up in town. Regina and I felt responsible, and we were…attached.” Her eyes are soft when she talks about them, warm like Emma can’t imagine her own eyes have ever been. “Killian hated the idea of us fostering them together, and I fought back, and eventually the relationship was so miserable and took so much out of me that it was a relief when he left.” She turns somber. “I don’t think I ever would have otherwise.”
“You seem to have recovered fine,” Emma says dryly.

Future Emma flashes her a grin. “You know, I expected to cry when he was gone. I cried so much when he went to hell. I thought it’d…at least feel hollow. But all I felt was relief.” She returns to the eggs, spooning out some into matching bowls that she’d found right away, and comes to sit beside Emma. “I don’t think I realized just how exhausting the relationship was until it was over. But all he does is drag you down, Emma. A prize, a savior, never a person.” Her expression is sincere, pained, raw. “All he does is hurt you. I know it seems easy now. But god, every memory I have of him now is of all the ways I tolerated his bullshit because it was easier than fighting.”

“I…” She doesn’t know, and she struggles for a defense, for something to retort about the good he’s done for her.

“I know, I know.” Future Emma rolls her eyes, but fondly. “You’re madly in love.”

Emma bites her lip. “That seems…not really accurate. I nearly slept with Regina last night,” she says, and Future Emma spits out her coffee.

“You what?” She wipes at her lips and the table, her eyes still wide. “You two are way ahead of us. How the hell did–”

They’re interrupted by the Reginas, both sleep-rumpled and wearing matching robes. Future Regina looks a lot crankier than Emma’s Regina, who’s smiling with a hint of nervousness as she catches Emma’s eye.

Future Emma glances between them and then walks to Future Regina, pressing a kiss to her lips. It’s almost shy, and she whispers. “Hi, Morning Breath.” Future Regina’s face clears up a bit.

Regina isn’t watching them. Regina is still gazing at Emma when Emma turns back to her, and she reaches out with one hand to caress Emma’s cheek. “Morning,” she murmurs.

“Morning,” Emma echoes, leaning into her palm, and all her fears from the morning seem to fade away in the face of Regina’s smile.
Robyn takes a lot of coaxing from Future Emma and an entire container of Gerber Baby snacks before she’s prodded into creating another tornado. The day has been otherwise uneventful. Emma had taken Future Emma to work, where she’d laughed at the __Days Since Our Last Crisis__ board. “I remember that. I think our record was...twelve days, maybe? Why are you looking at me like that?” Emma groans and bangs her head against her desk.

Future Regina and Regina had both come by for lunch. So had Killian, who had taken one look at the station’s occupants and stormed out. Emma hadn’t run after him. They’ll have to have a talk soon, but she finds that she doesn’t want to interrupt a perfectly pleasant day for it.

“Presumably, seeing as we have no memories of this encounter, we’ve split into alternate universes after this,” Future Regina notes. “Good luck with that menace of a fish.” Both their future selves shudder.


They’re holding hands again as they wait for the portal, Zelena prodding her daughter from across the street while Emma and Regina stand with their counterparts. “This wasn’t bad, as far as portals go,” Future Emma says thoughtfully. “The last portal took us to the middle of the Sahara.”

“Do not,” Future Regina says warningly.

Future Emma smirks. “Regina thought we were on Tatooine. I’ve never seen someone try so enthusiastically to use the Force.”

“I have magic!”

“I know, snookums,” Future Emma says easily.

Future Regina smiles sweetly, speaking through gritted teeth. “I will murder you in your sleep, honeybear.”

“You say the most romantic things,” Future Emma sighs, pressing a hand to her heart. She winks at
Emma, and Emma watches them in amusement until she’s suddenly enfolded in a hug. “Take care of us,” Future Emma murmurs into her ear. “You’re going to be great.”

Future Regina kisses her on the cheek, which certainly does not make Emma blush (but you know what. Regina is just as pink after observing that), and then Robyn is finally done chewing and begins to form the tornado. The portal opens above the other Emma and Regina, and the two lock hands again and jump, into the whirling tornado and the future that awaits them.

Emma watches them go, a curious sort of emptiness within her. Regina is still watching the spot where their future selves had disappeared, wistful and uncertain, and it galvanizes Emma enough to say, “So. How about dinner tonight? Somewhere nice.”

Regina smiles at her, bright with promise that has Emma warm and smiling back just as brightly. “That would be wonderful.”

Epilogue

Emma tumbles out of the portal and back onto their own Main Street, four years into the future, before she lets go of Regina’s hand and winces, waiting for the inevitable chewing down.

Regina doesn’t disappoint. “Married?” she demands at last, hands on her hips. “You couldn’t think of a better lie?”

“Killian was proposing! I wasn’t thinking about much other than making sure that never happened to the other Emma!” Emma protests. “And you went along with it!”

“Of course I did!” Regina says irritably. “It was a way to get rid of Hook. I’m always going to help with that.” She scowls at Emma, but Emma’s known her long enough to see the way that it doesn’t quite reach her eyes.

It had been… weird, honestly. She’s been living with Regina for years and raising children with her for longer than that, but marriage is a step beyond. They’d kissed nearly a dozen times over the past day. They’d shared a bed, and Regina had curled around her, lips against her shoulder, and they’d both pretended it had been accidental. Regina had said that whole thing about falling in love with Emma that had obviously not been true, but Emma had ached for it to be anyway. It had felt so
frighteningly real that it had convinced the other Emma and Regina, and Emma is uncontrollably jealous of them both, suddenly.

“Was it that bad?” she asks, her voice small. “Pretending to be…”

Regina softens for a moment, her eyes dark and gentle and just a little wistful. Emma waits with bated breath. It feels as though the world is still for an instant, teetering on a pinpoint for Regina’s response. “No,” Regina admits softly, and the world turns upside down and stays, joyfully, in position. “No, it wasn’t.”

She turns away, high spots of color on her cheeks, and makes for Granny’s in a rush. Emma calls after her, “Regina!”

Regina hesitates. Emma clears her throat and plunges. “Dinner tonight?” she says, twisting her hands together. “Somewhere nice?”

Regina turns back, and she has the same expression as she’d had last night when she’d been talking to the other Emma. Emma is breathless with it, with wanting and hoping and… “That would be wonderful,” Regina murmurs, just loud enough for Emma to hear her, and her smile is bright with promise.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!