Voyage of Discovery

by JunoInferno

Summary

Beatrice is a fifteen-year-old living in Manhattan with her mother. She has no idea about her mother’s past or her father. The answers to those questions will lead to about a thousand more and change who she is. Sometimes more literally than others.

Notes
I've been publishing this story for a while now on another fanfic site and I've never done it here. I'll be uploading it here with only a spelling and grammar check to distinguish it from the original. That's not to say I wouldn't change things, but I've always understood with writing that at some point you have to let it go and that point was when it was published to its original audience. I really just want to have it in more than one place so sorry if you see this a lot. As always, please let me know what you think and happy reading.
Chapter 1

Every high school in America has a queen. At New Amsterdam Prep, it was Taylor Billingsley. Taylor was blonde and perfect and just what she thought she ought to be. She had the cute boyfriend, her dad had some big Wall Street job and her mother was descended from actual royalty, which she mentioned at every possible opportunity. When there wasn't one, she made one.

She acted like a queen, ruled over everyone with an iron fist with a Tiffany tennis bracelet around it.

Then there was Beatrice French.

Taylor hated Beatrice because she couldn't understand her. She was a quiet girl with thick brown hair and black plastic rimmed glasses that obscured brown eyes. She had no powerful connections, just a mother who worked at the New York Public Library. Taylor didn't even know what she was doing at this school. Beatrice took no interest in the daily dramas of her classmates, she stayed glued to her iPad, her iPhone and her Macbook. She did her work quietly and efficiently. She didn't get in Taylor's way, but she was hardly admiring her and Taylor didn't like that.

One day, a teacher put Beatrice in a group with Taylor because as usual Beatrice didn't have a group. It involved making political posters for history class. Taylor did all the talking with her friends and Beatrice did all the work.

"Beatrice, we need more glitter," Taylor announced.

Girls like Taylor always needed more glitter.

"It's in the supply closet. Go get it."

Beatrice went out in the hall and to the supply closet.

"Could have said please," Beatrice muttered, walking to the closet. She flipped the light on- the switch was outside- and went in to begin searching through the shelves for a suitable container of glitter.

In a swift sequence, the door opened and the light flipped off. Beatrice turned back and before she could do anything she heard the locks close.

"Oh, no." Beatrice went and banged on the door. "Hello? Someone's in here!"

There was no reply, just the sound of cruel, girlish laughter.

"Oh, come on, guys," said Beatrice.

Then she heard the dismissal bell ring and the deafening sound of students leaving and realized her dilemma.
The thing was that Beatrice had never gotten over her fear of the dark. She always had something on. Her night light, then the TV. She was useless in the dark, shaking. In all fairness, Taylor didn't know she was toying with one of Beatrice's deepest fears, she just thought she was humiliating her by getting her stuck in a closet for a while.

Beatrice was never very good at being fair while she was angry.

Beatrice spent an hour trying to get out. When that didn't work, she slumped to the floor and put her head on her knees trying not to fall apart.

After an infernal amount of time passed, Beatrice heard footsteps down the hall and muffled voices.

"Look, I know my daughter and trust me, if this bag is here, she's here-" Her mother's voice was unmistakable.

"Mom?!" She knocked on the door. "Mom!"

There was a flurry of footsteps and soon the light switched back on and the door was open. Her mother stood with the janitor holding the red leather messenger bag she had left in the classroom.

"Oh, Beatrice," said Belle. She gave her a kiss and a hug. "Sweetheart, what happened? How did you ever get stuck in there?"

There were two ways to play this. One, tell her mother everything which would involve a trip to see the headmaster, Belle shouting at him and a big meeting with Taylor and the other girls where eventually nothing would happen because Taylor's dad had just given the school money for a new aquatic center and Belle French had not. Belle worked at the New York Public Library but the not inconsiderable money for Beatrice's schooling came from some settlement she didn't talk about. Despite the fact that it cost more for a year here than a moderately priced new car, Belle would pull her out because she wouldn't let her daughter suffer, even for the best possible education. The first way got Beatrice nothing and she knew it right away.

Beatrice shrugged. "Just clumsy, I guess."

Beatrice was actually only slightly clumsy and had nothing on her mother's clumsiness. Clumsy was a convenient cover, though, especially for any kind of organized sport. She had only been made to play volleyball once in her life after the bruises on the other girls, which had actually been unintentional.

"Oh, my poor girl," said Belle. "Come on. Let's get you home."

Beatrice agreed and went home and said nothing because she didn't want to hurt her mother's feelings.

It didn't mean she was done.

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Then

Belle French sat nervously in the conference room, digging her nails into her fingers. One of her lawyers, Kenya Watts, squeezed her hand sympathetically.

"It's going to be okay, Belle. She doesn't have any power over you now."
Belle nodded, not quite able to believe that. She looked down at her swollen belly, hoping that Kenya was right for the sake of her child.

The door opened. Mayor Mills walked in with a wall of dark-suited attorneys. They sat without a word.

The lead attorney for the City of Storybrooke was called Albert Spencer. He had a piercing gaze and Belle had a hard time imagining him as a nice man.

"Mister Spencer, is your client ready to talk?," asked Saul.

"I'm not giving her anything," Regina muttered under her breath.

"What was that, Ms. Mills?," asked Saul.

"Don't answer that," warned Albert.

"I am not giving that whore anything!," Regina shouted.

"Well," said Saul, "I see your client's on her best behavior today. Her sparkling personality will play well at trial."

"What trial?," Regina spat, ignoring her lawyer's expressions. "One look at that woman and any jury will know I was just trying to keep a public menace-"

"Public menace?," asked Saul. "To be a public menace you would have to charge her with something! You had her locked up in a mental hospital with no sign that she's a danger to herself or others! Not to mention the complete lack of prenatal care Miss French had before arriving in Boston. That's wrongful imprisonment and child endangerment! Do you know what wrongful imprisonment is? That's a civil rights violation. One call to the Justice Department and there are going to be investigators all over your sleepy little hell hole."

Regina's face gave away very little, but it was the first time Belle had ever seen her look something like panicked.

She turned to Albert. "You never said anything about an investigation. Would they send more people to Storybrooke?"

"They're bluffing," Albert reassured her.

"I went to law school with the First Lady," said Saul. "One call."

The tension hung in the air.

"Give her what she wants," said Regina.

"Mayor Mills-" Spencer tried to object.

"Whatever the price, pay it," said Regina. "Anything to get that imp's harlot away from me."

"Imp's harlot?," asked Saul. "Where do you get these insults from?"

Regina ignored the slight. "I have one condition."

"A condition?," asked Kenya.

"Belle French never sets foot in Storybrooke again."
Belle hesitated, her soft little voice finally coming out. "My father's still there-

Regina scoffed. "He doesn't want to see you."

"I..." Belle stammered.

Regina leaned across the table. "Nobody wants to see you there. There is no one waiting for you."

"Belle, you don't have to agree to this," said Saul. "She has no right to ask this."

Regina was right. Moe French had made it very clear on their last visit, even sending her to talk with the nuns. What made her want to tell Regina no?

There was one other consideration. Her baby. She had no way of providing for her. She would have to give her up without it. Money was the only way to take control of her fate. Money would make sure her daughter had a life that was whatever she wished it to be.

"Fine," said Belle.

Saul looked to Regina and Albert. "Let's talk numbers."

"I'm done here," said Regina, standing up. She looked at Belle. She was wounded, but not down and couldn't resist adding in one last tidbit.

"He is never coming for you."

"Who?," asked Belle.

Regina plastered that icy smile on her face as Belle stared at her in panic. Then she left.

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Now

Taylor walked into school, expecting the bodies to part as she walked the halls as usual. They did, but they were accompanied by whispers and stares, not admiration.

"Oh my God, Taylor," said Harper, one of Taylor's chief lackeys. "How could you be so stupid? To send all that stuff to everyone?!"

"What stuff?"

Taylor noticed everyone looking at their phones. She walked over and ripped one out of the hand of a mousy freshman.

Taylor's scream could be heard all the way out at the new aquatic center her dad had paid for.

Beatrice had waited out the morning in her usual spot in the library. She was able to just get snippets of the gossip as it made its way through the school. She spotted Taylor and her death glare in the reflection of the special display case. Beatrice turned back to her Macbook.

"Hi, Taylor. You look a little pale. Couldn't get a spray tan appointment?"

"You evil little..."

"Is something wrong, Taylor?"
"You hacked my computer, you put my Facebook and my texts and my grades and-

How could it be considered hacking if her password was something as easy as MrsBieber4ever?
"I don't like what you're accusing me of, Taylor. I was as surprised as anyone to see you telling
the whole school all of your secrets. Still, it's liberating in a way, isn't it?"

"You know you did it! You're always on your computer doing God knows what!"

Yeah, like reading, Beatrice thought. "What I know, Taylor, is that you're not very nice to people
and sooner or later, something like this was bound to happen." She paused. "Look on the bright
side, there were no pictures."

"Pictures?," Taylor asked.

"Yeah, I mean, I've heard that some people keep all sorts of embarrassing pictures on their phones
and computers. At least you didn't have anything like that."

Taylor's face was red by now and she looked ready to spit blood. She took one step towards
Beatrice and that's when she added...

"I would imagine, Taylor, that if you were to plan any sort of retribution against the person who
did this, they would release any of those sorts of pictures."

"You little bitch."

"Yeah, back at you," said Beatrice, collecting her things. "Excuse me. I have to get to class."

Beatrice walked past Taylor leaving the girl seething.

Revenge felt pretty good.

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Then

"How is she?"

Belle looked up from her book and smiled. "August, I'm sorry, I-"

"You were caught up in the book," he said, sitting on the bench next to her.

Belle nodded. "Guilty as charged."

It was a chilly November day. August had agreed to meet Belle here in Shepherd's Bush. Belle
was the only mother to venture out with an infant and got some stares. August was the only one
that understood the reason why, that Belle still unknowingly hung onto her ways from their old
land. There were other dangers in this world, but August wasn't convinced cold air was one of
them. He peered into the stroller. The baby girl was sleeping and bundled up, a stuffed lamb
keeping her company.

"What's she called?" asked August.

"Beatrice."

"Beatrice?" August couldn't hide his surprise, though, considering her father's name she had
gotten off easy.

"Why does everyone have that reaction?"
"It's not a name you hear a lot..."

"Have you read Much Ado About Nothing?"

"No..."

Belle gave him a chastising look. "Some writer you are. Two lovers with a war of words between them."

"And Beatrice is the girl?"

"She's a strong, intelligent, independent-minded woman who settles for nothing less than true love."

"That reminds me," said August. He held up a bag.

"Oh, August, you didn't have to do that."

"New baby gets a gift," said August.

Belle took the bag and pulled out an ornate, leather bound book with "Once Upon A Time" in gilded letters. "What a beautiful book," she said, caressing her hand over the letters. She began flipping through the pages. "How lovely. Thank you."

"I thought you might like 'Beauty and the Beast.'"

Belle groaned. "Is it the name thing? Everyone says that."

"Well, it's the name thing," August admitted. "And the book thing. Not to mention you kind of look like her."

Belle looked at the illustration and was unimpressed. "Lots of people look like her. Shouldn't this beast be hairier?"

"None of these are the usual tellings," said August.

"The Ogre War?," Belle asked skeptically. "Are these even meant for children?"

"They're meant for her," said August, looking at the baby.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Your girl has a destiny." He quickly amended that upon Belle's worried look. "Everyone does. This will help her."

Now

"I'm home!"

Belle French entered balancing an armful of books, a pastry box and her over-sized bag. She put down the stack of books next to another stack from a previous borrowing.

"Beatrice, where are you?"

"In here, Mom!"
Belle went to Beatrice's bedroom. The girl was as usual, glued to her iPad.

"What's up?," she asked.

"I am so sorry that I'm late!," said Belle, giving her a kiss on the forehead. "I am a horrible mother."

"Did you get the collection?"

"Yes, we did. You're so sweet to ask." Belle smiled and ran her hand through her daughter's hair. "I got to read the email from school. Something about cyber security?"

"Oh, that girl, Taylor, she had all her texts and Facebook messages forwarded to the whole school. And she was cheating on her boyfriend, buying papers and had an appointment to see a plastic surgeon about butt implants."

The butt implant thing might have been made up, but it was going to happen sooner or later Beatrice reasoned.

"Oh my," said Belle. "How terrible. What a thing to happen on your birthday."

Beatrice shrugged. "It's not like people really take notice of me anyway, Mom."

Belle looked at her sadly and gave her a hug. "Well, I do. Come on. I've brought you something."

Beatrice followed her mother to the kitchen. Belle took out a pastry box and opened it revealing a box full of cupcakes adorned with buttercream red roses. She took one out and placed it on a small blue floral china dish.

"From the Cupcake Cafe?," asked Beatrice.

"Only the best in the city for my Beatrice." Belle placed a candle on top and lit it. "Make a wish."

Beatrice made the wish she had made every year since she discovered what wishes were for. They weren't for toys or games, but things you couldn't get to on your own. Things you needed magic for. That was why you couldn't tell anyone: revealing the intention made the magic lose its power. At least that's what she had decided.

She wished she could find her father and blew out the candle.

Belle gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"Oh, God, eight-fifteen," said Belle. "Time to order dinner."

What Beatrice couldn't know was that she shared a birthday with someone and she had also just made a wish.
Chapter 2

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time. Thanks for the follow and the reads. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Now

Travel was one of Belle French's favorite pursuits, right after reading. It was important to her to see the world and even more important for her daughter to see the world. She wanted her to know what was out there and decide what she wanted to make of her life. Since entering her sophomore year of high school, this had involved supposedly casual trips to ivy league schools. Beatrice had been less gullible since Belle decided a spontaneous trip to New Jersey was in order to see Princeton. That was followed by a spontaneous five hour stay in the library.

This trip was different and at least involved a plane ride and a nice hotel. There was a librarians' convention in New Orleans and it happened to fall over a long weekend at school.

After Belle's sessions were done for the day, she and Beatrice went to see the sights that all tourists saw: the French Market, the Audobon Zoo and Aquarium and went for beignets at Cafe Du Monde.

The restaurant was open air and always busy. They could smell the river and hear the sounds of ships passing. Belle laughed as Beatrice tried to eat one of the beignets without getting powdered sugar all over her clothes and inevitably failed, ending up with a coating of sugar on her glasses.

"Wait, wait," said Belle, getting out her phone. "I need a picture of this."

"Seriously, Mom?," she asked. "I'm fifteen not one. This isn't cute, it's just pathetic."

"Oh, but you are cute. You will always be cute to me."

Belle did her worst with the camera and Beatrice set to cleaning off her glasses with the hem of her shirt.

"Why do you take pictures?," asked Beatrice.

"All mothers take copious amounts of pictures."

"To show, but we don't have anyone to show them to."

Belle frowned. "I suppose you're right."

"Do you ever think of talking to your dad?"

"No," said Belle. "He wants nothing to do with us. He made that very clear. So I want nothing to do with him."

Beatrice nodded and put her glasses back on.

"Let's not be depressing," said Belle. "I'm thinking let's get more sweets."

Then
"What are you doing in those clothes?"

Belle looked up at Rumplestiltskin.

"What am I doing in these clothes?," she asked looking down at her usual blue work dress. She had been in the library of the Dark Castle, trying to organize it into something that made sense.

"We're travelling, pack your bags!"

Rumplestiltskin waved his hands. A poof of red smoke enveloped Belle and she was clad in a blue travelling gown and gold cloak.

"You know I hate when you do that."

"Thank you would have sufficed."

"We're travelling?"

"That is unless you don't want to go."

"You'd let me go?"

"You're going with me."

"Where?"

There was another puff of red smoke. Belle looked around and realized she was no longer in the Dark Castle. She was standing in something marshy. It was night wherever they were. A castle covered in vines stood not far away.

"We're in the Half Sunk Kingdom. I've read about this place."

"Ever been?"

"They say there's magic here from other realms," said Belle. She looked at Rumplestiltskin. "What are we doing here?"

"I have a business arrangement to make," said Rumplestiltskin. "You can wait outside."

"Wait outside?," asked Belle. "You brought me all the way here to wait outside?"

He shrugged. "Well, unless you have somewhere else to be, dearie."

Belle watched in disgust as he disappeared inside the castle.

Now

They went next door to Cafe Du Monde and bought pralines from a place called Aunt Sally's that smelled divine. They went to Jackson Square and Belle made Beatrice pose for pictures in front of the statue of Andrew Jackson.

"Do you want to go inside the church?," Beatrice asked motioning at the picturesque Saint Louis Cathedral.

Belle shook her head. "No, outside is good enough for me. I'm not much for churches."
There was a jazz band playing in the square. They listened to the music for a while then moved on to watch the street performers. There were various people doing tarot and palm readings.

"What do you think?", Belle asked.

"Palm reading? Seriously, Mom?"

"We'll have fun," said Belle. "Come on."

They stood in line and waited for an old woman in a purple cloak.

"How much?," asked Belle.

She looked at Beatrice quizzically. "Whatever you want to pay."

Belle shrugged and got out a twenty. She looked at her daughter. "Do you want to go first?"

"No, you first."

The woman took Belle's hand, tracing it with her finger.

"Oh, yes, I can see very clearly...

Belle exchanged a mirthful smile with Beatrice and looked back at the fortune teller.

"There is a man. A dark man."

"A man?"

"Darkest of all. He looks for you in a cup."

"Well, I'm not there," said Belle.

"That doesn't stop him looking. He's a man."

"Sounds like a romantic," she said smiling at her daughter. Belle turned back to the woman. "You haven't got a name or something?"

"It's written on the blade of a knife."

Belle nodded. That was a little weird. "Right. Your turn, Beatrice."

Beatrice sat and held her hand out. The woman didn't take it.

"There's a swan."

"A swan?"

"You'll defeat a dragon."

Beatrice looked at the woman skeptically. "Are you sure you don't want to take my hand?"

"I can see your future as clear as day. You'll go on a quest and you will have to make a choice."

"Getting all that from just looking at me?"

"There's a darkness in you."
"Okay," said Belle, taking Beatrice's hand. "Thank you very much, but I think we are done here."

"You'll find him."

"Come on, Beatrice," said Belle, dragging her away.

"Find who?," asked Beatrice.

"It doesn't mean anything, Beatrice. It's just for fun," said Belle. "I thought I saw a bookshop down this street."

"You didn't think that it was just for fun when she said there was a darkness in me."

Belle stopped walking and looked at her daughter. "There's no darkness in you."

They went to the shop and Belle eagerly chatted up the owner of the establishment about the best of the local history section. Beatrice reached in her jacket to get her iPhone and found a tarot card with an address written on the back.

She flipped over the card to see what it was.

The Magician.

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Then

Belle wandered through the marsh by the swamp. There wasn't much to look at. It was night and Belle had decided a swamp was a swamp.

She paid no attention to the sound of rustling in the water. A book she had read said it was full of nocturnal fish that came out to feast. Nothing to worry about.

Then she looked up to realize a huge winged creature was emerging from the swamp as if rising by smoke. It looked at her with hungry iridescent eyes and lunged towards her. Belle started backwards only to trip on her skirts in the marsh and looked up at the monster's snarl. Suddenly it burst apart like fireworks and Belle saw a dark skinned woman in a purple cloak standing nearby.

"You should be more careful around swamp dragons," said the woman. "It wouldn't do to have you swallowed up."

Belle caught her breath. "I don't know how to thank you."

"I'm the priestess of this land." She appraised Belle a moment. "Come inside."

The woman walked in a tent that Belle hadn't noticed before. Belle got up and did her best to get what dirt she could off the new frock and followed the woman inside.

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Now

Beatrice waited until her mother went to another conference session to get to the address on the card. She found it in a somewhat dark street with an unassuming sign "Voodoo Objects and Services."

Beatrice walked into the shop. The old woman from the square sat behind the low counter.

"Welcome, Beatrice."
"How do you know my name?"

"I can see your name as plain as the nose on your face."

She took the tarot card out of her pocket. "The Magician. Why did you give it to me?"

"To give you an answer."

"An answer to what?"

"Your question. The only question you have. The only question you've ever had. Who is your father?"

Beatrice closed in on the counter. "How could you know that? How could you possibly know that?"

"Magic."

"Magic's not real."

"For the people of this realm, perhaps. Few of them can access what little magic there is in this land. You, however, are not of this realm."

"I'm from New York."

"But not conceived there."

"Ew..." Beatrice couldn't help but say.

"Your life began far away, but you're going back to it. Back to magic."

"Right, because my dad is a magician or something..." Which would be about the most embarrassing thing he could possibly be next to surf instructor.

Boy band member?

Billy Ray Cyrus. Yes, that was as bad as it could be.

"Until you believe in your own power, you'll never be able to find him."

"My own power?"

"Why don't you pick something?"

Beatrice looked back. There were three sacks on the counter she hadn't noticed before.

"They're all the same."

"Then you should have no problem making the choice."

Beatrice picked up the one on the right.

"You've chosen wisely. You'll need it where you're going."

"I am so getting out of here," Beatrice muttered.
Belle followed the woman inside her tent. It was full of trinkets, some Belle recognized from the Dark Castle, but mostly new. She sat at a table and motioned to Belle to take the chair on the opposite side.

"Pick a card," said the woman in the cloak.

Belle looked, they were all face down. She pointed at one and the priestess flipped it over.

"Ah, the lovers."

"The lovers?," asked Belle. "Is that a good thing?"

"It suggests passion and an intense connection..."

Belle beamed at that.

"You have a choice to make."

"What?," asked Belle. "No, I don't."

"See, the card is reversed. It means you're not certain of your relationship, you're questioning the choice you already made and now you have to decide if you want to change your mind."

"No, I won't change my mind," said Belle.

"Is that wise?," asked the woman. "Sometimes we set off on a path and think there's no way back, but there is. Now is the time to decide if you want to go back."

"Go back?," asked Belle.

"This path leads you to darkness and isolation-"

"And true love," said Belle. "I won't give that up. I won't stop fighting for it."

The priestess collected her cards. "We'll see each other in the next world."

"The next world?," asked Belle.

The tent disappeared and Belle found herself sitting on the ground. She stood and again dusted herself off.

"Belle! Belle, dearie!"

Rumplestiltskin appeared out of the high grass. "Oh, good, you're there. I was starting to worry that I would have to find a new housekeeper. Come on. We're finished here."

"What about magic from another land?"

He shook his head. "just some interesting powder and we're off!"

"Rumplestiltskin-"

"Places to go, people to see, dearie!"

"Rumplestiltskin!," she screamed.
He turned back and wrinkled his face at her. "What did you shout like that for? Usually when people shout like that, I get their firstborn in return."

Belle decided to leave the matter of the firstborn for a later date. She was desperate to get this out at all. "Do you even want to love me? I saw your face change, I know it was true love, but do you even want to love me?"

He frowned at her.

"I've been back two months and we are scarcely different than when I left." She motioned around. "You brought me to a province neighboring my father's like you want me to escape!"

"Don't you want to escape?"

"Would I have come back if I did?"

"Oh, but you will, dearie-

"Stop calling me 'dearie."

"Why?"

"You call everyone that. You call people you don't like that." Belle walked closer. "I'm not changing my mind. I just need you to believe in me."

"Belle..." He drew in his breath. "You deserve much more than I can give you."

"Can you give me love?," she asked.

Rumplestiltskin drew in his breath sharply. "Yes..." he said weakly, desperately willing it to be true.

"Then let me worry about what I deserve."

He appeared to consider what she had said. "As you wish."
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

So, some bad things happen to Belle this chapter. It could be upsetting.

As always, I do not own Once Upon A Time. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Then

Belle looked out the window of the horseless carriage. She was starting to recognize the outer limits of her father's lands. She soon went past the gawking villagers as they wondered at the carriage, what sort of magic it used and who the occupant must be.

The spring wildflowers were fully in bloom, palettes of color dotting the countryside. Belle had been many places, seen many things, but she was still taken with the beauty of her homeland.

She had not been home since she first left with Rumplestiltskin. When she first left him, she had wandered, but not home, either too embarrassed or unwilling to explain how her heart had broken. Now she had word that Sir Maurice was ill and needed his daughter's help. It took every bit of convincing Rumplestiltskin that she needed to go. She was a free woman, not that he liked to hear it. Still, Belle realized their arrangement would be a bit touchy with Sir Maurice to say the least. Perhaps that was the true reason she hadn't written her father, it was the sort of development that had to be explained in person.

She knew almost for certain that this would be her last visit home.

Once she was inside the grounds of her father's house, the carriage stopped. She got out and examined it. Nothing seemed broken, but then again she didn't know much about magical carriages.

She continued on through the garden to the entrance.

Her father's man, Jean, opened the door.

"Belle," he said in astonishment. "The beast let you leave?"

"Don't call him that," Belle warned. "I shall go to my father."

Belle began up the grand staircase.

Jean cleared his throat. "Sir Maurice is in the receiving room."

Belle turned back to Jean. "The receiving room? Surely he's too ill to be conducting business."

Belle made her way to the receiving room. The doors opened and she found Sir Maurice sitting in his chair. Off to his side, floating, was the Blue Fairy. Her presence gave Belle pause.

"Father?"
The doors shut behind Belle and she heard them lock.

"Hello, Belle," said the Blue Fairy.

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**Now**

It was Saturday morning and the night before August had called to say that he was in town. Belle couldn't meet for brunch, but sent Beatrice.

She walked on her own. She was a New York kid. Walking on her own didn't bother her, nor did riding the subway. The restaurant was just a few blocks so she walked, but couldn't escape the feeling that she was being followed. She looked back after a couple of corners, but didn't see anyone.

"What does your mom do on Saturday mornings at the library?," asked August as he dug into his eggs.

Beatrice shrugged. "She helps with this charity thing, teen mothers who are studying for their GED.

"Does she get paid?"

"No."

"That's Belle..." said August.

"What do you mean?"

August shrugged it off. "She just likes to help people."

"Is that what she was like growing up?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"You know," said Beatrice, "it might be nice to have some stories about her. Something about her wild years? Something I could bring up when we're having knockdown drag out mother-teenage daughter fights."

August shook his head. "You're never going to have those. Your mom's too nice."

"What made you finally leave Thailand?," asked Beatrice.

"I've got some business to deal with," said August.

"Another deadline?"

"Yeah, you might say that."

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**Then**

Belle listened as her father and the Blue Fairy speak for some time.

"No, Father, you have it all wrong. He let me go!"

"Yes, now we can save you," said Sir Maurice.
Belle shook her head. "No, I mean he let me go before."

Sir Maurice looked puzzled. "Before?"

"Yes, then I went back. I chose to go back."

"There's no need to keep your bargain with that monster, Belle."

Belle shook her head. "No, Father, that's not it at all."

Belle noted that none of this seemed to be a surprise to the Blue Fairy who had stayed oddly silent. Belle supposed her own Fairy Godmother had recounted their conversation to her.

"Yes, I went back." Belle decided to spare some of the details and what had happened in between. "I went back because I love him."

Belle felt her smile threatening to overtake her whole face. Sir Maurice actually looked ill now.

"He can never love you back, Belle," said the Blue Fairy. "The Dark One cares only for his own power. He lost his own son because of it."

"Yes, he told me about Baelfire and your role in it."

"He had only himself to blame," the fairy added.

"Yes, he realizes his mistake. He's changing. I know he loves me."

"Why? Because he gives you bribes?," Moe asked looking with contempt at Belle's golden adornments.

Belle looked down at her gown and the necklace. "These were gifts."

"Rumplestiltskin's gifts always come with a price," said the Blue Fairy.

Belle stood. "I am done."

"Belle, I forbid you to return to that monster!," Maurice shouted.

"No one chooses my fate but me and do not call him that." She walked back to the doors, having forgotten that they were locked. "Would someone open this?!"

She realized the Blue Fairy was floating next to her. "We know, Belle."

Belle felt her heart stop.

"Such events do not escape our notice," said the fairy.

"Know what?," asked Sir Maurice.

"Is this the reason I was summoned?," asked Belle. "Is this the reason for the ruse? Why you said my father was dying?"

"It was necessary," said the Blue Fairy.

"What if you were right? What if he hadn't let me come?," asked Belle.

"What is going on?," asked Maurice.
The Blue Fairy turned. "Sir Maurice, your daughter is going to have a child. The child of the Dark One."

Belle turned back to look upon her father. His face was a mixture of grief and dread and perhaps even disgust.

"What can be done?" Sir Maurice lamented.

"Done?" asked Belle.

"Belle, you are not tied to this monster because you bear his demon seed. He will be made to answer for this and you will not be dishonored."

"Do not use those despicable words," said Belle. "I have not been dishonored."

"The Dark One's power cannot be permitted to propagate in any way," said the Blue Fairy. "You must do this, Belle. Cora and Regina the Queen, these are the Dark One's past pupils and the same destiny awaits this child."

"What sort of a fairy are you?" Belle asked with disgust. "This is a child. She has done nothing wrong."

"She?" the Blue Fairy asked inquisitively.

"It's true, then," said Maurice. "The child has dark magic."

"It was just words," said Belle. "It doesn't prove anything. This isn't some demon you're talking about, Papa. This is your grandchild."

Belle looked in her father's eyes and somehow in these few minutes something had changed within him. She knew he wouldn't try to understand, that he had turned.

"If you are going to act, it must be quickly, Sir Maurice," said the Blue Fairy. "You will have limited time to act."

Belle didn't like where this was headed.

"Rumple-"

She was cut off by the sudden loss of her own voice. She looked desperately at her father and screamed silently as the guards dragged her away.

---

Now

Beatrice went by the library after parting ways with August. She had the same feeling again and looked back to see a man in a green jacket. She went on to the library and up the stairs. She spotted the man downstairs, talking to one of the reference librarians and supposed it had just been a coincidence. Lots of people went to the New York Public Library.

Belle French had recounted many times for her daughter their first visit to the Stephen Schwarzman Building of the New York Public Library. To be fair, Beatrice was in utero at the time. Belle had just started living in New York and August urged her to go, saying she would enjoy it. When Belle got there, she thought it looked like a castle of books, complete with a lion statue out front to guard it. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen and knew she just had to work there. She got a GED, went to college and got a Master's in Library Science. When she
graduated, the only job available at the time was at the Riker's Island branch, she took it. Her supervisor flatly said she wouldn't last, but none of the inmates frightened Belle. She worked her way up, promotion after promotion and was finally at her castle.

Upstairs, there were classrooms where the meetings were held. Beatrice spotted her mother inside. The classroom was nearly empty. Belle was holding the hand of a girl not much older than Beatrice herself, heavily pregnant as she cried. Beatrice waited quietly and looked the other way until the girl had presumably calmed down and Belle was showing her out.

"Oh, Nina," said Belle, "this is my daughter, Beatrice."

"Hi," said Nina.

"Hi," said Beatrice. The girl didn't seem to be in a conversational mood, not that Beatrice could blame her.

"Well, Nina, call me if you need anything."

"Thank you, Ms. French."

Nina left. Belle turned to her daughter. "Come on. Help me clean up."

Beatrice helped Belle pick up some books and trash that had been left behind.

"Had you been waiting long?," asked Belle.

"A few minutes."

"Poor thing," said Belle. "Entire family is telling her what to do with her life. I know what that's like."

"Really?," asked Beatrice.

Belle nodded.

"You weren't that young when you had me," said Beatrice.

"Well, don't tell my father that."

"What did he say?"

Belle stopped. "Well, you know I don't remember much, but I got an earful, he'd disown me. He made me go talk to these awful nuns," she recalled with a shudder. "Everyone tried to talk me out of what I knew for certain."

"What did you know?"

"That I loved my baby," Belle said with a smile. "Once you know that, there's nothing more to talk about."

---

Then

In a dungeon, Belle was coming back to consciousness. She looked around, catching the glimmer of the fairy on the far side. There were several of the local clerics talking with her father. Finally, there was an old woman she recognized. She lived out on the fringes of her father's lands and was known for her questionable teas and potions. Everyone knew what she did and yet no one spoke
of her.

Belle's throat still burned from whatever she had been forced to consume. She opened her mouth and still no sounds came out. She felt tears rolling down her cheek.

She stopped as she felt movement in her womb.

It hadn't worked. Her child was alive.

"I used every remedy," said the old woman. "They've all failed."

"Try something else!," Sir Maurice insisted.

"I fear the Dark One's influence is too strong," said the Blue Fairy.

"You must do something," said Sir Maurice. "Or surely Belle is truly lost."

"You misunderstand, Sir Maurice. Fairies have certain rules, that is why I have left it to you and the clerics and the medicine woman."

"Then what is there?"

"I believe there may be another way that I can act," said the Blue Fairy.

Now

Belle and Beatrice walked home from the library. They made a quick stop at the grocery store and that was where Beatrice noticed the man in the green jacket in the frozen food aisle.

"Beatrice," said Belle.

She turned back to her mother.

"Why don't you pick out some cereal and yogurts for your breakfast?," asked Belle.

"I'll just go to Starbucks."

Belle frowned. This was as close as she ever got to scolding or punishment. "A growing girl cannot survive on espressos alone. Pick some out."

Beatrice looked back for the man in the green jacket.

He was gone.

"Beatrice, what is it?," asked Belle.

Beatrice looked back as her mother waited expectantly.

"Yeah, yogurt, coming up," said Beatrice.
Chapter 4

Then

Belle looked out the window of the King of Agrabah's library. Night had fallen and it still seemed to be as hot as the day. She could see the lights of hearths of clay houses and the campfires of the desert nomads. This was such a wondrous land and yet Belle had only seen it from inside the palace walls. Apparently, women had even less opportunity in this land than her own and Rumplestiltskin insisted that she stay in the palace, the access to a new library was partial payment for his services.

Belle was reading her fourth book of the evening when she noticed a golden glow in the sky heading towards her.

"I've been looking for you, Belle."

The gold dot blossomed and became a fully formed woman in a gold dress.

"Fairy Godmother," said Belle. "What are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same thing."

"I'm just visiting."

"That's not what I meant."

Belle suddenly felt as if she were being scolded. The look on her Fairy Godmother's face said everything.

"This is about Rumplestiltskin?"

"You're a good and smart and beautiful girl, Belle. What are you doing with him?"

"He saved my people from the ogres."

"Yes, and it was noble of you to sacrifice yourself, but dealing in dark magic cannot leave you untouched."

"Dealing in dark magic? You say it as if I had other options when I did not. You offered no help when I asked."

"Fairy dust has limits, Belle."

"That still would have done nothing for my people."
"I can use it to help you, Belle, to get you away from him."

"Belle!"

She heard Rumplestiltskin down the hall, his footsteps approaching. She looked back at her Fairy Godmother.

"I'll give you three days and I'll return," said the Gold Fairy, going back into her magical form and shimmered away.

Belle looked back to the door as it magically opened. Rumplestiltskin entered.

"You're back."

"Miss me?"

Belle embraced him. "Did you get your genie?"

"Not yet, but I will." He stood back to admire her in the Agrabah court dress, a gauzy blue midriff revealing affair embellished with precious gems. "The local couture seems to suit you."

"Does it?"

"Yes." He pulled her closer, bending his head down to kiss her shoulder. "Everything does."

"I was reading."

"You'll strain your eyes. Come to bed."

"Strain my eyes?"

"Yes, it would be a pity."

"Wouldn't you fix them?"

"But what would you offer me in return?"

"I have to offer something?"

"Everything has a price."

Belle smiled. "What could I give you in return?"

"We'll come up with something," said Rumplestiltskin.

Now

It had been a few days since the first sighting of the man in the green jacket. Beatrice couldn't decide if she was being paranoid or if he was really following her. She saw him again at the library and at Starbucks in line behind her, but those weren't exactly places only she went. She hadn't told her mother anything yet, she hated to worry her. Yet the thought distracted her while she tried to concentrate on her homework.

"Beatrice! I'm home!"

Beatrice looked up.
There was a man with her mother.

Why was there a man with her mother? Her mother didn't date. Here he was, middle-aged, balding, with a genial smile that Beatrice's gut told her not to trust.

"Beatrice, this is Owen Flynn. He just started at the library. He was helping me get these home."

"Hi, Beatrice."

"Hi, Owen."

"Interesting book you have there."

Beatrice looked down. It was the voodoo book that she had found to try to understand what was in the sack.

"We were just in New Orleans for a conference," said Belle. "Beatrice became very interested in the voodoo culture."

"Did she?"

Beatrice didn't answer.

Belle tried to fill the air. "We bought these amazing pralines. Let me get you one to thank you for being so helpful."

Owen followed Belle into the kitchen.

"Don't give him our pralines," Beatrice hissed.

She watched in horror as Belle chatted with Owen more. After what seemed like forever, he left.

"You cannot go out with that guy," said Beatrice.

Belle looked at her. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me."

"Well, last I checked, I'm the mother here."

"Last I checked, you're too nice."

Belle laughed. "I'm too nice?"

"Yes, you are, you think that there's good in everyone-"

"I do not."

Beatrice bent down to look her mother in the eyes. "Yes, you do."

Belle seemed more amused than anything by her daughter. "How can you be this cynical at your age?"

"I was born cynical," said Beatrice. "I'm also right."

"Name three times I have been too nice."
"Ilsa, who was stealing from us."

"She probably just needed the money for her family."

"Mom, she had a Rolex. There was also those supposed Girl Scouts who never delivered those cookies. You always give homeless guys money, even when they're not really homeless, they're just lazy college students!"

"Do you not want me to date? Is that it?"

"Well, not until I've done background checks on everyone."

"Beatrice, he's a librarian."

"Why isn't he married? What's wrong with him?"

"Is something wrong with me that I'm not married?"

"Is his favorite book 'Catcher In The Rye?'," asked Beatrice.

"Why are you being weird about this?," asked Belle. "Is something else going on?"

Beatrice scoffed. "No, nothing else is going on. What's going on is you are, are, I don't know..." She stormed off.

"Beatrice!," Belle called after her. "Beatrice, come on! Don't be like that!"

---

**Now**

Belle was reading when she noticed the point of a blade over the page of her book and at her neck. One of the king’s daughters was staring her down.

"Uh, Jasmine, isn't it?," Belle asked still staring at the knife.

A bag went over her head and she fought as she felt herself being pulled away.

When the bag finally came off, Belle was next to a tiger in a sandy dungeon.

Jasmine stood over her. "Heel, Raja."

The tiger stopped sniffing at Belle and sat back.

"Now," said Belle, "why have you kidnapped me?"

"My father sent for your imp to find the djinn. I need him to stop."

Belle nodded. "I don't like you calling him an imp."

"Then what shall I call him?"

"How about his name for a start?"

Jasmine grunted.

Belle nodded. "Uh, look, Jasmine, here's the thing. I've been on a few of these sort of business trips with Rumplestiltskin and sometimes people try to get to him through me and it doesn't end
well."

Jasmine looked at her questioningly.

"I mean, I can usually get him to change whoever it is back into whatever they were, but it's, well, I'd rather just not go through it."

"I need that djinn."

"What for?," asked Belle.

Jasmine waited a while before finally answering. "There's a man."

Now

Belle couldn't remember the last time she had been on a date.

Or she mostly just couldn't remember. It certainly wasn't since Beatrice was born and though the details of her daughter's conception were sketchy Belle hoped there was dinner involved and maybe more.

"Thanks for taking me out, Owen," said Belle. "I don't know when I've been out."

"You should get out more often," said Owen. "A woman like you shouldn't be alone."

Belle smiled and shook her head. "I'm not alone. I have Beatrice."

"Does she see much of your ex?"

Belle smiled again. Certainly not knowing your daughter's paternity was a second date conversation. "No, not as much as we'd like."

"We'd? The split must have been amicable then."

Belle shrugged. "Why not be friendly?"

"Does he live far?"

Belle looked at the menu, eager to stop this topic of conversation. "So, I was thinking about the chicken satay."

Beatrice sat in the kitchen. She had suggested the Thai restaurant to Belle, pretending to be supportive, but mostly because her physics lab partner Tommy's family owned it and his older cousin, Non, was a waiter.

"Kid, are you going to sit here all night?," asked Non.

Beatrice shrugged. "Hey, you got your money. Also, I need more spring rolls. What were they talking about?"

"Your dad, I'm guessing."

"My dad? What did she say?"

"Not much. Sort of a weird conversation."
"Anything else?"

The waiter thought. "He likes to take pictures of his food. I wouldn't worry too much. I don't think there's going to be a second date."

Beatrice peered back out the kitchen window at her mother and Owen. Belle was getting bored now. Owen was still leading the conversation.

Beatrice walked over to Non. "Twenty dollars if you spill something on him."

"Would have done it for ten," said Non.

"Crap," muttered Beatrice.

The date was tragically cut short after Owen had to leave due to a terrible soup spill, Beatrice followed him as he went home.

Where the man in the green jacket was waiting.

"What happened to you?," asked the man.

"Long story," said Owen. "What about the girl?"

"I haven't seen any magic."

"She's curious. God knows she's got it in her."

"And the woman?"

"Oh, she's one of them. Believe me on that."

"But if they can leave the town now, if that girl is out here-"

"Don't worry, it won't come to that. I'll see to it."

As soon as they went inside, Beatrice bailed, running home.

On the elevator ride up to her apartment, she thrust her hands in her jacket pocket and pulled out the sack the woman had given her and the tarot card.

The Magician.

"No way..."

She went inside the apartment. Belle still wasn't home. She went to her room and opened the sack. It contained candles, some stones and something labelled "zombie powder."

---

Then

Belle listened as Jasmine explained.

"So, he's poor?"

"And my father's forbidden me even seeing him. That's why we had to steal the lamp so he could present himself properly."
"Jasmine, you don't need the lamp," said Belle. "You just need to believe in Aladdin and yourself and your love."

"Live outside the palace?," asked Jasmine.

"Jasmine, trust me there's a whole world out there and not everyone lives in palaces. You can live in a house..." Belle motioned at Raja. "With a big yard."

"What did your father say when you married him?," asked Jasmine.

"Our initial arrangement was of a somewhat different nature," said Belle. "But it's blossomed into love over time."

"Love? Him?"

"Some might say the same about a penniless boy from the streets," Belle chided. "Or the spoiled princess who won't make any sacrifices for the man she says she loves."

"You two make a strange couple."

Belle nodded in agreement. "But which of us is the strange one?"

Now

Beatrice walked into the Starbucks. She had called August after she got home and he said he would meet her on his way out of town. She spotted him immediately. August waved to her with a smile and she rushed to the table.

"Wow, didn't even stop to order, must be-"

"Is magic real?"

He paused. "What do you think?"

"August, I'm not really in the mood for one of these games where you ask questions after I ask a question. You gave me that book when I was a baby and it says it all takes place in another realm. I met this Voodoo woman-"

"You met who?"

"She said that I was from another realm and she gave me this." Beatrice fished the tarot card out of her pocket.

August looked taken aback. "And who did she say that was?"

"My father."

August was silent.

Beatrice took a breath, not sure she was ready for the answer. "Is that in any way true?"

"It might be." August paused. "Beatrice, do you know anyone with a receding hairline?"

"Oh, yeah, that was totally going to be the other thing."

Beatrice looked back. Owen was heading right towards her.
"Beatrice, I'm so glad I found you. There's been an accident. Your mother's in the hospital. You need to come right away."

"No, she hasn't," said Beatrice.

"I'll take her," said August.

"Who are you?," asked Owen.

"Who are you?," spat Beatrice.

Owen grabbed her by the arm and dragged her as August was in pursuit.

"Let go of me," Beatrice said elbowing him.

He grabbed her by the hair and dragged her into an alley. There was a van waiting. August followed and hit Owen hard enough to free Beatrice. The men fought.

Beatrice reached in her pocket for her phone and instead found the powder. Owen knocked August to the ground and Beatrice threw the powder at his back.

Owen froze.

Beatrice got up. August looked at her in astonishment.

"What was that?"

Beatrice just shook her head.

"That was magic! You used magic. How did you do that?"

"It was just this powder, the woman gave it to me, I..."

August walked over. "Beatrice, what did she say when she gave it to you?"

"She told me to pick one and that I would need it."

August looked at Owen. "Come on," he said helping Beatrice off the ground.

"Should we call someone about him?," asked Beatrice.

"And tell them what? You froze him with magic powder? I don't think so."

"It said 'zombie powder.' You don't think he's going to eat anyone's brain, do you?"

"Let's just go."

"Where are we going?"

"To meet someone."

August led Beatrice to an apartment building. He hit the buzzer for 7B.

"Hello?"

"It's me."
The buzzer sounded and the door opened. August led Beatrice up the stairs and to the apartment. A stubbled man appeared.

"Who's this?," he asked.

"Neal, this is Beatrice. Beatrice, Neal. You two have something in common."

The two stared at each other for a moment.

Beatrice looked up at August. "We do?"

"Neal's from our land," said August.

"We have a land?," asked Beatrice.

With a pained expression, Neal led them inside.

"I don't understand," said Neal. "You said she's from our land, but she looks too young."

"I am right here," said Beatrice.

August spoke up. "Regina had her mother sent away from Storybrooke when she was pregnant. I don't think I totally understood why until just now. She just used magic."

Neal shook his head. "There's no magic here."

"It sounded like something brought over from the other side, but she can use it."

"Who's she supposed to be?," asked Neal.

Beatrice threw her hands up. "Still, standing right here."

"Sorry," said Neal.

"She's Beauty and the Beast's kid," said August.

Beatrice contorted her face in disbelief. "I'm sorry, I'm who?"

August looked back at her. "You didn't know? I dropped some really big hints."

"There's no kid in that story," said Neal.

"There's also no magic in that story, except for the rose," said Beatrice. "And the candelabra and the clock and the teapot. Okay, basically that whole house was magic, but there was definitely no kid."

"Let's say that version of the story wasn't entirely the truth, except there was a rose and a teacup," said August.

"Oh, come on," said Beatrice.

"Okay, what's your mom's name?"

"That's a coincidence."

"What is your mom's name?," asked Neal.
"Belle," Beatrice grumbled.

"Does she like to read?," asked Neal.

Beatrice looked at Neal. "Okay, like, are people named Belle not allowed to read? Is that what we're saying? What kind of message is that?"

"Not when they're from Storybrooke," said August. "Believe me, your mom is the Belle from the book."

Beatrice looked at Neal. "You believe him?"

"I have to," said Neal. "I know it's the truth."

August spoke. "They don't know it. There's a Curse that brought them to this world from another realm. Someone's going to break it."

Beatrice tried to recall the details of the book. "This is why my mom doesn't remember anything," said Beatrice.

August nodded.

"So, what? How do we break this curse?"

"We don't," said Neal.

"Remember the last part of the book? The Savior?," asked August.

"Great, so how do we find-"

"She's actually already in Storybrooke."

Neal looked at August. "You didn't say that."

"I was going to when I saw you," said August.

"If she's there, why hasn't the Curse broken?," asked Beatrice.

"Because she doesn't believe yet."

"Oh, great plan," said Beatrice, "have a savior who doesn't believe in what she's saving. Who came up with this?"

"That's why I'm going back," said August.

"You are?," asked Neal.

August shrugged. "I have to. In the meantime, I need you to keep Beatrice safe."

---

Then

Belle went back to her suite, exhausted and certainly not in the state she wanted to be in for her visitor.

"Fairy Godmother," she said.
"I've come to see what you have to say, Belle."
Belle sat on the chaise lounge. "I love him."

"Belle-"

"I love him. I know full well who he is and I still love him. I want to be with him, to help him."
"Belle, he is the Dark One. He only cares about his own power."
Belle shook her head. "That's just a part of him."

"His power will consume him, Belle and nothing, not even you, will be untouched."

"He needs me."

"Have you thought of children, Belle?"
Belle shook her head. She sincerely hadn't. "I suppose children will come if it's meant to be."

"Such children would surely be monsters and there would be people with an interest in stopping that."

"I don't believe they would be. How could any child born of true love be a monster?"

The Gold Fairy sighed. "I want to be perfectly clear, Belle. Once I leave you tonight, I can no longer help you."

"I understand."

"I'm supposed to report this immediately to the Blue Fairy," she said.

"No, please, he-"

The Gold Fairy held up a hand to stop Belle. "I saw what you did to help Princess Jasmine. In light of that, what I will do is forget to do so."

"You'll forget?"

"Fairies can't lie," Gold explained. She paused. "Be careful, Belle."

The fairy imploded back into her smaller form and Belle watched as she flew away.

Now

August left Beatrice with Neal to get her home. They stood outside his building and Neal tried to hail a cab.

"Why aren't you in Storybrooke?," Beatrice asked Neal.

"I left that world a long time before the Curse."

"Why won't you go back?"

"My father."
"Your father? What did he do?"

Neal was silent as he kept trying to hail a taxi.

"Seriously, what?," asked Beatrice. "You haven't seen him in years and you're still hiding. What did he do?"

Neal scowled. "You wouldn't understand."

"No, I wouldn't. I don't even know my father. Well, except he's the Beast or whatever."

Neal nodded. "Well, I can guarantee he won't be as bad as mine."

Beatrice sighed at Neal's ineffective taxi hailing. "Let me." She stepped out, raised her right hand and one immediately came to a stop.

"Wow, August is right, you are magical," he said dryly.

"Ha ha."

"Call me if that guy shows up again or anyone else starts sniffing around," said Neal.

---

**Then**

"Funny thing," said Rumplestiltskin.

Belle looked up from her book, startled.

"You see, I went to an awful lot of trouble to find the genie that was causing all that trouble, I capture the miscreant, bring him back and the King has another job for me."

"Oh?," asked Belle.

"Yes, it seems one of his daughters and her pet tiger have disappeared. He offered me all the treasure in Ali Baba's den to find her."

"Really?"

"And the library, but I thought I would check with you first."

"Oh," said Belle, looking around. It was too bad. It was an impressive library. "You didn't want what was in Ali Baba's den?"

"Really, Belle, if there was anything worth having there, I would have it already." He motioned around. "You didn't want the library?"

"No," Belle lied.

"Well, then, I suppose we should just hope the poor princess can make it on her own."

"I suppose."

"Did anything else happen while I was gone?"

Belle shook her head. "No."
Rumplestiltskin nodded. "Ah."

"I guess we should be going, then," Belle said, putting her book down and looking longingly at the library.

"Why don't you finish reading that one while I tell the King no?"

Belle smiled. "Okay."

Rumplestiltskin walked out of the library, glancing back at a contented Belle. He stepped out onto one of the palace's verandas.

"Still there, Goldie?"

The Gold Fairy appeared. "Yes, Rumplestiltskin?"

"Did you think I wouldn't notice?"

"I thought it was best not to deal with you directly." She paused. "Belle's a wonderful woman."

"Oh, something we can agree on. I suppose you're going to fly back and tell all?"

"No, I will keep my promise to Belle for as long as I can," said the Gold Fairy. "For her. Not for you."

Rumplestiltskin snorted. "Well, there was never any confusion on that score. If you do have to pass it along, add in this: a fairy helped to take my son away and I won't let that happen again. Is that clear?"

"Very."

"Good. Now, fly away, fairy."

Now

Beatrice went home. She took a shower, got in her pajamas and took out the book, poring over the tale of Beauty and the Beast.

"Beatrice."

She looked up to see her mother smiling. Belle came in and sat at the foot of the bed.

"You had me worried with that strange call of yours, earlier," said Belle. "Asking if I was alright? What was all that about?"

Beatrice shook her head. "I just had a bad feeling."

"If it's about Owen, you don't have to worry," said Belle.

"Oh?," Beatrice asked nonchalantly.

Belle shook her head. "Not for me."

"That was quick."

"I didn't need very long."
"I thought you had to get to know people and understand them, people have layers..."

"Mock all you like. That's still true. Owen just had less layers than I would have liked." Belle paused. "I've never told you something. Do you know how I know I loved your father even though I can't remember my old life?"

"No."

"Because it hurts and I know when I find someone else, it will stop hurting."

"Tale as old as time," said Beatrice.

Belle looked at her with a frown. "What?"

"True as it can be."

"Why are you being so silly?," asked Belle.

"It's that sort of day."

Belle kissed her on the cheek. "I'm going to start dinner."

Belle got up and left. Beatrice laid back and pulled her pillow over her head.

She was living with a freaking Disney princess.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon a Time. Thank you so much for the reads, follows and reviews. I can't get enough of them. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Then

Grumpy was the leader of Snow White's Royal Guard. As such, he had to keep an ear to the ground for developments. Who knew what Regina might be planning in her exile? And Rumplestiltskin. That imp was always up to something.

Then one day Sir Maurice arrived unexpectedly seeking refuge. He appeared before Snow White and the Prince at court, looking like a broken, disgraced man. His was a small principality, but it had been in his family for generations and there had never been problems. To lose it seemed to have taken a great toll as he told his tale in front of the court.

"I don't understand, Sir Maurice," said Snow White. "Your land has always been prosperous. Your people were always content. You even managed to defeat the Ogres. What made them rebel against your rule?"

Sir Maurice looked ashamed. "They have fallen under the spell of the Dark One."

Charming and Snow exchanged glances. The audience murmured.

"Rumplestiltskin?," asked the Prince.

"Why?," asked Snow.

"I'm afraid I couldn't say, Your Highness," said Sir Maurice.

"You're welcome to stay as long as you need, Sir Maurice," said Charming.

"Will Belle be joining us?," asked Snow.

Sir Maurice seemed almost startled by the question. "My daughter was traveling when the revolt began. I sent word for her to stay away."

Grumpy eyed Sir Maurice. He was definitely lying about that and Grumpy thought for sure it was about Belle.

Sir Maurice said some words of thanks to the royals and went off.

"Why would Rumplestiltskin cause a rebellion against Sir Maurice?," asked Snow White.

Charming shrugged. "Why does he do anything? He's insane."
"I don't think so," said Snow White. "He's always tried to get us together."

"But why?," asked Charming.

"I don't know why, I just know he has a reason," said Snow White. "I don't see what leaving Sir Maurice landless accomplishes or what it has to do with anything."

"Do you know Belle?," asked Grumpy.

"Yes," said Snow. "Her mother, Lady Reinette, was lady-in-waiting to my mother. We used to play together at the Summer Palace."

"Good thing she was away during the revolt," said Charming.

"Yeah," mused Grumpy. "Good thing."

Now

"Hello?"

"Neal, hi."

He groaned. "Beatrice. Seriously? What time is it?"

"It's three."

"Beatrice, why are you calling me?"

Beatrice flipped through the pages of the storybook. "These other realms, are they like other dimensions?"

"What?"

"You know, the Enchanted Forest is a parallel universe, so is Neverland and Wonderland. Although, as far as Neverland goes, if it's a whole other universe, why does it seem to just be one freaking island?"

"I don't know, Beatrice, I never bothered asking." His voice still sounded asleep.

"You went hopping between dimensions and didn't bother asking how it worked?"

"People don't really think like that where we're from."

"They really should."

"Why aren't you asleep?"

"Nightmares."

"Go back to bed."

"They just start again."

Neal groaned. "What kind of nightmares?"

"There's a room and it's dark, but there's fire."
"Sounds like a sleeping curse."

"It sounds like a what?"

Neal cleared his throat. "It's a sleeping curse. You were under a sleeping curse at some point."

"What do you know about sleeping curses?"

"My dad used to... Just trust me, I know about curses. Your soul visits this Netherworld."

"My soul is in a what?!," Beatrice shrieked.

"It'll fade..."

"This Netherworld, is it another dimension or a different plane of consciousness?"

"Beatrice, I'm going back to sleep."

"Excuse me for wanting to know where my soul is going while I'm asleep!"

Beatrice no longer heard anything and looked at her iPhone.

"He ended the call," she muttered. "Jerk."

---

Then

Grumpy kept an eye on Sir Maurice while he stayed as a guest at the palace. Grumpy noticed that he and the Blue Fairy kept meeting in the garden. Ever since what had happened with Nova, Grumpy had been unable to set aside his personal feelings when it came to fairies. He supposed they had their uses and they had helped in the fight against Regina, but he didn't have to like them.

He had seen Belle once again on her way back from adventure as she stopped off in the tavern for something to eat. She explained she was going back to fight for true love, because it was worth fighting for. He got the feeling she was holding back on something.

"When I think of my poor daughter and what that monster did to her..." said Sir Maurice. "He must have done something to her, cast some spell..."

"I wish it were so, Sir Maurice," said Blue. "Belle made her own choice to choose the Dark One over all else, even good and now she is surely paying the price."

The Dark One! Rumplestiltskin? Had she loved him? Grumpy found it difficult to fathom, but, hey, whatever. Blue was right, though, she wasn't under any kind of spell.

"Does she... suffer?"

"No, she's simply sleeping."

Grumpy waited until the fairy left the palace grounds and followed her blue light out deep into the forest. He watched from a distance as she descended and used her wand to move aside an overgrowth of vines to reveal a glass coffin. He couldn't see the occupant from his vantage point, but watched as the fairy waved her wand again and flew off.

Grumpy waited until the Blue Fairy was gone to go over to the spot with the vines. He pushed the overgrowth aside by hand and was able to see the coffin's occupant.
"Belle..." he gasped.

Now

"Beatrice," Belle said in shock.

Beatrice looked up. Her mother stood in the doorway. She had been hovering between consciousness and unconsciousness for most of the night, finally noting that morning had arrived. She had to do something, what was it?

Right. School.

"I'm getting ready, I swear," said Beatrice, willing her body to move. "Just one second."

"You look awful," said Belle.

"Thanks, Mom. I'll fix it. I just need my glasses."

"They're on your face."

Beatrice blinked. "Are they?"

Belle walked over and put her hand on Beatrice's forehead. "You're not warm. Is it something else?"

"I didn't get much sleep."

"Well, how much did you get?"

"I don't know, an hour?"

"An hour?!," Belle exclaimed. She frowned. "Beatrice, were you up all night watching Doctor Who again?"

"No," she said defensively. "I had... nightmares."

"Nightmares?," asked Belle. "What sort of nightmares?"

"Nothing, here, I'll go to school," said Beatrice, sitting up. She swung her right leg off the bed. "Give me a minute, I'll get the left one going."

"Beatrice, tell me..."

"You know what, I'll just crawl," she said unceremoniously dropping to the floor. "Maybe I can stand by the time I get to Starbucks."

"Beatrice, how long has this been going on?"

Just ever since she had used magic. Or whatever. "I don't know, a few weeks."

"Beatrice, why didn't you tell me?"

"I'm fine. It's not a big deal."

Belle shook her head. "You can't go to school like this. Get back in bed."
"I'm fine."

"Back in bed. Now."

Beatrice sighed in resignation and climbed back on to her bed, collapsing and unable to move.

---

Then

Snow rode a carriage deep into the woods as the dwarves led the way. She wasn't used to not being on a horse, but she was pregnant and had to get used to that. Grumpy had said there was something she needed to see out here and she trusted him enough to go without further details.

When the carriage stopped, Snow got out. The dwarves parted ways to show her what they had traveled to see.

"My glass coffin," said Snow.

It was grown over. Snow had the dwarves help her pull off the brush and greenery to see that it was Belle.

"Oh, my poor dear friend," said Snow. She turned to the dwarves. "Do you know who has done this? Was it Regina?"

"That's the kicker," said Grumpy.

Before Snow could ask what he meant, the Blue Fairy arrived.

"Oh, Blue, thank the gods you're here. My friend Belle has been put under some sort of spell, for some time it would seem. She needs your help."

The Blue Fairy didn't answer.

"What's wrong?"

With no answer, Snow White looked to the dwarves.

Grumpy shot Blue a glare. "Why don't you ask her who put Belle under the spell?"

Snow White turned to the fairy.

"Snow White, there are things you do not understand-"

"Like what?"

"Belle is carrying the Dark One's daughter. That cannot be allowed."

"Allowed?," Snow asked with disdain.

"The child's existence would only enhance the Dark One's power. That cannot be allowed. If such power fell into the wrong hands, which it surely would-"

"What about Belle's hands?"

"The Dark One is sure to corrupt."

"You sure like telling people how to run their lives," said Grumpy.
This earned a glare of disapproval from the fairy, not that Grumpy cared.

"I want to talk to Belle," said Snow White.

"I can't do that. The risk is too great."

"You are speaking nonsense. The child is innocent, no matter her father. Belle can guide her daughter." She didn't add that Rumplestiltskin had confided in her about her about heartbreak when she went to him to forget her now husband.

"Your Highness-"

"Or I'll summon the Dark One," said Snow White.

The Blue Fairy looked at her in shock. Grumpy smiled as the dwarves stood resolutely with their princess.

"I will summon him and tell him what has happened and who is responsible."

"You don't know what that would mean."

"I know what this means," said Snow. "Wake her up."

The Blue Fairy waved her wand and beneath the glass, Belle's eyes flew open. Grumpy led the dwarves in taking the cover off.

"There," said Snow helping her sit up, "there my dear friend. You're alright."

Belle opened her mouth. No sound came out.

Snow White turned back to the Blue Fairy. "Why can't she speak?"

"She tried to summon the Dark One."

"And what do you think will happen if I return her to Rumplestiltskin without her voice?," asked Snow White.

"You would return her?"

"If it's what she wishes."

The Blue Fairy waved her wand again.

"Hello, hello..." Belle said, testing out her own voice. "Your Highness."

Snow shook her head. "Just Snow for you my very dear friend."

Belle turned to the Blue Fairy, but she was flying away. She looked back at Snow.

"Belle, tell me what happened."

Belle tried to collect herself, but it was no use. "They tried to kill my baby!," she sobbed as she fell into Snow's arms.

Snow held her friend. "No harm will come to her or you. You have my promise."
Now

Beatrice was surrounded by flames.

"Oh, come on," she muttered. She had fallen asleep.

The flames leapt up and hit her left arm. She howled in pain and looked at her arm. It was burned.

"Help!," she heard a voice scream. "Help!"

Beatrice made her way through the flames. One leapt in front of her, obscuring her view and she waved her hand in instinct, but saw that the flame dissipated. She frowned and tried it again, the flames disappeared, until the whole room was empty and she saw a frightened young woman in a pale pink dress.

"How did you do that?," she asked.

"I don't know," said Beatrice. "Magic?"

"Magic," she said, looking scared. "Did Maleficent send you?"

"Maleficent?," asked Beatrice. "Oh, no way. You're Sleeping Beauty?"

"No, that was my mother."

"Oh, well, my mom is Belle."

The young woman looked at her. "Who?"

"Belle, you know, Beauty and the Beast. Tale as old as time, true as it can be? Barely even friends, then somebody bends, unexpectedly..." she tried to sing the last word and the girl seemed unimpressed. "Yeah, I've been listening to that a lot lately."

The woman stood. "I'm Princess Aurora."

"Beatrice."

"What sort of clothes are those?"

Beatrice looked down at her pajama bottoms and t-shirt. "I'm sleeping. These are pajamas. Not all of us fall asleep dressed for the Oscars."

"I was spinning." "Really? Don't you people learn? Stay away from spinning wheels!"

Aurora looked taken aback.

"What are you spinning for anyway? You're a princess! Go shopping!"

"What land do you come from?," asked Aurora.

"New York."

"And you practice magic there?"

"Well, I did this thing with some powder and just whatever that was. It's not like I go around
trying to practice magic."

"Beatrice! I'm home!"

Beatrice awoke in her bed. The sun was setting.

Belle popped her head in. "Did you get any rest?"

"Yeah, I got some."

"Good, I brought dinner."

Beatrice got up and stumbled out to the kitchen.

"Ooh, dumplings," said Beatrice reaching with her left arm across the counter.

"Beatrice!," Belle gasped.

"What?"

Belle gripped either side of the burned forearm. "Beatrice, what happened to your arm?"

Beatrice stared at the arm in horror. How could that be? How could that possibly be?

"I burned myself, uh, cooking. It's not that bad."

Belle looked up at her daughter, positively stricken. "Beatrice, what have you done to yourself?"

"It was just an accident on the uh, stove..."

"Beatrice, the stove is broken."

Oh, right. The super said he would fix it a week ago.

Belle looked ready to cry, taking her daughter in her arms.

This was going to be hard to explain.
Chapter 6

Then

Snow White wondered what had possessed Charming. Why he thought he could borrow one of her birds and trap Rumplestiltskin without so much as running it by her. She had left Belle there scarcely two weeks ago and now she would be alone again with no one to protect her. She blew into the room where the Prince was trying to comfort Cinderella.

"You never said anything about trapping Rumplestiltskin!"

"Snow..." Charming began.

"What were you thinking?!," Snow shouted. She looked at Grumpy. "Grumpy, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"He was acting under my orders, Snow," said Charming.

"Which no one bothered to inform me of!"

Cinderella shook her head. "What does it matter? He's a monster!"

Snow thought of her friend, Belle, sitting alone at the Dark Castle, pregnant with her true love's child, waiting for him to return. Perhaps worried that something had happened to him. "Maybe you don't know everything about him."

"What's there to know?," asked Cinderella. "He's a horrible imp."

"Snow, he's the most dangerous man in all the realms. He had to be captured," said Charming.

"He's taken Thomas," Cinderella sobbed.

Snow threw up her hands. "Okay, I'm going to say this and I know it's not going to be popular, but maybe you should have read the contract in the first place."

Cinderella looked aghast at Snow White. "How was I to know he would want my child?"

Snow shrugged. "Maybe because he's Rumplestiltskin. Maybe because his deals come with a price, which he mentions a lot."

Charming exchanged looks with Grumpy. Snow knew the look. They had both clearly decided this was a case of pregnancy hormones run amok. Though she knew she was perhaps not as gentle as her usual self, this only angered Snow White more.

"Snow, maybe we should talk in the other room?," said Charming.

"I don't want to talk to you right now," said Snow. "Could someone please send for Lancelot?"

Grumpy followed her out into the hall. "You made us swear not to tell."

"That was because I didn't want rumors spreading, to put Belle and her child's lives in further danger!," said Snow. "You heard Belle tell what her own father and the fairies did! What would everyone else do?"

"Even though Belle loves him, Rumplestiltskin is still dangerous," said Grumpy. "Something had
"Even though Belle loves him, Rumplestiltskin is still dangerous," said Grumpy. "Something had to be done."

"With Belle left on her own?," asked Snow White. "Send for Lancelot now."

Now

Beatrice was in a psychiatrist’s office.

Since dragging her daughter to the emergency room with an inexplicably burned arm and nightmares, Belle French had made it her mission in life to see to her daughter's mental health. She had taken an emergency leave of absence, gotten Beatrice excused from school and read every book the New York Public Library offered on curing your insane teenage daughter. The titles phrased it nicer. Now, they were sitting in the waiting room of a psychiatrist's office. Beatrice looked around, the practice seemed to cater to teenagers so the room was full of other kids her own age who didn't want to be there. Belle was one of two parents. Beatrice watched as a boy muttered to himself.

"I am not crazy," said Beatrice.

"No, no, I would never say that," said Belle. "Maybe you're just stressed?"

"I'm not stressed!," she shouted capturing the attention of the other patients in the waiting room.

"Beatrice, please. I just want to help you."

"Miss French?"

A young-looking woman led Beatrice into her office. Beatrice thought this must be a receptionist until she insisted upon calling herself "Doctor Amy." The office decor was clearly designed with the intention of looking cool to her young patients, decorated with concert posters and hip furniture.

"So, Beatrice, tell me about yourself," she said, reclining in her chair. "What do you like to do?"

"Not be crazy."

"That's not why we're here, Beatrice. Nobody's saying that."

"I can't think of what else we would be here for."

"Do you like to hang out with your friends?"

"I don't have friends," said Beatrice. Although, Princess Aurora and I are starting to get along, but I think she likes that I can stop the flames.

"Boyfriends?"

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah, have you seen the boys running around high school lately?"

"Girlfriends?"

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "I'm not a lesbian. When there's a boy worth being into, you can count me in."

"A boy worth being into?"
"Yes, I have standards."

"What sort of standards?"

"What about not completely lame?"

"Fair enough," said Doctor Amy. "So, what do you like to do?"

"I like my computer. I like books. I like Doctor Who and I like coffee. Is that enough?"

"There's no right or wrong answer, Beatrice," Doctor Amy said as she wrote on her clipboard. "And what about your mom? Do you two have a good relationship?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to expand on that?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because you asked me a yes or no question, not an open-ended one and I don't need you trying to come up with some way that my mom is the problem. She's seriously not."

"And your dad?"

Beatrice froze. Doctor Amy looked as if she had struck gold.

"I don't have a dad so I don't see how I could have any issues with him," Beatrice stonewalled.

"Does that bother you?"

Beatrice wanted to scream. What did she think? "No, I'm totally fine not knowing one of my parents at all. It doesn't bother me at all," she said sarcastically.

"Do you think about your father a lot?"

"No."

"Do you ever wonder who he might be?"

"No." Because I'm fairly convinced he's a cursed fairy tale character in Maine, some sort of Beast who does magic? Beast Magician? Beastician?

"So, everything's okay at home?"

"Fine." Except for the part where my mom was dating some guy doing magical surveillance on me and oh, yeah, I have magic powers.

"How did you hurt your arm?"

"Burned it." In a Netherworld where my soul goes while I'm asleep since I was under a sleeping curse one time and it is a good thing I am not saying any of this out loud.

"How did you burn it?"

"Accident."
"Beatrice, it's okay, you can say anything here."

"Being okay to say anything implies that I have the choice to not say anything."

"That's not why you're here. To get the most out of treatment, you need to participate in it."

"I don't need to get anything out of treatment because I don't need it."

"Have you ever thought about hurting yourself?"

"No!"

"About suicide?"

"No and do not go out there and tell my mom I'm suicidal because I'm not."

"Do you remember burning yourself?"

"It was an accident."

Belle went in after Beatrice to talk to Doctor Amy alone. Beatrice sat in the waiting room and Belle emerged having clearly been crying. She forced a smile on as they walked to the elevator.

"So, did you like her?," asked Belle.

"No," said Beatrice.

Belle nodded. "Well, I'll see if we can get a referral, but you'll be coming three times a week."

"Three times a week?," asked Beatrice. "What am I supposed to talk to that woman about for three times a week?!"

"Beatrice, please," said Belle. "Please try for me."

"There is nothing wrong with me."

"Beatrice, I need you to try and I need you to swear to me you won't hurt yourself again."

"I didn't!"

"Beatrice, please."

Belle looked away, Beatrice knew she was trying to keep herself together. So she turned the other way.

Then

"Your Highness," said Lancelot, bowing his head.

"Lancelot, thank you for coming," said Snow. She glanced out at Charming talking with his men and shut the door. "I need your help."

"Surely the Prince can do your bidding?," he teased.

She scowled. "We disagree on this. Are you aware of what has happened to Prince Thomas?"
"The kingdom is full of it." He leaned towards Snow White. "Did she even bother reading the contract?"

"That's neither here nor there," said Snow. "I think I may have a way to help, but this has to be done in the strictest confidence. No one can know and especially not the fairies."

"I'm intrigued."

"Rumplestiltskin is not the man you think he is or rather he's not the man he would have us think he is. He has a... a...

Lancelot eyed her curiously.

"I'm not sure what you would call her."

"A woman?," Lancelot asked in disbelief. "Rumplestiltskin has a lover?"

"You're one to talk," she snapped.

Lancelot put his hands up in mock surrender.

"She's to have his child."

Lancelot nodded. "You want to trade his lover for Prince Thomas?"

"No," said Snow.

"Then the Dark One's child for Cinderella's child?"

"No!," said Snow. "I am sworn to protect that child. Using her as a bargaining chip does not fit in with that. Nor do I think it's in our best interests to anger Rumplestiltskin in such a way."

"Then what's your plan?"

"Rumplestiltskin has been forced to endure a long separation from the woman he loves. His heart has hardened. The man in the dwarf mines is not the man I've dealt with before."

"You mean completely crazy?"

"Belle says she brings out the good in him. Maybe if we let him see her he'll be more willing to listen to us and we can get Thomas back."

"The best in him? Do you think there's anything good in him to bring out?"

"Belle thinks there is and so do I." She handed him a piece of parchment. "I've written Belle to explain. Take a carriage and bring her here. Let no one know who your passenger is."

"Yes, your highness."

"Make haste. Rumplestiltskin has many enemies."

Now

Beatrice was having a hard time getting a hold of August. His phone always went to voice mail.

"Hello?"
"August, thank God!" Beatrice glanced out her door at Belle. She was reading yet another book from the what to do with your insane daughter genre. She ducked back in her room. "Look, I need help. Neal told me what he could, but I need someone with more expertise."

"I don't know how much more expertise I have than Neal."

"Look, I was under a sleeping curse and I keep visiting this Netherworld. The problem is somehow I burned my arm there and now I'm seeing a shrink and my mom won't let me more than ten feet away because she thinks I'm crazy."

"I'm sorry, Beatrice, I don't know how to help-"

"Is there anyone there who can help? You know? Someone in Fairy Tale Town who knows about this stuff?"

"No, Beatrice, they're all under the Curse-"

"A book or something? First Aid Treatment for injuries from the Netherworld?"

"No, look, right now I've got to focus on getting Emma to believe."

"Savior girl?"

"Yes, there have been a lot of distractions here-"

"There have been a lot of distractions here, August, but I'm a believer so maybe help me out."

"Beatrice, I'm running out of time. We all have problems. Once Emma believes and the Curse is broken, everything can be fixed."

"Yeah, that's only taken twenty-eight years, how much longer do you think it will be? Before or after I end up in the asylum?"

"Your mom won't send you to an asylum."

"No, she's already made one in the apartment."

"Look, I've got to go, you're going to have to just hang on a while longer." He groaned.

Beatrice frowned. "August, is something wrong?"

"I'm fine, gotta go," he said with a tense voice.

Beatrice screeched in frustration and threw her iPhone at the bed.

"Stupid savior girl! Take a hint!"

"Beatrice?"

Beatrice froze and turned around to see Belle in the doorway.

Yeah, that last thing probably seemed a little crazy.

---

_Then_

Snow White wondered what was keeping Lancelot. It wasn't that far to the Dark Castle. The fear
of Regina's threat continued to gnaw at her and that led her and Charming to see Rumplestiltskin and learn about the Curse. By the time she saw Lancelot, his men and the carriage, she had nearly forgotten they existed. In the moments as she raced downstairs, she let herself cling on to a brief hope that somehow they could avert the Curse.

She hurried downstairs.

"Lancelot!"

Snow realized the carriage was empty.

"Where is she?"

"I'm sorry. Belle was gone."

Snow White noticed his arm. "How did you hurt yourself?"

"We ran into Regina's soldiers."

"Doc should look at you-"

"Snow White, that wasn't all. There were rumblings that King George took Belle."

"King George? Who told him where to find her? And why would he-"

"A gift. For Regina."

Snow gasped in horror. Her shoulders dropped.

Lancelot shook his head. "I'm sorry, Your Highness."

Now

Beatrice awoke. Belle stood over her in concern.

"Sweetheart, are you alright?"

"I'm fine."

"You were screaming." Belle flipped on the light. "Beatrice, my God, your other arm!"

Beatrice looked. The right arm had gotten the worst of it this time.

Belle sat on the bed. "Beatrice, why are you doing this to yourself? Sweetheart, please, tell me. Whatever it is. I can't bear to see you hurting yourself."

"I'm not hurting myself!"

"Then how is it happening? When you went to bed, your arm was perfectly fine and now..." She shook her head. "Come. Let me clean it."

Belle dragged Beatrice to the bathroom. Beatrice watched as her mother brought out the various bottles and ointments, eyes full of water.

"Mom?"
Belle looked up hopefully.

"Whatever I say, do you promise to believe me?"

"Believe you? Of course I'll believe you. You're my girl."

Beatrice was resigned to this. Anything was better than seeing her mother cry, letting her worry herself sick.

"There's a parallel universe, actually, there's a few. Actually, it could be infinite-

"Beatrice, what does this have to do with-

"There's one called the Enchanted Forest."

"The Enchanted Forest?" Belle looked skeptical.

"I don't make up the names, but anyway, you're from there-

"I'm from there?"

"Yeah and there was this curse while you were pregnant with me that brought everyone from there here- well, to Maine, actually- and took away all of your memories of your past life and replaced them with false ones."

"Right..." said Belle. "Is there anything else?"

"Regina Mills-

"Wait, where did you get that name?"

"She's really the Evil Queen because everyone in the town in Maine is a character from a fairy tale. Or possibly Alice in Wonderland. Or Peter Pan for some reason."

"Then who am I?"

"Belle."

Her mother stared at her blankly.

"You know, Belle? Likes books and the Beast? I didn't think this would be such a hard transition."

Belle shook her head. "Beatrice, that's just a coincidence."

"No, not really, when you add it in with all the other stuff I just said."

Belle stared at her blankly. "And what does this have to do with your arms?"

"At some point, you were under a sleeping curse and the people under a sleeping curse visit this Netherworld and there are flames there."

"And you're under a sleeping curse?"

"No. You were while you were pregnant with me. I'm still trying to work that out."

"Right, well," said Belle finishing up with a bandage wrapping around Beatrice's arm. "We can
talk about this more in the morning."

"You don't believe me."

"Of course I believe you."

"No, you don't. You're the worst liar ever. You don't believe me. Did you read some book that told you to humor me?"

"Beatrice, I-"

"I didn't tell you the truth because you would think I was crazy! Then you thought I was crazy anyway! So what's the point?!"

"I don't think you're crazy."

"Yes, you do! You're going to have me locked up with girls with real problems! Not stupid magical ones!"

"Beatrice, just please, go to sleep." Belle hugged her and kissed her on the cheek. "I love you. We'll talk in the morning."

Beatrice sat on her bed, defeated as her mother left.

---

_Then_

Lancelot escorted Snow White down to the dwarf mines. Rumplestiltskin was in his cell as ever.

"Come back, dearie?", he called. "I'm afraid nothing's changed! You're all still doomed!"

Snow White walked below the light of the torch.

"No Charming, I see? Should I be worried?", asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Belle's fairy godmother was the same as Cinderella's," said Snow White.

She saw the imp stiffen.

"I don't know who you mean, dearie."

Snow White ignored him and tried to carry on as she started to sniffle. "That's why you killed the Gold Fairy, isn't it? It wasn't power, it was revenge. You thought she should have helped."

"I don't need a reason to kill a fairy," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Belle was the first person to hide me from Regina," said Snow White.

"What a delightful piece of trivia," the Dark One quipped without his usual enthusiasm.

"I'm sorry," said Snow.

Rumplestiltskin looked up at her. In the flickers of torchlight, he could see that her eyes and face were red. Tears flowed freely.

"I'm so sorry," said Snow White. "I'm so sorry you lost her."
Rumplestiltskin eyed her. "Just a housekeeper, dearie."

Snow White nodded through her tears. She knew Rumplestiltskin would never reveal himself in front of her. Though everyone in the kingdom made deals and then spoke of him with disdain, Belle was the only one who seemed to know him.

"I'm sorry," said Snow, still sobbing. "I'm sorry."

Snow White cried and Rumplestiltskin was forced by the nature of his plans to act disinterested.

He could only wonder what had possessed the princess to bring up someone who had been dead for years.
Chapter 7

Now

Belle laid awake most of the night.

What was Beatrice possibly thinking? That she had been some princess in a fairy tale? She hadn't been anybody. She had been locked away in a place no better than a cell. She couldn't even remember anyone coming to visit her.

Maybe she had deserved to be there. Maybe she had been crazy.

Then she heard the front door shut.

Then

"Gold."

The Gold Fairy Godmother froze and turned back as the Blue Fairy hopped across clouds to come near her.

"You were so quiet at the meeting today," said Blue. "Nothing to report on your charges?"

Gold shrugged. "Aurora remains free of Maleficent for now. Cinderella continues to toil for her stepmother, but her ball has not yet come."

"And what of Belle?"

Gold didn't speak. There was no point. The Blue Fairy would know all.

"She is your charge and she has become the Dark One's lover," Blue said with contempt. "How can you explain yourself and this utter failure?"

"She loves him," said Gold. It was the only answer.

"She is infatuated, it is your job to guide her."

"It's not an infatuation," Gold insisted. "It's True Love."

"And how can you know that to be certain?"

"Because she kissed him and the curse of the Dark One weakened."

"I see. Then why does the Dark One continue to plague the kingdom?"

"Because he stopped her." Gold saw Blue's disapproval beginning again. "He thought it was a trick by Regina the Queen. They have worked through it."

"And yet the Dark One remains."

"Belle says he needs his power to find his son and she won't take that from him," said Gold. Sensing Blue was about to say more, she quickly added, "Which I think is more proof of True Love than any kiss."
"He made his choice about his son long ago."

"A choice he's lived to regret."

"Are you Fairy Godmother to Belle or the Dark One?"

"Perhaps he needs one or perhaps it's Belle."

"Do you have any idea what havoc your negligence has wrought? There was a spark of magic which has been traced to be growing in your charge."

"Children born of True Love always have magic."

"More likely it's the Dark One expanding his power, creating a new pupil, like Cora and Regina. This child is destined to go down their path."

"I don't think he would do that."

"Oh. Do you now?"

"He's gentle with Belle," said Gold. "And we all know Rumplestiltskin's tale, that he was a poor spinner who took on the Dark One's powers to save his son. He never tried to steer him towards the practice of magic. It seems to me impossible that a father could risk his soul for one child and lead another down a path he knows all too well is a burden."

"Is this what you told Belle?"

"No, I did my very best to dissuade her, even saying that their children might be monsters and it didn't work."

"I'll be taking over as Belle's Fairy Godmother."

Gold was stunned. "You can't do that! I was godmother to her mother, Reinette, and her mother and her mother before that and so on."

"I suppose you want to be Fairy Godmother to the Dark One's child as well?"

That was indeed a frightening thought, but Gold tried to shake it off. "She might well need one."

"She will never have one."

"What does that mean?," asked Gold.

"She's not your concern anymore," said Blue, turning back amongst the clouds.

"He won't let you near her!," said Gold, calling after her. "Of all of us, he despises you the most."

Gold could only watch as Blue flew away.

Now

"Beatrice!" Belle shouted.

Beatrice stood on the train platform, wishing she couldn't hear her mother or had the heart to ignore her. Before she knew it, Belle had grabbed her and turned her around to face her.
"Beatrice, what are you doing?"

"How did you even find me?"

"Credit card activity."

Beatrice looked incredulous. "You know how to do that?"

"A woman in India talked me through it. Now, what are you doing?"

Beatrice shook her head. "You asked me to tell you the truth. I did and you don't believe me, which is sort of ironic when you think about it!"

"Beatrice, I believe that you believe that's the truth," said Belle.

"No! That's the truth!"

"You need help, sweetheart."

"They want to lock me up!"

Belle shook her head. "No, I am never going to let anyone lock you up. We can figure this out together."

"Then let's go."

"Go where?"

"Storybrooke."

"Beatrice, no, you don't understand, I can't go back there."

"Why not?"

"Beatrice, I was in a mental asylum there. The mayor said I was some kind of prostitute..."

Beatrice shook her head in incredulity. "You were not a prostitute-"

"That's why I don't know who your father is-"

"Mom, I go to a high school full of slutty girls and you are not a slut-"

"Is that any less likely than my being a princess in a fairy tale?"

"Yes, actually! It is!"

"Beatrice..."

"Take me to Storybrooke and prove me wrong! Do that and I will go wherever you want and be locked up."

"That's not what I want-"

"What if I can give you one other person who says the same thing?," asked Beatrice. "If I have one other person that says the same thing, will you at least go to Storybrooke?"

"Beatrice..."
"That's my deal."

Belle nodded. "Alright, it's a deal."

Then

The Gold Fairy resumed her duties with less than her usual enthusiasm. Belle's fate weighed on her, especially since she heard her former charge had disappeared. The Blue Fairy was silent on the subject and rumors of Rumplestiltskin's latest streak of trouble ran rampant throughout the land. Today she was off to a tower to visit a girl who was locked up and would need hope.

"Rapunzel?," called the Gold Fairy. "Rapunzel?"

"She's not here, Goldie," said Rumplestiltskin.

The Gold Fairy froze with fright as the Dark One lit a candle.

"What have you done to her?" asked Gold.

"I've set her free."

"And what price did you exact from her?" asked the Gold Fairy.

Rumplestiltskin edged closer to the fairy. "I just wanted the chance to talk to you. It's not as if you were giving her a lot of help, leaving her locked up in a tower when a mere wave of your wand could set her free."

"These things have a timetable. You wouldn't understand."

Rumplestiltskin smiled. "Oh, I know all about timetables. And what about Belle's timetable?"

"I don't know," said Gold.

"You're lying."

"We don't do that."

"Another lie."

"I don't know," she repeated. "Her fate was taken out of my control because of her association with you. The Blue Fairy took over. She's not exactly a fan of yours."

"The feeling's mutual." Rumplestiltskin edged closer. "That still doesn't tell me where Belle is."

"And neither can I."

Now

Neal opened the door. He saw Beatrice and someone he would have had to guess was Belle. "Uh..."

Beatrice pushed past Neal and entered. Belle followed.

"Hi, Beatrice," Neal said dryly as he shut the door. "Please come in."
"Neal, this is my mom. Tell her."

Belle looked up and down at Neal. "How do you two know each other?"

"Tell her!," Beatrice shouted.

Neal shook his head. "Why am I-"

"Neal, I realize you've got daddy issues and everything, but you telling her the truth is the line between me and an insane asylum, so it would really be helping me out if you could just put that aside and tell her the truth!"

Belle stared at Neal.

"I'm from a place called the Enchanted Forest," said Neal. "It's the same land you're from. Someone cast a curse and brought everyone from that realm here, that's why you don't remember things, why things are hazy-"

Belle shook her head. "What you're talking about is impossible-"

Neal interrupted her. "That guy you went on the date with. Owen. You haven't seen him in a while, right?"

"Yeah," said Belle.

"He was dating you to gain your trust. He was working with someone who was following Beatrice."

Belle looked at Beatrice. "Is that true?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you say anything?," asked Belle. "Were you hurt? Did something happen?"

"No."

"Why would he be following you?"

Luckily, Neal seemed to pick up on the fact that Beatrice wasn't quite ready to reveal the magic thing. "He and perhaps some others are curious about the world we come from. You're the only people to have left Storybrooke."

"No, we aren't," said Belle.

"We so are," said Beatrice. "Have you ever met anyone else from there? Have you ever met anyone who's even heard of it?"

Belle shook her head. "It's a small town."

"It doesn't even have a Wikipedia page," said Beatrice.

"You know I hate Wikipedia," said Belle.

"Then name a book that mentions it," said Beatrice. She looked at Belle. "I did what I said I would. I have given you one other person who has the same crazy story as me."

"You're not crazy," said Belle.
"No, she's not," said Neal. "Believe me, I wish she was. My life would be a lot easier."

"Yes, because this is about you," said Beatrice.

"Oh, yeah, I forgot. This is your thing now," said Neal.

"Yeah, it's my thing since you won't help."

"You don't know my life!"

Belle shook her head. "Would you two stop bickering like children?"

Beatrice turned to Belle. "I believe we had a deal."

---

Then

The Gold Fairy looked on in satisfaction as Princess Aurora danced with Prince Philip at the ball. The royals and the courtiers looked on in admiration at the sight of new love. Aurora was safe. She had True Love now and nothing could hurt her.

She wished the same could be said for all of her other charges.

"Belle's dead."

The Gold Fairy froze. Of all the people to sneak up on someone, the worst had to be Rumplestiltskin.

She floated back to face the Dark One. "And who told you that?"

"I have my sources."

"And did they say anything else?"

Rumplestiltskin looked puzzled. "She's dead. Did you want details?"

"The Blue Fairy no matter what you think of her, she wouldn't kill."

"No, of course not, you fairies never do anything wrong," Rumplestiltskin grumbled.

"And why have you come? To exact your revenge?"

"I think not today, dearie. These things have timetables."


"That will all become apparent soon enough," said Rumplestiltskin. "Too bad you won't be around for it."

"This isn't my fault," said the Gold Fairy.

"And it's mine?!"

"Yes! Because you know what you are and you still persist! Your darkness leaves no one untouched! You should have sent her away!"

"I tried that! Don't you think I tried that?! If you think I could have, then you never understood
her! No one did! No one!"

By this time, the guards of the palace had come out to the garden to see the strange sight of the Dark One and a fairy arguing.

Rumplestiltskin disappeared into a puff of smoke.

The Gold Fairy felt pity for the Dark One.

Yet somehow she had never been more afraid. True Love was the most powerful magic, but when it got taken away from someone who was so desperate for it, that's when True Love soured and that could be just as powerful.

Now

Beatrice could be insistent upon deals and Belle often complied for reasons she didn't understand. Before she knew it, Belle had suspended the newspaper subscription, bought an atlas and rented a car. She didn't like this idea one bit, but she had made a deal with Beatrice and she was the one person in the world she would never let down, even if it meant going back to Storybrooke. Even if it meant facing her father or Regina.

Belle got in the driver's seat and looked at Beatrice. She was set to go with what would be the first Starbucks of the day and looked as if she was on a mission.

"I still can't believe I'm doing this," said Belle.

"We made a deal."

"I know." Belle looked at Beatrice. "There may be things in Storybrooke that you might not like hearing."

"I expect there might be," said Beatrice. She looked at Belle. "Not changing my mind."

"Neither am I," said Belle and she started the car.
Then

In Storybrooke, Regina Mills was a respected if somewhat feared mayor. That came with a certain expectation of behavior, even if they were all cursed imbeciles. She couldn't go around giving out the verbal lashings she wanted to, but that left one person she did still get some joy out of torturing.

She went through the exit door that led to Storybrooke Hospital's mental ward.

The icy nurse was waiting as ever.

"Any visitors?" Regina was confident there would never be any. Gold thought she was dead. Moe thought she was a fallen woman. Just like the Enchanted Forest. Still, one could never be too careful with Rumplestiltskin as her adversary.

"No visitors," said the nurse. "She has been sick, though."

"The poor little dearie," Regina said with an irony only she recognized as she walked towards room twelve.

She opened the hatch and looked inside. Belle did look positively pale. Or that might have been not having left her room in thirteen years.

"He's still not coming," said Regina. "Not now. Not ever. He doesn't even know you exist and even if he did-"

Regina's taunts were interrupted by Belle dropping her head to vomit the hospital slop. Regina stepped back in disgust and shut the hatch.

That had really taken the fun out of that.

Now

Belle took a deep breath as she passed the "Welcome to Storybrooke" sign. Beatrice had dozed off in the front seat and she was grateful that the screams hadn't resumed.

She hadn't been here since the day she left in the ambulance for Boston. The details of how she had ended up in the mental ward were all a haze. Her father's disapproval was the only thing she
was certain of.

Her whole life was a haze. She could only guess at it. What had happened? She wasn't going to have any answers here, all she could do was disappoint Beatrice.

She drove on anyway.

Since August's deception, Gold had found the pleasure was really taken out of his usual routine. It had, of course, been progressively lessening since Emma's arrival awoke him from the Curse. Some things had been more fun, like taking Moe French's van or having Mother Superior pay him the rent. Seeing the rest of them suffer the Curse was just starting to be tiresome. It was a testament to Regina's limited imagination that she could have possibly gotten satisfaction from lording over this cursed town for twenty-eight years.

Of course, now it was rather fun to watch to her work desperately to save it all.

So it was merely out of routine that he went to Granny's for the rent on his rounds.

"Is it rent day?," asked Granny.

Oh, why did this woman insist on being so tiresome even in her cursed state? Would it kill someone to greet him with something other than some excuse about the rent? At least in the Enchanted Forest people would at least amuse him for a moment with how they needed to leave their larcenous parents or how they needed to forget their True Love. Even Regina had become monotonous here with her single-mindedness about getting rid of Miss Swan.

"Yes-" Gold began with disdain.

"Excuse me?"

He froze in mid-sentence.


Impossible.

Gold turned to see the face that accompanied the voice.

Impossible. Older maybe, but not in any way that would ever matter to Gold or that he would even notice. The modern clothes seemed strange, but the colors were all her, but, still.

Impossible.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Belle. "You were doing something."

"No," he said softly, "no, it's quite alright. Be my guest."

Belle smiled and edged up to Granny. "I'd like a room, please."

"Just you, honey?"

"No, actually, my daughter and I will be staying."

Daughter. That word dealt a blow to Gold.

"How many nights?," asked Granny.
"I'm not sure actually," said Belle. "We're on a bit of a quest."

"A quest?," asked Gold.

Belle turned to face him and shrugged. "It's hard to explain."

"That's quite alright."

"Here you go, hon," said Granny, giving her a key.

"Thank you."

Beatrice awoke in the car. It was parked outside some inn. This had to be it. She grabbed her bag and got out of the car.

Being from New York as she was, Beatrice wasn't much for small towns. This one, though, it was all wrong. Everything seemed slightly out of date. For one thing, the cars. Nobody had a new car, like the positively ancient Cadillac on the corner. She walked around. The shop windows seemed just a little bit out of date. She supposed that was the whole frozen in time thing.

It wasn't long before she found a diner. An actual diner and looked inside to see August.

August looked up at her in shock. "Beatrice, what are you doing here?"

"What am I doing here?" She sat down in the booth next to the kid. "Well, let's see, at night I've been visiting a Netherworld in my sleep-"

"Beatrice."

"And I got this!" She pulled down her sleeve, revealing the bandaged arm. "Oh, yeah, then this!" She pulled the other sleeve.

"I'm sorry, Beatrice. I thought that world was closed off-"

"Apparently, it's not! It's wide open! And I am trying to explain to my mother that I'm not some emo girl who burns herself, but it's kind of hard considering she doesn't know who she really is, but I've managed to get her here and now I need this stupid curse broken!"

"Is Neal with you?"

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah, he's got serious Daddy issues."

"Has anyone seen you? Like Regina or Mr. Gold?"

Beatrice looked at the kid. "Who is he?"

"I'm Henry."

"He's got the same book as me," said Beatrice.

"Has Mr. Gold seen you?"

"I have literally no idea who that is," said Beatrice.

"Wait, so she knows about the curse, too?," asked Henry.
"Um, hello," Beatrice said holding up her wrists, "I've been in a Netherworld talking to Princess Aurora every night."

"You what?," asked August.

"Yeah, I tried explaining Doctor Who. She didn't get it."

Then

A week after her last visit to Belle, Regina walked down the street doing the usual morning rounds.

That's when she noticed Mary Margaret, Doctor Hopper and Marco standing around the clock tower. Other groups had gathered as well.

"What's going on here? What's all this?," asked Regina.

"Oh, good morning, Madame Mayor," said Doctor Hopper.

"We just couldn't help but notice the clock moved," Mary Margaret offered weakly.

Regina looked up. For thirteen years, the clock had sat at 8:14. It now said 8:15.

Which could only mean the Curse was weakening.

She stalked immediately into Mr. Gold's shop.

"Good morning, Madame Mayor," he said as he wiped down the glass case.

"What did you do? To the clock?"

He looked at her as if she were crazy. "To the clock?"

"It moved!"

"Oh, you mean above the library? Such a strange occurrence."

"And you had nothing to do with it?"

Gold looked at her curiously. "Do I seem like the sort of man to go around fixing clock towers?"

"You are the sort of man who does anything he sees fit to his purpose."

"And to what possible purpose would repairing the clock be?," he asked incredulously.

She eyed him again. He really had no idea what she meant. She turned on her heels and left.

Because there was only one other possible explanation.

Now

Gold tried to be subtle in following Belle out of the inn. Subtlety was in short supply as the town pariah walking with a cane.

"Oh, my God!," Belle exclaimed.
He turned, grateful for an excuse to talk to her. "Is something the matter?"

"My daughter, she was asleep and I didn't want to wake her and now she's..."

Belle put her face in her hands.

"Perhaps she just went in search of you. How old is your girl?," asked Gold.

"Sorry?," asked Belle, casting him a suspicious glance.

Gold smiled. "It might help if I knew who I was looking for."

"Right, of course, she's fifteen."

"Fifteen? That's an interesting age." Indeed it was, as it explained nothing.

Belle shrugged. "I think it might be the one that does me in."

"Is she trouble generally?"

"Beatrice? No, it's always been just us and she's never given me any problems until recently and she's not trying to be trouble. I don't know, I-" Belle stopped herself. "I'm sorry. I sound like a crazy woman. I shouldn't lay all of this on you."

"No, not at all. He paused. "Beatrice?"

"I know, everyone always has that reaction, but it's from a play-"

"I know. Much Ado About Nothing."

Belle smiled. "I read it when I was pregnant with her. No one gets it."

"Her father didn't care for it?"

"It wasn't really an issue." She paused. "There's not a coffee shop, is there? She sort of has a caffeine addiction."

Gold motioned. "Granny's is just there. Perhaps that's where your girl went."

Then

Regina went back to the hospital expecting to see the nurse. She was there, joined by Graham and Whale.

"Sheriff, what are you doing here?"

"Investigating a crime."

"A crime?"

Whale spoke. "The patient in room twelve is pregnant."

Regina now thought she would be the one to throw up.

Whale continued unaware of the mayor's distress. "She's three months and since she's been in here as long as anyone can remember, that means someone got in. She's so non-responsive that it had
to have been by force."

"You can't know that," Regina said futilely.

"I just spoke to her myself," said Graham. "That poor girl doesn't have the presence of mind to consent to anything. She barely knows who she is."

Belle was non-responsive because she had no memories. Regina hadn't given her any. It was more fun that way when she came to see her. She gave Gold the sad memory of a brief lost love. She gave Moe the memory of a daughter who sold herself. She gave Belle nothing because she needed nothing.

They also couldn't know that Belle was three months pregnant because she must have been close to that when Regina cast the Curse. New life couldn't grow in Storybrooke, time was frozen. Hell, Cinderella had been walking around whining about being pregnant for thirteen years. That had already gotten old.

Yet somehow Rumplestiltskin's spawn was growing if the morning sickness was anything to judge by.

Regina walked back down the hall and looked through the hatch.

Belle still didn't know who she was, but somehow her eyes weren't quite as blank and lifeless. There was a spark in them as she sat on the bed, hand over her belly.

If this were the Enchanted Forest, Regina would have had any number of ideas. The child could have always been used as a bargaining chip with Rumplestiltskin, she always needed those. Or she could have adopted the child, trained him or her and enjoyed a delicious bit of poetic justice in the final destruction of the Dark One. Perhaps child could have stabbed father with his own dagger. Regina had a bit of fun fantasizing about that particular scenario.

This wasn't the Enchanted Forest, though. If the child was possessed of any magic as the seed of the Dark One's true love was bound to be, then he could only be a problem. The only magic in this world was that which was brought here. What if the spawn weakened the Curse any further? What if it somehow awakened Rumplestiltskin?

Regina had nightmares about what he would do to her if he found out.

Well, there was just one thing to do.

Now

Inside Granny's, Beatrice could not believe what had happened.

Beatrice looked at Ruby. "No mocha?"

"No."

"Latte."

"No."

"Americano."

"Sorry, just coffee..." Ruby said warily.
"Oh, God, what have I done?," asked Beatrice.

August looked at Ruby. "Just keep the coffee coming."

Ruby nodded and walked back to the counter.

"If you grew up in New York, that means you can leave!," exclaimed Henry. "Why can you leave?"

"I don't know," said Beatrice. She looked back at August. "Why can I leave?"

"Guys, this is all fascinating, but-" August's face dropped.

"What?," Beatrice asked, turning back. Belle had just come in with an older man with a cane. There was something about him. Everyone in the diner looked away.

"Your mom's here," said August.

"Who's she with?"

"That's Mr. Gold," Henry supplied.

Beatrice looked back at August. "And who is Mr. Gold? Why wasn't I supposed to see him? Is he going to do something to her?"

"No," said August.

"Beatrice..." said Belle. "August, what are you doing here?"

"I write here."

"You know Mr. Booth?," asked Gold.

"Oh, yes, we're old friends," said Belle.

"How nice," Gold remarked. He looked to Beatrice. "And this must be your girl."

"Yeah, here she is. The elusive Beatrice," said Belle.

Beatrice watched Gold. He was looking her over, for what purpose she couldn't figure out. He stopped at her glasses and then again at the bandages on her arms. Beatrice tugged her sleeves down self-consciously.

"Well, Miss French," said Gold, "now that you're reunited with your daughter, I suppose I should be leaving you."

"Thank you for your help," said Belle.

"Not at all. If you need anything while you're here, you can find me at my shop." He turned to August. "Mr. Booth knows where it is. I believe I'll be seeing him there later."

"Right," said August, looking not so thrilled about that prospect.

Gold nodded giving Beatrice one last examining look and walked off.

"He seems nice," said Belle.
Henry looked at Belle in shock.

"Seriously, what is happening here?," asked Beatrice.

"You ran off again," said Belle, sitting down next to August. She looked at Henry. "Who's your friend, August?"

"This is Henry," said August.

"Hi, Henry. I'm Belle."

"Belle?," Henry asked in disbelief.

Beatrice shook her head. "I know, right?"

"I should go," said Henry. "My mom will be looking for me."

Beatrice got up to let Henry out.

"So, Belle," said August, "what are you doing here?"

"Neal told her."

"Neal told her what?," asked August.

"Seriously," said Beatrice, "let's just stop the crap, okay?"

"Beatrice..." Belle warned.

"No, really. I'm sick of playing this game where I come off crazy," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice," said Belle, "what is it you're hoping to prove?"

She motioned around. "None of this is right. The fact that you can't get Savior Girl to see it is just a little puzzling."

"Who is Savior Girl?," asked Belle.

"She means Emma Swan," said August with a shrug.

Beatrice remembered the prediction of the voodoo woman. "I'm sorry did you say Swan?"

"Yes," said August.

Swan.

Dragon.

Oh great.

---

Then

It wasn't hard to convince Graham and Whale that the most humane thing to do was to send Belle French away. The Storybrooke mental ward was no place for her. Surely, in a city like Boston they would have the facilities to help her. Perhaps if she did ever regain mental competency, Graham would be able to resume his investigation into who took advantage of the poor girl. The
worst possible thing would be to leave her in the place where she had been so misused.

This course of action also had the added benefit of sending her beyond the town line.

It was almost a shame Rumplestiltskin would never know that his lost love was so close and she carried their child. Regina had no intention of waking him up to tell him.

Regina sat in her Mercedes at the side of the road out of town watching as the ambulance carrying Belle went past the town line.

Nothing happened. The ambulance drove safely on its way.

She really hated that imp.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

I still do not own Once Upon A Time. So, here's the thing. I started this story almost two years ago and you may remember that canon did not give Belle a mother until 4.06, but as you may have noticed, I deal with Belle a lot and had to fill in the blanks myself. So, Belle has a mother, Reinette- I know, Reinette, Colette, I was so close- and this is the chapter where you meet her for the first time. Again, thanks so much for your reviews and comments. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Then

"Belle!," called Lady Reinette. "Belle!"

"Can I help, your ladyship?," asked Johanna.

Reinette smiled at the servant. "Have you seen Belle? She needs to get ready for the evening's events."

"I think I saw her go into the library, milady," said Johanna.

"Of course," said Reinette. "I should have thought of it myself. Thank you, Johanna."

Lady Reinette made her way to the library of the Summer Palace. King Leopold had built this place for Queen Eva and left nothing to chance. Though Queen Eva was not a prolific reader, she did read and the King had seen to that. It was a grand room with walls and walls of bookshelves and beautiful window seats to look out over the kingdom with. The library at Sir Maurice's was decidedly more modest, like a lot of things at Sir Maurice's so when she and Belle visited the Queen and Princess Snow every summer Belle made thorough use of the library.

"Belle."

Belle looked down from the window seat. She was a beautiful girl now and Reinette had no doubt this would carry into her womanhood.

"Yes, Mama?"

"You need to change before this evening's amusements."

"But, Mama..."

"Come now, Belle," said Reinette. Her daughter obliged and got down from the window seat. Reinette took her by the hand. "You are becoming a young lady. You must be careful how you present yourself, especially here."

"Why?"
"Because this is the court of King Leopold and Queen Eva, one of the most prominent in all the lands. Your best chance of making a good marriage is here." She caught Belle's scowl. "Not this year and not for a few yet, but surely someday."

"I would wish to marry for love."

Reinette smiled wistfully. "I wish it for you as well and I think you with your many virtues shall have your wish."

---

Now

"I don't suppose there's anyone around here whose last name is dragon," said Beatrice as they walked inside the city building that housed Sheriff Swan's office.

"No," said August.

"Great," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice, I don't understand what you're hoping to find at the sheriff's station," said Belle. "I've already told you what I was."

"And I've already told you that's a bunch of crap. So we are going to find or rather not find your arrest records and meet the sheriff. It's a win-win."

"I don't know," said Belle.

"Well, I do and I'm the crazy one, remember?"

Beatrice walked into the sheriff's station where she found Savior Girl finishing up a doughnut.

Beatrice looked at August and motioned at Emma. "Really? Her?"

Emma looked at her skeptically. "Can I help you?"

"Yes, I'm Beatrice French," she said. She motioned at her mother as she came in. "This is my mother, Belle French."

"Belle French?" Emma looked at her. "Is your dad Moe? From the flower shop?"

"Yes."

Beatrice spoke again. "Anyway, you have arrest records, don't you?"

"Yeah," said Emma.

"Then we need hers," said Beatrice.

"If you don't mind, Emma," August added.

Emma led them to a room full of file cabinets.

"Not very often people come in asking to see their arrest reports," said Emma.

"Well, I have reasons," said Beatrice.
"Are you guys just visiting?," asked Emma. "I didn't even know Moe had a daughter."

"He's not likely to mention it," said Belle.

Emma looked at Belle for a minute, like she was trying to figure something out in her mind. She went back to her work at the cabinet.

"Huh," said Emma, stopping the flipping through folders.

"Something amiss?," asked Beatrice.

"There's nothing here," said Emma. She looked at Belle. "You're sure you got arrested?"

Belle shrugged.

"There's nothing here." Emma walked to another cabinet.

"Nothing there," said Beatrice looking pointedly at her mother.

Emma searched through another cabinet. "Okay, Belle French."

"An arrest record?," asked Belle. "Misplaced?"

She cast Beatrice a sideways glance and the girl rolled her eyes.

Emma shook her head. "No, Graham was meticulous with his filing. Wait..."

"Something wrong, Sheriff?," asked Beatrice.

"I found you on an incident report, Belle," said Emma. "The late sheriff, Graham. He wrote it up. This was over fifteen years ago. I didn't think he was that old."

Beatrice shot August a look. "Really? How odd."

Emma frowned and handed the folder to Belle. "I think you should look at it."

Belle leafed through the pages. "I... I don't know what this is. I never..."

Emma looked at August. "August, why don't you take Beatrice out for a minute?"

"What does it say?," asked Beatrice.

"Come on," said August.

---

Then

The party was made up of royal ladies and their daughters at the Summer Palace to celebrate the Festival of the Equinox Lady. It was one of Queen Éva's favorite events and invitations were hard to get, but Reinette had known her since they were children.

Reinette had been the daughter of a Duke, but was now married to a lowly knight from a small kingdom. Their marriage was out of necessity and Reinette regretted that necessity save for Belle. Love for her was the only thing she and her husband agreed on. They disagreed on everything else, including Belle's upbringing, like these trips in the summer. Reinette wanted to expose her daughter to the best society, Maurice would have been happy for her to marry any errant knight. Reinette knew that Belle was very smart and would need a suitable match. Being mistress of their
land wouldn't be enough for her, though she would soldier on cheerfully through a life of duty. The only way to make Belle’s life more interesting in Reinette’s eyes was through a husband’s station who was above their own.

"Now, Snow, girls," said Eva, "we have a special treat for the festival of the Equinox Lady. The good seer, Octavia, she's going to tell you something about your future husbands."

"Oh, a trifle, really," said Octavia. "Who will go first?"

None of the girls stepped forward.

Eva smiled in amusement. "No one? Snow?"

Snow White looked to Belle. "You go first, Belle. You're the bravest."

Belle looked to Reinette and she nodded her approval. Belle stepped forward to the woman.

"Your hand, child."

Belle held out her hand.

"You, child. You will find True Love..."

The girls giggled.

"With the most powerful man in all the realms."

The giggling stopped at the seriousness of Octavia's tone. Reinette's interest was piqued and she was quite pleased with the prophecy. One of the other girls took her turn as Belle came to Reinette.

"Mama, I don't want to marry for power," said Belle.

"And you won't," said Reinette, smiling. "Didn't you hear? You're going to find True Love."

"I want adventure."

"Adventure you will have," said Reinette. "Belle, with True Love anything is possible. Love is hope. You are going to have everything you could ever want."

"I'd want a library," said Belle.

"Well, I'm certain you'll get it," said Reinette.

Now

August took Beatrice out onto the street. He leaned up against a ramp, looking as if he were in pain.

"Is something wrong?" asked Beatrice.

"Emma needs to believe," said August.

"Oddly enough, I've found a shortcut," said Beatrice. "It's called proof."

"This is her destiny."
"Good. I'm thrilled for her," said Beatrice. "I still need help with my thing. Now, who's Mr. Gold?"

"What?"

"Why wasn't I supposed to let him see me? And why is he so interested in my mom?"

"He's just-

Beatrice shook her head. "Nobody's just anybody here. Who is he?"

August relented. "Rumplestiltskin."

"I haven't been sold to him, have I?", asked Beatrice. "You know, that whole firstborn thing? No, wait, my mom's too smart to not actually read the contract."

"No, you're fine. He's just... powerful."

"Well, there's no magic here so he's not all that powerful, is he? What are you not telling me?"

Beatrice stopped and turned. A woman with dark hair in a black pantsuit was staring at her from down the street.

"That's her, isn't it?," asked Beatrice. "The Evil Queen."

Belle came outside. "Beatrice, I-"

"What did she say?"

Belle was staring at Regina and Regina was staring back. Volumes were happening in looks between the two women.

"Mom?," asked Beatrice.

"It's okay, Belle," said August.

"No, I'm fine," said Belle, taking her daughter by the arm as she looked at Regina. "Sorry, Beatrice, you said this town was frozen in time, didn't you?"

"Yeah."

It was Belle dragging Beatrice back in the sheriff's office. Emma looked up in surprise.

"You said Graham died?," asked Belle.

"Yeah," said Emma.

She walked over to a plaque on the wall with the late sheriff's picture.

"He looks the same," said Belle.

"Okay..." said Emma.

"No, he looks exactly the same. He didn't age at all."

Emma shrugged. "Alright."
"Regina looks exactly the same," said Belle.

"Thank you for joining me at my point," said Beatrice.

"Maybe they just age well?," asked Emma.

Belle shrugged.

"Really? That's what you're going with?," asked Beatrice.

"I need to see my dad," said Belle.

"Is that a good idea?," asked August.

"No, but I can handle him," said Belle. "Thank you for your help, Sheriff."

Belle left, Beatrice followed.

"August," said Emma. "A minute?"

August stopped. "I should go with them."

"August, who are they? Really?"

August smiled. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

---

**Then**

"Sir Gaston!," Reinette exclaimed.

It was her first morning back in her land after the summer escape. This was often a difficult time, leaving the life at the palace and coming back to her own duchy, not because she had disdain for the duties of a noblewoman, it was her husband. They usually had a cursory meeting in the morning as she took breakfast in her room. They went over the day's events and at the end of this meeting, he had decided to drop in that he had made preliminary arrangements to marry off their only child.

"Not right away, of course," said Sir Maurice. "I know she is not of age, but when she is..."

"Why don't you just marry her off to a watering can?," asked Reinette. "They would have as much to talk about."

"What is the matter with Gaston?," asked Sir Maurice.

"He's a dolt and a braggart and he doesn't interest Belle in the least."

"You forget, milady," said Sir Maurice. "You've borne me no sons. I need someone to rule over my lands and no woman can do it on her own."

Reinette scoffed. "You underestimate your own daughter."

"Belle may have a sharp mind for a woman, but it's still a woman's."

"Whereas Gaston has no mind."

"Hold your tongue, woman."
"I have held my tongue for many years over many things, sir, but I am afraid my daughter's husband will not be one of them."

"I have her best interests at heart," said Sir Maurice.

"I have never doubted your love for Belle," said Reinette. "Merely your appraisal of her worth and your judgment."

"She is my daughter and I will do with her as I please," said Sir Maurice. "Now, if you'll excuse me, milady."

Reinette fumed. This would not stand.

Now

Gold didn't look up as he heard the bell ring on the door of the pawn shop. He didn't need to.

"There you are, Mr. Booth," said Mr. Gold. "I was expecting to see you some time ago."

"I was busy."

Gold approached closer, his cane emphasizing every step. "And what might you have been busy with?"

August froze.

"Does it have anything to do with our new visitors?," asked Gold. "You've been holding out on me, Mr. Booth."

"I can explain-"

"Explain how when you were impersonating my son, you were holding back on Belle? Who does the girl belong to?"

August waited too long. "Who do you think?"

"Do you know what happened?"

"Regina sent her away. That's all I've ever known. I swear."

"Well, we all know what an oath from you means," said Gold. He went back behind the case. "Here's what you're going to do. You're going to keep working on Miss Swan. In the meantime, you're going to send Belle my way."

"What?"

"She trusts you and let's face it, she shouldn't, so whatever she's here for, whatever she needs help with, you'll suggest that I can help."

"Why should she trust you?"

"Because she used to and she can again."

"If the Curse was broken, she would."

"Yes, and I will wait with bated breath for you to deliver on that promise. In the meantime, this is
Belle and Beatrice stood outside Game of Thorns.

"This is a bad idea," said Belle.

"Um, you suggested it?," asked Beatrice.

Belle nodded. Yes, it had been her idea this humiliation was the best way to prove the truth to her daughter.

"Mom," said Beatrice, "there's nothing some jerk I haven't met yet can say to change my mind about you. I know who you are."

"That jerk is my father."

"We'll see," said Beatrice.

Belle took a deep breath and walked in. Beatrice followed.

Moe French turned around. Beatrice watched his face as he looked at her mother: it was like he was looking at a phantasm.

"Hi, Dad," said Belle.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded harshly.

"I'm visiting Storybrooke," said Belle. She took Beatrice's hand. "This is Beatrice. Your granddaughter."

Moe looked at Beatrice. There was something repelling him.

"What have you brought your bastard around for?"

"Excuse me?," said Beatrice.

"You made your choice, Belle."

"Dad, see, I don't quite remember-"

"Remember? Your disgrace? Your whoring yourself out?!"

"You can't talk to her like that!," shouted Beatrice.

"Beatrice, you should wait outside," said Belle.

"Yes, get that out of my shop."

Beatrice scowled. What had this man done to her mother? What was it he thought of her? She had no idea because this definitely was not in her story book. Whatever it was, he was wrong.

She was angry. So she knocked over the nearest flower arrangement to the ground and its vase
smashed into pieces.

"Beatrice!," Belle exclaimed.

"You'll pay for that."

"It was an accident," Beatrice said flatly. She kicked over a stand of flowers. "Like that."

"Get out!," Moe bellowed.

Moe was walking closer. Belle stood between he and Beatrice, then pushed her out of the storefront.

"How long has your dad been an asshole?," asked Beatrice.

"Miss French."

Beatrice and Belle turned to see Regina smiling icily.

"I was surprised to see you here," said Regina. "Given the terms of our agreement."

"I have something to do in town," said Belle.

"Well, having seen that reunion with your father, it's safe to say you're done," said Regina. "I'll tell Granny you're leaving."

"No, I'm not done," said Belle. "And if you want to drive me out of town, you're going to have to work a lot harder at it."

Regina looked startled by what Belle had said.

"We'll see," said Regina.

---

Then

Reinette waited in the forest in the meeting place that had been arranged. There was someone who was far more powerful than Sir Maurice, who would make any deal. She heard a rustling in the trees and the imp appeared.

"Are you him?," asked Reinette.

"Rumplestiltskin," he said with a bow. "And you are?"

She frowned. "I thought you knew everyone."

"Yes, you see, that is curious," said Rumplestiltskin, approaching her closer. "I don't know anything about you."

"Lady Reinette."

"And what ails you, Lady Reinette?"

"My daughter."

"Let me guess, you don't approve of her lover?"
"She's fourteen."

Rumplestiltskin's face immediately showed distaste at his own faux pas which Reinette thought curious. "Oh, sorry." He paused. "Then what?"

"My husband wishes to marry her off to the most obnoxious man in the village. She should choose her own fate."

Rumplestiltskin eyed her. "And that's what you want?"

"A seer has foretold that she'll find True Love. I want her to be free to do so. What would you ask in return?"

"So strange..."

"What?," asked Reinette.

"I can't see anything about your daughter."

"It's been foretold."

"No, see, I have the power to see the future and I don't see anything..."

"I've made my request. What's your price?"

"Don't hear that often..." He paused. "No price."

"That's not-"

"I'm not interested in the deal."

"What?"

"Because I don't know what you are. I don't make deals without knowing what it's going to cost me. You're dangerous."

Reinette was in disbelief. She had never heard of the Dark One refusing a deal. "What danger?"

"I don't know, but don't worry, dearie, if it's True Love, these things have a way of figuring themselves out."

He vanished as quickly as he had appeared and Reinette was left alone.

This would not stand. She would find someone to help her.

---

Now

Gold polished a wooden chest. It had belonged to Belle's mother, a keepsake he had obtained for her though he had never met the owner herself. It had been years since he had paid any attention to it, noting in his cursed that it was a curious box with excellent craftsmanship and leaving it on the shelf, never trying to sell it. Now he thought it might suddenly prove useful.

"Mr. Gold?"

He recognized Belle's voice immediately and took off his apron.
"It's me. Belle French? We met at the inn?"

Gold pushed past the curtain of the backroom and smiled.

"I don't know if you remember," Belle said nervously.

"Of course I remember. Miss French. How goes your quest?"

Belle shrugged. "Mixed results. August said I should talk to you and Sheriff Swan says you're the only one she's seen win against Regina."

"Then you're acquainted with our illustrious mayor?"

"Yes, um, Sheriff Swan said you were a lawyer?"

"I have many interests."

Belle nodded. "Yeah, I can see that. Landlord, pawnbroker..."

"Do you need legal advice?"

"I can pay," Belle said quickly.

He shook his head. "There's no need. Consider this consultation pro bono. What seems to be the matter?"

Belle took a breath and began. "Over fifteen years ago, I was taken from the Storybrooke Hospital's mental ward to Boston."

"Ah," said Gold, trying to act blasé.

"See, my life before that's a bit hazy, which I know sounds awful..."

"Not at all. Please continue."

"When I got to Boston, the psychiatrists there said there was nothing wrong with me. One of them had a friend who was a law student and she investigated my case a bit and it turned out Regina had ordered me locked away."

"Had she?," Gold asked, gripping his cane. In the asylum. Where the people from her dungeon had gone. She had been there, but for how long? And what did the Blue Fairy have to do with it? He had never doubted her involvement. The Gold Fairy had never denied it.

Belle continued with her story. "Yes. She had a professor who was a prominent attorney in Boston and he represented me in a lawsuit against the mayor and the city. I settled out of court on the condition that I didn't return here."

"Is that so?," Gold asked, trying to hold back his anger.

"It was quite a bit of money," said Belle. "I've used it to further my education and look after my daughter, but Beatrice has been having problems lately."

Gold looked at her inquisitively.

"Mental problems. She may be having delusions and she's been hurting herself."

"Delusions?" Belle looked anxious and he added, "Anything you say is between us, Miss
French.

"She thinks this town is under a curse where it's been frozen in time. Everyone's from some place called the Enchanted Forest and I'm Belle from Beauty and the Beast. Snow White, Prince Charming, they're all here."

Gold was stunned. "Is that so?"

"I know, it's... well, I don't want to say what it is because I don't want to think of her like that. She does seem to have a point. Regina hasn't aged a day, neither has my father."

"You saw your father?,” he asked with surprise.

"Yeah, it didn't go well." Belle paused. "Anyway, I had to bring Beatrice here to prove the truth to her so she can get the help she needs, but Regina doesn't seem to like my presence and I'm afraid she'll want everything back. If that's what has to happen, I can live with it. My daughter's more important, but I have been saving a lot of it for Beatrice's college fund."

"And when you left Storybrooke, you were already pregnant?"

"Yes, that's most of why I settled. I would have preferred the truth, but I had a baby coming and no income, no family..."

"You don't have to explain yourself to me, Miss French. I think I understand what it means to do anything for your child."

"You have a child, then?"

"I had a son. Not anymore."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," said Belle.

"Never mind," said Gold. "If you could get me a copy of your settlement, I'll take a look at it. In the meantime, I think you'll find Mayor Mills won't be a problem."

"She won't?," Belle asked skeptically. "She certainly seemed like one earlier."

"If she approaches you again, you can tell her that I am handling your case and she can come talk to me."

"Really? That does it?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, thank you, Mr. Gold," said Belle.

"It's my pleasure, Miss French. You should be able to stay in Storybrooke as long as you need to."
Chapter 10

Then

Belle's mother had been gone for six years. She felt it acutely over the day and had shocked Rumple by being terse and perhaps even unpleasant. She had finally been forced to relent and admit the significance of the day.

"I think I have something that may help," said Rumplestiltskin.

Belle looked up from her book and saw an ornate carved chest at Rumplestiltskin's feet. "My mother's..." She looked up. "How did you...?"

He waved his hand. "Magic?"

"What if my father looks for it?"

"Do you suppose he would?"

Belle didn't answer. "Thank you," she said as she knelt at the chest and opened the latch. She went through the contents as Rumplestiltskin sat next to her. There were various examples of fine embroidery and a leather bound book.

"Did your mother do these?," Rumplestiltskin asked, fingerling the woven silks.

"Yes."

"She was good."

"High praise knowing the critic," Belle said with a smile.

"Spinning and weaving are dangerous hobbies for noble ladies."

"Don't worry," said Belle. "She had all the skill. I didn't get any."

"Fret not, dear Belle. I can provide any spinning you might need."

Belle smiled at him and found another smaller box with the same shape and carving as the one it was in. Belle opened it and revealed a sizable amount of jewels.

"Are these all your mother's?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"You didn't look?," asked Belle.

"Why would I? They're yours."

Belle looked back down. "Yes, all hers."

"I didn't think Sir Maurice could afford such things."

"No and he would never buy her jewels anyway." She looked up. "My mother had to marry my father. There was never any love between them. There was a scandal when she was young. Her
"Virtue was called into question and she had to marry quickly to anyone with a good name and a title."

"She told you all this?"

"When she thought I was old enough she let me know they both loved me, but there was no love between them." Belle shrugged. "She didn't want me to make the same mistake."

"Oh, this one is interesting," said Rumplestiltskin, lifting a pendant from the box. The gem inside had constantly moving swirls of color.

"What is it?," asked Belle.

"Magic."

"Magic? How does it work?"

"No idea."

Belle looked at him in disbelief. "You don't know?"

"It's the magic of women."

Belle was amused now. "So that's all it takes for you to not know something about magic?"

"I'm not a woman."

"I had noticed."

"Very observant."

There was a banging on the main door.

"Wait here," Rumplestiltskin instructed.

He got up and left the Great Hall. Belle looked down at the pendant. She grazed her finger across the stone and it became solid, blinding white for a moment. She looked on in shock.

---

**Now**

Beatrice needed to think.

She needed espresso.

Unfortunately, in this cursed town, the closest thing would be sitting at Granny's and having cup after cup of coffee.

The diner was busy with the townsfolk coming in for their morning meal. Apparently, nothing ever happened here because more than one had inquired to Granny or Ruby about who the girl with the glasses was.

A hush came over the diner and Beatrice glanced up to see Mr. Gold coming in. She went back to looking at her iPad and then heard a cane stop accompanied by a chair scraping against the floor.

Mr. Gold was sitting in the table next to her booth.
"Good morning, Miss French."

"Uh, good morning..."

He picked up a laminated menu. "Just coffee?"

"I can't think about food until I'm awake which looks unlikely on this stuff," she said staring at the dreaded mug.

"Have you tried tea?"

"Yes, that would be great if I wanted to fall asleep."

She looked up. He seemed amused. That's when she saw Regina coming in to the diner and walking up to Gold.

"We need to talk."

"Do we, dearie?," asked Gold. He turned to Beatrice. "Miss French, have you met Mayor Mills?"

Regina looked at her in surprise, she hadn't noticed Beatrice sitting there.

"We were never formally introduced," said Beatrice. "I'm good, though."

"Mr. Gold," said Regina, looking slightly annoyed at Beatrice.

"Excuse me," said Gold getting up and following Regina out front.

"You aren't really going to fall for that, are you?," asked Regina.

"Fall for what, dearie?"

"That girl, do you really think she's yours? She could belong to anyone."

"And what makes you so concerned, dearie?"

"The Curse. We can't have outsiders poking around."

"Is that why you had your little chat with her?," asked Gold. He snapped his fingers. "Which reminds me, you're going to leave Belle and her daughter alone. Please."

Regina scowled. "Do you think that will hold?"

"I think it will hold until the Curse breaks at which point you're going to have more problems than them and if you try anything, I'll be one of them."

"Do you want the Curse broken?," Regina asked in disbelief. "Just so she can remember you? We've been in on this together since the beginning, Gold."

"Have we. dearie?" He looked at her. "We're done now. Please."

Regina scowled again as Gold went back inside.

---

Then

Belle knew the signs as well as anyone.
It was as if Belle's mind had wandered away from her. She had a book open, she had started reading it and now she didn't know what had happened for the past ten pages. She flipped back to try and regroup, but she kept getting distracted.

The tenderness in her breasts. The sudden tightness in her gowns. The absence of her monthly cycle and this morning, she had been ill. That was the most damning of all. Rumplestiltskin had been off at some deal or other, so she hadn't had to face his inquiries, but she knew she couldn't avoid the topic very much longer. She wasn't sure how to broach it, if only she had been able to talk with some friends or even just other women. She wouldn't trade her life in the Dark Castle, but in the area of socialization it did leave something to be desired.

She wished for her own mother. She wished for someone to explain to her the ways in which her life was going to change. That was what she worried about: being a good enough mother.

A bird flew in the open window of the library. That caught Belle's attention. It sat on the table next to her and she realized there was a note. As she took it, the bird flew away.

Her father was dying.

---

**Now**

Gold forced his way into Belle's room at the inn. Sliding in, he quickly spotted one bed with her neat fingerprints all over it, a book on the night stand. He noted the title and made a mental note to obtain his own copy and have it at the shop.

Though he was certainly interested in Belle, she was not the reason for this little search. It was the girl, Beatrice. He knew very little about her, just that she knew the truth of the Curse and liked caffeine. Her things were strewn all over her bed. Among them, a stuffed lamb, surely some sort of childhood keepsake. More interesting was the promising red leather messenger bag at the foot of the bed.

He didn't have a lot of experience with teenage girls and Beatrice's things were a mystery to him. There were some random school papers, including a physics essay he couldn't follow, but she appeared to have done well on it. She had a computer that he quickly discovered was protected by a password. That left him to rifle through the rest of the bag. He found five lip glosses and two nail polishes, a Starbucks gift card and a blue box that made noises.

He was about to give up hope of finding anything he understood until he found a book about voodoo. He knew in this land it was seen as a strange religion of some sort, but had seen its corollary back in the Enchanted Forest. He also found a purple sack. He opened it and recognized the contents. There was an empty container and he thought he saw the remnants of a magical powder on it. He also recognized some magical trinkets: some stones and some candles.

"Oh, Beatrice," he said with a smile, "what are you playing with?"

He was about to replace the contents of the bag when something fell out of the book. He reached down to pick it up off the floor and realized it was a tarot card. He had seen them all over the Half Sunk Kingdom though they were trifles to the people of this world. The card had an address written on the back and he turned it over to see which one it was.

The Magician. Oh, he had seen that card before.

---

**Then**
"Belle!"

"In here, Rumple!," she called back from her room.

Rumplestiltskin entered. He pointed at her case open on the bed. "What is that?"

Belle turned to him with a red, tear-stained face.

"My darling Belle, what's the matter?"

"My father..." She burst into tears again and Rumplestiltskin moved to hold her.

"What's happened?"

"A bird delivered a letter. His physician says he's had sort of stroke, he's unable to even write..." Belle handed him the letter. "He's asked for me."

"I'm sorry, Belle."

"So you understand."

"Of course I understand."

"I must go to him."

Rumplestiltskin held up one finger. "I don't understand that."

Belle's jaw dropped. "What are you saying?"

Rumple opened his mouth and before he could get a word out, Belle beat him to it.

"Am I supposed to not go to my dying father?"

"Well, you said it-"

"How could you possibly think that? That I could just abandon him? Are you forbidding it? I am not your captive-"

"I wouldn't say I'm forbidding it-"

"What is wrong with you?! How could you be such a-"

"Let's not toss out the 'b' word again."

"Rumple, surely you can see that I have to go to him! I know you, I know your heart. I know you understand."

He looked at her. She was staring at him with those eyes. Damn those eyes sometimes.

"And what will you tell them of me?," he asked.

"The truth."

"Let's not be rash..." he sneered.
She frowned at him. "My father deserves to know the truth. It's my father and my people, Rumple. They won't hurt me."

"And what if they won't let you return?"

She put her arms around him. "Then I'll call for you and you'll come get me."

"They very moment I'm needed. And let's use the truth sparingly. I can't have it going around that I've gone soft."

"I swear I won't let anyone know you're kind," said Belle.

He stared at her. "Was there anything else?"

She shook her head. "No."

Now

Beatrice had followed her mom around all day. Apparently, she wasn't allowed to be on her own now. The diner was as far as she could go. That led to the adventure of looking for a fax machine in Storybrooke.

"Have you noticed everyone here has flip phones?," asked Beatrice.

"So?," asked Belle as they walked down the street.

"So, who has a flip phone? Nobody has a flip phone anymore." She realized they were almost at Mr. Gold's shop. "What are we doing?"

"I have to show some papers to Mr. Gold," said Belle.

"Really?"

"Yeah, he's working for me. For us, really."

Beatrice was skeptical to say the least. Rumplestiltskin was working for them. "As what?"

"As a lawyer," said Belle. "He's being really nice about it so try to be pleasant."

"Nice?," asked Beatrice.

Belle entered the shop first and Beatrice followed. Gold stood behind a glass case and placed a wooden box on it. "Well, hello, Miss French."

"Hello, Mr. Gold. How are you?," asked Belle. She held up the papers. "Sorry, it took me forever to find a fax machine around here."

"No problem. I see you've brought your daughter."

"I hope that's alright," said Belle.

"It's fine." He looked at Beatrice. "Feel free to have a look around the shop while we talk."

Beatrice nodded. She hoped her mother would listen to her on this, because this really was the weirdest pawn shop ever. Not that she had been to a lot of pawn shops, but she had seen them on Law & Order. Surely there were supposed to be electronics and people's jewelry. Guitars and
bicycles and oil paintings just seemed wrong. There was a set of beer steins, a mobile made of crystal unicorns.

"Are you reading this?," asked Belle.

Beatrice glanced back at the counter. Belle had a book in her hands.

This could only be a harbinger of doom.

"One Hundred Years of Solitude?," asked Belle. "I am as well."

"Well, I've only just started it," said Gold.

"I'm embarrassed to say I've just read it myself."

"Why embarrassed?," asked Gold.

"Well, I'm a librarian."

"Are you?" He sounded almost pleased at that.

"Yes, I've been trying to put together a series of lectures on Latin American authors, so I've had to study up."

"Don't you find magical realism fascinating?," asked Beatrice.

"I'm sorry?," asked Gold.

"She means the style of the book," said Belle. "Extraordinary events occur outside the realm of possibility, but the characters react like they're normal. You'll see. I'm sorry, I should be letting you read the settlement."

"No, not at all."

That's when Beatrice saw the most creepy pair of puppets ever.

"Oh, my God," she couldn't help but say.

Belle turned. "Beatrice, what's wrong?"

She pointed at the creepy puppets.

"Well, those are odd," said Belle.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "Did you seriously give someone money for those?"

"It was more of a barter," said Gold.

"They look so real, like they've shrunk..." said Beatrice. She reached out her hand to touch them, but didn't have the nerve.

"If they bother you, you could always come away from them," Gold suggested, not looking up from the settlement papers.

Beatrice decided he was right and walked away. Still, something to have new nightmares about.

"I don't see Beatrice mentioned anywhere in the settlement," said Gold.
"Well, she wasn't born yet," said Belle.

"She's not even referred to."

"What does that mean?," asked Belle.

"It means that at the least, this settlement has no binding authority over her. Has Mayor Mills given you any more grief?"

"No, actually," said Belle. "She crossed the street when she saw me earlier. It was a bit weird."

"I wouldn't worry about it," said Gold. He saw Beatrice looking at another case full of jewels. "Does something capture your attention?"

"Yeah, would you say this is more tiaras than your average pawnbroker's?," asked Beatrice.

Gold shrugged. "I hadn't given it much thought."

Beatrice stared at a pendant, with an oval stone in an ornate setting. She couldn't pick out what sort of stone it was since it was multi-colored.

Suddenly, Gold was standing behind the case. "Did you mean this one?," he asked pulling out the pendant and placing it on the top.

"That's so beautiful," Belle remarked.

"It's a Lloviznando opal," said Gold. "Very rare."

Beatrice looked up. "How rare?"

"Very." Gold looked at Belle again. "Miss French, why don't you talk me through this section of the agreement?"

"Okay," said Belle, walking back over to the other case.

Beatrice looked at the pendant again. She reached down and grazed a finger over the stone as it burst into brilliant white light. She stared at it in shock.

She didn't notice Mr. Gold watching her out of the corner of his eye.
Chapter 11

Then

Snow White followed Belle into the Dark Castle. The dwarves followed at the ready.

It was strange to walk into the Great Hall without a request, with seemingly no fear of the occupant.

"Rumple!," she called. "Rumplestiltskin!"

There was no answer. She walked into the next room to find the spinning wheel vacant. She had hoped her homecoming might be more remarkable, like the first time she had left and returned.

She turned to Snow. "He must be out."

Snow nodded. "I'll wait with you."

"Oh, no, don't do that. Your husband will be worried."

"So much time has passed. Explanations may be needed."

Belle shook her head. "I'll handle the explanations. Trust me, it's best if I handle him alone."

"Are you frightened of him, Belle?"

Belle smiled as if she thought that was a ridiculous question. "No. He would never hurt me. He just... needs reminding sometimes."

"Have you decided what to call your daughter?"

"No, I haven't really had time," said Belle. "Not after her father."

Snow White smiled. "Well, when you decide send word to me. I would like to be her patron."

"Her patron?"

"A sort of non-fairy godmother."

"She's unlikely to have one of those," said Belle. "You would do that? Be the patron to the Dark One's daughter?"

"Of course I would," said Snow White. "I don't think the rest of them are right. No child can be born evil. Besides, I owe Rumplestiltskin."

Belle didn't understand. "He doesn't really leave his debts unpaid."

"I've paid him, but Charming and I wouldn't be together without his help. Besides, you're my friend. Our daughters can play together."

Belle smiled. "I think I'd like that."
Now

Mr. Gold made his way to the shop early. He had a few things to get done before he went to Granny's in hopes of running into Belle. He parked his car and headed down the street when he noticed Whale and one of those dwarves- what was the point in learning their names- standing and looking at something.

Or someone. He soon realized that it was Belle, running down the street in a pair of black workout leggings and a yellow top. Gold couldn't say that he disputed the fact that the view was rather enjoyable, but took issue with anyone else enjoying it. Oh, to be able to turn someone into a snail again.

She stopped in front of him and pulled out her earbuds. "Mr. Gold! Good morning."

"Good morning, Miss French."

"I was just... running," she said apologetically.

"I can see that. Do you run often?"

"Yes, well, not as often as I'd like. Too many things get in my way, but I have time in Storybrooke and I needed it."

"You're worried about Beatrice."

"Yeah," Belle admitted. "I don't know if I'm accomplishing anything here."

"Well, you've only been in town just a few days," said Gold. "Perhaps she needs more time."

Belle nodded. "You're probably right."

"I have some more questions about the settlement."

"Oh," said Belle.

"I have a busy day today. I wonder if you would mind meeting over lunch to discuss it." "Okay," said Belle. "Not to be picky, but is there any place here besides Granny's? I love hamburgers, but..."

"There's Tony's and Mushu's, depending on what you like. I'm afraid Storybrooke's dining options are not as varied as Manhattan."

Belle nodded. "I'm getting that. Uh, Chinese? Sound alright to you?"

"Shall we make it twelve?"

"Twelve, then," said Belle with a smile.

Beatrice was trying to get her head awake yet again when Henry came and jumped in the booth across from her. He brought out his story book.

"You want in on Operation Cobra, right?"

"What's Operation Cobra?," she asked.
"Breaking the curse," he whispered.

"Seriously, this is what my life has come to?," asked Beatrice. The ten year old believed her.

"Somebody added a chapter to my book. It's about Pinocchio."

Beatrice shrugged. "And why would someone do that?"

"Because there's something we need to know."

Beatrice held her hand out. "Let me see."

Henry looked at her. "You haven't agreed yet."

"I'm not agreeing to anything without a reason," said Beatrice. "Let me see."

Henry handed the book across the table.

"Mind if I order?," he asked.

"Great, I'm buying you breakfast now," she said.

"Thanks?"

Beatrice flipped through the pages. "You have more stories than me."

"What?"

She pointed. "This story about Rumplestiltskin. I don't have it." She flipped through. "I've got nothing about Rumplestiltskin except Cinderella and then he's like a minor character that pops up for a stupid plot point."

"Maybe it's a different book?"

"It is a different book." Beatrice frowned and flipped through the pages. "Somebody made you a different book than mine. What do you know about Rumplestiltskin?"

"Henry."

Beatrice looked up. Savior Girl had walked in.

"What are you doing? What was so urgent?"

"Someone added a new story to my book," said Henry. "Who knows that we hide it at the sheriff's station?"

"No one," said Emma. "We can talk about it later. You're gonna be late for school."

Henry obligingly stood up and took the book from Beatrice.

"Hey!," said Beatrice.

"We can talk later," said Henry, running out.

"Sorry," said Emma. "He's got this thing with the book."

"Oh, you mean where the town is frozen in time because the Evil Queen cast a curse to pull
everyone from the Enchanted Forest here and take away their happy endings? That thing with the book?"

"How long were you two talking?," Emma asked in surprise.

"Not long," said Beatrice. "Question, have you noticed how old all the cars are here?"

"What?," asked Emma. "You're not trying to sell me on this, are you?"

"Have you noticed how the answer to any question starting with 'how long' is 'as long as I can remember'?"

"What?," asked Emma.

Beatrice turned to the ginger town psychiatrist she had seen Belle chatting with. "Doctor Hopper."

"Uh, yes?," he asked, sounding surprised.

"How long has Regina been mayor?"

"Uh, wow, uh as long as I can remember, I guess."

"And how long have you been a psychiatrist?"

He shrugged. "As long as I can remember." Hopper quickly caught how odd that sounded. "I mean, uh-

"Marco," Beatrice said, turning to his breakfast companion, "how long have you and Doctor Hopper been friends?"

"As long as I can remember," said Marco.

"Try this one, how long has your shop been open?," asked Beatrice.

"That doesn't mean anything," said Emma. "Life gets hazy. People forget stuff."

"That's your answer?," asked Beatrice. "Life gets hazy? That is your whole answer?"

"What do you want me to say?," asked Emma. "That Henry's right?"

"Do you know what Occam's Razor is?"

Emma shrugged. "Uh, a guy named Occam and he was shaving?"

Okay, Savior Girl was not big on logic puzzles. "No, it's a principle in problem solving. When you're trying to explain something, you should pick the hypothesis with the fewest assumptions. One theory that explains everything."

"Like this town was cursed in a fairy tale?"

"Yeah, like that," said Beatrice.

"Except what you're saying is completely crazy."

"Except it's not."

"Yeah, I've got to go," said Emma, getting up.
Beatrice watched in misery as Emma left.

Yeah, she had been living in a town full of cursed people and didn't notice? Yet she was the crazy one?

She got up from her coffee and went back into the inn, where Belle was looking at her clothes.

"You could just pick something. Anything," said Beatrice. "Not like it matters here."

"No, I'm going to lunch, that's all."

Beatrice frowned and looked up from her iPad. "What do you mean you're going to lunch?"

"With Mr. Gold."

"Mom!," exclaimed Beatrice.

Belle turned to her. "What?"

"You're going to lunch with Mr. Gold?," she asked, resisting the urge to tack on Rumplestiltskin and some expletives.

"What? He just had some questions about the settlement," said Belle. "It's not like it's a date or anything."

Beatrice shot daggers at her mother.

Realization suddenly dawned on Belle. "You don't think he thinks it's a date, do you? I mean, if he does..."

"Oh, my God, Mom!," Beatrice shrieked pulling a pillow over her face.

"He is very nice," said Belle.

"You're the only one who thinks that," Beatrice said through the pillow.

"And there is something very foxy about him..."

"Oh, my God, Mom! We cannot have this discussion! We can never have this discussion!"

"Sorry," said Belle. "I didn't realize I was traumatizing you."

"Well, you are."

"I'm going to take a shower," Belle said, dismissing herself from the room.

Beatrice was eager to distract herself from some new and disturbing mental images so she thought back to the story book. August had given her that book when she was a baby and she suspected he would know where Henry's had come from and why it was different. Beatrice knocked on August's door. "August? It's me. I have a question."

He didn't answer, but the door was unlocked.

Beatrice walked in. She didn't see him, but instead she saw pages, like the ones in her book, hanging to dry. She picked one up. They were full of a story she had never read before.
The first was Pinocchio. About how he had been given a mission and sent through an Enchanted Tree. She quickly realized it was August.

The second was how the Evil Queen had managed to capture the Beast's Beauty.

---

**Then**

Belle was curious at the state of the Dark Castle.

Nothing could be done. She supposed that at least meant Rumple hadn't bothered to get another housekeeper. The library, though, was flawless. Organized as she had left it and without a speck of dust.

Rumplestiltskin never returned, though. Belle busied herself, wondering what she should do. If she should ask Snow White for help? Should she try calling his name?

Then one day there was a banging on the front door of the Dark Castle.

Belle wasn't sure what to do at first. She had never actually answered the door of her home. Rumplestiltskin took care of that, he had visitors coming and going, Belle perceived that they had varying levels of danger. She was never allowed to see Regina, sometimes the occasional intermediary and usually she could see the people that came to make deals with Rumple, but he preferred she didn't because she would inevitably try to get him to take pity on some poor tenant farmer which he insisted was bad for his reputation.

"Uh, I'm sorry, Rumplestiltskin's not in right now..." Belle said sheepishly.

"I've come for Belle, Mistress of the Dark Castle, at the behest of Her Royal Highness, Snow White."

"Snow White?"

The man held up a parchment bearing Snow White's seal. Belle opened the door to see a carriage and Snow White's soldiers.

"Belle? I'm Sir Lancelot. Her Highness would like you to read this."

"I, uh-"

"It's about Rumplestiltskin."

Belle took the parchment and read it fervently.

Belle looked to Lancelot. "She understands I won't betray him?"

"She wouldn't ask that. Only that you see him."

"I just need to pack a few things," said Belle.

Lancelot followed her.

"Is this necessary?," she asked.

"Snow White commanded that I not take my eyes off of you until you arrive at her palace."

Lancelot followed Belle into a bedroom. He hoped the imp's cage could truly contain him as he
didn't like the idea of being found in Belle's bedroom. Once was enough for one lifetime.

Belle got a case out. "And he is well?" She turned. "He is not hurt?"

"The princess wondered at his state of mind," said Lancelot. "She says he does not seem himself."

"What do you mean?," asked Belle.

"Forgive me. He seems to have lost his mind."

Belle nodded. Was that what had happened to her poor Rumple? "I'll speak with him. He'll listen to me."

Lancelot nodded. Then he could have sworn he saw a fairy.

Then it all went black.

Lancelot stirred awake. "Guards!," he shouted.

He stood. Belle's open case was on the bed, but the lady was nowhere to be seen. In the distance, he could see a blue speck.

"Fairy dust." Snow White had warned him about the fairies and he had thought it curious, more of a precaution than an actual danger. He felt foolish for being so taken in.

He rushed back down to his men. "Follow that fairy!," he shouted.

They rode hard and fast. The fairy's trail ended at a clearing close to Regina's land.

"Belle!," he shouted, watching the lady being spirited away in a wagon.

A gang of Regina's men turned round to fight Lancelot and his soldiers. Lancelot was cut in the arm by one's broadsword and suddenly pixie dust descended and Regina's men fell to the ground. He ran back to mount his horse again.

"You're too late, Lancelot."

Lancelot looked up at the Blue Fairy. "I have orders from my princess, not you."

"All the realm is in terrible danger. Regina will enact a curse that will rip away everything we hold dear. The only hope is a Savior, the daughter of Snow White and the prince. We need a way to safely transport Snow White and her unborn child to another realm."

"And what does this have to do with Belle?," Lancelot demanded.

"The only hope is an Enchanted Tree, the last such tree we know of. It is on the site of Regina's exile."

"You traded Belle for a tree?," he asked with contempt.

"It is our only hope, Lancelot. The only thing that can save us all from the Curse."

"Is that all?"

"Would you really have us choose the Dark One's lover and child over Snow White when the entire realm is at stake?"
"That's not your decision."

"Perhaps not, but it is made and now if you tell Snow White you will only burden her with this knowledge."

"And the knowledge of what you have done."

"Do you suppose that will matter after the Curse? When the things that we love are torn from us, will this matter? You know what you must do, Lancelot."

Lancelot rode back to the castle, wondering what he was going to say to the princess. When she came out to greet him with hope gleaming in her eyes, he finally realized it.

"We ran into Regina's men."

"Doc should look at you," said Snow White, looking at his arm.

"Snow White, that wasn't all. There were rumblings that King George took Belle."

"King George? Who told him where to find her? And why would he-"

"A gift. For Regina."

Snow gasped in horror. Her shoulders dropped.

Better to break her heart this way. Better to not let her know the trade that had been exacted for her and her daughter's safety.

Lancelot shook his head. "I'm sorry, Your Highness."

Now

Beatrice was stunned at first.

Beyond stunned. The pages fell from her hands to the floor.

She walked back to her room and sat down.

A tree. An Enchanted Tree. The Blue Fairy, the supposedly good one, had traded her and her mom for a tree. A tree for a Savior. A largely useless Savior.

Beatrice had always held out the hope that discovering her real heritage would give her a kind of definition, a purpose. Now she knew. Now she realized her purpose was to be collateral damage. There was no destiny in that book. She was a cast off. She didn't belong. Not in her life back in New York and not here.

Not anywhere. She was a reject from life.

Beatrice tried telling herself that was fine. Fine. Fine. She didn't need to be a princess in a castle. She didn't need to have a family. No. She was Beatrice French and she could do it on her own. All on her own. Just her mom.

She didn't have to be special. In fact, she wasn't. Emma was the special one. What was the point of being special? Lots of people weren't special and they didn't seem to mind.
She could get by being not special.

Then the crying started.

She tried not crying at first. Then she let a tear roll. Then another followed, then another. She was hyper ventilating.

"Beatrice?" asked Ruby.

She hadn't locked the door. Ruby walked right in and looked alarmed. "Beatrice, what's wrong?," she asked, kneeling down to the floor. Beatrice hadn't realized she was on the floor until Ruby was next to her.

She just shook her head. She didn't know what to say. There wasn't anyone who could understand. The only person who understood was August and he had never told her. He had been lying to her for her whole life. He was a liar. He was a freaking wooden puppet whose nose grew because he lied so much. This was who she had been relying on for her information.

"Can you tell me?," she asked.

She just shook her head again.

Ruby seemed disturbed. For all the questionable wardrobe, she had compassion. "I'm going to go get Granny. I'll be right back."

And now she had Little Red Riding Hood/Big Bad Wolf trying to comfort her.

When Mr. Gold was seen in Storybrooke it was usually a cause for concern. He was never seen enjoying the company of others, let alone having others enjoy his company. Yet at Mushu's the townsfolk watched as he did just that with the pretty newcomer.

"I do wonder about Regina, though," said Belle. "It doesn't look like she's had work done. I suppose it's the hatred keeping her youthful."

Gold smiled. "You're more right than you know."

"What is it with you two?," asked Belle. "You two weren't..."

"No," Gold said quickly. "It's more of a business relationship. Our interests used to be aligned and they're not anymore."

"What happened?," asked Belle.

"She took something of mine," said Gold. "I'd like it back."

"Is that all?," asked Belle.

"That's everything," said Gold.

"Belle?"

Belle looked up in surprise at Ruby. "Hi-"

"Granny said to come find you. It's Beatrice."

"Is she hurt?," asked Belle, already standing up. Gold quickly followed suit, getting up and
putting money on the table.

"I don't know," said Ruby.

"You don't know?," asked Gold.

Ruby was surprised at how perturbed Gold seemed. "She just won't stop crying," said Ruby. "She won't tell us what happened. Granny is with her."

"Did she say anything?," asked Belle.

Ruby shook her head. "Something about a tree?"

"A tree?," asked Belle. She shook her head. "I need to go. I'm sorry."

Gold nodded. "Of course. Don't worry about it."

Belle rushed out with Ruby leading the way.

He suspected he knew just the tree.

After all, there was only one.
Hi, thanks for the reviews. Another housekeeping note, when this story began there was no hint of a Merlin on the horizon of OUAT... So I made my own and now I have a different one from whoever ends up on the show. I thought I would just clarify that.

Anyway, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Now

Beatrice's eyes glazed over. It felt like she had entered the point of consciousness right before she fell asleep. She had been vaguely aware of Granny hovering over her for a while.

She heard Belle's high heel first and then her mother knelt down in front of her.

"Beatrice, what is it?," asked Belle. "What's happened?"

"The tree."

"The Enchanted Tree. The one Emma came through..."

Belle furrowed her brow. "The sheriff?"

"She's the Savior. She matters. I don't. I never have."

Belle's jaw dropped. "Beatrice, of course you matter!"

"No, not really," she replied matter-of-factly. "I'm not special."

"Not special?!," Belle exclaimed.

"No, see it's just like everything else."

"You're special," said Belle. "You're smart. You're tenacious-"

"And show me where in life that matters more than being pretty and likeable and I'll agree."

"I like you."

"You're biased," said Beatrice. "Not to mention, you like everyone. And if you could remember who you were, you would see my point."

"What point?"

"If you're pretty and people like you, you can get away with anything. If you're Taylor, nobody
cares how shallow you are. If you're Cinderella, nobody cares that you're such a moron you sold your firstborn."

"Cinderella?"

"She didn't read the stupid contract and nobody bothers mentioning it."

"Why are we talking about Cinderella?" Belle asked in confusion.

"You've got to be born special. My fate is not special. Emma gets to be special. I don't."

"If I'm Beauty and your father's the Beast, doesn't that make you special?" Belle was grasping at straws, anything to stop this despair.

"The guy's got one freaking story in that book. And it's not like I'm going to have a ride at Disney World. That chipped cup gets more screen time than me. Basically, the best I can hope for is Elphaba from Wicked."

"The Wicked Witch of the West?"

"The book not the musical. I mean, Idina Menzel can at least sing."

Belle shook her head. "Beatrice, I am trying, but I don't understand."

"It will all make sense to you later."

"Could you at least get off the floor?"

---

Then

The man threw Belle onto the floor. She had just begun her journey back to the Dark Castle when he had come upon her and hustled her away. Just her luck to be alone when she would have had Mulan and Philip to protect her mere moments before.

"Is this her?," he barked at another man. Both were finely dressed with crests and armor, though Belle didn't know the crests they bore.

The other stepped forward and pulled out some kind of scroll. "Yes."

The other turned back. "What is your name, girl?"

Seeing no alternative, she answered. "I'm Belle of Avonlea."

"Your mother?"

"The Lady Reinette. What's the-"

"And your father?"

"Sir Maurice. What is the meaning of this?"

The first turned back. "She says Sir Maurice."

"Well, she would, wouldn't she? A perfect hiding place."

Belle was just confused. "Who are you? What is the meaning for all of these questions?"
"I am Sir Gawain," said the man who had thrown her down.

"And I am Sir Percival."

"Wait, you're Knights of the Round Table," said Belle. "What do Knights of the Round Table want with me?"

Gawain looked at Percival. "Either she is a very skilled liar or she has no idea what we're talking about."

"And what are you to the Dark One?," asked Percival.

Belle paused. The hesitation was enough for the knights.

"Perhaps it is not too late," said Gawain. "Perhaps Merlin's vision has not come to pass."

"Merlin's vision?," asked Belle.

Percival ignored her. "And do what with her?"

"Well, kill her, preferably..." said Gawain.

"What?!," Belle screamed.

"We're trying to talk here," said Gawain, dismissing her.

---

**Now**

Belle sat on the porch at the inn alone. It was getting late and she had managed to put Beatrice to bed. Belle had hoped August would come back, but the consensus seemed to be that he was off with Emma. She had taken a book out to the porch, but hadn't read it. Instead, she had flipped through every photo on her phone.

"Miss French?"

Belle looked up. Mr. Gold was standing next to her.

"Mr. Gold. Hi."

"How are you?"

Belle shrugged. "Did you um-"

"Well, you left lunch in such a rush, I thought I would make sure everything was alright."

"Beatrice is... no, everything's not alright. She's fine physically, but I think the delusions are getting to be too much."

Gold sat in the next chair. "The story with the Enchanted Forest?"

Belle smiled. "Right. The Enchanted Forest. It's all in this book, August gave it to her when she was a baby. It's not the usual fairy tales."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, Rumplestiltskin turns out to be Cinderella's fairy godmother and she's sold him her baby."
"Well, that's different."

"It's not the fairy tales. It's how she thinks she fits into them." Belle looked at Gold. "She doesn't think she's special. She doesn't think she has a place in them."

"She doesn't think she's special?"

"You said you had a son. I mean, is there any other sentence you can think of that's more awful to hear from your child? Give me an 'I hate you' or 'You're suffocating me' any day."

"There might be something worst," Gold commented ruefully. "I think I understand, though."

"I mean, you tell them to be themselves, that it's okay to be different and then they're praying they fit in and you're praying they fit in. It was okay when she was younger. I could make her feel special. She doesn't have parties, she doesn't go to parties. Her last birthday, I was the only one who cared."

"Perhaps she just prefers solitude."

"No, how could anyone? She's right. We are on our own. She says I take pictures and I have no one to show them to and she is right."

Gold noticed she was clutching at her phone. "Are you expecting a call?"

"No, I was just looking at it," said Belle. "Just about every picture I have of her is on here. She loaded it for me. I think she deleted anything with braces or a bad pimple, but all on here. I've been staring at them, trying to figure out where I went wrong."

"I'm sure you didn't do anything wrong."

Belle shook her head. "That's the problem with single motherhood. No one to blame but yourself."

"Did you want to show me?," Gold asked Belle, motioning at the phone.

Belle shook her head. "Oh, God, no, I couldn't bore you like that."

"No, not at all," said Gold. "You need someone to talk to."

Belle stared at him and then smiled. "Maybe just a couple."

---

_Then_

"Okay," said Percival, turning to Belle. "How would you prefer to be killed?"

"What?"

"Well, we're going to have to kill you."

"We definitely are."

"And we just wondered if you had any thoughts on that."

Belle shook her head at them. "You're both crazy."
Suddenly, both men flew back into the wall as if there were a gust of wind from somewhere. They seemed pinned there and Belle turned, thinking it must have been Rumplestiltskin.

It wasn't.

It was an older man, but definitely not feeble. He was long and wiry and his face reminded Belle of a hawk or something. He approached them carefully.

"What do you think you're doing?"

"Merlin," Percival gasped.

"Merlin, please, we had orders-"

"Oh, did you now?," asked Merlin. "Whose orders? Was it that bed-hopping trollop?"

"Sorry," said Belle, "what's going on?"

Merlin turned back from his interrogation. "Just a minute."

"Okay..." Belle said skeptically.

Merlin looked back at them. "I'm going to let you go and count to three. If you're not gone when I'm finished counting, I'm going to turn you into a snail. If you ever go near this woman again, I will turn you into a snail, unless I can think of something worse, then I'm going to turn you into that and don't think you can hide from me. Whatever land you're in, I will know what you do."

He released his fist and the knights fell to the floor, then clamored over each other to run out.

Merlin turned back to Belle.

"Who are you?," she asked.

"Merlin. You know, Merlin?"

Belle didn't speak.

"Is it the outfit? I think when people hear wizard, they want a hat and a beard. I'm over the hat and beard thing. Are you just going to sit there on the ground?"

Belle got up and dusted herself off.

"What are you wearing?," he asked.

Belle looked down at herself, she was still wearing the clothes she had been to the expedition. "I was hunting a beast."

"Yes, but I think you're hunting a different beast now. A far more dangerous prey than a prince some middling evil fairy cast a curse on."

Belle's jaw dropped. "How do you know that?"

"I'm Merlin, Belle of Avonlea. Now, we should get a move on before your imp does something stupid. Well, more stupid than usual."

He waved his hand and the door opened. Belle hurried to follow him out.
Now

When August returned, Beatrice was in the hallway having taken her iPad while Belle slept so she could watch Doctor Who in peace.

"Oh, yay," said Beatrice as August limped in. "How's that whole Savior thing going?"

August leaned against the wall. "Not great. She refuses to believe."

"Well, that's just the thing I needed to cap off my day," said Beatrice.

"What do you mean?"

"I saw the pages in your room," said Beatrice. "Traded for a tree."

"Beatrice-"

"I hope it was a good tree. I mean, like really good. Oh, you would know. You got to go through it."

"The Savior had to."

"Yes, I know. She had to come here and save everyone. I bet that's going to be awesome. I'm really looking forward to it."

"What do you want me to say, Beatrice?"

She shrugged. "Am I anyone in the book? Do I even matter?"

"The book's not everything."

Beatrice stood up. "And with that crappy platitude, I am done."

"Where are you going?"

She walked off and began heading down the stairs. "Why do you want to know? It doesn't matter."

---

Then

Belle followed Merlin through a forest.

"Where are you taking me?," asked Belle.

"It's a shortcut, my dear."

"A shortcut?"

He looked back. "You know, to the Dark Castle, to reunite you with your True Love, Rumplestiltskin."

"And how do you know that?"

"I'm Merlin."

Belle saw no choice but to keep following. "The knights, they spoke of a vision you had."
"What sort of vision?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, there's having a vision of the future and there's having a vision of the future."

"That's really the same thing," said Belle.

"Fine. There's visualizing and envisioning. I'm done with visualizing and now I'm envisioning."

"Why did you save me?"

Merlin stopped and turned. "What did I just say?"

"You have a vision of the future. I don't see what I have to do with that."

"I have been waiting a very long time for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, I've worked at all the other elements for years, but you, dear Belle, you are the finishing touch."

"I am?"

"You have goodness and courage and intelligence. Mind you, just a dash of stupidity in there."

"Excuse me?"

"You're in love with an imp, my dear. Now I do require that you be in love with an imp or this thing won't work, but still, you must admit, not your most brilliant decision."

"Wait, you want me to be in love with Rumplestiltskin? What for?"

"You heard me."

Belle stopped walking. She wasn't eager to repeat the incident with the Queen. "What for? Is this some trick? Do you want me to betray him?"

Merlin stopped and turned back. "Oh, see there, that's True Love. That's the stuff."

"Who are you? Really, who are you?"

"I told you. I am a man with a vision of the future."

"And what role do I play in it?"

"Is there a point in telling you? Remember, no one decides your fate but you, my dear."

Belle was in shock. "How did you-"

"I told you that. You were very young, barely bigger than my hand."

"I don't know you."

"I know you. I know everything about you. I knew your mother, her mother, her mother and as I said, I have been waiting for you a very long time."
"To do what?"

"What you do." He turned. "And here we are."

Belle looked up. It was the Dark Castle.

"What? We... this isn't possible."

"I told you. It's a shortcut."

"But."

"Now, what are we going to do about the outfit?"

There was a shimmer as Merlin waved his hand. Belle looked down and realized she was in a gold gown. The wizard seemed pleased with his efforts.

"You know, you just have to go with the classics. Now, you, go make the future happen and I'll see you around."

Belle looked at him in dismay.

"Are you going to just stand here?"

"Thank you," Belle said, unsure of the sentiment.

She hurried back up the path and into the Dark Castle.

---

Now

Beatrice walked down the street. She wandered aimlessly through the cursed town, knowing there was nothing she could do to make a difference.

That was when she spotted Savior Girl loading a yellow VW bug with a box.

Leaving town.

What the hell.

Then she had an idea. She didn't know where it came from or why, but immediately decided it was a good one.

Beatrice walked into the pharmacy and was greeted with a sneeze.

"Oh, please," she groaned as she identified his alter ego.

Beatrice quickly found the grilling aisle and returned to the register with lighter fluid and a box of matches.

"You have to be eighteen to buy that."

"You can take the money or I can just take it."

The pharmacist frowned. "I'm calling the sheriff."

"No, you know what?," said Beatrice. She put a ten on the counter. "I'm going to."
She picked up the lighter fluid and matches, then walked to the door where there was a fire extinguisher.

"And I'm borrowing this," she said. "Just in case."

Beatrice walked back out. She pulled the box back out and put it on the sidewalk. She was waiting when Emma came back down with a bag.

"Uh, Beatrice, hi."

"What are you doing?," she asked.

"What am I doing?"

"See because it looks like you're leaving town and I know you're not leaving town."

Emma shrugged. "Beatrice, look, this really isn't any of your business."

"Uh, yeah, it kind of is because you're sort of ruining my life right now."

"I'm ruining your life? I just met you."

"Uh, you're kind of ruining everyone's lives because you suck at being a Savior."

"You, too? Did you and August meet at a support group or something? I don't want to be your savior."

"No, you would not be my first choice, either."

"What?"

"I would pick someone a little smarter, someone more likely to actually believe, someone who actually gives a damn about other people."

"Is this your way of persuading me? Because it sucks."

"Well, you suck."

Emma shook her head. "You're all crazy."

"Besides, I don't have to persuade you to be the Savior. You are the Savior. I just need to find a way to get you to do whatever it is you need to do and to start with, I have to keep you from leaving town."

She struck a match.

"Beatrice, what are you doing?"

"I'm crazy, remember?"

Beatrice tossed the match into the car. Emma's eyes widened as the flames grew.

"Oh, my God!" She looked at Beatrice. "Are you insane?!"

"Yes, we clarified that. Get over it, I took your stuff out," she said motioning at the boxes on the sidewalk.
"Arson! Really?!"

"Arrest me," said Beatrice.

Suddenly, lights around begin to flick on. People came out of their apartments and anything still open.

Mary Margaret came out of the building in her pajamas with a coat thrown over.

"Oh, my God! Emma, your car."

"I torched it. You're welcome," said Beatrice.

Mary Margaret frowned. "Sorry, who are you?"

"Beatrice. I'm the new crazy girl in town," she said as the fire truck arrived. "Emma was just leaving, but, oh, look, she doesn't have a car."

Mary Margaret looked down at Emma's belongings on the sidewalk. "You were leaving? Emma!"

Mary Margaret and Emma proceeded to argue while Beatrice pondered the turn of events.

Well, she had made her stay. That was something.

"Okay," said Emma, grabbing her by the arm, "you're coming to the station."
Then

Rumplestiltskin entered the Great Hall ready to start his plans for the day. He looked at the long table to see that his morning plans had already begun without his consent. Merlin sat atop the end of the table and popped some grapes into his mouth and Rumplestiltskin cursed the incubus that sired the wizard for what was not the first time.

"Merlin," he grumbled.

"Morning, sunshine," said Merlin. He motioned towards a buffet of food on the table. "I made breakfast."

Rumplestiltskin glared as he walked closer. "What are you doing here?"

Merlin dropped his jaw in feigned shock. "Is that any way to thank me for such a nice breakfast? Not to mention this lovely tea set I'm giving you. I would be careful with that tea cup. It's an heirloom."

"What do you want?"

"Funny thing happened. I was on my way to visit a young lady-"

"A young lady?," Rumplestiltskin questioned.

"Yes, we all must have hobbies," said Merlin. "I heard the most interesting thing. Prince Henry is to marry the daughter of a lowly, drunken miller. It seems the girl- though, frankly, she might be getting on a bit too much to be called that- she can spin straw into gold. I wondered who might have taught her that."

"I made a deal with her."

"Yes, and I fear you might be getting more than you bargained for."

"What do you care?"

"I care deeply. Have you bargained for the firstborn child?"

Rumplestiltskin didn't answer. He hated Merlin, hated how the wizard always seemed to have one up on him.

"That poor child. Saves a little girl from a runaway horse and her whole life is ruined."

"I need her."

"I don't doubt that, but I do question whether you know who you're dealing with."

"I'm the Dark One. I can handle the miller's daughter."

Merlin eyed him, then smiled. "Oh, no you can't. You really can't. See, there are two kinds of people with worthless fathers. The first, well, you know all about that, don't you?" Rumplestiltskin stiffened. "Ever hopeful hearts they have. They might grow scales for the outside world, but they still have hope. The second, well, they have a sliver of ice in their hearts. This miller's daughter,
she belongs to the latter group."

"Don't try to divine my motives," Rumplestiltskin warned.

"And don't try to interfere with my plans. I warn you, someone will end up with no heart at all."

"Don't you touch her," he growled.

The wizard looked amused at the suggestion. "I don't have to lay a finger on her or you," said Merlin.

Now

Beatrice sat at a table in the sheriff's station. Emma was in the office fuming.

"You could start arresting me anytime," said Beatrice.

Emma glared.

"All that paperwork. I bet there's fingerprints and mug shots. Oh, also, you're the primary witness so you'll have to stay in town for the trial."

The glare continued.

"Well, at least your mom will be happy if you stay. She seemed pretty mad."

"Mary Margaret is not my mom."

"Oh, come on. You look alike."

"Would you stop?"

"Fine, but seriously, you will have to stay in town. I have a right to face my accuser."

"Yes, she does," said Gold.

Beatrice looked up to see her mother and Mr. Gold. They were standing side by side and it seemed odd. Beatrice found that unsettling, but also unsettling was that her mother had once again run to Rumplestiltskin when there was trouble.

She really hoped she hadn't been sold.

"Seriously..." Beatrice muttered.

"You're her lawyer?," asked Emma.

"Yes and as of now my client's not answering any more questions," said Gold.

"What questions?," asked Emma. "Your client torched my car right in front of me."

"Well, that's your version of events and you're not exactly without bias here."

"What?," Emma exclaimed.

"It was your car. How do we know you didn't burn it yourself for the insurance money?"
"Seriously, Gold?"

"You haven't arrested her. How convinced of her guilt could you be?"

"So when I wanted help, it was too hard, but she comes in with a clear cut arson case and you drop everything?"

"Oh, Sheriff, I do hope your anger at me isn't influencing your judgment and causing you to lash out at my client who was just an innocent bystander."

"She got matches and lighter fluid from the pharmacy."

"Circumstantial," said Gold. "Now, I've already spoken with District Attorney Spencer. Are you going to arrest her?"

Emma looked really uncertain.

"What? Seriously?," asked Beatrice. "What happened to arresting me?"

"Be quiet," Belle warned.

Emma walked over to Gold. "Is this the favor?"

"Sheriff, I don't know what you're suggesting, but it's unseemly," said Gold. "Now, are you going to arrest my client?"

"No," Emma relented. "It doesn't mean I won't change my mind. Besides, I'm not going to lock up a fifteen year old."

"How compassionate. Beatrice, come on."

"What?"

"Come on," Belle repeated.

Beatrice grudgingly obliged her fate as she left with Gold and Belle.

---

**Then**

It was never hard for Merlin to get into places. The Court of King Xavier was no different as the footman led him to the throne room.

"Your Majesty," said Merlin.

King Xavier stood and walked over. "My court is always happy to receive you, Merlin. Have you come for my son's wedding?"

"Oh, I'm afraid I can't stay. I do have some business to discuss with Your Majesty, if we could only speak in private."

"Of course, this way."

King Xavier led Merlin up to the treasure room. Merlin looked on in amusement at the rolls of spun gold.

"What brings you here?," asked Xavier.
"It regards your soon to be daughter-in-law, Cora."

"What about her? She's just the miller's daughter."

Merlin motioned at their surroundings. "Except for all this."

"She has a power, yes."

"Xavier, you surprise me. There's only one man in the realm who can spin straw into gold. Well, there was only one, until he got stupid and showed someone else how to do it. Tell me, are you familiar with Rumplestiltskin?"

"The Dark One?," Xavier asked with alarm.

"The very same."

Xavier was flustered. "The menace! I'll send soldiers, I'll have him caught."

"You'll do no such thing."

"I will not be deceived in this way."

"You most certainly will."

"Then why did you tell me this?"

"You see, the imp thinks he is playing a chess game. That's only half of it. See, he's playing my game, but he can only see about half the board and doesn't know I've been moving all the pieces."

"For what purpose?"

Merlin shook his head. "You wouldn't possibly understand. Now, Cora will come to you and all you must do is remind her of who she is. Who she really is. She's not the kind of woman who could run off for love with an imp. Remind her of all that your son can offer and I see that look, try not to be so damn hard on the poor boy. He's going to have a hard enough life as it is, not to mention a very sad death. Remind Cora, love is weakness."

King Xavier was all surprise. "And what if I refuse?"

Merlin gave it thought. "Well, I suppose I'll just kill her then. A broken heart is a broken heart, really, but I like this way better and hey, you still have someone who can spin straw into gold. Not everyone can say that."

Xavier stood silently.

"I'll show myself out," said Merlin. "After all, big day tomorrow."

Now

Gold had seen Belle and Beatrice back to the inn. Then he had come to the shop. He had plans to make for his trip, but there was much to do before that. He would have to sort out the District Attorney, await the end of the Curse and then the first part of his reunion with his family. He expected he would have to come up with something to earn the girl's trust. He walked over to the jewelry case to remove Belle's pieces as he heard the doorbell ring.
"My tree is dying," said Regina.

Gold smiled. "Maybe it's your fertilizer."

"You think this is funny? Well, I'll tell you what I think. I think it's a sign of the curse weakening because of Emma. But do you care? No. You're content to just sit back and do... Whatever it is you're doing, while all my hard work burns."

"That's not all, is it? Come on. You might as well get everything off your chest."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Henry. Miss Swan wants him."

"She'll have that boy over my dead body."

"The curse was meant to take away Snow White and Prince Charming's happiness. Perhaps, you giving up Henry is just the price to keep the curse unbroken."

"I think I'd rather just get rid of her."

"Well, well. You're going to have to be quite creative. We both know the repercussions in killing Miss Swan. The curse will be..."

"The curse will be broken. That's because you designed it that way. Undo it."

"You know... Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. Magic, well, is in short supply around here and dwindling by the minute."

"I want to strike a new deal. One where I can get rid of Emma without shattering the Curse."

"Unfortunately, a deal requires two interested parties and you no longer have anything I want."

"I can rewrite Belle's memories. You two can be back together."

"Yes, but you can't rewrite the girl's memories."

Regina scoffed. "Are you that desperate to have Belle's bastard?"

"You see, I got to thinking about that, dearie and then I remembered that for many years, the clock above the library was eight-fourteen and it changed one morning. One morning you seemed very angry at me. When Belle hired me as her attorney, I looked at the paperwork and realized you sent her away around the same time that the clock changed."

Regina stared at him.

"True love, dearie," said Gold. "The most powerful magic of all, but then, you knew that, didn't you?"

"Fine," said Regina. "But don't tell me you didn't have that planned."

"Planned? Dearie, if I had it planned, we wouldn't be here. Do you think I would have entrusted the fates of Belle and my child in this land to you? Really?"

Regina continued to glare.

"I will give you a piece of advice, though. I would plan a trip because once people waken up and
remember who you are and what you did to them, well, they are going to be looking for blood.”

"There's still the matter of your little princess's pending arson charges. Like father, like daughter."

"I'm sure I can figure out something."

Regina stalked out unhappily.

Beatrice sat across from her mother in the diner. It had been a late morning, trying to catch up on the sleep lost by the slight arson Beatrice had committed in the night. Burning something down did clear some of the space around them at the diner. Belle had spoken through most of lunch and Beatrice had never felt the need for an espresso so badly as now.

"I don't even know what to say," said Belle. "I don't know if I'm supposed to be mad or sad or if you can even help yourself-"

"I had a reason," said Beatrice.

"Yes and that's the thing, your reason is that you think the sheriff is going to break some curse and you couldn't let her leave town so you burned her car."

"Yeah," said Beatrice, shrugging plaintively.

"Is that all you can say for yourself?"

"Until you actually want to listen..."

"What?," asked Belle. "Is that attitude? You burned a car and you are giving me attitude?"

"You think I'm insane."

"Beatrice, I-" Belle sighed. "Honestly, I don't know. I do know that it might be a bit short-sighted to let some book of fairy tales choose your destiny. No one decides your fate but you."

"Yeah, that's in the book," said Beatrice.

There was a hush over the diner and Beatrice realized she was to the point that she no longer had to turn to see if Gold had entered.

"May I join you, ladies?," asked Gold.

"Of course," said Belle.

She scooted down the booth to make room for Gold.

"So, what did the District Attorney say?," asked Belle.

"Mr. Spencer is not yet prepared to file charges pending Sheriff Swan's investigation," said Gold. "You can't leave town, though."

Belle frowned. "Mr. Spencer?"

"Yes, he acts as the district attorney and the city attorney."

"Still? He was in charge of my case," said Belle.
"I shouldn't worry about it," said Gold. "He won't file charges unless he's certain he can win and he has suggested a psychiatric evaluation."


"I've put him off for the time being," said Gold.

"I don't want Beatrice locked up. Especially not in that awful place," said Belle. "An institution is still an institution."

"I would only suggest it as a delay tactic," said Gold. "I won't let her be locked up."

Beatrice frowned. "What kind of lawyer are you?"

"Well, luckily for you, I'm the very good kind."

"Beatrice, he's trying to help you," said Belle. "We're trying to help you."

Beatrice groaned and rolled her eyes. When she was done rolling them, she looked upon Belle and Gold sitting together and staring at her.

There was something oddly disconcerting about it.

Really disconcerting.

"So, your plan is to just delay and delay and keep tossing crazy theories at Emma?," asked Beatrice desperate to shake off whatever she was seeing.

"It's not my entire plan." He paused. "Have you always worn glasses?"

"Do you think it affected my ability to tell whether I was throwing a match at a car soaked with lighter fluid?"

Gold smiled. "Idle curiosity."

"I'm pathetically farsighted. Okay?"

"She's worn glasses since she was a baby," said Belle. "I don't know what that has to do with anything."

"Well, it's important to have all the information," said Gold.

---

**Then**

"Didn't expect to see you on a horse, dearie," said Rumplestiltskin.

Merlin smiled. Rumplestiltskin had managed to find him on the King's Road. Knowing the future could make one so impatient. "I expected to see you."

"How did you know what would happen with Cora?"

Merlin scoffed. "You really ought to have seen that coming."

"You did it," he accused.

"No, I don't remember ripping out her heart. I am fairly certain that was her."
"You conspired."

"I'll not deny it, but, Rumplestiltskin, how could a woman who would rip out her own heart have any room in it for you? Do you have any idea how much love a woman will need in her heart to love you? I'll tell you now that woman has not yet been born."

"Why did you do it?"

Merlin laughed. "Oh, Rumplestiltskin, if I told you and made a chart with pictures, you would not understand."

"Try me."

"Okay, how about this? I know you."

"No one knows me," he sneered.

"I know you. I know that you are the sort of man who was never meant to become the Dark One. I know you. I knew your wife. I knew that pirate she ran off with. I knew Baelfire. I knew your parents."

"A claim too far, dearie."

Merlin seemed to find this laughable. "You don't think I knew your parents? You don't think I know your father?"

"Not for a second."

"Then you might try asking yourself where the two spinsters who raised you got a magic bean from."

Merlin watched as Rumplestiltskin tried to conceal his shock.

"And before you bother asking me if I have any more," said Merlin, "you should know that I would never give you one even if I did so don't bother humiliating yourself by begging."

"I would never beg. I would do far worse."

"Oh, we both know you would beg. You can't kill me, you have nothing that I want, so all you have is... fealty."

Rumplestiltskin stood speechless.

"Now, won't you excuse me? I'm off to see a young lady."

"On a horse?" Rumplestiltskin questioned.

"As I said, I have my plans," he said as he rode off.
Chapter 14

Then

The Duke of Padua finally rode into his home gardens.

"Your Grace!," the footman exclaimed as he bowed, taking the reins of the Duke's horse.

The Duke nodded and got off. "How is the Duchess? Has she delivered?"

"I know not, Your Grace."

The Duke walked into the Great Hall and heard a great howl as he began removing his gloves.

"I would say not," said the Duke.

"The wizard is here," said the footman.

"Merlin?"

The footman nodded.

"See that he is comfortable and tell him I will be with him shortly," said the Duke. "I must see to my wife."

"Yes, Your Grace."

The Duke leapt up the stairs two at a time and ran through the great house to the mistress' rooms. He was a lanky, yet oddly dashing figure and the servants were used to his running around his home. Maids hurried to and fro, looking at him curiously as he knocked at the bedroom door.

"Catherine?," he called.

"WHAT?!"

The Duchess was an acquired taste at the best of times. Fortunately, it was one her husband had long ago acquired. He cautiously cracked the door open.

"I just wanted to let you know that I had arrived-"

"Yes! I got that from when you knocked and said my name!"

"Right... Anyway, if there's any office I could perform for you, my lady, anything you require of me-"

"Yes, actually!"

"Oh?," he asked brightly.

"Go to Merlin, get him to turn the clocks back to nine months ago when you thought it was a good idea to have that third bottle of wine with the Sultan of Agrabah!"
"I thought you quite enjoyed that."

"Not anymore!," she snapped back.

"Right..." He paused. "I shall go to Merlin."

The Duke hurried downstairs to the sitting room. His four sons sat at Merlin's feet as the wizard told some story.

"And that is why you should never ever give someone a magic bean. They ruin lives. Ah, Your Grace."

The youngest turned. "Papa!"

"Hello!," said the Duke with a grin as the boy scampered towards him. The other three piled on for their turns at a hug.

"Do you have stories of the battlefield for us, Papa?," asked his eldest.

"Perhaps later," said the Duke. "Is it not time for your tutor? Go to him and let Merlin and I speak."

The boys left. The Duke turned to Merlin.

"Is it a girl?," asked the Duke with obvious excitement.

Merlin smiled. "What would make you think that?"

"Because my wife had borne me four sons and every time you have come, stayed a short while and left disappointed."

"Most men prefer a son."

"I have no preference but to have my wife and child healthy. That having been said, I do have four sons."

"You have a large land with many responsibilities necessitating many sons."

"I should welcome a daughter, though."

"Oh?"

"I love nothing in the world so well as my wife, why should I not love a daughter after her image?"

Merlin smiled. "True Love."

"I wonder, though, if it was a daughter you were waiting for all this time, why all the false visits?"

"Do you question my knowledge of the future?"

"Well..."

"Sometimes if one is too close to events, one cannot see them properly."

"Curious."
"Oh?"

"I only just had someone tell me-"

He stopped mid-sentence interrupted by a baby's first cry.

Merlin smiled. "Yes, that's her."

The Duke entered his wife's room. The midwife and maids backed away, giving him his space as he approached Catherine. Biting tongue notwithstanding, she was quite a lovely woman with porcelain skin and red hair. She held the baby against her, smiling.

"Well, here is Papa..." she cooed.

"My lady," he said, placing a gentle kiss on her lips.

"You took far too long," she said.

"I was delayed. Forgive me."

"Always."

The Duke looked down. "I was really hoping for red hair."

"Oh, hush it, Alec... she's perfect."

"Merlin's here."

"Merlin? Is she the one he's waited for?"

"I think so. Finally, though, we have our little queen to help you rule us all."

"Reinette," Catherine said suddenly.

"Reinette?"

She looked back down at the baby. "Our little queen, Reinette."

The Duke smiled and kissed his wife in agreement. "Reinette."

Now

"Okay," said Belle. She looked seriously at Beatrice as she sat on the bed in the room at the inn. "I'm going for a run."

"Okay. Have fun."

Belle shook her head. "No, for once, listen. I want you to stay in this room. I don't want you to go anywhere. I don't want you to commit any more felonies. I don't want you to hurt yourself-"

"I never hurt myself!"

"Please, Beatrice? Just promise me?"

Beatrice sighed. "I promise."
Belle nodded and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "I love you."

"Love you, too," Beatrice said grudgingly.

It was five episodes of Doctor Who later when Beatrice got a knock at the door. She paused her iPad and walked over to answer it.

It was Savior Girl.

"August is wood."

It was an odd opening statement, but this whole thing was odd. "Um, yeah?"

"Henry ate a poison apple turnover."

Beatrice let out a breath of contempt and leaned against the doorway. "Why did Henry have a poison apple turnover?"

"Because Regina gave it to me."

Beatrice crossed her arms. "And Regina would be?"

"The Evil Queen."

"Not so crazy now, am I?"

"You did torch my car."

"For a reason."

"August says you used magic. He said you could help."

"Oh, God," said Beatrice, remembering the fortune teller's prophecy.

"Beatrice, I'm not ready for this. I need all the help I can get. I have to get some sort of magic to save Henry."

"And the Curse?"

"I'll work on it, but right now Regina is waiting. We don't have much time."

"Oh, good," said Beatrice. "Regina is waiting."

She walked over and put on her ankle boots, grabbed her iPhone and the purple sack from the voodoo woman.

"What's that?," Emma asked looking at the sack.

"Well, it mostly looks like some rocks and a couple of candles, but I think it might help," she said closing the door on the room and starting to walk out with Emma.

"How is that going to help?"

"Not a clue. It's really too bad I used all the magic zombie powder."

"The what?!," asked Emma.
"Come on," said Beatrice. "Her Majesty awaits."

Then

The Duke looked across the room at the son-in-law he had been trying to make conversation with for the better part of the day. He had no love lost for Sir Maurice and had thought at one time he could learn to at least tolerate the man his daughter had chosen to marry, but he was now decided that was not to be.

The footman entered. "Sir Maurice. Your Grace. There is a visitor."

"I'm not taking visitors," said Maurice.

"He says he is Merlin."

"Merlin?" asked the Duke. "He's a friend to our family. Send him through."

Maurice nodded his acquiescence. The footman departed and soon returned with the wizard.

"Merlin," said the Duke. "How good to see you."

"Your Grace," he said. "Sir Maurice."

"Merlin, are you unwell?" asked the Duke. "Forgive me, you do not seem yourself."

The wizard paused. "Have you ever gotten to the near end of something, like a journey, and it's not quite gone the way you planned?"

"Yes, but perhaps you are where you're meant to be?"

"Indeed," he said, casting a glare at Sir Maurice.

"Come. Sit. My wife is with Reinette."

"Indeed I am not," said Catherine, entering the room.

"We heard nothing," the Duke remarked in alarm.

"You would not have," said Catherine. "She's an absolute lamb. A true beauty."

"It's a girl?" asked Sir Maurice.

"Yes," said Catherine tersely. "Your wife and daughter are waiting."

Sir Maurice left.

Catherine looked to Merlin. "Are you certain you wouldn't like to turn him into something?"

"That's not really my thing," said Merlin.

The Duke snorted. "Since when?"

"I truly wonder at that man," said Catherine.

"He passed the morning hunting," said the Duke.
Merlin looked out the window. Catherine looked at the Duke in puzzlement then back to the wizard.

"Merlin, I wonder if I might crave an indulgence," said Catherine.

"I suppose it should depend on what manner of indulgence."

"You've been following our families for generations."

"Yes?"

She shrugged in curiosity. "To what end? For how long?"

"Do you swear to the gods to never tell?"

They exchanged glances.

"By the gods," said the Duke.

"And I," said Catherine.

"Your great-granddaughter."

"Is she..." The Duke struggled. "I know she should be special, but to what purpose should you need her?"

"I've tried to build a kingdom before and it's fallen."

The Duke looked at his wife. "Do you mean Camelot? It's only just begun."

"Just wait," said Merlin.

"So, our great-granddaughter is to be a queen?" asked Catherine.

"I shouldn't worry. All your granddaughter must do is follow the path of True Love."

Once Sir Maurice was off and Reinette had fallen asleep, Merlin made his way into the nursery. He approached the cradle and took the baby in his arms.

"Here you are, Belle of Avonlea. I have been waiting a very long time for you. Despite what you may be told, you come from an unbroken line of True Love and that makes you perfect for what you are going to do. You will be a hero. You shall fear no beast and no one, no one decides your fate but you."

Now

Regina walked up to the library with her huge ring of skeleton keys. She pointed at Beatrice.

"What is she doing here?"

"I heard you needed help," said Beatrice. "Are you going to stop me?"

Regina froze. She actually couldn't and she silently cursed Gold in this instance. She opened up the library as Emma and Beatrice followed her in.

"Oh, my God, you guys have a card catalog and nobody noticed how out of date you were?,"
Beatrice remarked.

Regina didn't say anything. She walked over to a mirrored tree on the wall and placed her hand on it. She moved a few more levers and an elevator rose.

"Whoa," said Emma.

Regina motioned at the elevator.

"After you," said Emma.

"It's a two man job, one of us has to operate it."

"Great," Beatrice grumbled.

"And I'm just supposed to trust you?," asked Emma.

"You don't have a choice," said Regina.

"This battle I'm supposed to fight. Who is it? Who's down there?"

"I'm guessing a dragon," said Beatrice.

Regina turned to look at her. "How did you know that?"

"Fortune teller."

Regina stood closer to Beatrice. "If that imp is trying to double cross me-"

"What imp?," asked Beatrice.

"Yeah, what imp?," asked Emma. "Wait, what dragon?"

"Here's what you're going to have to do," said Regina.

The Curse was drawing to a close. Gold had waited for this day for a very long time, he was so close to achieving his goal. All he had to do was wait a bit and then go to the library.

He was very surprised to hear a knock at his shop door. He walked over to see Belle standing out front.

"I'm sorry, I tried to call."

"Yes, sorry, I was busy," said Gold. "Won't you come in?"

Belle walked in. "It's Beatrice. I went for a run, I was probably out too long, I just wanted to clear my head and it was so stupid!"

"Calm down, Belle. What's the matter?"

"She wasn't in our room. I tried asking August and his room had some creepy life-sized wooden doll in it-"

"Really?," asked Gold.

"Then I asked Granny and she said she saw Beatrice leave with the sheriff."
"What?," Gold asked, unable to hide his dismay.

"I went to the station, but nobody was there. I don't know what else to do. Do you have any idea where she might have taken her?"

Gold hurried back behind the counter and got the key he would need out.

"Miss French, I think it would be best if you stayed here for the moment."

"Where are you going?"

"To get Beatrice."

"Then I'll come with you-"

"No, Belle, please, do as I ask."

"No. She's my daughter!"

"Belle..." He paused. "Everything Beatrice has ever told you about the other realm, the Enchanted Forest, is true."

"What?"

"There was nothing wrong with her except she was born into a world she was never meant to be in and that's my fault."

"I really have no idea what you mean," said Belle.

"Which is why you should wait here. I'll call you the moment I find Sheriff Swan."

As Gold left, Belle was lost with a terrible sense of confusion and unable to do anything.

Then

Belle French was an unusual expectant mother for the nurses at Beth Israel Hospital.

For one, the memory thing. She had only a vague notion of who she was and no notion of who the father was. No father, that was the second thing. It wasn't because they hadn't seen single mothers, it was because Belle was quite beautiful and quite lovely when they got to know her. No one showed up to be with her, parents, friends, no one. She passed her labor in her room, quietly, calmly and seemed genuinely grateful when the staff would come in to check on her.

Then it was a shock when seemingly out of nowhere her labor suddenly came on fast and hard like the autumn thunderstorm outside that had appeared out of nowhere.

Belle finally couldn't help it, howling as the nurses and doctor hurried to get into position.

There was a harsh crack of thunder and Belle screamed again, leaving her panting and out of breath.

"Just breathe, Belle," said the nurse. "You're doing fine."

Belle nodded, unable to speak. She felt another contraction come on and screamed again, joining in the thunder. There was a burst of lightning and the power suddenly went out.
"Oh, what the hell?," muttered the doctor. "Someone get me a light."

"What's happening?," asked Belle.

"It's fine. The generator will come on any second," said the nurse.

There was a hum as the emergency lights came on. Belle screamed again.

"This is it, Belle, you're almost done," said the doctor.

There was another final push and cry. The lights flickered back on as the baby let out her first cry.

"It's a girl," said the doctor, wrapping her up.

Belle waited impatiently as they did whatever checks and handed the baby to her.

"Hi," Belle said softly. "Hello."

Belle smiled. The girl with no memories, the girl who didn't know who she was, the girl with no one, she was a woman with a purpose now. She was a mother to this tiny creature born in the midst of this storm. Dark hair, lovely brown eyes, a face she had already fallen for.

"Have you picked out a name yet?," asked the nurse.

"Beatrice," said Belle.

"Really?," asked the doctor.

Belle shot him a glare and turned back to her baby.

---

**Now**

The elevator stopped. Emma looked at Beatrice.

"Want out first?"

"Your kid," said Beatrice.

Emma walked out, sword drawn. Beatrice followed.

There was a glass coffin. Emma walked past it as Beatrice ran her fingers over it and sniffed.

"Do you smell ivy?," she asked.

"What?," asked Emma.

Beatrice looked up and realized they had made their first mistake as Maleficent growled.

"Emma..." Beatrice hissed.

They ran. Emma looked at her sword and dropped it. "To hell with this."

She drew her gun and fired at Maleficent. This only made the dragon hiss fire. Beatrice yelped and ran behind a stone pillar as Emma followed.

"Why did you do that?!," Beatrice shouted. "Have you ever heard a fairy tale where the dragon
gets killed by a small firearm?!

"Have you got any great plan?!

Beatrice sighed. "Uh, Maleficent?," she called. "Maleficent?"

"What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to talk to her."

"She's a dragon!"

"Who was also a person." Beatrice dared to turn and look at the dragon. "Look, sorry about the Curse thing and Regina's really sort of a bitch..."

The dragon hissed fire against the pillar. Beatrice and Emma ran as Maleficent fell into a gorge."

"Do you think she's gone?," asked Emma.

"I think she has wings and you should back away from the edge."

Just then, Maleficent flew up out of the gorge.

"Really?!," asked Emma.

Beatrice turned to run and tripped, cursing her clumsiness as she heard her iPhone crunch in her front pocket. Emma grabbed her to help her up and her glasses fell to the ground.

She was about to turn back for them when she felt Emma yanking her and saw a very blurry flame.

"How bad did you need those?," asked Emma.

"Pretty bad."

"That magic you had. Any idea how to use it?"

"Not really. I can't see and I have a candle and some stones." Beatrice paused. "I can't see and I have a candle."

"Okay..."

Beatrice reached into the sack and pulled out a candle. She let out a sigh and blew on the wick, lighting a small flame.

"Okay, wow," said Emma. "Fire's not something we're really short on."

Beatrice blinked. "I can see."

"Okay, that's something."

Beatrice pulled out the stones. "I am going to throw these at that dragon and then I suggest doing something with the sword quick."

"What do the stones do?"

"Not a clue."
Beatrice turned and threw the stones, one managed to land in the dragon's mouth. It swallowed and lit up the scales. Emma threw her sword at the bright spot and the dragon burst into ashes.

"Oh, God," said Beatrice, suddenly covered in dragon ash, her candle taken out by the ash.

"Yeah."

Emma walked over where a golden egg laid atop a pile of ashes.

"Okay, I've got it."

"Cool," said Beatrice. "Would have liked to see that."

"You really need glasses."

"No kidding?"

Now

Merlin walked into the hospital nursery, surveying down the rows of babies.

"Can I help you?" the nurse asked.

"Doctor Avalon," he said, brandishing his plastic badge. "Here to see Baby Girl French for an Ophthalmology consult."

"She's-"

"Yes, I see her," said Merlin walking over.

Merlin much admired the Land Without Magic. Though he had to say, he found the way children were born into this world somewhat strange. Bringing life into the world, that was the greatest magic of all and here it was charted and managed and supervised. He lifted the girl from her plastic bassinet and looked at her eyes.

"Oh, yes, Beatrice, that mean old witch did do quite a number on your eyes, didn't she? She didn't get you though, do you know why?"

The baby stared blankly.

"You are part of an unbroken line of True Love. On your mother's side. I won't even start on the absolute wreck on your father's side. You're too young. You might think you don't belong, but you are exactly where you need to be. What others might think are weaknesses, they are your greatest strengths. You don't see the world like others. You're afraid of the dark, so you never let the light go out. This, Beatrice, this is what I have waited for."

Merlin put her back down.

"Now, I will see you later."

Now

Emma looked at Beatrice as they rode up the elevator.

"Would you stop shaking your head?," she asked, gripping the egg.
"I have dead dragon in my hair!"

Suddenly, the elevator stopped.

"Oh, come on!"

"Regina!," shouted Emma.

"Miss Swan?," Gold called down. "Miss French, what are you doing here?"

"What are you doing here?," Beatrice asked.

"I was checking on Miss Swan and it's a good thing because it appears Regina's abandoned you."

"I'm coming up," said Emma.

"Miss French, what happened to your glasses?"

"Dragon."

"He's right," said Emma. "You first."

"I can't see two feet in front of me," said Beatrice.

"It's not that far," said Emma, helping her to the wall. "I'll help you on the ledge and then just pull yourself up."

"Yeah, because pull ups are what I'm really good at," said Beatrice.

Emma helped her up on the ledge.

"Here, take my hand," said Gold, closing the distance between Beatrice and the elevator doorway.

Beatrice reached and Gold pulled. He seemed surprisingly strong for an old guy who limped around with a cane.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"Fine," said Beatrice.

"I'm coming up," said Emma.

"Well, you can't possibly scale the wall and carry that. Toss it up."

"Beatrice! You catch it!"

"Can't see! Can't catch!," Beatrice called back.

"We're wasting time," said Gold. "Toss it up. Your boy's going to be fine."

"You hold onto it. I'll be right up."

If Beatrice had been able to see, she might have noticed Gold as he came behind her and grabbed her by the arm as soon as he had the egg in hand.

"Gold! Gold!," Emma shouted.
"Hey, what?!" Beatrice struggled against Gold's grip. She was finding it very hard to shake off. "What do you think you're doing?!"

"Beatrice! What's going on?!," Emma called.

Before Beatrice could answer, she was rushed out of the library about the time she was far enough away to be able to see Regina tied to a chair and gagged.
Then

Catherine awaited her granddaughter's return to the Dower Summer House.

"Belle," she called upon hearing the door open and close.

There was a pause as Catherine knew Belle reluctantly came to the sitting room.

"Won't you join me? Reginald's made tea."

Belle sat down. "Grandmother, I'm not really."

Catherine ignored her and began pouring. "I have reports you were spotted at a dwarf tavern."

Belle froze. "Grandmother, I-"

"Of course, you're an adult. You've survived teh Dark One so I daresay you can handle yourself."

"Thank you, Grandmother-"

"Still, I have to wonder about the sort of woman who chooses to drink at a dwarf tavern. She must not want to be bothered. She must not want anyone to ask questions, particularly when she takes a satchel of books with her. So, I thought, why don't you just tell me what's happened?" Catherine handed her a tea cup.

"Nothing, I worked for Rumple-Rumplestiltskin, then he no longer needed me."

"And he didn't dishonor you in any way?"

"Gods, no!," she said. "He was quite the gentleman."

"Was he now?"

"Yes. He would never do anything so... vile."

"So you met someone else while you were at the Dark Castle?"

"No."

"I've heard descriptions of the Dark One, but of course, I've never seen the actual article. I've heard he has claws and green skin-"

"Sort of gold-tinged," Belle said absent-mindedly.

"Frightful hair."

"I wouldn't say frightful..."

"They say he wears dragon skins and usually leather trousers."
Belle gulped her tea.

"Mind you, your grandfather could pull off a pair of leather trousers. Well, he could wear them, I could pull them-"

"Grandmother!," Belle gasped.

"Oh, please, you were blushing long before I mentioned leather trousers." Catherine sat back in her chair smiling with the satisfaction of an old woman who liked to prove her skills. "Now, you said he let you go, but I think there was more to it."

"He let me go and then I met this woman on the road who said True Love's kiss could break any curse. Even his. So I tried it."

"And?"

"It was working."

"It was?"

"Then he stopped me."

"Oh."

"He said he cared more about his power than me and I called him a coward and I left and came here."

"Well, that is quite a tale, Belle."

"Then you understand."

"Of course I do."

"I mean, it's not like you and grandfather-'"

"What's not?"

"I mean, your True Love. It was different. He was someone you could fall in love with-"

The Dowager Duchess burst into laughter.

"Grandmother?"

"You- you think I wanted to love your grandfather? You think in a thousand years I would have chosen to fall in love with him?"

Belle was confused. "You two had True Love, though."

"Yes, but I didn't want it to start and by the time I did, it had already been decided. Belle, when I met your grandfather he was an insufferable blabbermouth who was in love with his reflection. Not to mention he was a frog."

"I didn't realize you-"

"No, Belle, he was literally a frog."

"What?"
"He was trying to get me to kiss him to break his curse and finally, I just kissed him to get him out of my life and it worked."

"Then what?"

"He followed me around until I agreed to marry him. Then I did and he followed me around until I married him and he wasn't so bad."

"Wasn't so bad?"

"Leather trousers, Belle."

Belle thought she might die of embarrassment. "So what? So I should go back to him and beg?"

"No, a woman should never beg. That's a man's office. Just act like you forgot your cloak or something."

"He'll never admit anything. He's too much of a coward."

"Of course he is. Most men are. Besides that, I don't think you get to become the Dark One without a reason."

"I suppose not."

"I'm not saying you have to go back this instant. Just when you're ready."

Belle smiled and kissed her grandmother on the cheek. "Thank you, Grandmother."

---

**Now**

Belle sat in Mr. Gold's shop, pondering the strange turn of events and her own shortcomings as a mother when the phone finally rang.

"Hello?"

"Miss French."

"Mr. Gold, have you found her?"

"Yes."

Belle breathed a sigh of relief. "How is she?"

"She's alright. A little worse for wear."

"Where are you? Should I come meet you?"

"No, I'm going to bring her back to you shortly. You should stay put."

"Can I talk to her?"

"The sheriff has some business to conclude. I'm sure you'll speak shortly."

"Well, thank you, Mr. Gold."

Gold walked back to the car and got in. Beatrice was sitting in the passenger seat, looking
unhappy.
"What's wrong?"

She turned. "What's wrong? What's wrong?!

"Yes."

"Okay, well, I've lost my iPhone, my glasses, my hair is full of dead dragon, I've been kidnapped by Rumplestiltskin-

"You have not been kidnapped."

"Then what would you call it?"

Gold paused. "Claimed."

"What?", Beatrice asked with dismay. "My mom sold me? Did she even read the contract? I didn't think she could be as stupid as Cinderella."

"Do you think your mother would sell her firstborn?"

"Not really..."

"Why haven't you run?"

"I can't see. We're in a moving car. Besides, you still have the egg and Henry is still dying and you have the cure."

"Did Regina tell you I was Rumplestiltskin?"

"No. August did."

"And do you know anything else about me?"

"The Cinderella thing. Straw into gold. You don't exactly have a lot of stories. You should talk to your PR guys."

"My PR guys?"

"Wait, Shrek Forever After. You were in that."

"Shrek Forever After?"

"Yeah, like you're mad at Shrek because he saved Fiona and then you didn't get to be King of Far Far Away, so you trick Shrek into like creating a time line where he was never born."

Gold shook his head. "What would be the point in that?"

"I don't know. It wasn't a very good movie. They should have stopped at three."

"So I have one not very good movie?"

"And this book, it was called 'Rumplestiltskin's Daughter.' My teacher read it in Kindergarten. Instead of marrying the king or prince or whoever, the miller's daughter marries you."

Gold shifted uncomfortably as this story was perhaps striking too close to the truth. "Is that so?"
"Yeah, so then your daughter gets trapped by the same guy and she like convinces the king to grow gold instead of spin it."

"You can't grow gold."

"Well, yeah, it seemed stupid. Not to mention, what sort of a moron is like, 'Hey, I can spin straw into gold.' I mean, if you said it, that's one thing. You can do it."

"You sound like your mother."

"So? Was she a moron?"

"Who?"

"The miller's daughter."

"What makes you think there was a miller's daughter?"

"Because I can't see anything and I can tell you're uncomfortable."

"I'm not uncomfortable."

"Yeah, because denying it is really convincing."

---

**Then**

Belle stood at the door to the Dark Castle.

She was deciding whether or not to knock.

She had even formed a fist several times and then unclenched it.

He might not even be home.

If he wasn't home, she could at least say she tried.

This was ridiculous, Belle finally decided. She was a grown woman. She could either be brave and knock on the door or live the rest of her days not knowing. Maybe that would be okay. Maybe she would have adventures, she could even go on and live a reasonably happy life, be happy with someone.

But whoever that someone was, he wouldn't be Rumplestiltskin.

Belle banged on the doors.

Nothing happened. So she banged on them again.

"Alright, alright, dearie! No need to be impatient!"

The doors opened with magic as Rumplestiltskin just entered the entry hall. He stopped in his tracks as Belle came inside the doors.

"Where are the angry villagers?," he asked.

"The what?"
"Angry villagers? To slay the beast?"

Belle shook her head. "I came alone."

"And why did you do that, dearie? I made myself clear."

Belle froze. She wished she had bothered to work out a reason or some sort of speech. So, she could only fall back on her grandmother's advice.

"I forgot my cloak."

Rumplestiltskin tilted his head at her. "You forgot your cloak?"

"Yes, I just came to get it."

Not having a better plan, Belle marched past Rumplestiltskin in the direction of her old room.

"Is that all?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Yes," she lied as she continued her walk and tried to come up with a reason that would keep her in the castle after she made it there.

"Your father let you return to a castle with a dangerous monster so you could get your cloak?"

"I didn't go to my father," Belle let slip and immediately regretted it.

"You didn't go to your father?"

She stopped and turned. "My grandmother keeps a summer home not too far from here. I went to her."

"Your grandmother?"

"The Dowager Duchess of Padua. Is that all or may I get my cloak?"

"Oh, don't let me stop you, dearie."

"I won't," she said smoothing her skirt as she turned to begin the climb up the staircase.

Belle listened to Rumplestiltskin's footsteps falling behind her own. She walked in her room and then pretended to search and he stood smugly in the doorway.

"Can't find it, dearie?"

"I'm certain it's somewhere around here," she said, trying not to let her infuriation show. "So, how have you been?"

"What?"

"Dealing? How is everything?"

Rumplestiltskin was dumbstruck. Belle felt a little guilty about taking pleasure in that, but it didn't stop her.

"I suppose you must have been very happy since I left," said Belle. "Since you care for your power so much, it must have made you very happy."
"Why have you come, Belle?" he asked with an air of gravity in his voice.

"Have you been happy?"

"What do you think?"

She stopped and gave up all pretense of searching for a cloak. "Then why won't you let me try to make you happy?"

"I can't."

"Why not? What's so important? I know it's not power!"

"It's what power can get me."

"Then what is it that you want?"

She waited as he said nothing.

"If you're going to cast me out again, I think I at least deserve to know the reason why. The real reason not the lies of a coward."

"My son."

"Your son?" Belle repeated incredulously.

"You're right, Belle. I am a coward. I always have been and once it cost me my son."

"I don't understand."

"He's gone to a land without magic."

"A land without magic?" Belle asked.

"I have to find him and let him know..." He didn't finish. Belle could only guess at what depths of feeling were contained in his omission.

"So if I broke your curse, you would lose your power and you wouldn't be able to find him."

"No."

"And True Love's kiss? Is that all that could break it?"

"Is that all?" Rumpelstiltskin scoffed.

"There isn't any other way I could take your powers from you?"

A grave look fell over his face. "Belle, whatever you're thinking-"

"There is no other way I could take your powers from you?," she insisted.

"No, but-"

"Then I won't kiss you."

"Belle-"

"I wouldn't take your son from you."
"Of course you wouldn't-

"Then what's the alternative? We never see each other again and both stay unhappy? What torture would that be?"

Now

The Cadillac stopped just outside the woods. At least Beatrice was fairly certain it was the woods. Up close it was a brown and green blur. Gold stepped out of the car wordlessly and she scrambled to follow.

"Where are you going?" asked Beatrice.

"There's something I have to do."

"With the potion or whatever?"

"Yes."

"What about Henry? Are you just going to let him die?"

"There's more than one way to get True Love."

"What?"

Gold now noted that the girl had moved to follow him up the path. "I thought you couldn't see."

"I can't."

"You're going to follow me into the woods when you can't see?"

"Yes."

"To try and save a boy you hardly know with a potion you don't know how to use? I don't think so."

Gold walked up the path.

"I'm getting pretty good at using things I don't know how to use."

Gold hadn't realized she had followed and turned. He smiled in amusement at her as she hopelessly groped around. "You have inherited some of your mother's tendencies."

"And what would you know about my mom?"

"I know your mother rather well." He glanced back down the path at her. "You should stop before you hurt yourself."

"I can see some of the far away trees," said Beatrice.

"Yes, but your feet are rather close to you and where you're walking is what I'm concerned about."

"Yeah, I know you want to make sure the goods are in tact."
"No, I want to make sure your skull is in tact."

As if on cue, Beatrice tripped over her own feet and planted her face in the ground. She had been content to lay there and ponder where her life had become some kind of cosmic joke, but she realized Gold was helping her up.

"As I said, too like your mother. Are you alright? Did you hit your head?"

"My nose, maybe..."

"It doesn't look broken. Does it hurt?"

Beatrice realized Gold had one hand holding her chin and the other picking leaves out of her hair. "How did you manage to get so many dragon scales in there?"

"They itch." She yanked her head away, wishing she could see so she could get a read on Gold. "What are you doing?"

Beatrice froze, like she felt something. A wave of something. She turned to look back at the town.

"What was that?," she asked.

"I believe that would be Miss Swan." He took her by the arm. "Come on."

"Now you're dragging me."

"No, there's a ledge coming up and I want to make certain you don't fall over it."

"Okay, well, that hurts. I burned my wrists. It hasn't healed yet."

"Right, sorry," said Gold, moving his hand up. "Come on. Now, what about Beauty and the Beast?"

"The movie? The musical? The TV show?"

"The story. Whatever August told you."

"Well, my mom promised to go with the Beast forever to save her village from the ogres and... I don't know. This story is losing some of its appeal."

"Why?"

"Because my mom's in it."

"Then what happens?"

"They fall in love and have a daughter with really bad eyesight."

"Is that all you have?"

"Well, you try investigating something while everyone is under a curse and your mom thinks you're crazy and see how much better you do."

"And have you decided who the Beast is?"

"Not really." He let go of her and Beatrice could make out the shape of a well. She thought. She didn't really know a lot about wells. "Why did we stop?"
Gold stepped up to the well. "This is a very special place. The waters that run below are said to have the power to return that which one has lost."

Beatrice spotted the purple glowing potion. He dropped it in the well and she tried to scramble up.

"What did you do?," she shouted.

"Beatrice, everything's going to be fine."

"In what way is everything fine?!," she shouted. She then looked back down the well and thought she could make out a plume of purple smoke. She thought her vision was betraying her again, but, no, it really was a giant plume of purple smoke. She motioned at it and looked back at the blur she was fairly certain was still Gold. "In what is everything fine?!"

"Beatrice."

"Yeah?"

"I'm your father."

"What? No..."

Then she started thinking about it.

Her mother had immediately liked him and nobody else liked him.

He had been kind of clingy ever since they'd arrived.

The Magician card.

Since when did the Beast make deals? And how was the Beast going to stop the ogres?

Also, Beatrice was trying to remember for certain that Gold had brown eyes.

"Oh, God, this must be how Luke Skywalker felt..." Beatrice remarked as the purple smoke obscured everything. Gold took her hand. "What's the smoke?"

"Magic."

"Yeah," said Beatrice. "Sure, that makes sense."
Thanks for the comments and kudos, guys, I really appreciate them. Some housekeeping: we're now entering a sort of alternate season two. Things will play out differently. Do with that knowledge what you will. Thank you so much, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon a Time. Thank you so much for the reads and reviews and follows. I really appreciate them. Some housekeeping: we're now entering a sort of alternate season two. Things will play out differently. Do with that knowledge what you will. Thank you so much, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

**The Day The Curse Broke...**

Belle had tried the iPhone again and again. The purple haze had dissipated and she was left in Gold's shop to ponder what had happened. She wondered if it would be better to go seek out Gold and Beatrice, but surely whatever was happening he would keep to his promise to bring her back.

Finally, the door opened and the Belle ran to them.

"Watch your step," said Gold.

"Can't," Beatrice muttered.

"Beatrice!" Belle ran towards her and took her into her arms. "I am so sorry, sweetheart. What happened? Are you alright?"

"I lost my iPhone and my glasses."

"And there's dragon skin in your hair." She looked at Gold. "Why is there dragon skin in her hair?"

"It wasn't my idea," said Gold.

"Really? Because it sure seemed like that," Beatrice snapped.

"It was my idea for Miss Swan to go. Not you," Gold replied. "I never would have put you in harm's way."

Belle quickly relented and threw her arms around Gold. "Rumplestiltskin."

"My darling Belle."

"Ugh," said Beatrice, wondering how she could be so disgusted by something she could hardly see. She looked at Belle. "Sorry. So, you're confirming this?"

"Confirming what?," asked Belle.
"Uh, him?"

"She doesn't seem to want to take my word for it," said Gold.

"Beatrice," said Belle, taking her hand. "This is your father."

"Rumplestiltskin? He's the Beast?"

"The Beast, the Dark One..." Gold quipped.

"I'm sorry, the what one?," asked Beatrice.

"Yeah, August didn't really give you a very thorough book," said Belle. "The point is we were never supposed to be separated, Beatrice."

"Yes, about that," said Gold. He looked at Belle. "Tell me what happened."

Belle had been trying to put the pieces of her life back in order since the Curse broke. "I went to see my father and he wasn't dying. The Blue Fairy made him lure me there."

"The Blue Fairy..." Gold said with contempt.

"She already knew about Beatrice somehow." Belle glanced at Beatrice, then back at Gold. "Sorry. Could we talk about this alone?"

"What do we have to talk about alone?," asked Beatrice, suspicious of any new developments. She didn't think she could take it.

"Beatrice."

"No, I've been seeing a psychiatrist. I've had you think I was crazy. I get to know why."

"I really don't think it's appropriate," said Belle. She took Gold by the hand and looked at Beatrice. "Just wait in here."

Belle dragged Gold out.

He was already seething. "What couldn't you say in front of Beatrice?"

"I didn't want her to hear that her own grandfather sent for clerics and a medicine woman to get rid of her," said Belle.

"Did he now?"

Belle could see the anger growing in Gold's eyes. "Yes, he did, but-"

"You might tell her that's why she needs glasses."

"What?," asked Belle.

"Those same elixirs sometimes they're given to blind an enemy."

Belle nodded. "Then I was under a sleeping spell. Snow White and Grumpy found me and made the Blue Fairy let me go. They helped me return home, but I think you were already gone by then. When you were imprisoned, she sent for me, but..."

"But what?"
"The Blue Fairy spirited me away and-"

Belle could see the anger growing in Gold's eyes. "And she traded you to Regina for a tree."

Belle nodded. "You know the rest. Locked up, sent away."

"They are all going to pay for this. All of them."

"Rumple-" She paused. "What was that cloud?"

"Magic."

"And what do you need magic for? Your revenge?"

"You can see how it might prove useful."

"Rumplestiltskin, no-"

"I can't let this stand. You were taken from me. They tried to murder our child-"

"Listen to me, please," Belle begged. "Beatrice has known you're her father for less than an hour. She doesn't trust you yet. How is she supposed to do that if you go on a killing spree?"

"Against the people who have tried to hurt her-"

"She doesn't understand that and I don't want her to. She needs a father, Rumple. You're all she's ever wanted. Please don't take this from her."

"She doesn't want me."

"Rumple, she doesn't even know you yet and you don't know her. Just... let's hold off on my father and the Blue Fairy and Regina."

"Are you hoping I'll just forget about it?", he asked sarcastically.

"A little," Belle said with a slight smile. "I'm also hoping you'll want to know your daughter more than you want them dead."

Gold relented. "Fine. I won't, but if they so much as look at her in a way that I don't like-"

"We will worry about that if it happens. Right now, she needs us."

Gold nodded. "You're right."

They returned inside.

"Anyone want to tell me anything?," asked Beatrice.

"Give me your wrists," said Gold.

"What?"

"It's okay," said Belle.

Beatrice sighed and held out her wrists. Gold pulled up the sleeves and unwrapped the gauze.

"That looks nasty," he remarked. "The sleeping curse must have been a rather vicious one to still
have a hold on you."

"So I hear."

"I didn't realize the puppet knew about such things."

"No, well, there-" Beatrice's sentence was interrupted by a weird tingling in her wrists. "What are you doing?"

"Healing them."

Beatrice yanked her wrists away. "What?!"

"Now, let me see your eyes..."

Beatrice backed away banging into one of the cases.

"Beatrice..." said Belle.

"And what is involved with that?"

"Involved?," asked Gold.

"Before you start messing with my eyes that are connected to my brain I think I'd like to know more."

"I wouldn't hurt you."

"Is there an optometrist? There has to be, right?"

"Or I could just fix them," said Gold.

Beatrice looked at Belle. "I know you keep my prescription around."

They were both staring at Belle now.

"Rumple, maybe it's too much all at once," said Belle.

"But I can fix it-"

Belle closed the distance to Gold. "She's going to need longer than an hour to trust you," she said softly.

"Doctor Morita is down the street," Gold said grudgingly.

"Great," said Beatrice. She headed towards the door and was pleased for herself for successfully remembering where it was when she got outside to see the fuzzy outline of an angry mob running down the street.

"Yeah! Let's get her!"

"Kill the queen!"

Gold pulled Beatrice back in.

"What was that?," asked Beatrice.
"I think they must be looking for Regina," said Gold.

One Month Later...

Beatrice walked with her mother down the main street. There was something to be said about the day without glasses, she didn't know how many stares they got. She couldn't tell if it was because the townspeople still wondered how a beauty could love a beast, if they were curious about the Dark One's family or if they were just waiting for her to go all Carrie and smite everyone.

"I was thinking about the library," said Belle.

"In New York?"

"No," said Belle. "Here."

"You mean the thing with the card catalog and the dragon in the bottom of it?"

"Your father says it's safe. Besides, I can get computers."

"You want to run it?"

"What's wrong with that?"

"Just that you used to be a senior librarian at the most famous library in the world..."

"And now we live here with your father. Our lives have changed and it's not all bad." She paused. "Do you miss your school? Your friends?"

"I don't have friends so really nothing has changed."

"You could try to make friends."

"Yeah, let me just demonstrate that." Beatrice picked out a random mom pushing a stroller. "Hi. How's it going?"

The woman pretended not to hear Beatrice and sped faster away.

"Okay," said Beatrice. "Nice meeting you."

"Beatrice..."

Belle froze and pulled Beatrice closer to her.

"Mom!," she groaned, trying to pull herself away. She looked across the street to see Mother Superior and some of the others. "The nuns again? What is with you and the nuns?"

"You haven't been talking to them, have you?"

"About what?"

"Anything."

"So, I'm supposed to be friendly to people, except the nuns. Yeah, this makes a lot of sense."

"Also, the priests."
"Is there a rabbi I should be scared of somewhere around here? What is going on?"

"Just do as I ask."

Belle walked into the pawn shop and Beatrice followed.

"Well, hello," said Gold. "How did things go at school?"

Belle looked at Beatrice.

Beatrice groaned internally. This was her mother's new thing, forcing the two of them to talk. "I got my class schedule."

"Oh."

Belle shot a look at Gold.

"Anything interesting?" he asked.

"Well, physics. Pre-Calc. Then you know the usual stuff."

"Do you need anything? For school?"

That was the other thing Beatrice had noticed. When in doubt, Gold sought to find something he could fix, preferably by buying something. This had led to the ordering of a new iPhone—apparently, nobody in Storybrooke cared about new phones, it had to be ordered—and any number of items for her room.

"Pencils? Paper?"

"I think I have extra in my New York stuff."

"There's a stationery store across the street," said Gold. "You could just go pick some new things out. Here."

Gold reached for his wallet. He always had cash on him. Though Beatrice wondered why people were still paying him rent since as she understood it a curse had made him own everything. Maybe it was some part of the "We Are Both" speech she had missed.

He handed her more bills than were necessary.

"Thanks," said Beatrice.

She left. Belle turned to Gold.

"It's as if I'm pulling her teeth to give her anything," said Gold.

"She's not used to having a father offer to give her things," said Belle. "Give her time."

"How were things at the school?"

"Okay. It's different from her old school. She'll have to get used to it."

"My sources say the dwarves found fairy dust."

"Or I could have just asked Mary Margaret."
"Well, there are some things fairies don't tell their princess. Either way, we need to be more careful."

"I don't see how we could possibly be any more careful. She's barely been out of our sight since the Curse broke. She's fifteen, Rumple, she's not a baby."

"We need a plan for school, if you're going to insist upon it."

"You can't just lock her up in a tower."

"That's not my first instinct," said Gold. "My first instinct was to deal with those who would do her harm."

"I still think we don't need a killing spree."

"As you wish," Gold said in a way that clearly indicated he thought they definitely did.

---

**The Day The Curse Broke...**

Belle held Beatrice's hand as they walked. The angry mob had died down. She felt like an idiot, but since she couldn't see anything, this was better.

"Your father said the optometrist was just down here."

"Well, that's assuming he didn't join the kill Regina squad."

"Well, then he'll just be easier to find, won't he?," Belle asked cheerfully. "What do you think of your papa so far?"

"I really couldn't say. I just met the guy."

"You must have questions. You've been wondering about everything your whole life and now I can tell you the truth. Don't you want to know anything?"

"No. Beauty. Beast. I'm covered."

"That's not our story. Not really."

Beatrice looked ahead. "Where's everyone headed?"

"Ruby!," Belle called.

"Belle! Beatrice!," said Ruby as she hurried over.

"What's going on?"

"Town meeting. Beatrice, Emma was wondering what happened to you."

"Yeah, there was this thing..." said Beatrice, trailing off.

"What's wrong?," asked Ruby.

"I'm sort of blind without my glasses."

"We're headed to the optometrist," said Belle.
"Oh, I think I saw him back over there." Ruby leaned in. "Belle, you know who he is, right?"

"Doctor Morita?"

"Ayoki."

Belle grimaced. "Not the fountain."

Ruby nodded.

"The fountain?," asked Beatrice.

"There was this fountain of youth and a man asked your father for help in getting to it."

"And everyone lived happily ever after?," Beatrice asked dryly.

"There's not by chance another optometrist?," asked Belle.

"So no happy ending," said Beatrice.

"No, sorry," said Ruby. "It'll be okay. We'll figure something out. Come on."

They went into city hall. The room was overflowing, but Ruby led them through the throng of people.

"Belle!," Mary Margaret exclaimed.

"Snow!"

The two women hugged like the childhood friends they were.

"I am so sorry," said Mary Margaret. "I never meant for Regina to-"

Belle shook her head. "I know you didn't. There are others to blame for that," she said casting a glance at Mother Superior on the other side of the room.

"Is Gold planning something?," asked David.

Mary Margaret turned. "Do we have to do this now?" She caught sight of Beatrice and walked over. "And this is your daughter! She is beautiful, Belle, just like you."

Beatrice was completely thrown off, barely being able to see events. Now Snow White was her mom's best friend?

"Hi, Belle," said Leroy.

"Grumpy!," Belle exclaimed, giving the man a hug.

And now Grumpy was her buddy.

She was starting to feel light-headed.

"Are there snacks at this thing?," asked Beatrice.

"Are you alright?," asked Mary Margaret. "Here, sit down."

"She hasn't eaten," said Belle.
"Henry," said Mary Margaret, "see if Granny has anything for Beatrice."

"You okay?"

Beatrice made out a blonde blur next to her.

"Oh, you know," said Beatrice.

"Yeah," said Emma. "I do know. I was going to come after you, but the hospital called. Then I broke the Curse and there was a big purple haze..."

"So, you heard who the Beast turned out to be?"

"Yeah," said Emma. "How's that going?"

"Weird."

"Here you go, Beatrice," said Henry, turning up with a paper towel of cookies. "This was all they had."

"Thanks," said Beatrice, taking the offering.

"So, your dad's Rumplestiltskin?," asked Henry.

"Oh, just say that so everyone can hear," said Beatrice.

The crowd finally swelled enough so that they felt the meeting could begin. There was a lot of rabble, lots of questions.

"What about the other realm?"

"Will Regina get her powers back?"

"I can't find my mother!"

"Do we still have to pay taxes?"

"Is school cancelled?"

"What about federal?"

"Do I still have to pay those parking tickets?," someone called out.

Emma took that one. "Stop parking in front of fire hydrants!"

"What are we supposed to do without fairy dust?"

"Is the optometrist here?," Beatrice added.

"Who are you?," someone called out.

"Who am I?"

"I'm on this side."

Beatrice threw her hands up. "Well, clearly I'm a girl in need of glasses!"

"We have a lot to figure out, everyone," said Mary Margaret.
"But seriously, is there an optometrist in the house?," added Beatrice.

"Beatrice..." Belle warned.

"Wait, she's with Belle? Who is she?"

"I thought Belle went with the Dark One-

Beatrice looked down at the blur she thought was Henry. "Is everyone staring at me?"

"Yeah," Henry answered.

---

*One Month Later...*

Beatrice walked in the house. The pink Victorian that she now called home. Gold and Belle followed.

"You might want to take a look in the kitchen," said Gold.

"The kitchen?," asked Beatrice.

"Well, go on," said Belle.

Beatrice walked into the kitchen. On one of the huge counters, there now sat an espresso machine.

"That's the one from Starbucks," said Beatrice. She looked back at her parents as they followed her in. "They don't sell these to the general public."

"As a rule," said Gold.

"Is there an instruction manual?," asked Beatrice, looking around the counter. "Never mind, I'll Google it."

Before she had her phone out, Gold was at her side.

"I suppose I can help you out this time," said Gold.

"You can make espressos now?"

"I'll get by."

Beatrice watched as Gold worked his way through the process and finally presented her with a mug.

She took a sip.

"How is it?," he asked.

"Not bad," said Beatrice. That was a lie, it was actually really good and she wondered if he had used magic or enchanted it or... On the other hand, she had been in Storybrooke almost a month and no longer really cared. "If this whole straw into gold thing ever goes south, you can probably get a barista job."

"I'll keep that in mind."
"Thank you," said Beatrice. "I'm going to go sort through more of my stuff."

"Do you want help?," asked Gold.

"No, I'm fine." Beatrice walked out with her mug.

Gold turned to Belle.

"That was good," said Belle.

"It's been a month."

"Rumple, does she remind you of anyone?"

"Of course. She reminds me of you."

"She's you. Difficult, stubborn, thick-skinned you," said Belle. "You might want to keep that in mind."

The Day The Curse Broke...

"Oh, come on!," said Beatrice.

"You can't be serious," said Emma.

They had found Morita outside. He had indeed been among the townspeople. One of the less cooperative townspeople.

"Is she the Dark One's daughter?," asked Morita.

"I am standing right here," said Beatrice.

"She's a kid," Emma said sternly. "She's not responsible for whatever her father did."

Belle spoke. "I understand you're upset, but Emma is right, Beatrice didn't do anything and she really needs her glasses."

"Why doesn't Rumplestiltskin just make some?," Morita snapped.

"Optometry isn't his specialty," said Belle.

"Emma, what's going on?," asked Mary Margaret.

Belle motioned at Morita. "He won't make her a pair of glasses."

"Doctor Morita..." said Mary Margaret.

"Why should I? So she can see us all before she kills us?"

"I just met you!," Beatrice protested.

"She lost them trying to help save Henry," said Emma.

"I understand," said Mary Margaret, "but right now, we don't have the luxury of holding on to all our old grudges. We all need to pull together to figure this out. Make the glasses. Leroy!"
Leroy walked over.

"Would you mind walking with Belle and Beatrice to Doctor Morita's shop? Beatrice needs some glasses," said Mary Margaret.

"No problem," said Leroy.

---

One Month Later...

After weeks in her presence, Gold still had no idea what made his daughter tick. He had more facts. She did like roast despite picking at it her first night in his house. Her favorite meal to eat out was Greek, the only restaurant in Storybrooke had this misfortune of being down the street from Game of Thrones so she resented the quick dash in and out. She loved her electronics like Belle loved her books.

She couldn't sleep in the dark, so her solution was to leave her television on. Gold didn't know this the first night so he had made the mistake of turning it off for her then got to witness the meltdown. That had been heartbreaking. He had no doubt that Belle had been an extraordinary mother, but he couldn't help but wish he had been there to hold his daughter as she cried, to rock her to sleep, to take away all of her fears.

"Rumple..."

Gold turned back as Belle came up behind him and put her arms around him.

"You're watching her again," she whispered.

"How can she sleep like that?"

"I don't know. I just know she does."

Gold continued to stare.

Belle whispered in his ear. "You said it's been a month. If she were a month old, she would keep you up half the night and barely know who you were."

"She would be mine, though."

"She is yours," Belle insisted. "Come back to bed. She has a big day tomorrow and you'll need to be on barista duty."

Gold relented as Belle led him back to bed.

---

Moe hardly ever had anyone in the flower shop early so he was surprised when Mother Superior of all people arrived first thing.

"Mother Superior," said Moe. "I mean, Blue."

"That's alright," said Mother Superior. "Have you spoken to your daughter?"

Moe shrugged. "She refuses and I think that beast forbids it."

"Perhaps," said Mother Superior. She placed a small bottle on the counter. "I've brought you something."
"What?"

"Something to help you remember who you are."

"But we all remember who we are now."

"Please. Drink it."

Moe shrugged, opened the bottle and knocked back the elixir. Something overcame him and he looked back at Mother Superior with new eyes.

"Blue."

"And you are?"

"Sir Maurice... of the Round Table." He paused. "Is there word of Merlin? Did he survive the Curse?"

Mother Superior shook her head. "No and for that we can be grateful."

"The monster lives."

"Yes," said Blue. "Yes, she does."
Then

The Gold Fairy appeared in the clearing.

"And who has summoned me?," she called.

"I have."

The Gold Fairy looked to see Merlin sitting at a table that had suddenly appeared. He motioned at the tea and cakes.

"Would you care to sit, Goldie?," he asked.

Goldie sat grudgingly.

"What do you want?"

"Don't be so hostile, my dear. We both want the same thing."

"And what is that?"

"To join Reinette with her True Love."

"Will you tell me now why you want that?"

"No."

"Then why should I help you?"

"Because I saved your wings when I brought Catherine and Alec together. Fourteen generations of True Love, that's what I want."

"Nobody's ever had fourteen generations of True Love."

"I know. The most is twelve, when I unite Reinette and her True Love it shall be thirteen. When I unite Belle-"

"Who is Belle?"
"Reinette's daughter, of course."

"And I suppose you have Belle's True Love decided?"

Merlin grinned. "Oh, I can't wait to see the look on your face, Goldie."

"To what end do you need fourteen generations of True Love?"

"Oh, wouldn't you like to know? Point is, you help me unite Reinette with her True Love and you can take all the credit. That ought to keep that blue tart happy, eh?"

"What happened with you two?," asked the Gold Fairy.

"Are you going to help me or not?"

"What is it you want from me?"

"Fairy dust."

"There's a limited supply..."

"What are you saving it for? To make a coach from a pumpkin?"

"I have to spread it out over a year."

"Well, you just think about it," said Merlin. "Get back to me."

"Where are you going?," asked Goldie.

"A ball."

Now
Beatrice stared in the mirror. She was trying to get ready for her very first day at her new school. Storybrooke High didn't have a uniform unlike the elementary and junior high so she was charged with coming up with an outfit that conveyed, "Yes, I'm the Dark One's daughter, but really, I just met the guy a month ago and maybe be my friend?" She had ended with an old fall back: a dark floral skater dress, black leggings, her favorite ankle boots and a blue cardi. That and her usual red leather messenger bag, she was set.

Maybe. There were about five other outfits laid out on the bed.

There was a knock at the door.

"Beatrice?," Gold asked. "I've made breakfast."

"Okay," said Beatrice.

"I want you to have time to eat before we have to go."

"I'm not really much of a breakfast person."

"You have to eat something."

Beatrice screamed silently at her reflection. How could someone she barely knew be smothering her?!
"Beatrice?"

"I'm coming," she said.

Outfit changing would have to wait. She doubted it would make any difference anyway.

Belle and Gold had settled into a routine. He cooked breakfast, she sat. Belle wondered how the switch had happened, but Gold didn't mention it so she thought it was best to leave it alone.

"You don't think I've tried to get her to eat in the morning, Rumple?," asked Belle.

"I don't see how she can function. Besides, you hear about these poor girls in this world with these disorders..."

Belle raised an eyebrow at Gold. "Have you been reading my books on raising teenage girls?"

"Well, you had them laying out."

"Beatrice doesn't have those problems, thank the Gods," said Belle.

"Any other problems she might have?"

Belle smiled. Then she couldn't help it, she giggled and covered her mouth.

"And what is so funny?," asked Gold.

"You got to the sex part of those books, didn't you?"

"Forgive me if I don't quite find the humor in it."

"We've already had the talk," said Belle.

"Oh, Gods..." muttered Gold.

"She's not doing anything! She didn't even have a crush at her old school."

"And you think she'd tell you?"

"Yes, she would."

Gold narrowed his eyes at Belle. "There's something you're not saying."

"Nothing... just that she's on the pill anyway, but it was just because she was having awful menstrual cramps..."

Gold groaned like someone who had been sucker punched with two things he didn't want to know.

"It's your own fault, really," said Belle.

Beatrice entered. She put down her bag and took the seat at the counter next to Belle. She looked from her mother to Gold.

"What did I miss?," she asked.

"Nothing," Belle said quickly.
"Nothing," Gold confirmed, hoping to later find a way to wipe away the memory of the conversation from his mind. "What would you like?"

---

**Then**

It was a pleasant day at the Duke's Castle. Reinette awaited her ball and her dear friend Princess Eva had finally arrived to pass the time with her, bringing much needed gossip.

"She made straw from gold?" Reinette asked Eva.

Eva nodded. "I saw it with my own eyes. The miller's daughter."

"So, you're not to marry Prince Henry after all?" teased Reinette.

"He's engaged to her. Gods help him."

"Why do you say that?"

"There was a look in her eyes I didn't like," said Eva.

Reinette rolled her eyes. "What did you do to her before that?"

"Nothing!"

Reinette looked at her again. "Eva."

"I tripped her."

"Why would you do such a thing?"

"I don't know. I didn't like her scowl. This is why I need you as my lady-in-waiting. To keep me in check."

Reinette nodded. "You should make amends with the new princess as soon as possible. It does no good to have powerful enemies."

"Fifth in line to be queen?"

"Yes, well, remember how far back she started from."

A maid appeared. She bowed. "My lady. Your highness."

"Yes, Anna?" asked Reinette.

"His Grace requests your presence in the drawing room. One of the guests has arrived."

"The wizard?" asked Reinette.

"Merlin?" Eva whispered.

"The very same," said Reinette.

"My darling girl," said the Duke. He took Reinette's hand and turned her to Merlin. "You, of course, have met, but I think my girl does not remember it."
"Of course," said Merlin. "You've grown a bit taller."

Reinette smiled. "I should hope so, sir. Might I introduce..."

"Her highness, Princess Eva of the Northern Kingdom," said Merlin. "Of course."

Eva looked in shock as she rose from her curtsy. "That's remarkable."

"Well, not really," said Merlin.

"Merlin wanted a word alone," said the Duke. "If that is all right with you, Reinette?"

"Of course, Papa."

The Duke gave her a kiss on the forehead and escorted Princess Eva out. Reinette turned to Merlin as he sat back down.

"What have your parents told you of me?," asked Merlin.

"That you united them," said Reinette. "That you require me for something."

"Does that not concern you, my lady? That I require something of you?"

"You helped them find True Love and their parents and their parents' parents. I would think what you require of me must be in the same vein and how can love be bad?"

"You're so young..." said Merlin. "When you're as old as I am, you learn that not all love is good. Not all love is true. I just recently had to help a friend... an acquaintance, really, come to grips with the same concept and he was much older than you are."

"Was his heart broken?," asked Reinette.

Merlin smiled ruefully. "Oh, Reinette, his heart has been nothing but broken since he was a boy."

"Can you not help him?"

"I'm helping him now."

Reinette neared the wizard. "Is he the one? Is he my True Love?," she asked with wide eyes.

"I'm afraid not. You're a generation removed."

"Then are you saying my daughter-"

"All in good time, Reinette. All in good time. First, I must help you find your True Love. Now, you must be honest with me, is there anyone I should know about? Prince? Shepherd? Stable boy?"

Reinette shook her head. "I fear not. There is this silly knight, Maurice, but I should never deign to marry him."

"And why not?"

"He's just the usual. All interested in his hunting and his armor and nothing else."

"Should there be something else?"
"My parents dote on each other. I have never heard more than two minutes silence between them when they were not sleeping. They have lived their whole lives together and never run out of conversation."

"He listens to her."

"And she to him. That is what else there should be."

Merlin motioned. "Have a seat."

Reinette smiled and sat in the chair.

"What are you interested in?"

"Is this True Love or are you merely matchmaking?"

"One may well inform the other."

"I weave and spin." She caught the glint of Merlin's smile. "Is something funny about that?"

"You'll see what I mean later. What else?"

"Music. I play the piano, harp and violin. I also sing. I shall be singing at my ball tomorrow."

"Excellent," said Merlin. "We shall let the siren's song lure in your True Love."

"I don't know how I feel about being called siren."

"Tell me, why do noble ladies learn music and sing?"

"Why?"

"Indulge me."

"So others will think we are cultured. So we can get a good husband. To pass the time. Why else?"

Merlin nodded in consideration. "Have your parents told you I can travel between realms?"

"No."

"One of these realms is a Land Without Magic."

"A Land Without Magic?," Reinette asked incredulously.

"In this land, they have music, they have such music, Reinette. Music that could make you weep tears of sadness or joy. Men and women toil for this music. Not just noblewomen and troubadours. People, all people, gather to hear it and they have these things that record the music and make it so that the moment can be replayed again and again."

"You said there was no magic."

"There's not."

"Then how can such a thing be possible?"

"They made it possible. They invent, they create. They don't use magic to solve their problems."
Reinette smiled. "Then what did they want with you there?"

"That's just it. They didn't want anything with me there."

"Is that why you wanted to be there?"

Merlin nodded. "I fear I am keeping you from your dress fittings and music lessons and your girlish gossip. Go on."

Reinette stood. "I shall see you at dinner."

---

[now]

Beatrice walked down the hall.

It was the break between third and fourth period. Storybrooke's educational system had been reworked in the weeks since the Curse broke since everyone had been in the same freaking grade for twenty-eight years. Beatrice didn't know why that hadn't been a hint. Beatrice was the only genuinely new student besides the freshmen. She might have been the new girl, but everyone knew who she was, especially the teacher of her first period English class who had traded her firstborn for some cows or something. Why that was Beatrice's fault, she didn't know. Actually why that was the Dark One's fault, she didn't know. She was fairly certain she would have to ask to change teachers and hoped it didn't involve a visit from Gold.

She walked into her physics classroom. Science. Tricky in terms of seating because it was all shared. By the end of this, she would have to sit in close proximity to someone and there was a chance they would be working on their first assignment together. If she played her cards right, she might be able to get her new lab partner to overlook the fact her father was the Dark One in light of the fact she was great at Physics.

The others were quickly taking their seats. Beatrice had to walk further back. There were whispers- she was getting used to that- and the students were joining forces quickly. Finally, there was the odd girl out, in this case, a petite Asian girl. Beatrice sat on the stool next to her.

"Hi," she said, summoning her best Belle impression as she got out a notebook and a pen. "I'm Beatrice."

"Christine Morimoto," the girl replied tartly. "Of course, in our land I was Ayako. I believe you've met my husband. Ayoki."

"Doctor Morita?," she asked, blocking "ewwww" from escaping her lips.

"We used to be the same age," said Christine. "Then someone showed him the way to a fountain of youth. For a price."

"Then why are you younger?"

"I drank too much. Of course no one warned me. Now I'm cursed in this land, separated from my husband by cruel fate."

Beatrice started to get the impression Christine was not going to care about how good she was at Physics.

"So, do people go off campus for lunch or..."
Christine stood, collected her things and walked over to the next table. Beatrice stared back at her notebook.

Okay. This could work. Someone else would eventually have to sit next to her.

Then the bell rang and the door shut.

She was the odd number.

Oh, God. She would have to join a group with two people and it was unlikely both of them would accept her. Worse, she might have to work with the teacher. Then she would be the dork with the teacher as a partner.

She was screwed.

Beatrice took the opportunity of lunch to retreat to the library. The system had worked at her old school. The other social outcasts stared at her, then looked away quickly so she found a study carrel in the furthermost corner.

She did luckily have a lunch packed thanks to the Dark One. At her old school, it was dorky to bring lunch and she had planned on ditching it, but was now grateful she hadn't. She set up her MacBook with some earbuds and took to her sandwich. It was actually pretty delicious with Italian meats on soft bread. Say what you wanted about Rumplestiltskin, the guy could cook. She looked in the dorky Thermos to find iced coffee and found some grapes.

She felt a poke on her shoulder and looked back to see the librarian.

"You can't eat in here."

"Yeah, sorry, it's my first day and it's not really going well-"

"There are rules. Don't think you're above them."

"I never said I was above them. I just am having a really bad day-"

"Are you talking back to me?"

"No, look, I'm not even getting anything on a book."

"Go to the office."

"The office? I'll put this up."

"You should have put it up when I first came over."

"I."

"The office! Now!"

Beatrice was in the principal's office.

She had never been in the principal's office.

Of course, she had never burned a car before she came to Storybrooke, so...
The door swung open and Beatrice felt the same hush she had before at the diner. She cringed, realizing what had happened, hearing the tap of a cane and not the clacking of Belle's heels.

"Are you alright?" asked Gold.

"It's the principal's office. Not a dungeon. Where's Mom?"

"Your mother's having lunch with Mary Margaret. I saw no reason to interrupt her." Gold turned to the secretary. "I'm here to speak to Principal Walker. Now."

"He's busy-

"Now," Gold repeated.

The secretary nodded and got up, hurrying off.

"Can I please know what you did?" asked Gold.

"I ate lunch in the library," Beatrice said in what she thought was the lamest confession in human history.

"You ate lunch in the library?" Gold asked. She could tell he thought it was the lamest confession in human history as well.

"I have been here all day trying to... I just wanted to have lunch without getting stared at. Okay?"

Principal Walker appeared. "Uh, Mr. Gold, won't you come in?"

"No, I believe we can finish this here. Was I called because my daughter was eating lunch in the library?"

"Well, there is no food or drinks in the library-" he stuttered.

"This is a school, not Her Majesty's dungeon," said Gold. "You're her principal and no longer her mother's jailkeeper. Perhaps if you can't remember that simple fact, it seems to me you no longer need to be the principal. Now, is my daughter missing valuable instructional time while you detain her for this joke of an infraction?"

"It won't happen again, Dar- Mr. Gold."

"I'm pleased to hear that." He looked at Beatrice. "Beatrice, is there anything Principal Walker could do for you to make this transition easier?"

Part of her thought she should say no. Then another part of her figured Gold was already here.

"Actually, I need to change English teachers," said Beatrice.

"What's the problem?" asked Gold.

"Someone traded her firstborn for some cows."

Gold looked as if he couldn't remember that. "Well, I'm certain Principal Walker will have that resolved by the end of the day. Won't you?"

"Yes, Mr. Gold."

"Good," said Gold. "I will see you at the shop after school and I look forward to hearing
Then

Merlin stood unhappily at the party. He could mingle with the best of them, it was part of his particular skill set, but he was never truly involved. At least at the home of the Duke and Duchess of Padua, they were never false. They were quite possibly the best people he knew.

The Duchess approached him. "Merlin?"

"Your Grace," said Merlin, kissing the Duchess' hand.

"What nonsense have you been filling my daughter's head with? A land without magic?," she asked.

"I didn't realize my tales would have such an impact," said Merlin.

"We have music here, you know," said Catherine.

"Not like this," said Merlin. "They have music and stories and paintings."

"You speak like a man who is tired of life."

"If you knew how long I have lived, Your Grace, you would understand the reason why though I would never wish it upon you."

"Have I missed something?," the Duke asked, joining them.

"Merlin is disenchanted with our land," said Catherine.

"Oh, well, perhaps Reinette can liven your spirits. My lady?"

The Duchess took the Duke's arm and together they walked up the grand staircase where they could look down upon the guests.

"My lords, ladies and gentlemen!," the Duke called out. "My wife and I are delighted to welcome you to our home to celebrate the introduction of our daughter, Reinette, into society. So she wishes to favor us all with a song. Won't you please welcome her?"

They applauded and Merlin half-heartedly joined in. He had heard many a noble lady sing and rarely one with any talent. Reinette stepped forward.

"When you're alone, silence is all you know..."

Merlin looked up and stared, enraptured by the nature of her voice. It was soft and grew and grew...

"When you are here, music is all around. When you are near, music is all around. Open your eyes, don't make a sound..."

Her voice seemed so much deeper than Reinette had seemed, lending new layers and new depths to the young girl.

"Let in the light, let in the shadow, let in the light of your bright shadow. Let in the light, let in the light of your sweet shadow..."
She finished to an appreciative audience. She accepted kisses from her parents and then went to mingle, eventually making her way to the wizard.

"Well, Merlin," said Reinette, "I know it can't rival the music of the Land Without Magic, but will it do?"

"Yes, my lady, I think it will do," said Merlin. "A siren's call indeed."

Reinette smiled. "Then I shall look for my victim. Please excuse me."

Now

Beatrice laid on her bed, watching her third episode of Doctor Who on the new flat screen television on the opposite wall. Belle knocked and walked in.

"So," she said, "I guess I don't need to ask how school went?"

"They've had twenty-eight years to strengthen their cliques," said Beatrice. "It's Mean Girls times a thousand."

Belle sat on the edge of the bed. "I'm sure they're not all like that."

"Does it matter?"

"Yes, it matters. You'll make a friend."

"Oh, right, I almost forgot about my bubbly personality. My charm. My breathtaking natural beauty."

"You do have charm and breathtaking natural beauty," said Belle. "You just don't believe it."

"I know, I know..."

"You don't know and that's always confounded me, but then again, I've seen it before." Belle held out a box. "Here."

"What is it?"

"It looks like a box," said Belle.

Beatrice sat up and took it. She opened it, revealing the necklace she had noticed in Gold's shop only now the colors in the opal were swirling.

"It belonged to my mother," said Belle. "It was part of her trousseau. Your papa says it's magic."

"What does it do?"

"He has no idea."

Beatrice's face dropped. "Oh, good."

"He says it's women's magic. Perhaps you'll figure it out."

Belle got up and walked towards the door.

"If it's magic," said Beatrice, "why did your mom have it?"
Belle shrugged. "I don't know. She was the product of True Love. I'll have to tell you about her parents sometime. They were quite a story."

"Like Emma," said Beatrice.

"Like Emma and you," Belle said pointedly.

"You never got it to do anything?" Beatrice asked as she touched the gem, causing it to flash a brilliant white light.

"I touched it once when I was carrying you," said Belle. "You need magic to make it work and you are the only magic I have ever had."

"And she never said what it did?," asked Beatrice.

"I remember she wore it when she was happiest," said Belle. "Your papa says dinner will be done in twenty minutes."

Moe looked behind him as he opened the door for Percy into the backroom of Game of Thorns.

"My brother knights," he said.

"Good to have you with us again," said Percy.

"Will Mother Superior be joining us?" asked a knight turned garbage man.

"Any moment," said Moe.

"Then we can discuss what is to be done about Merlin's Vision," said Percy.

"Indeed," Moe agreed.
So over on that other fic site, you have to put your notes at the start of the chapter and say you don't own whatever. Over time, I've taken to making commentary about the show on it and this one was: "I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC that causes severe emotional damage. I think it was around the end of 3A. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

Then

Lady Reinette awoke late the morning after her failed meeting with the Dark One. So late in fact that she missed her daily visit with her husband which was no great hardship. She wondered if it might be worth it to sleep late everyday.

She sent for her maid and took her morning tea. The woman then helped her with her corset, skirts and the soft yellow day dress. Alone, she perused her jewelry. She didn't think much of it, she had many pieces, inherited from her mother and given by other relatives, yet the only pieces Sir Maurice had ever given her were the wedding band and a simple solitaire that always seemed out of place next to the rest of her jewels.

Then there was the pendant. The white gem with ever swirling colors in it. On mornings when she felt as down as she did today, her attention always went to this jewel in particular. She could never quite remember where it came from.

Until she put it on.

Then she did remember and her true life always came flooding back to her. She smiled, remembering countless kisses and embraces that were never enough, the words of lovers exchanged like sweet offerings.

She always remembered what was important.

Reinette found Belle in the rose garden, sitting in a hammock, biting her lower lip as she was engrossed with a book.

"May I join you?," Reinette asked, struggling to settle her skirts on the hammock. "Oh, this is most unladylike."

"Where were you last night?," asked Belle.

"I had something I had to do," said Reinette. "I wish to speak with you about something important."

"Yes, Mama?"
"Has your father told you of his plan?"

Belle scowled. "You mean Sir Gaston?"

"Yes, that plan," said Reinette. "I just wanted to let you know you're not marrying him."

Belle looked at her mother brightly. "Papa has changed his mind?"

"No. He hasn't, but you're not marrying him."

"I don't understand."

"Belle, as long as you are alive, you have a choice. You don't have to marry Sir Gaston simply because your father wishes it. You can say no. You can run away. You can do whatever you would like."

"Is this about the soothsayer?," asked Belle. "I told Papa and he said it was just superstition."

"That's one of the areas where your father is mistaken. I fear he may be mistaken in everything but his love for you," said Reinette. "You see, I also have another source who gave me the same information long before you were born."

"Really?," asked Belle.

"He also said that no one decides your fate but you." Reinette paused. "Belle, there are two species of marriage. One is born of True Love. My parents had that. The other is everyone else. That's the kind I had. Make no mistake, Belle, we love you deeply, but there is no love between us."

"Then why marry?," asked Belle.

Reinette shook her head. "A scandal among other things, but that will not be your fate, Belle."

Now

Beatrice walked into the attic. She was hoping to find her winter boots as they were expecting some sort of cold storm seeing as how this was freaking Maine.

She looked upon it in shock. The place was a mess, with everything strewn all over which was odd. Belle had placed these boxes up here meticulously and Gold may have been a hoarder, but he was an incredibly organized hoarder.

She walked down to the den to see what was going on with it. That's when she walked in on them again. Well, not exactly walking in. Emma had shared with her that had happened to her in their occasional informal "Turns out my parents are fairy tale characters" support chats they had at Granny's. The very thought of that happening had scarred Beatrice, but they did make out like freaking teenagers.

As they were this evening in front of a roaring fireplace as Belle still held onto her book with one hand. Gold was completely engaged in bringing Belle closer against him and...

Beatrice thought they could really use another TV in this room.

Gold looked up, breaking off the kiss. Beatrice stood in the doorway, face half-covered. He never said anything, never acted as if he was displeased she interrupted, he just looked curious.
"Sorry, to, uh..." She cleared her throat. "Anyway, I was just looking for my winter boots."

"They're up in the attic with the rest of the winter clothes in the Rubbermaid," said Belle.

"Yeah, well, I was just up there and everything looks like it's been ransacked or something."

"Ransacked?," asked Gold.

"Yeah, all my stuff is on the floor."

Gold looked at Belle. Beatrice watched as they shared a look of grave concern and then flew off the couch.

"It's just messy, guys," said Beatrice as she followed them up the tiny staircase to the attic. "I'm not saying you have to fix it now."

She arrived to find them frantically searching through the mess.

"It was a pink box," said Belle.

"My baby stuff?," asked Beatrice. "Seriously? I'm looking more for boots. The wellies? Either the red ones or that pair with the Union Jack?"

Gold happened upon an overturned pink plastic box. "This one?"

"Yes!!" Belle headed over and Beatrice watched as she rifled through baby blankets, clothes and old toys and stopped at her baby book. She flipped through it and sighed in relief. "It's still here."

Beatrice walked over. The book was opened to the page "Baby's First Haircut" and a lock of hair was still taped to the page.

"Yes, because thieves would naturally go after my hair..." Beatrice rolled her eyes. She stopped and narrowed her gaze at her parents as she remembered who she was talking to and where she lived and recent events. "Wait, would thieves go after my hair?"

Gold didn't answer, not moving his gaze from Belle. "Was there anything else?"

Belle was deep in thought. "A silver box engraved with her name and a bear holding a toothbrush."

Gold shook his head as he guessed what might be in such a box. "Please tell me you didn't..."

Belle and Gold searched frantically through the mayhem.

"Why would you keep something like that laying around?," Gold asked.

"I was cursed!"

"And now you're not."

"I haven't even thought about it in years!"

Beatrice searched her memory and vaguely recalled a box of that description. "My first tooth box?"

"It's not here," said Belle.
"Are there others?," asked Gold.

"I threw them out. If she wants to go look through a New York City landfill for them, she can try," said Belle.

"I'm going down there."

"Rumple, don't-"

"I promised not to exact revenge, this is not revenge, it's prevention."

"Um, what are we talking about?," asked Beatrice.

"The Tooth Fairy," Gold said sharply.

Beatrice thought that must be a quip of some sort, then it wasn't. "I'm sorry, are you being serious right now?"

"Let me call the sheriff," said Belle.

"I'm sorry, are we still being serious right now?," asked Beatrice. "You're going to call the sheriff because someone stole my baby tooth?"

Gold ignored her. "And what would be the point in that?"

"If you go over there and start on some kind of rampage, nobody will know why and everyone will think it's just you being the Dark One."

Beatrice shook her head again. "I'm sorry, rampage?"

"I'm not really concerned with the public perception of it, Belle."

"Well, I am! We still have to live here, Beatrice still has to go to school and I, for one, am tired of that... that evil winged bitch passing herself off as good! I would like everyone to know what she is."

Gold looked on. "What do you suggest?"

"Do you have something that can keep her safe until we get the tooth back?"

Gold turned to look at Beatrice.

"Okay, seriously," said Beatrice, "does anyone want to tell me anything?"

Emma Swan was beginning to get used to weird, though, it was hard when weird kept constantly adapting to a new level of weird. Like when she had come home with Henry this evening to have her parents Snow White and Prince Charming tell her she had to leave again because Rumplestiltskin and Belle's kid's baby tooth was possibly stolen by the Tooth Fairy. Now she was watching as her parents tried to help Belle pick through the things tossed on the floor.

"Are you sure it's not there?," asked Emma.

"I have looked a hundred times," said Belle. "I'm sure."

"What would someone want with a baby tooth?," asked Emma.
"Blood magic," said Gold, standing in the corner. "To hurt her or control her."

"Why would anyone do that?," asked Emma.

"To get to me obviously," said Gold.

"Then why don't they take something of yours?," asked Emma.

"Because that's not how you control me, dearie," said Gold.

"This is my fault," said Belle. "I should have thought of it."

Mary Margaret shook her head. "No, of course it isn't."

"Do you really think Mother Superior put Sister Violet up to this?," asked David.

Mary Margaret shook her head. "You don't understand what she's capable of when she wants to be."

"I thought fairies were supposed to be good," said Emma.

"Don't you have a lot to learn, dearie?," asked Gold.

"Okay, no offense, but in the book-

Gold cut Emma off. "And who do you think writes the stories in a book of fairy tales?"

Emma shook her head. This was all getting a little too weird. "I'm going to go check your windows."

Emma left before Gold told her again she was wasting her time. She went back down the attic staircase and found Beatrice in her room.

"Oh, hey, Beatrice," said Emma.

Beatrice stood in her doorway. "Hello."

"You doing something?"

"I can't leave my room until you get my baby tooth back from the Tooth Fairy."

"What?," asked Emma.

Beatrice poked at the doorway, revealing a magical force field.

"What is that?," Emma asked incredulously.

"A protection spell," said Gold, sneaking up on them. "A very specific protection spell."

"He means he is the only one who can get in. Or out."

"You locked your kid up?," Emma asked Gold.

"I'm protecting her," he corrected.

"This has got to be the sort of thing that enchanted social services checks up on," said Beatrice. "Of course, they must suck because, well, every fairy tale ever."
"What's so special about this tooth?," asked Emma.

"Good luck getting an answer on that," said Beatrice.

"Do you need anything before I go?," asked Gold.

Mary Margaret appeared. "Ruby's here. She'll sniff out the tooth."

Beatrice looked at Gold. "How about a ticket out of crazy town?," she asked.

"Alas, no passage available," said Gold. "Try to sleep."

They walked away as Emma shrugged sympathetically and waved goodbye.

"Yeah, I'll sleep," said Beatrice. "Right after I google Tooth Fairy and evil."

---

Then

Reinette was ill.

Dying to be precise.

Sir Maurice had hoped to formally announce the engagement of his daughter and Sir Gaston to the duchy with a party, but his wife was ill. The formalities would have to be delayed until after a suitable mourning period.

Belle was tireless at her mother's bedside. She was sixteen now and fully capable of taking on the responsibilities of nurse. She took instructions from the doctor who seemed unable to help. Reinette's parents and brothers had descended on the small duchy, further aggravating Sir Maurice.

Belle read to her mother, she wasn't certain her mother could hear her anymore. Reinette hardly opened her eyes. She hardly answered. They said that hearing was the last thing to go.

So Belle read. She read though her throat was sore, she would have read until it bled. She had sent everyone else to try and rest, promising she would send for them if there was a change.

"Belle..." Reinette whispered hoarsely.

Belle stopped reading. "Yes, Mama?"

"My necklace."

"Your necklace?"

"Yes."

Belle put the book down and walked to the jewelry box. Reinette had so many beautiful pieces, Belle spent many happy hours playing dress up with them when she was little. Which necklace did she mean?

Then somehow it came to Belle.

The one she always smiled as she wore. The white stone with the swirls of color. Belle took it to her mother.
"This one, Mama?," she asked softly.

Reinette nodded weakly. "Help me."

Belle bent down to try to get it on. She fixed the clasp.

Reinette’s eyes changed in such a way it surprised Belle in a way she would later conclude was a mystery of death.

"Do not marry Gaston," said Reinette.

"Oh, Mama, please don't worry about that now."

Reinette weakly grasped her daughter's hand. "You are all I have ever worried about. Someday, when you have your daughter, you'll understand."

Belle shook her head. The future was an impossible thing to fathom at the moment. A future without her mother. "You don't know that, Mama."

"Yes, I do," said Reinette. "You'll see then."

"Mama...

It happened in a moment. There was nothing dramatic, not like in her books. The line between life and death was a shockingly quick one.

Reinette was alive.

Then she was dead. The life left her eyes and face in a fraction of a second. She looked hollow.

Belle felt tears running down her face. "Mama? Mama!"

Then she watched as the colors in the pendant stopped swirling. The house roused. Her father and her mother's family joined her in a rush after death was long decided.

Belle's mother was gone.

Then

Beatrice did eventually fall asleep and then awoke, shocked to see the sun hanging high in the sky.

"Guys!," she called as she tried to get her clothes together. "Guys!"

She walked over to the doorway. "Guys! I'm late for school! I've got an essay to turn in for French and she doesn't take late assignments!"

There was no answer.

"Mom!," Beatrice shouted.

She suspected there might be someone else in the house. This also led to the problem of how to call this someone. Mr. Gold was too formal. He had a cursed first name that he didn't like and didn’t share. Of course, Beatrice had trouble imagining something worse than his actual first name. There was always "Rumplestiltskin" but that just sounded ridiculous.
Dad was not a word that came easily off her tongue. She and her mother had a long, quiet, private talk about it. Her mom had encouraged her, saying that what had transpired was in no way her papa's fault, but not to do anything she wasn't comfortable with. She had made a few attempts at it, but the word died on her tongue. She had never had to use it. She had never thought she would have to use it.

Well, now was as good a time as any, she supposed.

"Dad!"

Gold appeared quickly, looking stricken and possibly out of breath.

"What's wrong?"

She motioned around. "I'm trapped in my room by magic and I'm late for school."

"You're not going to school."

"What?"

"The trail went cold and the Tooth Fairy denies everything. Mother Superior isn't talking."

"The nuns? What do the nuns have to do with anything?"

"The nuns are fairies."

"Okay and what do the fairies want my tooth for?"

"Your mother will be home soon. Would you like something to eat?"

"What are you not telling me?"

"I'm not-"

"My hairbrush is clean."

"Excuse me?," asked Gold.

"I've never had a clean hairbrush in my life, but since I've been here my hairbrush has been clean. I didn't think about it until you started talking about my baby book. What's been happening to my hair?"

"I've burned it."

"So, you've been walking in here, cleaning off my hairbrush, taking the hair, building a fire and-"

"No building a fire."

"The stove?"

Gold held out his hand and Beatrice watched as a ball of flame appeared.

"Okay then," said Beatrice.

He closed his hand and the fire disappeared.

"So why do you need to burn my hair?"
"So it can't be used against you, to cause you pain or control you."

"Why would someone want to do that?"

"Because they're frightened and stupid and it's a dangerous combination."

"Frightened of you?," asked Beatrice.

He didn't answer right away. Something was turning in his head and she noticed as his eyes went to the necklace Belle had given her. She had been wearing it ever since in an attempt to figure it out.

"Most people are," said Gold. "You should go back to bed."

"What?"

Gold walked away.

"So, I'm just trapped home alone?," asked Beatrice. "Yeah, this is safe."

It was the next morning. Emma had been on the crazy tooth train for the better part of a day now and she was still struggling. Ruby had tracked the tooth down to the convent, they did confront the Tooth Fairy, Sister Violet and she said nothing, while Mother Superior looked on.

Which they told her meant she was orchestrating the whole thing. Marco had told them he had seen Mother Superior going to Game of Thorns most nights, joined by others.

Which was about when Belle had pulled Gold aside and strongly suggested he go check on Beatrice.

"I don't understand why Mother Superior-"

"The Blue Fairy," Belle said bitterly.

Emma shook her head. "Right, yeah, of course, why is the Blue Fairy against Beatrice? She's just a kid. She hasn't hurt anyone. I mean, she did torch my car..."

"She was trying to make a point," said Belle.

"And I get that now," said Emma.

"The fairies and Rumplestiltskin have always had a... complicated relationship," said Mary Margaret.

"Like they're total opposites?," asked Emma.

"Like one tried to murder my unborn child and put me under a sleeping curse," said Belle.

"The point is we need to resolve this and let Mother Superior know we aren't going to tolerate this," said Mary Margaret.

That's when the three women noticed Gold standing in front of Game of Thorns.

With a fireball.

"Rumple!," Belle shouted.
The fireball went through the windows and door. Gold went inside as Belle ran down the street.

Emma looked at Mary Margaret. "How are we supposed to stop him exactly?!

"Yeah, that's mostly Belle's department," said Mary Margaret.

"Ah, gentlemen," said Gold, looking upon the group in the shop. Who do we have here? Knights of the Round Table? Mother Superior, how delightful that you could be here."

"What do you want, beast?," Moe asked gruffly.

"Oh, I think you know what I want," said Gold. "See, I just realized that we haven't had a chance to talk since the Dark Curse broke. I thought perhaps you all might need a refresher course in how things work. See, I think you might be frightened of my sweet little Beatrice. Why else would you go to so much trouble to get a weapon to use against her?"

Percy was the one to speak. "She's not sweet, she's a monster, she-"

Gold raised a hand and closed his fist, choking the knight without laying a finger on him.

"See, that's precisely what I'm talking about. I just wanted to remind you that the only monster you should be frightened of around here is me."

He waved his hand, causing Percy to fly back into the wall and drop to the floor gasping for breath.

"And the best way to make a monster angry is to try to hurt the things he loves," said Gold. He looked at Mother Superior. "Isn't that right, Blue?"

"You'll make your daughter into a monster," said Mother Superior. "As surely as you drove your son away."

Gold raised a hand, ready to choke the life out of the annoying gnat once and for all.

"You're wrong," said Belle.

For the first time, Gold realized Belle was there along with Emma and Mary Margaret.

"You're so wrong," said Belle. "You never once tried to hear my side of it. You never even gave Beatrice a chance."

"Belle, I'm handling this."

Belle stepped forward. "I just want the tooth back," she said.

"Belle-" Gold began.

"He's still my father," said Belle.

"And the rest of them?," Gold asked pointedly.

"They aren't worth it," said Belle. "Unless I don't get the tooth back in which case..."

"Belle!," exclaimed Maurice.

"No, Papa, the next time you think about who's right in this, try and remember who tried to kill their only grandchild!"
"The tooth," said Gold.

The knights looked among themselves and Gary, formerly known as Gawain, produced the silver box with Beatrice's name and a teddy bear holding a toothbrush on it. Gold took it and opened it to see the tiny white front tooth in it. He looked at Belle and she nodded.

Gold took the tooth from the box and with a flick of his hand, it disappeared into flame. He handed the empty box to Belle.

He looked at Emma.

"Are you going to arrest me, Sheriff?"

"Well, you did set fire to the building," said Emma. "It seems to be a pattern in your family."

"I do own the building."

Emma shrugged. That was as good a conclusion to the string of crazy she was going to get. "Okay, never mind then."

"We're not done here," said Mary Margaret. She turned to Mother Superior. "I want your wand."

"What?," she gasped.

"Mary Margaret..." said Emma.

"Regina's not been using her magic. I don't see why we should force her to not use hers and ignore what Mother Superior's done."

Mother Superior looked appalled. "And what about what he's done?," she asked pointedly looking at Gold.

"He came to protect his child," said Mary Margaret. "What you did to Belle was in my kingdom, making it my responsibility and now I think you should pay for it."

"I could always suggest something more colorful, your highness," said Gold.

Mary Margaret looked pointedly at Mother Superior. "Now, please."

Mother Superior reluctantly pulled her wand from under her cloak and handed it over to Mary Margaret.

They parted ways as the fire department finally arrived to take care of the burning embers of the front window of Game of Thrones. Belle walked off with Gold, hooked into his arm.

"I'm sorry if that's not the moral victory you had in mind," said Gold.

Belle shrugged. "You were right. It's about protecting Beatrice."

"Though I must admit, seeing the fairy held to account was a tempting prospect. Did you see the look on her face when Mary Margaret asked for her wand?"

Belle smiled. "Can she get another one?"

"I should think so, but still, the royals will be watching. She'll have to be careful."
"Did something happen between you and the Knights of the Round Table?," asked Belle.

"No. Why?"

"Before I returned to you at the Dark Castle, two of those men, they were called Gawain and Percival then, they abducted me."

"Abducted you?," asked Gold. "How did you escape?"

"This man saved me."

"What man?"

Belle searched for the name. "Merlin?"

"Merlin?" Gold stopped walking. "Merlin?"

"Did you know him?"

"Yes, I did. What did he say?"

Belle shrugged. "I don't know. It was all sort of rambling. He seemed to know about us. About some vision?"

"A vision? Did he say anything else?"

"I don't know. It was so long ago. Rumple, should we be worried?"

"I don't know."

"Is this Merlin in Storybrooke? Could we ask him?"

"He was at one time," said Gold. "I haven't seen him in years."

Belle frowned. "I thought no one left here."

"You would have to know him," Gold said with a grimace.

---

*Then*

Belle walked towards her mother's grave carrying the roses. It was alone, at the far end of the churchyard. She took the hood off her cloak and whispered a quiet prayer to the gods.

Belle laid the flowers to rest and knelt down.

"Hello, Mama," she said. She fingered her mother's pendant. "It's my birthday, but I'm sure you know that."

Her eyes watered. She never found this easy. Her grandmother insisted that one had to give thanks to the woman who gave one life on her birthday. So every year, Belle made the trek out here. Her mother's grave was far off from the rest of Sir Maurice's family, she supposed it must have been a testimony to how little love there was between them.

"I'm eighteen," said Belle. She shook her head. "I know. You knew that. Grandmother thought I should have a ball, she even offered to pay, but Papa wouldn't hear of it. He said it was a waste of time since I'm already engaged. I don't really care about balls, but if I'm to spend my whole life
with Gaston, it might have been nice to dance just one night."

Belle smiled ruefully as the tombstone gave her no feedback.

"I had this foolish flight of fancy," said Belle. "I was really hoping I would meet my True Love at the ball. Maybe we'd run away together, have adventures. Maybe one little girl? Stupid, I know. Gaston already speaks of sons to carry on his line, but I only want a daughter."

A gravelly voice came out of the darkness. "Why should you not?"

Belle turned to see a tall, wiry figure, obscured by a cloak.

"Did I frighten you?" he asked.

"No, sir. I'm-"

"Belle of Avonlea. I know who you are. Forgive me for overhearing you."

"Then you must think me very foolish."

"Well, strange, no question," said the man. "Never foolish."

"I doubt that."

"You are engaged to Sir Gaston?"

"Yes."

"And unhappy?"

Belle didn't know why, but she told the mysterious figure the truth. "Very."

"You don't love him?"

Belle shook her head. "No, I never could."

"Well, that doesn't surprise me. That man's quite a dull blade."

"I don't know what to do," said Belle. "My mother told me long ago to only settle for my True Love and that is not Gaston. My father forbids me to see almost anyone else, no balls, no house parties, no travel. It's not as if my True Love is just going to appear out of thin air in my father's castle, is it?"

"No one decides your fate but you," said the man.

"Yes, I know." Belle froze and looked up. "Wait, my mother said that. How did you-"

"You ought to return home, Belle. Your father will send a search party and you wouldn't want Sir Gaston to have the credit for rescuing you."

Belle stood and began edging away from the shadowed figure.

"For what it's worth, I think you're right about sons," said the man. "I had a young man, not really a son, that I entrusted with something and he has failed me terribly. If you want something done right, get a girl."

"I'm afraid I didn't get your name," said Belle.
"That's because I didn't say it. Now, don't forget to take your chance. Do the brave thing and bravery will follow."

"Right," said Belle, totally confused and totally sure she wanted to get out of there. She hurried off.

Now alone, Merlin turned to stare out at the horizon.

"No ogres," he said to no one. "She's eighteen. How can there be no ogres?"

As he stared out at the peaceful landscape, he had a revelation.

"Oh, right," he said. "Me again. Of course it would be. Well, in for a penny..."

Merlin waved his hand and the ogres screams could be heard in the distance.

"That ought to do it."

Now

Beatrice had been trapped in her room so long she was considering watching a show other than Doctor Who when the magical force field dissipated from the doorway and windows.

She edged out into the hall. "Hello?"

She didn't get an answer.

"Uh, Dad?," she asked uneasily.

Gold finished ascending the staircase. "I was just about to tell you. The danger has been averted. You can leave your room."

"So the Tooth Fairy isn't going to come kill me in my sleep?"

"No."

"Well, thanks."

"There's something to eat downstairs from Granny's," said Gold. "I can drive you to school for afternoon classes if you'd like."

"Well, let's not go crazy," said Beatrice.

Gold smiled. "Very well. I'm going to help your mother in the attic."

"Okay."

Beatrice went down to the kitchen and quickly found the bag from Granny's. She found two hamburgers and a grilled cheese, quickly wondering which belonged to who. She went back up to the attic and froze in the doorway at what she found.

Her mother was clutching the pieces of what Beatrice remembered as a nursery school art project for Mother's Day. A handprint in clay with sparkle paint. She was crying over it as Gold held her.

"They ruined this," Belle said tearfully. "She was so proud when she gave this to me. You should have seen her little face."
"Yes, I wish I had," said Gold, brushing aside a lock of Belle's hair and kissing her on the cheek.

"I didn't mean it like that," Belle said apologetically.

"I know you didn't, sweetheart."

"She was all I had for so long," said Belle.

"I understand," said Gold. "I also know that's not the case anymore."

Belle nodded.

"Hold out the pieces in your hand."

Belle did as he asked and he moved his hand, making the pieces move and rejoin.

As Beatrice watched, she felt like a bit of an intruder. She slowly went backwards down the stairs to the attic.

She paused and took a moment to go loudly back up the stairs.

"Uh, Mom, Dad..." said Beatrice, still tripping over that last word, pretending she didn't see Belle hiding her sniffles.

"Uh, yes, what is it, darling?," asked Belle.

"I was just wondering who had the grilled cheese and who had the hamburgers."

Gold grimaced. "It was supposed to be three hamburgers. Granny had Ashley Boyd working the counter today. She can't read a contract or apparently write an order correctly."

"That's okay," said Beatrice. "I'll just have the grilled cheese."

"No, you love hamburgers, I can have the grilled cheese," said Belle.

"No, I'm fine," said Beatrice. "You like them more than me."

Gold spoke. "I'll split the hamburger and the grilled cheese with you."

"Okay," said Beatrice with a nod.

"Okay," said Gold.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

So, here's what I put this time: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they rip out your heart and you have to hope they'll put it back in March. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Now

"What do you think this does?"

Gold looked up from the books at Beatrice as she held the necklace in front of him. She had been spending some of the afternoons in the shop with him. She had started out in her own corner of the workroom in the back, but was slowly exploring the front of the shop and spending more time conversing with him.

"You decided to wear it," he remarked.

"I thought maybe if I wore it I could figure out what it does."

"What made you think of that?"

"There was a Doctor Who."

"The show with the magical blue box?"

"It's a time machine."

Gold looked at her as if he didn't understand or care about the distinction.

"We'll get to that later," said Beatrice. "I am still asking about this necklace."

"It's women's magic."

"Is that supposed to be misogynistic or what?"

"It's simply a fact. I can't make that necklace do anything."

Beatrice held up the stone. "All it does is this," she said, putting her finger on it and the swirling colors disappeared and became bright white light. "See? That's it. What does that do?"

"I suppose it looks pretty."

"Okay, that's misogynistic."

"Some spells are meant for women, my girl. That's all."
"But Reinette, she wasn't a sorceress or something, right?"

Gold scoffed. "I don't think she would have married Sir Maurice if she was."

"Point taken," said Beatrice. "I barely know the guy and would want to turn him into a snail."

Gold stopped what he was doing and looked up at her. "I mean, not really," said Beatrice, quickly afraid she had made a request.

"What makes you say that?"

"The one time I met the guy he called Mom...names," she finished, unwilling to repeat them. "It's not like when the Curse broke he ran over here to say he was sorry so..."

Gold nodded. "You think he must stand by them."

"Yeah."

"Well, as usual, your instincts do you credit," said Gold.

The door to the shop opened and the bell rang. A man wearing a coat carrying a cooler came in.

"Beatrice, have you met Doctor Whale?"

Whale didn't respond and put the cooler down on the counter. Gold opened it and Beatrice peered inside.

"When they say I charge an arm and a leg, it's meant as a figure of speech," said Gold.

"That's an arm," said Beatrice. "Why do you have an arm in a cooler?!"

"Put it back," said Whale.

"You want me to reattach your arm?"

"Can you do it?"

"Of course, but why?"

"Do people bring you limbs in coolers a lot? I'm the only one who seems to be bothered by this," said Beatrice.

"I want to use it again," said Whale.

"No, I meant why bring the stable boy back now," said Gold.

"I thought... I thought that if I helped her, she would return me to my world. I want to see my brother – to try to bring him back again."

"Are you crazy?," asked Beatrice. She looked at Gold. "Is he crazy?"

Gold shrugged. "Debatable."

"I need to try again," said Whale. "The last time ended badly."

"Yeah, so let's do it again," said Beatrice. "Because it's worked out so well with Regina's dead boyfriend running around town like Frankenstein's monster."
Gold laughed.

"What?," asked Beatrice.

"You told her," Whale accused.

"No, no, she's a bright girl."

"Sorry, what did I figure out?"

Whale chose to ignore her. "My arm, you said you can do it."

"There's a difference between can and will."

"Name your price."

"Say it."

"Say what?"

"You came here, not the hospital so say it."

Whale grimaced, like he was chewing on glass. "I need magic."

"That's all I needed to hear." Gold waved his hand and the arm appeared back on Whale. "Always a pleasure doing business with you, Victor."

Beatrice's jaw dropped as Whale walked out. "He's Frankenstein?!," she asked. "That's Frankenstein?"

"Yes."

"So, Frankenstein's from the Enchanted Forest?"

"No. He came from another realm. The Land Without Color."

"How do you have a whole land without color?"

"How?"

"Yeah, how?"

"You're very big on these words 'how' and 'why'."

"Colors happen because different substances react differently to the electromagnetic radiation that we would call light. I have to assume there was light in the Land Without Color or whatever, because light is a necessity for life and clearly he came from somewhere so that land must have substances that only react without color when they absorb and reflect light."

Gold always found himself with mixed emotions when she spoke like this. On the one hand, he was impressed with her reasoning ability and her intellect. On the other, her use of incessant logic got tiresome along with her insistence that "Magic" was not an actual answer. "I have no idea," said Gold.

"Did you go there?"

"Yes, I did."
"Were you in color or were you black and white?"

"I was in color."

"So there. We can conclude that the Land Without Color had matter that reacts without color when it absorbs and reflects light."

"And what does that tell you?"

She shrugged. "It tells me matter is different there."

"And does that matter?"

"Do the building blocks of the universe matter? Yeah."

Gold just stared at her blankly.

"You think I'm a nerd, don't you?," asked Beatrice. He saw the tiniest flicker of disappointment in her eyes, which she quickly tried to hide.

"No." Gold waited too long to answer and he knew it.

"No, I mean, I am a nerd about a lot of things..." she said with a shrug.

"You simply ask bigger questions than I'm capable of answering," said Gold. "Don't hold back so the rest of us don't feel stupid."

---

**Then**

Merlin's vision led him to the Frontlands. The war with the ogres had raged there for generations. The conscription age had just been lowered.

It was time. It was a critical moment. He had checked in on Rumplestiltskin before. That wreck of a mother. That poor excuse for a father. The spinsters who raised him had at least been kind and loving, but they had died, leaving him to marry that wife. When he first looked upon her, Merlin hadn't thought much of her, but over time, she had become callous and was mercurial in her way.

Then Rumplestiltskin had crippled himself. To be a father to his boy. That meant he was the kind of man who would stop at nothing to protect his child. That he didn't care what it made him. That he didn't care if he hobbled around the rest of his days or his wife ran off with a pirate.

"Zoso."

The Dark One turned to him. "Merlin. What are you doing here?"

"I was just wondering if you knew how to recognize a desperate soul."

---

**Now**

Belle had begun the long process of reopening the town library. She started with cleaning and some help from Leroy for minor repairs. The next step was to organize the books and for that she had enlisted Beatrice's help and sometimes Gold's.
They were an easily distracted pair of helpers, though. Belle had ordered a new shipment of children's books. It seemed that Regina's initial idea of what a library should have in it had been lacking any fairy tales. Belle sought to rectify that and had taken the liberty of ordering anything she remembered Beatrice reading.

Which is why Gold had begun reading "Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter" and now debated it.

"This book is ridiculous," he concluded.

"I always thought it was a clever story," said Belle. "It shows your softer side."

"You know what?," said Beatrice, closing the book. "I'm going to have to object as well."

Belle sighed. "Now you as well?"

"I'm the title character, I get to object," said Beatrice.

"Speaking of the title, my name's not even spelled correctly," said Gold.

"Why do I have spiral curls?," asked Beatrice.

"You're complaining about that? Have you seen me? Why do I end up farming?," asked Gold. "Because farming is so much fun?"

"And sorry, if I get trapped in a tower and told to spin straw into gold or die, I'm calling him to come get me," said Beatrice motioning at Gold.

"Yes, someone would definitely die," said Gold.

"Who was the miller's daughter?," asked Beatrice.

"Someone I wouldn't marry and go farm with," said Gold.

"Do I get a hint?"

Gold looked at Beatrice. "A hint? She was Regina's mother."

That explained everything for Beatrice. "Well, she must have been messed up."

Suddenly, the door swung open and Regina herself entered.

"Speak of the devil..." said Gold. "Ah, Regina, it's been a while since you stormed in somewhere I was in a huff."

"Where is it, Gold?," she asked.

"I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about, dearie."

"You know damn well what I mean."

"No, I really don't."

Belle looked at Gold. "Should we leave?"

"No, you're fine where you are. Regina knows what will happen if she tries anything and worse what if Henry finds out she broke her promise not to use magic?"
"I just want it back."

"Still no idea what you're on about, dearie."

"The hat."

"The hat?" Gold smiled. "You mean Jefferson's hat? You think I have it?"

"Jefferson's hat?," asked Belle.

"Why would I even want it?," asked Gold.

Regina scoffed. "I don't pretend to know what goes on in that twisted imp's brain of yours."

"Well, seeing as how I'm feeling generous today, I'll make you a bargain. I'll help you find it if you help me find someone."

"Who?"

"Merlin."

Regina laughed. "Do you think I'm stupid enough to bring him over? He's dead."

"No, he's really not and if you think you can kill him, well, you're more short-sighted than I thought."

"And how do you know?"

"Because I saw him in my shop. He sold me a necklace."

"Then why don't you go put a poster up on the board in the town square?," asked Regina. "Now, where's the hat?"

"As I said, I don't have it and if you can't help me, I have no interest in helping you," said Gold.

Regina stalked off.

"Why are we talking about Merlin?," asked Beatrice. "He's real, too?"

Gold turned. "Merlin was a wizard in our land."

"Why do you need to see him now?"

"I have something to discuss with him. It's nothing for you to worry about," said Gold.

"Is anyone else real that I need to know about? So far we seem to have all the fairy tales, some Greek myths, oh, yeah, Frankenstein and that whole freak show and now, Arthurian legend, which is odd as I thought there was something of a historical basis for that..."

"Merlin was a world hopper," said Gold. "He could summon the power to transport himself between realms. No portal."

"So he came here?"

"Among other places," said Gold.
Mary Margaret and David had asked Belle to meet them at Granny's. She was grateful for the distraction from the library. Gold and Beatrice's help could be not as helpful as she envisioned. After the iced tea, they revealed their ulterior benevolent motives: Moe wanted to talk to her.

Belle shook her head. "No, I can't."

"Moe seems sincere," said David.

"If he's sincere at all, it's because he's frightened of Rumple," said Belle. "I can't forgive him for what he did to me."

Belle looked at Mary Margaret. She had that look. A look that said she didn't approve and a look that said she knew Belle was not being entirely honest. She was furious at Moe, but he was her father. If she truly didn't care, she would have just let Rumple end him, but she still held onto the same hope that all wronged children had, that he would come to her and say he was sorry and they could be a family again.

"Let me guess," said Belle. "You think I should."

She shrugged. "I don't know. He is your father. Maybe what you said at the shop affected him. You could at least hear what he has to say."

"Rumple would be furious and I can't blame him," said Belle. "I couldn't meet him alone."

"I'll go with you," said David. "The dwarves if you want. And Granny and a crossbow."

Belle looked at Mary Margaret. "When?"

She smiled. "Tomorrow at three."

"I'll meet him in the park. I'll need someone to look out for Beatrice until Rumple gets her from school."

"Emma and I will," said Mary Margaret. "This will work out. You'll see."

---

**Then**

Merlin watched from the horizon as the new Dark One walked onto the field of battle. A truce with the ogres. Leading the children home.

"You've done this." He would recognize that accusatory self-righteous voice anywhere.

Merlin grimaced. "How are you, you insufferable blue trollop?" He turned to see the Blue fairy floating behind him.

"He's the one. He's part of your vision."

"He is."

"What do you think you're going to do with him? The Dark Curse will eat at his soul. His life will become a burden. He will lose everything."

"Oh, well, maybe you ought to go stop him from creating this truce in the Ogre War and you, Blue, can lead all the little children out to get slaughtered."

Blue glared. "One good act changes nothing. He killed."
"He killed for his son. He's laid down his soul for the boy. Whatever happens, whatever he becomes, you can be certain it was because of love."

"What help is this monster to your vision?," Blue demanded.

Merlin smiled knowingly. "Do you know the best guard for something precious?"

Blue remained silent.

"A monster who loves it. Game. Set. Match."

Now

There was a park near the inn that they had agreed to meet at. Belle watched Moe for a spell from Leroy's truck.

"I'm getting out," said Belle.

"I've got your back, sister," said Leroy.

Belle smiled. As she got out, David got out of his truck and the other dwarves joined them. Granny was the last on the scene holding her crossbow.

"Belle..." Moe said, sounding stricken. "Is this all really necessary? Don't you trust me?"

"Why? Because you haven't tried to hurt me before?," asked Belle.

"I never wanted to hurt you, Belle. I just wanted to rid you of that demon."

"That demon," said Belle, "is my daughter. She is me. You were hurting me."

"Does he know you came?," asked Moe.

"I wouldn't be here if he did."

"Does he really control you that much?"

"He wants to protect me. Can you blame him? After everything that's happened?"

Moe checked his watch.

"Papa, what is it you wanted to say to me?"

"Sorry?," Moe asked, seeming distracted.

Belle cast a worried glance back at David. This wasn't right. Did he have an apology? If he didn't have an apology, what was this for?

"Papa, please," she said, "did you have something you wanted to say to me?"

"It has to be done, Belle."

Belle turned back and ran. "David! Leroy! We have to go!"

"Belle, don't!," Moe called after her futilely.
The clock until the final bell was the slowest clock of all.

Her last class of the day was art. Incidentally, it was her least favorite class. Other students chatted happily while they worked on their projects. Beatrice wasn't very good at art and as usual, she sat alone and struggled with whatever the stupid assignment of the day was. She waited for the clock to move and ignored it when she knew people were talking about her. There were two chatty girls in particular who she could hear on the other side of the room.

"Why does she wear those stupid glasses? Can't he just magic her eyes right?"

"Her parents drive her. I'd sooner shoot myself."

"How do you think her mom ever..."

"Ever what?"

"You know. With him."

Beatrice wanted to vomit. Or walk across the room and smack the both of their skulls together. It was hard to tell.

The bell finally, mercifully rang. Beatrice breathed a sigh of relief. All she had to do was go to her locker, get her books and walk out to where Gold was waiting, which she admitted was pathetic, but there was no arguing with the guy.

She walked to her locker and opened it. She rested her messenger bag on the inside and went about getting her things ready. She was looking for an errant study guide for her English class when she overheard the next comments.

"Do you think she has magic?"

Another girl laughed. "Do you think if she had magic she would walk around so pathetic all the time? It's not like she has any friends."

"Well, who's going to be her friend? I don't want to get turned into a snail."

"If I were her, I'd just kill myself."

Beatrice buried her head further in the locker and tried not to feel anything. She tried not to think because if she thought... Well, she didn't need anyone to tell her that her life was pathetic. So she just tried not to think and stood frozen until the hall cleared and she took a deep breath. She stepped back to pick up her bag and go when someone grabbed her and put his hand over her mouth. She struggled to fight him off and someone else blindfolded her.

Not the blindfold.

One fear. One stupid fear that everybody else got over.

Beatrice found herself tossed in somewhere and heard the distinct slamming of a trunk. She pulled the blindfold off as the engine started.

It was still dark, but the thing she had going for her at the moment was that her kidnappers were stupid.

Her iPhone was in her pocket.
When Gold pulled up outside the high school, he found that most of the cars had left the parking lot. Although he wouldn't need the lot to be empty to notice Miss Swan's newly refurbished vintage yellow VW Bug as he had paid for it.

He walked up to the window.

"I don't understand, Mary Margaret," said Emma. "What was it that Moe was so scared of that-"

Gold tapped his cane on the roof of the Bug. "Miss Swan. Your Highness."

"Uh, hi," said Mary Margaret. "We were just-

"You were just what?," asked Gold.

"Belle's talking to Moe," said Emma.

"She's completely safe," said Mary Margaret. "She just wanted someone to look out for Beatrice and since school only just let out-"

Gold's phone rang.

He picked it up. "Beatrice? I'm outside-"

She interrupted him. "Yeah, remember we were talking about the book and I said if I was being held hostage, go ahead and come rescue me?"

"Yes?"

"Go ahead and come rescue me."

"Gold, what is it?" asked Emma.

"Where are you?," Gold asked urgently.

"I would say it's pretty much a car trunk."

"Gold," Emma repeated.

"Is that Emma? Put her on. She's going to need my Apple ID."

---

_Then_

Merlin hadn't seen it coming and that surprised him. He was confronted by the boy and his innocent wide eyes as he passed down the Duke's- well, the late Duke's- Road.

"You're Merlin, aren't you?"

Merlin turned to look upon Baelfire. The boy was shaking.

He smiled. "There's no need to be frightened. Yes, I am Merlin."

"I heard you were a wizard. The most powerful wizard in the land."

"Well, if I said it, it would be bragging."
"Are you more powerful than the Dark One?"

That was an odd question. "I have no intention of hurting your papa."

He looked astonished. "How did you-"

"I'm Merlin, remember?"

Baelfire nodded. "That's not why I asked."

"Why did you ask?"

"I miss my papa."

Merlin nodded in understanding. Rumplestiltskin the spinner had been a weak man. Just because Rumplestiltskin the Dark One had power, it didn't make him strong. That would take time and help from a very particular source. "The magic is overwhelming him."

"I need a way to rid him of his powers. He promised if I found one, he would do it."

Merlin looked down. That would be disastrous. "Baelfire, leave this alone."

"What?"

"You need to leave this alone."

"Why?"

"There are reasons for everything. This must come to pass. Any attempt at ridding your father of his powers will end badly."

"I want my father back!"

"Baelfire-"

The boy stormed off.

"Leave it alone, Baelfire!," Merlin called after him.

---

**Now**

Beatrice stayed on the phone as long as she could, but the car was stopped. Emma had logged in to the iCloud and was using the "Find My iPhone" app. They promised they were on their way. She grabbed the blindfold back and tied it on loosely since her captors seemed to think she was stupid. They opened the trunk and grabbed her again.

"I'm sorry, can I just mention my dad is going to show up and kill you all? Like seriously."

"Shut up."

She was shoved in somewhere and she heard a door slam. The blindfold came off.

"So, it's just you two?," she asked Gary and Percy.

She looked next to her to see a top hat.
She had the sneaking suspicion that this was the hat Regina had been talking about.

The men were standing next to her.

"Spin the hat."

"Spin the hat?," she asked incredulously.

"Spin it," Gary insisted.

From what she understood, that hat went to another realm. She really didn't want to go to another realm. They all sounded horrible. Wonderland, acid trip. Neverland, what the hell kind of Lord of the Flies nightmare was that? Oz? Outside of Wicked, she had no use for it.

"What if I don't?," she asked.

Percy took out a gun.

"If you're going to shoot me, why should I spin the hat?"

"Because Sir Maurice is with your mother," said Gary. "All I have to do is call him."

"He's her father," Beatrice said incredulously.

They didn't answer.

"Tell me why," said Beatrice. "Do I at least get to know why?"

Her iPhone started ringing.

"Don't answer it," Percy said pointedly.

"Spin the hat."

Beatrice turned towards it, hoping whatever magic she had wouldn't work on the hat.

Of course, she hadn't been that lucky in the past.

She halfheartedly tried to spin to hat, hoping to God it wouldn't and was let down when the object took on a life of its own. The air in the room seemed to swirl around and she looked down the hat at something that seemed to look like the Time Vortex from Doctor Who.

"Jump."

The Time Vortex in a hat was not something she really wanted to jump in.

"No."

"Jump or your mother dies."

Beatrice looked back from the hat to the men.

"Beatrice!," she heard Emma shouting.

The door opened. The men turned back and Percy shot at the door as Gary tried to shove her in the portal. She grabbed onto the edge.
"Beatrice, hang on!," Mary Margaret shouted.

"Well, that's easier said than done!," she screeched back.

Emma shot at the men and they fell. She clamored towards Beatrice as she fell and grabbed her hand.

"Beatrice!"

Beatrice tried to hang on. She really did, but she only seemed to be dragging Emma in with her.

They fell. It felt like falling forever.

Then Beatrice didn't remember anything for a while.

Gold finally made it to the room—damn his leg—just in time to see Mary Margaret jumping in a portal. A quick glance to the knights bleeding on the floor told him what had happened.

Of course it would be that. It could only be that.

"Where are you sending her?," Gold demanded.

"Somewhere she can't hurt anyone."

Gold saw the portal begin to flicker.

He knew what that meant.

---

**Then**

The Dark One was shattered. Merlin hadn't expected to care for his machinations so much, but he did. He cared for the line of True Love he was building on the other side of his vision and he found that he cared for the monster he needed on the other side.

Even if he was a difficult man to like.

The loss of his boy had him going between mania and depression. Merlin had to admit, he hadn't thought the Blue Fairy capable of this level of callousness, but then he had made that mistake once before.

"Reul Ghorm, oh, Reul Ghorm."

The Blue Fairy appeared above Merlin's head. "What?"

Merlin put on mock dismay. "Is that any way to talk to me? After all we've shared, you devious little tart?"

"What?," she repeated.

"You do know you have doomed this entire realm. Well done."

"I've done nothing."

"No, you see, Rumplestiltskin, he'll find the Curse to take him to the Land Without Magic."

She looked at him as if he were bluffing. "His powers will never be that great."
"You're counting on a lot."

"I gave him a choice. I gave him a path."

"You gave a fourteen year old boy a magic bean because you thought if you could get Rumplestiltskin out of this realm, you could put a stop to my plans. If it wasn't for that reason, it was at the least very negligent of you."

The Blue Fairy hovered closer. "In this plan, you need him to love, don't you? You just saw he can't."

"I just saw a man confronted by the nightmare of his boyhood. I just saw a man who is heartbroken and full of regret."

"You know what he needs to cast the curse. The heart of the thing he loves the most."

Merlin smiled. "And do you think he has to cast it himself?"

The Blue Fairy's face dropped.

"Oh, didn't think of that, did you? Some original power you are." Merlin paused. "You know what else I saw? I saw a man who won't make the same mistake again which actually works out well for me. So, game. Set. Match."

Now

Belle and David ran in the room to see Jefferson's hat set alight.

"No!," Belle shouted.

David ran for the fire extinguisher and put out the flames. Belle turned to Gary and Percy.

"Where did you send her?!," Belle shouted.

"Somewhere she can't hurt anyone."

"And Emma and Mary Margaret?," asked David.

"I'm sorry," said Gary.

"Maybe Gold can do something when he gets here. Get them back," said David.

Belle looked down. Next to the remains of the hat, she noticed a gold-topped cane. As she picked it up, she couldn't help but smile.

"He followed her," said Belle. She turned to Gary and Percy. "Do you know what that means?"

"That we're rid of the Dark One?," asked Percy.

Belle shook her head. "That wherever she is, whatever you think you've done to her, her papa is with her and she's going to be fine. And she is coming back."
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Hi, so this is where I remind you when I started this story, Frozen had just come out and I had not seen it yet. I vaguely knew Idina Menzel, singing, snow, so I decided to run with that for one of the OCs you'll meet in this chapter because I sort of figured they would never do Frozen on the show.

Way to prove me wrong, show. Way to prove me wrong...

Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

Then

It was a fine day on the estate of the young Duke of Padua.

A fine day for lovers.

That was what had Lady Amelia worried.

"Lady Amelia."

She smiled and looked up to see Merlin standing in her sitting room.

"You've not aged a day," said Amelia.

"Trying to keep up with you, milady." Merlin noted her mourning dress which the Dowager Duchess somehow made lovely. "I was sorry to hear about Bernard."

"His time had come," she said with a rueful smile. "Then again, you knew that."

"What is the reason for your summoning, milady?"

"My son. I must say he's borne his responsibilities well for one so young. He's fought well, he's seen to it that our people are prosperous. I have no complaints on that score."

"And on other scores?"

"You said to contact you if I felt Alec was not going down the path of True Love."

"And you fear that is the case?"

"Come have a look."

Merlin joined Amelia at the window. He saw the young Duke walking the garden with a petite young blonde, almost comically small next to his tall, lanky frame. She wore a busy patterned dress and feathers in her hair.
"Who is that?" Merlin asked in a dark voice.

"So she is not who you envisaged?"

"No. How did they meet?"

"She claims her Fairy Godmother helped her to come to the ceremony for my son's ascendance."

"Which fairy?"

Amelia shrugged. "The Blue Fairy, I believe."

"Oh, that winged trollop."

"I'm sorry?"

Merlin smiled and turned back to Amelia. "What is she called?"

"Lady Marion. Her family's title is newly minted, somehow her father came into a large fortune and bought it."

"You sound like a bit of a snob."

"I sound like someone who is trying to protect her son from a social climber."

"Oh, if only she was a social climber."

"Do you think there's something more sinister at work?" asked Amelia. "Is Alec in danger?"

"Only a meddling fairy who thinks she can halt the path of True Love. True Love will get back on track, if I have to drag them together..."

Amelia's face dropped. "What is he doing on bended knee?!"

She turned to Merlin to see the wizard had disappeared. Looking back out onto the garden, she realized Merlin now stood next to Alec.

Alec had just finished tying his boot when Marion shrieked.

"Oh, Your Grace! This is so exciting!"

"What?"

"Of course I will?"

"What?"

"I can't wait!" She was jumping up and down now. "What about June? I've always wanted a summer wedding!"

"What?"

"Okay, on your feet, sunshine."

Alec realized they had been joined by a man. "I'm sorry, who are you?"
"Merlin, now on your feet, sunshine."

Alec stood. He knew his parents' stories and those of his family.

"Well, we are in the middle of something!," Marion snapped. "The Duke was just proposing to me."

"Proposing?!"

"Yes! Because of our undying love!"

Merlin looked at Alec. "Is that true?"

"Well..." he said dragging out the word. He shook his head and turned to the girl. "Lady Marion, you keep speaking to me of this undying love we share and I have not yet noticed it. That is not to say you are unworthy of such a love or that I could not feel such a love, but it does strike me as odd that I am meant to be so in love and yet I have not noticed it."

"But, Your Grace, we do love each other!"

"Well, I do admit, you are nice to look upon and sometimes your voice is not shrill and your conversation is somewhat tolerable..."

Merlin looked at Marion. "Quite a declaration of love here. I'm surprised you can stand for want of weeping tears of joy."

Marion scowled. "I refuse to believe this nonsense!"

"Well, believe it, sweetheart," said Merlin. "At any rate, His Grace is going to come with me. We have business in the Far North."

"The Far North?," asked Alec. "What business?"

"Courting the Ice Princess."

"The Ice Princess?," asked Alec. He leaned in to Merlin. "Not the Summer Princess?"

"Well, you're going to find out soon, aren't you, sunshine?" He took Alec's wrist and looked across to see Lady Amelia walking down the garden path. "Fret not, Lady Amelia. I shall return your son."

"Mama, what is happening?!," Alec demanded.

"What is happening?," asked Amelia.

"I'm saving him from her," said Merlin.

Amelia looked Marion back to the wizard, then to her boy. "Have a good journey, darling."

"What?!," Alec shouted just as he and Merlin disappeared.

Marion looked at Lady Amelia in dismay.

"I shall call your carriage," said Lady Amelia. She snapped her fingers and the carriage appeared with two befuddled footmen. "Oh, look how quickly it came. Have a lovely journey home."

"You have magic!," Marion said in disbelief.
"Whatever made you think that, my dear?"

Now

Beatrice awoke on the ground. Gold was hovering over her.

"Gently now," said Gold, helping her sit up. "This sort of transportation always takes a minute to catch your breath."

"What?" Beatrice looked around. She was in a field. Emma and Mary Margaret were passed out nearby. She heard Emma groan.

"Just sit for a moment," said Gold.

"What happened?," asked Beatrice.

"You're fine."

"I was kidnapped, then they made me spin the hat to the time vortex or something..."

"It was a portal."

"A portal?" Beatrice looked around. It was nothing she recognized. "Where are we?"

"I want you to take a deep breath."

That was not helping. "Dad, where are we?"

"The Enchanted Forest."

"We are where?!"

"Don't worry."

"Don't worry?!"

Emma and Mary Margaret stirred.

"See, that was why I wanted you to take a deep breath, sweetheart."

Mary Margaret walked over in dismay. "It was a set up. Moe did it to distract Belle."

"Yes," Gold grimaced. "Perhaps next time I say not to trust someone, you'll take this into account."

"I don't get it," said Emma. "Why throw Beatrice through a portal back here?"

"Never mind that," said Mary Margaret. "We need a plan."

Gold looked up. "Are you asking me or commanding me, Your Highness?"

"Do you have a plan?," asked Beatrice.

"I'm working on it," said Gold. He helped Beatrice up.

"I thought this land was gone," said Mary Margaret.
"Well, that would just be another of Regina's oversights," said Gold.

"You never said-"

"Well, you never asked me, did you, dearie?" He looked around. "Fate seems to have smiled upon us."

"It did?," Emma asked skeptically.

"We're not far from the palace where we might find a portal..."

"The wardrobe..." Mary Margaret gasped.

"The wardrobe?," asked Emma. "The wardrobe? The one that baby me went into?"

"I don't know how you were confused," said Gold.

"Could it have survived the Curse?," asked Mary Margaret.

"It's a place to start," said Gold.

"But there was only enough power to transport one and Emma went through..."

"That reminds me, there was actually enough power to transport two," said Gold.

"What?," asked Mary Margaret. "The Blue Fairy..."

"And again, maybe you'll want to take that into account the next time. Shall we begin?"

Mary Margaret looked out at the horizon. "We'll need to find camp by nightfall."

"Camp?," asked Beatrice. She looked at Gold. "Camp?"

"We'll be fine," said Mary Margaret. "I know this forest."

"And you have me," said Gold.

"Can't you just blink and get us where we need to go or something?"

"All magic comes with a price and we don't know how much magic there may be left in this land," said Gold. "I don't want to use it, only to find out the price when we truly need it."

"It's not far," Mary Margaret promised.

Mary Margaret started walking. Emma followed.

"So, this is like Lord of the Rings," mused Beatrice. "I hate Lord of the Rings. Do you know why?"

Gold stopped and turned to her. "Beatrice, everything is going to be fine. I'm not going to let anything happen to you."

She shook her head. "It's my fault. I spun the hat. They said Mom was going to-"

"It's not your fault, sweetheart. It's theirs and I promise you, they will be made to pay." He took her hand. "Just stay by my side and we'll be fine."
Regina looked with disdain at the charred remains of the hat.

"Thank you for returning my hat," said Regina, casting a glare at Belle and David. She picked up a piece of it. "What's left of it."

"You mean Jefferson's hat," said Belle.

Regina sighed. "He told you."

"Where is Jefferson?" Belle pressed.

Regina shook her head. "Are you hoping for a retrieval? With this?"

"Well, I'm sure you can think of something to repair this," said Belle.

"I've made a promise to Henry," said Regina. "Even if I hadn't, you have all the answers, why don't you fix it? Oh, right, you're just the imp's mistress."

"That's enough," said David. "Fighting won't get them back. Who's Jefferson?"

"The Mad Hatter," said Belle. "He's a realm jumper. Rumple used to hire him for odd jobs."

"And you think he knows how to get to the Enchanted Forest?"

Regina motioned at the hat. "Well, you're not doing it with this thing. Face it. They're on their own."

"And you would like that, wouldn't you?" asked Belle. "Being the only mother in your son's life?"

"I am his mother," said Regina. "And let's face it, I'm not that sorry to see Gold gone, but I've really got nothing against Beatrice. I sort of wish I'd taken the girl in and trained her. I'm sure we could have accomplished a lot."

"That would have never happened," said Belle. "If it had, you would be dead."

"We'll never know, will we?"

"Where's Jefferson?" asked Belle.

"I don't know."

"Then where did you get the apple you poisoned your son with?"

Regina was quiet. "Well, doesn't your imp know everything?"

"Regina..." David pressed.

"I have his address," said Regina. "That's it. I haven't seen him since the Curse broke."

---

_Then_

Alec suddenly found it was cold.

Very cold.
Far North cold.

He looked to Merlin.

"The Ice Princess?!," he demanded, teeth chattering.

"Catherine, yes," said Merlin.

"Everyone knows who she is, what her tale is, she has cast an eternal winter to keep her sister the Summer Princess from ruling."

"Yes, but do you know why?"

"Perhaps she's mad?"

A telescope materialized in Merlin's hand. He passed it to Alec. "Look beyond those glaciers," he instructed.

Alec took it and did as he was told.

"Ogres," he said.

"The Ogres of the Far North are some of the most vicious in all the realm," said Merlin. "They do not attack in winter. Every summer the people of this kingdom must go to war with the ogres as they come over the melted ice pass. They do not bathe in the sunshine, they bathe in blood."

"Surely the Summer Princess and her generals-"

"The Summer Princess and her generals do not give a damn about the people they send to fight and die. They're not the first nobles to do so, you might recall the Duke of the Frontlands."

"Oh, I know the story of the Duke of the Frontlands," said Alec. "My father made certain I heard it as a warning against such against such neglect of feudal responsibility."

"So, if you knew that every summer when you gave up your rule your people would die..."

"I would make sure winter never ended," said Alec, suddenly appreciating the Ice Princess.

They heard a rabble and turned to see a group of knights bearing the Seal of the Summer Princess as they ran.

That's when Alec first laid eyes upon Catherine the Ice Princess. She was shorter than him, but not comically mismatched. He found she had the most pleasing curves and endless blue eyes and he suddenly found the color red to be the most pleasing one he had ever seen for hair.

She stalked towards the knights, her white dress and cloak grazing the snow-covered ground.

"Are you all idiots?!," she shouted. "You tried to burn down my ice palace! I'm the Ice Princess! I will just make more ice!"

To demonstrate this point, she conjured an ice ball and tossed it at them as they ran.

"Do you get it now?!," she shouted. She did it again. "How about now?!"

"This is not over!," one of the knights shouted.

She moved her hand again and the knight was suddenly encased in a tube of ice.
"You may return that swine to my sister," said Catherine. "And let him tell her how close I am to surrender."

The knights hastened their retreat, grabbing their friend.

"Right..." said Alec. "Just a thought, but I am not certain courting her is going to be easy."

"Yes, I've thought of that," said Merlin.

"Oh, any ideas?"

That's when Alec found himself on the ground.

He also found he was a frog.

"Merlin?," he asked.

"I know, you're cold, that's to be expected." Merlin draw a fur lined blanket from nowhere and placed the now frog Alec inside. He walked towards the Ice Princess.

"Merlin," said Catherine. "What are you doing here?"

"I wanted you to meet someone."

"Oh?"

He passed her the blanket.

"Uh, hello," said Alec.

"You might properly introduce yourself," said Merlin.

"Right. Forgive me, Your Highness. I am Alec, Duke of Padua."

"You're a frog."

"In all fairness, I wasn't a minute ago," said Alec.

Catherine looked at Merlin. "He's a frog."

"Catherine, don't be so narrow-minded. He's not just a frog."

"He's not?"

"I'm not?," Alec parroted.

"No, he's your True Love," said Merlin. "Oh, and this frog curse I just did, only True Love's kiss will break it."

"You can't be serious," said Catherine.

"Indeed I am," said Merlin. "You know how to conjure flies, do you not, Your Highness?"

Merlin disappeared.

Now
The enchanted sun lowered in the enchanted horizon and Beatrice wondered what the hell actually made this place enchanted.

Maybe it was her shoes. She had to remember to be more functional the next time she got kidnapped.

"You see, I hate Lord of the Rings because they just wander around. If the whole point is to get the ring to Mordor, why do they keep doing all that other crap? I mean, could they use the magic of the ring for like five seconds to get to Mordor and just keep an eye on Frodo so he didn't go mad with power?"

"Have you seen every nerdy thing ever?," asked Emma.

"Yes," said Beatrice.

"Maybe you could just enjoy the story?," Emma asked.

"Yeah, this is how I started the argument where I lost my last friend," said Beatrice.

"Your last friend?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Mellie. She liked nerdy things, but I dared to question the plot of Lord of the Rings and we had to end a sleepover at two in the morning. Also, she never spoke to me again. Like I'd give the ring a try before I walked through New Zealand for three movies."

"That's not how magic works," said Gold.

"Yeah, but the guy who wrote the book didn't know that," said Beatrice. She paused. "Middle Earth's not real, right?"

"What?," asked Gold.

"Stuff just keeps turning out to be real. Middle Earth isn't real, right? Dad?"

"I don't think so."

Mary Margaret stopped. "This is good. We can camp here. Emma, come on. We need firewood."

The women went off. Beatrice turned to Gold.

"Are we sure a hotel didn't survive the Curse?," asked Beatrice.

"You'll be fine," said Gold. "Come on. Lie down."

Beatrice sat down. She looked around. "I can't lie on the ground."

Gold took his suit jacket off and folded it up. He sat down on the ground and placed the folded jacket next to him. "Put your head down and take your glasses off."

Beatrice took them off and laid on her side facing Gold, the glasses clutched in her hand.

"Do I sound like a brat?," asked Beatrice.

"You sound like someone who doesn't want to be here and I can't say I blame you for that."

"You don't like it here?"
"I have many unpleasant memories of this realm, your mother excepted. It can be a very harsh place."

"Yeah, but you're the... you know."

Gold smiled. "I wasn't always."

"Then what were you?"

"Very long ago, I was a poor spinner. I got sent off to the Ogre Wars."

"Oh, right, ogres. Almost forgot about them."

"Close your eyes, nothing's going to hurt you."

Beatrice did as she was told. "Is that how you hurt your leg? In the war?"

"More or less."

"Is that how you became the..."

"The you know? Not exactly."

"Then what happened?"

He hadn't told her. He had practically begged Belle to hold off a while longer about Bae. He had been trying to win her trust and prove his love to her, he hadn't wanted the first thing she found out to be that he had abandoned her brother. Beatrice was a cautious creature, she needed evidence before she bestowed affection. He could tell her when they got home, when he was closer to finding a way to cross the town line.

"It's a long story," said Gold, running his fingers through her hair. "You need sleep."

"I can't sleep in the dark..." she said, dozing off.

"Is that so?," Gold asked, smiling at her as she fell asleep.

He caught sight of Mary Margaret staring at them.

"Yes, Your Highness?," he asked.

"I didn't say anything," Mary Margaret said with a slight smile.

---

**Then**

Catherine lived alone.

She quite liked living alone. She could do what she wanted, eat what she wanted without anyone looking and could pass the whole evening reading if the mood struck her.

And now she had a roommate.

Who was a frog.

A chatty frog.
"And that was how I won the games," said Alec. He looked to her with his amphibious eyes. "Were you not listening, Your Highness?"

"Should I listen if you're going to tell me the same story again and again?"

"My mother says I have never been able to cope with a moment's silence," said Alec.

"Wise woman," said Catherine, looking at her book.

"She has magic as well," Alec commented.

Catherine eyed him, finally looking away from her book. "Does she? Perhaps if you've inherited some of it, we can find some way for you to transform yourself back."

"I'm sorry, Your Highness. My mother's magic is passed among the women of her line."

Catherine sighed. "Great."

"Merlin did say True Love's Kiss would break the curse."

"I have no True Love," said Catherine.

"He seemed to think you did."

"Well, he's wrong," said Catherine.

"You must have a True Love and Merlin has never been wrong in my family about these matters."

"Merlin knows your family?," asked Catherine.

"Yes, for generations."

"Mine as well," mused Catherine.

"Do you mean he's planning something?"

"Do you think he's not? Why else bother? Whatever he's after must be very special to have gone on such a long while." She paused. "Was your line all True Love?"

"Yes, in fact. Why?"

"Because children born of True Love always have some magic."

"Well, I do not."

"Oh, I bet you have a few tricks you don't even realize," said Catherine.

"Why do you think you don't have True Love?," asked Alec.

"Because I can't," said Catherine.

Now

"Well," said Jefferson with a deadpan expression, "thanks for bringing my hat back."

He looked at the charred remains as Belle and David sat across from him in the living room of the
great hollow house.

"Is there any way we can put it back together?," asked Belle. "Some sort of magic?"

"It's done for," said Jefferson.

"Rumplestiltskin has books, maybe there's a restoration spell," said Belle.

"Books of dark magic?," asked David.

"Do you have another option?," Belle retorted.

"Fairy dust."

"Oh, right, fairy dust," said Belle. "From the woman who's responsible for this in the first place."

"You don't know that," said David.

"She has been trying to get rid of my daughter since she knew Beatrice existed," said Belle. "Do you really think she had nothing to do with this?"

Jefferson cleared his throat. "Even if I could get it to work, Belle, you know the rules."

"What rules?," asked David.

"The same number that go in have to come back," said Belle. "I can think of a few candidates."

"You can't just pick people to send back. That's not how we do things," said David.

Belle fumed. She looked at Jefferson. "Have you seen your daughter? Rumple said the Curse separated her from you."

"No," said Jefferson.

Belle nodded. "Well, you should and tell her you love her and never let go."

---

_Then_

It had been weeks.

Weeks of that frog roommate who chatted and chatted and tried to get her to kiss him.

He was on one such tear today.

And she had enough.

Catherine groaned, stopped and turned to see the frog. "Alright, if I kiss you, will you leave me alone?"

"If you're my True Love-"

"I very much doubt that I am your True Love, but I fear I will never be rid of you if I don't kiss you."

"Then kiss me, Your Highness."
Catherine took a deep breath. She was kissing a frog after all. Oh, wouldn't her sister love this? She closed her eyes, leaned forward and kissed...

The frog.

Which wasn't so bad.

The next thing she was vaguely aware of was being pushed on her back.

The frog was a man.

A very foxy man.

A man who could certainly wear a pair of leather trousers.

"Oh, no," said Catherine.

"What? Sorry, I just, I've been a frog for a couple of weeks and though I did look upon you with some favor, I had no idea how much favor until just now," he said not looking up from a swath of creamy cleavage.

"Eyes," she said harshly.

"Yeah, just one second..."

She slapped him across the cheek and he brought his hand against it.

"What was that? True Love's Slap?!," he squeaked.

"I'm not your True Love," she said.

"Well, I think the fact that I was a frog just a moment ago would beg to differ."

"I can't be!"

"I believe you are and I am so glad of it," said Alec. He knelt down. "Your Highness-"

She shook her head. "Please, don't."

"No, I must."

"No, you mustn't."

"I am but a humble Duke- wait, no, that's not right, I mean I am a Duke, but I'm certainly not humble-"

"No kidding?," Catherine asked.

"I meant humble in the way that one might be a humble shepherd, which wasn't right, I have land and treasure enough to last generations. My land is near as lovely as you are and-"

"Alec, stop."

"I mean, it's pretty nice, but what I think we're running into two different standards for beauty-"

"Do you ever shut up?!," she screamed.
"Your Highness?"

"I cannot marry you, Your Grace. I cannot even be..."

"You cannot be what?"

"Your lover," Catherine said, looking down.

"Why not?"

"There's been a 'blessing' cast on me," she said with distaste. "Though I don't see how it can be but a curse. If I share... that with my True Love, I'll lose my power and you've seen my kingdom and my sister. I need my power to serve my people.

"Catherine, there must be another way."

"You don't think I've looked?"

"We'll look together."

"Alec, there's nowhere else to look."

"Then simply be with me. Let us live as friends-"

Catherine shook her head. "I couldn't do that to you. Deny you your... needs. Deny you children. This is my burden to bear, I won't make it yours."

Alec shook his head. "Any burden you bear is mine."

"No, see, you can still have a good life, Alec. You can still be happy."

"If it's not with you, I don't want it."

Her eyes watered now. "I'm sorry."

With a wave of her hand, Alec found himself back in his front hall.

"Alec?," asked Lady Amelia. "Alec, what's happened? Where were you?"

He tried to collect himself. "Merlin! Merlin, where are you? I demand an audience!"

The wizard appeared.

"Why? Why has that been done to her? Did you know?"

He nodded. "I had hoped you could change her mind."

"How could I hope to change her mind? She cares for the welfare of her people! True Love's Kiss can't break her curse?"

"A very devious mind has rewritten her fate. Catherine's powers have been cast as her curse."

"Then what am I to do?"

"How should I know? You're her True Love, aren't you?"

Alec stood and steamed. "Prepare my bags and my horse!"
"Alec, where are you going?"

"To slay the Summer Princess."

"Alec!," Amelia gasped.

Alec grabbed his sword from its place in the hallway and looked at his mother.

"If the only way she can be free of her powers is to protect her people, then I shall protect her people. I will never stop fighting for her."

He marched out.

Lady Amelia looked at Merlin.

"'I will never stop fighting.' That's a good line."

Alec marched back in. "There isn't by any chance, any bread and meat ready to go? I'm a bit peckish."

Merlin sighed. "Then he ruined it."

Now

Belle went to the pawn shop. She almost had enough with David for the day. Rumple kept most of his books on magic at the shop and if any of them had something about repairing a portal, she would find it, dark magic or not. She went to get her key to the shop and found it wasn't necessary as the door was open.

The cabinets were open. Contents were overturned.

And one very dazed wandless fairy laid on the floor next to the cupboard Rumple had cast a special protection spell on.

Belle resisted the urge to kick Mother Superior to death. She settled for walking over and stepping on her hand with the heel of her stiletto.

Mother Superior stirred and looked at Belle in a mix of shock and fear.

"I know what you're looking for," said Belle. "And it's not here."

"He told you where he keeps it," said Mother Superior.

"You're not going to get it," said Belle. "If you try to come after it, that is going to end very badly for you."

"He's finally turned you, hasn't he?"

"You need to understand something," said Belle as Mother Superior got up. "The only reason you and my father and the others are still alive is because I asked Rumple not to kill you and that's not because I care about you all that much. I care about him. I want him to be better."

"Are you threatening me, Belle?"

"I wouldn't call it a threat."
Beatrice awoke, feeling a sharpness at her chin. She opened her eyes, finding the usual blur, but definitely no Gold by her.

"Dad!," called Beatrice.

"What are you doing?," the woman attached to the end of the pointy thing asked. "The ogres will hear you."

That wasn't inspiring.

"What are these?," asked a man.

Beatrice groped beside her. "Do you have my glasses?"

"Strange things."

"Could I have them back?"

"Whatever for?"

"So I can see. Dad!"

The man's footsteps approached and he knelt down beside her. "There's something familiar about you, isn't there?"

He put his hands on either side of Beatrice's face.

"Lancelot, what are you doing?," asked the woman.

"So powerful..."

"This is kind of creepy, dude..." said Beatrice.

Suddenly, a rush came from the woods.

"Lancelot!," exclaimed Mary Margaret.

"Your Highness," said Lancelot as he stood. "We thought the Dark Curse had taken you away."

"Step away from her," Gold growled. "You too, dearie."

"This is Lancelot. He's my friend-" said Mary Margaret, trying to intercede.

"Beatrice, come here," said Gold, yanking her up off the ground as he shoved her behind him. She was terrified, she felt about five, grabbing the back of Gold's vest.

"We can trust him."

"No, you can't," said Gold.

"What are you talking about?"

"Yeah, I wish I knew what we were talking about," said Beatrice.

"Hello, Cora," said Gold.

Lancelot put up his arms. "I'm afraid not."
"You're not fooling me, dearie."

"No..." Mary Margaret gasped, stepping in front of Emma.

"Who's Cora?," Emma hissed.

"You think I know?!," Beatrice hissed back at her.

"You don't really think I can be tricked by a shape shifting spell that I taught you, do you, dearie?"

"Well, from the look of you, I don't think there's that much of the Dark One left."

"Looks can be deceiving," said Gold as he held out his hand to form a fireball.

"Oh, they can," said Lancelot.

Who suddenly became a woman.

"What?," Emma hissed.

"What am I missing?," hissed Beatrice.

"Uh, he's a she, I guess..." said Emma.

Cora spoke. "Strange, Rumple, to have a girl so powerful with such a big weakness."

The other woman held her sword at Cora's throat. "What have you done with Lancelot?"

"Oh, Mulan, you tiresome girl..." Cora raised her hand and the woman flew backwards into a tree.

"What do you want, Cora?," asked Gold.

"To be reunited with my daughter, of course."

Gold chuckled. "Well, I don't think she wants to see you. She told me you were dead. Yet another oversight."

"You should have trained her better."

"Well, it was difficult to get any instruction through after the damage you did."

Cora looked at Beatrice. "Where's her mother?"

"Sweetheart, don't say anything," said Gold.

Cora vanished. Mary Margaret and Emma rushed to the woman coming to at the bottom of the tree. Gold turned to Beatrice.

"Are you alright?"

"Where were you?!," Beatrice shouted.

"Sweetheart, quiet. The ogres."

"Where did you go?!"

"Mary Margaret heard something. We had to check. I'm sorry. Don't cry." He hugged her and
kissed the top of her head. "I won't do it again. I'm sorry."

Mary Margaret walked back. "What do we do now?"

"Well, now, we have a bit of a problem," said Gold.

"Who was that?," asked Emma.

"Cora."

"And who is Cora?," asked Emma.

"Regina's mother," said Mary Margaret.

"The miller's daughter?," asked Beatrice. "The crazy one?"

"Crazier than Regina?," Emma asked in disbelief.

"As bad as you think Regina is, this woman is worse," said Mary Margaret.

"Great," said Emma. She looked at Gold. "And if you taught her, what does that make you?"

"Your best chance, dearie," said Gold.

"Does anyone see my glasses?," asked Beatrice.

"No...," said Emma.

"That is not good," said Gold.

Mulan roused and stood. "Where's Lancelot?"

"You know I don't really have time for this, dearie," said Gold.

"Dad, what's not good?"

"She has one of your possessions and she'll want to use it," said Gold.

"What does that mean?," asked Emma.

"It means we're going on a bit of a detour."

Gold waved his hand and they were suddenly standing inside somewhere. He walked over to a torch and blew on it, lighting up the room.

"What is this place?," asked Emma.

"The Dark Castle," said Mary Margaret. "His place."

"You said we couldn't use magic to transport us," said Emma.

"It had a price. The stakes just escalated. I have magic here that can protect Beatrice." Gold walked over to Beatrice and put his hands on either side of her face. "You trust me, don't you?"

"Yeah, except people usually say that before they're about to do something to make you not trust them..."

"It's just you didn't trust me to do this when we were first introduced," said Gold.
Something tingled and suddenly Beatrice could see the whole torch lit hall clearly.

"Oh, my God," said Beatrice. "I can see."

"Well, sunshine," a man's voice boomed, "what sort of time do you call this?"

Gold spun around to look at the grand staircase as the man came out of the shadows.

"Merlin," said Gold.

"Hope you don't mind. I let myself in."

"I've been looking for you."

Merlin smiled. "I thought you might be."
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

What I Wrote That Time: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they recklessly tear at the strings of your very soul.

Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Now

"Merlin?," asked Emma. She looked at Beatrice. "Did you see this coming?"

Beatrice shook her head. "Not really..."

"Merlin..." said Mary Margaret.

"It's very nice to meet you, Your Highness. You as well, Savior." Merlin walked over and looked at Beatrice. "Beatrice. How are you?"

"I've been better."

"You're here," said Gold. "I saw you in Storybrooke."

Merlin threw up his hands. "I'm here. I'm there. I'm everywhere."

"Can you help get us home?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Well, here's the thing, no." Merlin looked at Gold. "We've got the slight problem of his former apprentice who seems hellbent on a family reunion."

"Are you blaming me?," asked Gold.

"I told you that you couldn't handle that girl."

"Is he like your teacher?," asked Emma.

Gold chuckled. "No."

Merlin shook his head. "I'm afraid not. If I had been his teacher, he damned well would have learned something like how to make certain someone is dead, especially an ex-girlfriend."

"Whoa, back up," said Beatrice. "Ex-girlfriend?"

"It's nothing to trouble you with, Beatrice," Gold said quickly. "We had made camp for the night. I suggest we get started again in the morning."

"Of course you've brought us further from the palace," said Mary Margaret.
"Did you want to go back?," asked Gold. "Where Cora and the ogres can find you?"

Mary Margaret sighed and crossed her arms.

"That's what I thought. Beatrice, come along."

---

Then

Merlin had been in the Land Without Magic before and thus found it quaint that Regina thought she could be fooling anyone from the outside. He didn't want to confront the mayor about her inaccuracies, though, he was here to find Belle.

He finally spotted a familiar face.

"Snow!"

Mary Margaret Blanchard stopped and turned. "Excuse me?"

"Sorry, nothing, it just seemed as if it might snow..." said Merlin, pretending to look at the spring sky. "I don't think we've met before. Mr. Avalon."

"Mary Margaret Blanchard."

"Mary Margaret," he said with amusement, "I wonder if you could help me. I'm looking for a woman called Belle."

"Belle?"

"You might have seen her with..." Merlin paused. "This really is hopeless. Let's try something else, of all the men you know in this town, who scares you the most?"

"What?"

"I know it seems strange, but I promise, it would help me. Who scares you the most?"

"Honestly?," she asked quietly. "Mr. Gold."

Merlin smiled at Regina's choice in name. He wondered if everyone else would be as easy to find. "Yes, Mr. Gold. That is who I am looking for. Mr. Gold."

"Well, it's rent day, so he may be out, but I think you could find him at his shop."

"Thank you so much," said Merlin. He waved his hand so she wouldn't remember the incident. "You've been a tremendous help."

Merlin walked off leaving the schoolteacher terribly confused and found his way to Mr. Gold's shop.

---

Now

Beatrice followed Gold up the stairs and down the hall.

"You said he was a wizard," said Beatrice. "Well, duh, he is a wizard. Everyone knows that."

"Come on. It's time you got some sleep."
"How am I supposed to sleep when an evil witch wants to do something to me?"

"This castle only uses my magic now. I made certain of that once and this is the most protected room of all."

Gold opened the door. Beatrice walked in to see an opulent bedroom with a blue tapestries, furniture and bedding with hints of gold. Gold waved his hand and a fire began to roar.

"What room is it?," asked Beatrice.

"It's your mother's room."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. Come on. Get in the bed."

Beatrice sighed and got in the bed as Gold tucked her in. He was dangerously close to smothering her again, but at the moment it was one of her lesser concerns.

"So, this Cora, I'm guessing you two didn't part on good terms?"

"You could say that."

"And why would she want to use my glasses against me?"

"She won't be able to do anything to you." He smiled as he gave her a kiss on the cheek. "Sleep well."

---

Merlin entered the shop. Looking at the contents, he wondered what exactly Rumplestiltskin had left in the Enchanted Forest. He spotted the man himself, looking quite put together in his three-piece suit. He looked like the spinner again, but Merlin knew there was still a bit of the Dark One in there.

"Well, sunshine, look at you..." he said.

Gold stopped and turned from his task. "Can I help you?"

That's when Merlin was struck with a terrible notion.

"Tell me you weren't that stupid, sunshine..."

"I don't know what you mean. Who are you exactly?"

Merlin waved his hand, freezing the now mortal.

"Were you stupid enough to let yourself get caught up in your own curse? You moron!"

Merlin waved his hand again, wiping the slate clean and returning Gold to life.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes, my name is Mr. Avalon. I'm looking for someone you may know."

"And who might that be?"
"Your wife?"
Gold grimaced. "I haven't had a wife in a very long time."

"Girlfriend?"
He gripped his cane. "Afraid not."

Merlin rolled his eyes. Had he not even thought to properly take care of Belle under the Curse? "Prostitute?"

"What are you insinuating?"
"I'm looking to buy a chipped teacup. Would you happen to have one for sale?"
Gold narrowed his eyes. "I don't think so."

"Were you ever in love with anyone and where might I find her?"
"She's dead. Is there a reason you're-"
Merlin waved his hand and began to walk out.

"Can I help you?"

"Apparently not, sunshine!" He turned back. "Apparently, you are the biggest moron to ever get your hands on the Dark One's dagger! You come up with a Dark Curse to get everyone here and think you're so clever by giving it to a psychopath you helped create and you forgot to take care of the only good thing to happen to you in about three hundred years!"

"I'm phoning the sheriff."
Merlin waved his hand and Gold resumed his blank stare.

"Can I help you?," he asked.

"Not at all," Merlin muttered as he stormed out of the shop.

Now

When Gold walked into the Great Hall, Merlin was sitting at the large spinning wheel.
"I was surprised you didn't take this."

"It didn't fit in my luggage."

"Those additional baggage charges will get you every time. Shame. You took the cup, though."

"You know I did."

"Told you it was an heirloom."

"I want to know what you're playing at," said Gold. "I want to know what Beatrice has to do with it and why the Blue Fairy and the Knights of the Round Table are so against her. It's not just me."
"No, it's not," said Merlin, idly spinning the wheel.

"Then what is it?"

"True Love, Rumplestiltskin. True Love."

"What about it?"

"Well, I thought you knew. It's the most powerful magic of all."

Gold glared.

"When you first saw Beatrice, did you realize she was your daughter?"

"I suspected."

"Was it that she has your eyes or perhaps some other intangible quality she possessed? The same intangible quality I suspect Cora saw in Beatrice right away."

"How much magic are we talking about?"

"Fourteen generations of True Love."

Gold scoffed. "You're lying."

"Not lying, sunshine."

Gold stopped the wheel with his hand. Merlin looked up at him.

"Even if that was possible, which it isn't, Belle's father was not her mother's True Love."

"You've met Sir Maurice of Avonlea," said Merlin. "Is there anything about him that you can see in his supposed daughter?"

"Belle doesn't have magic."

"Does she not possess some intangible quality that drew you to her right away? Something that made you want her as payment?"

Gold didn't answer.

"Strange of you not to give it any thought, but then again, love makes fools of us all. Still, it was probably best for Belle that the sum of her magic was hidden away. You see, sometimes you have to let the other team think they're winning."

---

**Then**

Merlin looked up at Granny. "You haven't got anything espresso based, have you?"

"Espresso based?"

"It's nineteen ninety-six. Haven't you heard of that yet?"

"We just have coffee," said Granny. "Anything else?"

"I'll let you know," said Merlin.
Granny walked away. Merlin had begun lingering here out of a lack of ideas. A visit to Maurice revealed that he was just as big an arse cursed as not. He thought to try the library and found it closed. He tried the town's three bookstores and didn't find her or anyone of her description. He then took to the hospital where he found Prince Charming in a coma, but not Belle. He cursed the imp for his short sightedness. If that blue tart hadn't incapacitated him, he would have dealt with this himself. That Blue had felt the need to incapacitate him suggested Belle was alive somewhere, the question was where.

"She's as friendly as ever," said someone.

Merlin turned to realize he had been joined by Jefferson. The hatter and realm jumper.

"I wouldn't know. I'm new in town."

"Obviously. Nobody's moved here in about thirteen years?"

Merlin turned to Jefferson. "Is that so?"

"I remember you," said Jefferson.

"That's a start," said Merlin. "Now, why is that?"

"Regina's idea of a joke."

"Then you can help me."

"What do I get out of it?"

"What do you want?"

"My daughter. Regina put her with another family. I want her back."

"I would have to be able to rewrite this Curse to do that."

"So, you're not as powerful as they say..."

"No, I am as powerful as they say, but the imp who wrote this Curse is overly fond of technicalities so I'm afraid the strings are a bit too tight."

"Then I don't see what's in it for me."

Merlin leaned in to Jefferson. "You do not want to get brave with me, boy. You think Regina's trouble? Regina is but a breath of air against the hurricane of my rage." He took a bite of his pancakes. "Besides, I bet you would love to see her upset."

"What do you need help with?"

"I'm looking for someone."

"Who?"

"Belle."

"Belle? Rumplestiltskin's Belle?"

"That's the one."
"What do you want with her?"

He ignored the inquiry. "Do you know where she is?"

"The asylum."

"Take me there."

Jefferson nodded. "I'll need to make some tea."

Now

Beatrice awoke.

Right. It was still difficult enough to wake up in her room in Storybrooke after years of waking up in the same bed in Manhattan. Waking up in a bed in the Dark Castle in the Enchanted Forest was much harder.

She collected herself and popped her head into the hallway where she saw Emma wandering.

"Oh, hey," said Emma.

"Hey," said Beatrice, stepping out.

"Is there a map of this place or something?," asked Emma.

"I don't know, I didn't really pay enough attention on the way in," said Beatrice.

"I think I went upstairs, so we would need to go down," said Emma.

"I guess if we get to the dungeon we've gone too far," mused Beatrice.

"There's a dungeon?"

"It's called the Dark Castle, you didn't think there was going to be a dungeon?"

"Sorry, it's my first castle."

"To be fair, it's your second castle."

"Yeah, I didn't exactly get time to memorize the floor plan on my first one," Emma fired back as they found the staircase.

"Oh, I think we're getting close," said Beatrice, peeking out the stairs at the entry hall. "Dad?"

A pair of huge doors on the opposite end magically opened. Beatrice looked at Emma.

"Want to go first?"

"Your castle," said Emma.

"Beatrice!," called Gold.

Mary Margaret poked her head out of the doors. "Emma. Beatrice. Come on."

They walked into the Great Hall. Beatrice was confused at what she was looking at.
Merlin motioned at a table of fruit and pastries. "I made breakfast."

"Thanks," said Emma, picking up a danish.

Beatrice started looking through the offerings.

"Sweetheart, I believe this is what you're looking for," said Merlin.

Beatrice looked to see a mug topped with steaming foam.

"That's a latte."

"Is it?"

Beatrice took the mug. "How did you know?"

"Aren't you from the Enchanted Forest?," asked Emma. "Where did you learn to make a latte?"

"You're making a lot of assumptions, Savior," said Merlin. "You know what they say about assumptions..."

Mary Margaret turned to Emma. "Merlin's a realm jumper. He can even travel to the Land Without Magic."

"You know my reputation then, Your Highness," said Merlin.

"Lady Reinette told us all your stories," said Mary Margaret. "Every year at the Summer Palace, I used to beg to hear them."

"Well," Merlin said, "it's nice to be remembered."

"Wait, if you're a realm jumper, does that mean you can help us get back home?," asked Emma.

"Alas, no, Savior," said Merlin, looking over at Gold. "That magic is specific and tied to an individual: me."

"Well, that's convenient," Emma snorted.

"Rather inconvenient," said Gold.

"Well, luckily, I can manage to help you all turn an enchanted wardrobe into a portal," said Merlin.

"Which I could have managed easily," said Gold.

"The Blue Fairy told us that there was only enough magic for one," said Mary Margaret.

"When she should have said two," Gold muttered.

"Yes, she is a devious little trollop," said Merlin. "I wouldn't believe her if she told me the sky was blue."

"How do you know her?," asked Beatrice.

"How do you think I know her, sweetheart?"

Beatrice shrugged. "Ex-girlfriend?"
Gold and Mary Margaret stopped and looked at Merlin.

"Perhaps," Merlin suggested, "you ought to go see your prisoner the warrior princess."

Mary Margaret turned to Gold. "What did you do with Mulan?"

"She's in the dungeon," said Gold. "Would you rather I left her?"

"She did seem pretty quick with the sword," said Beatrice.

Mary Margaret started downstairs, with Emma in pursuit and Gold after them. Beatrice got up to follow.

"Beatrice," said Merlin.

She stopped and turned.

"Why don't you stay and talk to me?"

---

**Then**

Once the nurse was passed out at her station, Jefferson led Merlin down the hall to room twelve. A room with no name. A woman that had been forgotten.

Almost forgotten.

Jefferson used the nurse's keys to unlock the door and Belle turned, startled. She looked at Merlin and Jefferson in terror.

"It's alright, Belle," Merlin said softly. He sat down next to her. "Oh, Belle, I'm so sorry."

"Who are you?," asked Belle.

"More importantly, who are you?"

Merlin took Belle's hand in his. He placed the other across her belly and she practically jumped out of her skin as he smiled.

"There she is..."

"There who is?"

"Can't you feel that, Belle?"

"Feel what?"

Merlin placed Belle's hand against the slight bump of her belly.

Belle looked up at him in terror. "What's that?"

"Who is that, you mean?"

Belle shook her head. "What's going on? I'm not- It's impossible. I've never even-"

"Let's not worry ourselves with memories, Belle, because I know you don't remember anything but this room, but you are a hero."
"I'm not a-"

"Yes, you are, Belle. No matter what, that's your baby."

Belle smiled. "That's my baby."

"You'll be her hero and you are already mine."

Belle frowned. "Do we know each other?"

"Not as well as I would have liked," said Merlin. "Now, to reiterate, who are you?"

Belle smiled again. "I'm her mother."

"That's right," said Merlin. He leaned forward and kissed her on the forehead. He caught her as she fell forward and put her back in bed as she slept.

"What the hell's going on?" asked Jefferson. "Who is she?"

"I thought you knew."

"You know what I mean. Who is she to you?"

Merlin stood and walked towards the door.

"You don't think I know True Love's kiss when I see it?," asked Jefferson. "Who is she?"

"What do you care, hatter?"

"I helped you. What did you just do? Did you restore her memories? Did you-"

Merlin held up his hand to stop the hatter's prattling. "I began time for her again."

"Why would you do that? So she can have her baby in a cell? So she can count the days of her imprisonment?"

"No, because she carries within her powerful magic and it won't take long for the Evil Queen to realize she's a threat to the Curse so she'll send her out of town."

"Bad things happen to anyone who tries to leave Storybrooke."

"As a rule, yes, but rules are made to be broken."

"What makes you think I won't tell Regina now?"

"Yes, I had given some thought to that..."

Merlin shut the door and waved his hand.

Jefferson found himself back at his large, empty house wondering what had happened after he left that morning.

Now

"So," said Merlin, "what do you think of this land so far?"
"You mean the weird wiped out half forest with magic and no Starbucks," Beatrice asked as she picked at her eggs.

"Not a fan?"
Beatrice shook her head.

"What about magic? What can you do?"

"What can I do?"

"Come on. Don't hold back."

"I haven't really done a lot."

"Tell me what you have done then."

"Well, I got this zombie powder and I froze a guy with it."

"And that was in the Land Without Magic?"

Beatrice nodded. "I can control the fire in the Netherworld. I lit a magic candle and threw some rocks at a dragon. Also, spun a magic hat."

"I trust you defeated the dragon."

"Well, Emma threw a sword at it. Her. Maleficent."

"How did you light the flame of the magic candle?"

Beatrice shrugged. "I don't know. I just blew on it."

Merlin picked up the candelabra and placed it in front of Beatrice.

"You want me to light Lumiere?"

"Go on."

Beatrice stared at it. "See, I don't actually know what I'm doing."

"That's best." Merlin sat back and crossed his arms. "It will come easier in a land with magic."

Beatrice sighed and closed her eyes, then blew on the candle.

"Open your eyes."

Beatrice looked and saw a lit candle.

"Great, maybe next I can get Cogsworth ticking."

"You are magic."

"Right, the True Love thing."

"You're the descendant of fourteen generations of True Love. On your mother's side. As you might imagine, things weren't quite as smooth on your father's side."

"Someone loved Maurice?"
"Who says Maurice was anyone's True Love?"

"He's my grandfather."

"And what made you think that?"

"When my mom called him dad?"

"He's not your grandfather." Merlin leaned in. "Are you sure you can't do anything else?"

"Well, sorry to be a letdown."

"When was the first time you hailed a taxi?"

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Come on. The taxi hailing thing?"

Gold entered. "What's this?," he asked looking pointedly at Merlin.

"Nothing," said Beatrice. "I'm just good at it. Or lucky, I don't know."

"What are you not telling me?," asked Gold.

Beatrice looked up at Gold. "What? I didn't-"


Gold waved his hand to open the doors and Merlin sighed as he stood.

"Your father has such a lovely disposition. That's why I call him sunshine, you know."

Merlin and Gold disappeared into the hallway, leaving Beatrice to look around the room.

Spinning wheel. No surprise there. Tapestries. Golden fleece. What story did the golden fleece come from? She almost reached for her iPhone to Google it, but remembered her iPhone wasn't charged and also, there was probably no WiFi in the Dark Castle.

There were some empty pedestals around the room. She found a walking stick on the floor with notches along the side. She held it absentmindedly and watched in astonishment as a large cabinet opened.

"Okay..." she said to no one.

---

Then

Merlin waited in the town square.

The clock said eight-fifteen.

The townspeople slowly trickled out to begin their days. He watched as Snow White, the ex-cricket and the ex-craftsman stopped and chatted about the clock.

Then he saw what he was really waiting for.

The Evil Queen strode in as if she owned the place. Of course, creating a town with a Dark Curse probably gave someone that notion. She seemed particularly irked as she looked at the clock and
talked with her arch nemesis.

Then she did exactly what Merlin had hoped.

She stalked towards Rumplestiltskin's shop.

As an added bonus, Merlin spotted the Blue Fairy walking towards him: human sized and dressed as a nun.

He laughed. "Oh, this is priceless."

She stopped and glared at him. "Excuse me?"

Merlin shook his head. "Oh, just the thought of you as a... it's just so bloody rich."

"Do we know each other?"

"You bet your habit we do, sister."

"Mother Superior," she corrected.

"Oh, well, I beg your pardon, your royal pain in the arse..."

Blue dropped her jaw at him. Merlin spotted Regina angrily stalking out of the pawn shop.

"Are you inebriated?," asked Blue.

"Sadly not," said Merlin. "Oh, one more thing."

"What?"

He smiled as he sauntered off. "Game. Set. Match."

Now

"Why are you interrogating her?," demanded Gold.

Merlin smiled in amusement. "I would hardly call that interrogating. I was asking her what she knew."

"And why do you care?"

"Her magic is critical and yet, you seem to have taught her absolutely nothing. I don't think you realize what a tactical mistake that is, sunshine-"

"A tactical mistake?"

"Yes. If Beatrice doesn't learn to control her magic, she'll just keep wandering into things with no idea of the consequences. Was this Belle's idea? I thought she would have more sense."

Gold didn't answer.

Realization dawned on Merlin. "It was your idea. You're frightened."

"Don't be absurd."
"No, no, you're afraid. You've seen your pupils, Cora and Regina and you can't bear the idea of turning her, turning Belle's daughter, into one of them."

"And I suppose you like that idea?"

"No, I think that idea is the harbinger of the apocalypse, but I think there's probably a way to teach her magic without turning her into a bitch hag from hell. First suggestion, skip the heart ripping out lesson." He paused. "Do you remember the night I visited you?"

Gold didn't answer.

"Do you remember the storm?," asked Merlin.

---

Then

Gold was just coming from behind the counter when Merlin entered the pawn shop.

"I was just about to close," said Gold.

"Well, you're not closed yet, are you?" Merlin looked outside. "Quite a storm brewing out there."

"I suppose so," said Gold.

"Thunder, lightning, all up the eastern seaboard," Merlin said casually. "Even stretching down to New York City."

"Did you have a specific purchase in mind?," asked Gold.

"No, actually, I was wondering if you would be interested in an item I have," said Merlin. "A piece of jewelry."

"May I see it?," asked Gold.

"Of course," said Merlin, following Gold back to the jewelry case. He pulled a velvet sack out of his pocket and took out a pendant. Reinette's pendant.

Gold picked it up with interest. "This is quite beautiful."

"It's not what it was, I'm afraid," said Merlin.

"I see nothing wrong with it," said Gold.

"Well, a beautiful necklace is nothing without a beautiful woman to wear it," said Merlin. "Wouldn't you agree?"

Gold ignored him. He was still staring at the necklace. "This is an unusual stone."

Merlin nodded. The lack of magic in this place had frozen the swirls of color. "A Lloviznando opal," he called it.

"It's very unusual," said Gold. "What would you take for it?"

Merlin shrugged. "I don't suppose I'd thought of that."

"Rare indeed for someone to walk in here without a deal in mind."
Merlin nearly smiled at Rumplestiltskin nearly sounding like his true self. "It saddens me to think of the thing forgotten on some bedside table. I would be happier if someone were to have use of it. To make it beautiful again."

Gold nodded. "That will take an unusual customer."

"One I think you can find."

Gold smiled. "I think I can."

He looked up. The storm was becoming more and more apparent outside the window.

"It's not a storm," said Merlin. "It's a tempest."

---

**Now**

Beatrice had pulled a chair up next to the cabinet to better inspect the upper shelves. The upper shelves were just at her fingertips and that's when she spotted a rose.

The rose.

The Enchanted Rose. It was glittering under a glass dome, just like in the movie.

"Dad!," she called, wondering if whatever argument with Merlin had finished. "Dad!"

Getting no answer, she decided to take the object down for a closer look.

When she forgot what a klutz she was.

Beatrice dropped it and it fell to the floor. The glass case shattered.

What was supposed to happen with the rose? The Beast would be a Beast forever? He wasn't a beast now...

"Dad!," she called. "You're still alive, right?!"

"I'll be there in a moment!," Gold called back.

Beatrice supposed that was good enough and started picking up the glass. She lifted the rose from the shards and then something weird happened.

She found herself face to face with a knight and for the second time in under twelve hours, she had a sword pointed at her neck.

"Where is the Beast?"

"Uh, Dad!," she called.

"Who are you? Where's Belle?!"

"Storybrooke..."

"What does that mean? What has the Beast done to her?"

Beatrice was starting to get the feeling that whatever answer she gave the guy, he wasn't going to be happy with it.
"I'm sorry, who are you?" asked Beatrice.

"I am Sir Gaston-"

"Oh, my God, you're real, too," said Beatrice. She then noticed that while one leg had a foot, the other leg was more of a stub. "What happened to your foot?!"

He looked down. It seemed to be a surprise to him as well.

"What have you done, witch?"

"I didn't do anything!" Beatrice screamed, "Is anyone actually going to come in here?!"

Both sets of doors finally and mercifully opened. Gold and Merlin through one door. Emma and Mary Margaret through the other.

"Gaston," Mary Margaret said in amazement.

"Is he still alive?," groaned Merlin. He looked at Gold. "I thought I knew you better."

"Back away, dearie," said Gold.

Merlin waved his hand and Gaston flew back into the wall.

"Now, stay!," Merlin instructed. He turned to Emma and Mary Margaret as Gold helped Beatrice up. "What did the warrior princess say?"

"Um, what about him?," Emma asked, motioning at Gaston.

"Yes, everyone thought he was dead," said Mary Margaret.

"He was a flower," said Gold. "He's fine."

"He's missing a foot!," said Mary Margaret.

"Believe it or not, I actually didn't do that," said Gold. "Now, what about our friend?"

Mary Margaret shook her head. "She says everyone was frozen for twenty-eight years. A small part of the Enchanted Forest remained untouched and no one knows why. There's a settlement of them. She has to get back or they will come looking."

"I demand to know where the Beast that rules this castle is!," yelled Gaston.

Gold turned. "I'm standing right here."

"Where is my fiancee?!"

Emma snorted. "Yeah, I think that ship has sailed."

"Would someone cut out his tongue?," asked Merlin.

Gold rolled his eyes and waved a hand, sending Gaston into the dungeon through a puff of purple smoke.

"So how do you expect us to get to the wardrobe?," asked Mary Margaret.

"For one, Cora doesn't know where you're going," said Gold. "You'll be harder to detect without
magic."

"Great," said Emma.

"And how do we get it back here?," asked Mary Margaret.

"I'm certain you'll think of something, Your Highness," said Gold.

"Here," said Merlin, tossing something to Emma. "Use this if you have trouble."

Emma held it out. "This is an orange."

"It's a satsuma," said Merlin.

"And what do I do with it?"

"You're the Savior. You'll figure out something," said Merlin. "Just don't eat it."

"Do you have weapons?," asked Mary Margaret.

"In the front hall," said Gold.

Emma and Mary Margaret left.

Merlin turned to Gold and motioned towards Beatrice.

"I wonder if perhaps we want to revisit the notion of teaching her to use her powers before she does something she doesn't understand? Again."
Another note from the past:

I do not own Once Upon A Time, which is a show on ABC where they give you about five minutes of hope and then tear it away for a prolonged agony.

So, please, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

**Two Days After The Curse Broke...**

Neal had just gotten a new phone after his shattered on the sidewalk the day the pigeon delivered the postcard. He had just finished loading it up with music and it was still charging when it rang.

He saw it was Beatrice. He thought about not answering, not wanting any part of magic and all that crap now that it was back, but he also knew Beatrice. If she was calling, she would never stop.

Never ever stop.

"Hey," he said.

"Hey," said Beatrice.

"What's up?"

"You haven't heard from August, have you?"

"I got a postcard. So, the Curse is broken?"

"Oh, yeah, totally broken and now I am living in crazy town."

He cracked a smile. "That bad, huh?"

"You know the town in Gilmore Girls?"

"Beatrice, I'm a guy. I've never seen Gilmore Girls."

"Okay, then the comparison I was about to make is completely pointless."

"So, your mom knows she's..."

"Belle from Beauty and the Beast, not just Belle the strangely kind librarian? Yeah, she knows."

"Did you find your dad yet?"

"Oh, yeah. Found him."
He was curious at the tone of her voice. "What? Is he really hairy or something?"

"No, but you probably know him."

"I doubt that. I left that world a long time ago."

"No, apparently everyone knows him. Do you want to guess?"

Neal smiled. "Okay, I'll play. Give me a hint."

"Straw into gold."

Neal's stomach sank below his knees. "What?"

"Is that not enough? Likes to trade in first born children, though he keeps telling me it was just sort of a baby broker thing so I guess that's a moral gray area..."

Neal had to sit. "So, uh, your dad is Rumplestiltskin?"

"I suppose you want to keep your first born now? Though he claims that's not how that went, but won't say anything else."

"Beatrice, did you tell him about me?"

"Uh, yeah, because when I first met my dad, I immediately thought to mention this guy I know in New York-"

"Beatrice!," he shouted.

"What? Do you owe him money or something?"

That was when Neal heard a voice he hadn't heard in hundreds of years.

"Beatrice."

He thought the once familiar lilt was going to give him a heart attack.

"Beatrice, dinner is ready."

"Okay..." she said.

"Are you talking to someone?"

"Yeah..."

"Who?"

"A friend. Is that okay?," she asked sarcastically.

"It's eggplant parmigiana," Neal heard his father offer. "Your mother said you enjoy it."

"Yeah, I'll be a minute."

There was a pause while Neal assumed his father- their father- left.

"Okay, what's your deal?," asked Beatrice.
Neal couldn't ponder an answer. "Beatrice, don't call me again."

"What?"

Not answering, he hung up the phone.

---

A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest

The sun was just rising in the sky when Catherine felt her husband curling up against her.

"You know," she began, "come couples keep separates chambers and some husbands have the good sense not to bother their wives in such a ghastly manner as this after near thirty years of marriage."

The Duke kissed her neck. "That is for the husbands of lesser women."

"Was last night not enough for you?"

"It will never be enough," he promised.

There was a knock at the door. "Your Grace! Sir Maurice of Avonlea is here!," called the footman.

Catherine groaned. "What land is Avonlea that is acceptable to arrive before a house has risen for the day?"

"I dare say Sir Maurice has no regard for such things," said the Duke. He looked back to the door. "See to it that he is comfortable and he may wait in the breakfast room!"

"Yes, Your Grace!"

"What does he want?," asked Catherine.

"I assume to ask permission to propose to Reinette again merely so he can be rejected again."

"Will you grant it?"

"I would never grant it if I thought she would accept," said the Duke.

"Oh, to have my powers back just a moment," said Catherine.

"Now, my lady, what would making him into a block of ice solve?"

She turned to shoot him a glare.

"Oh, you are right," said the Duke in astonishment. "That would solve everything."

"I just don't understand," said Catherine. "Time was no mere Knight of Avonlea would dare to court the daughter of the Duke of Padua, Heiress to the Far North Kingdom."

"Now you sound like my mother," said the Duke.

"I know. I frighten myself sometimes," said Catherine. "Perhaps you should not grant it this time."

"Do you truly think Reinette would accept him?"
"I think she might get drunk or a witch might cast a spell..."

"Fear not, we will not be tied to that man," said the Duke. He curled back against her. "Now, to revisit the other issue..."

"So not in the mood."

"Well..." said the Duke, "that's that then."

Now

Belle had never been much for being alone.

She could be alone. It wasn't that. Reading her beloved books was a solitary activity but one she always tried to take into the garden or the sunshine of a window. In the Dark Castle she would often take her books into wherever Rumple was. In Manhattan, she had tried Beatrice's patience by dragging her daughter into the living room just to read in the same room.

Since Beatrice and Rumple went through the portal, she was mostly alone. She spent some of the days with David, working on a way to get them home, but they were spinning their wheels right now and the Prince's charms were somewhat lost on her. Belle thought Rumple must have been rubbing off on her. She worked at the library some of the time, then had done some work at the pawn shop while she looked through Rumple's books for help for the rest. It wasn't as if there had been much business. Some of the townspeople had dropped off their rent, some had come in to try to reclaim some piece of their former lives. Belle tried not to be a pushover, but a well-timed reminiscence about a beloved grandmother and she was through. She tried to dissuade buying under what an item was worth by making a note for Rumple about the sale in front of the customer. That had helped more than once, but the dwarves had gotten a very good bargain on their drinking steins. Surely he couldn't fault her for that?

Well, he most likely would fault her, but do nothing.

Night was the worst. It reminded her of her various cells. She went back and forth between her own bed and Beatrice's. She had cuddled with the stuffed lamb that had been her daughter's constant companion as a small child and still sat atop the pillows. She had even watched Doctor Who.

Then one night she had an idea.

"Henry."

The boy was at the counter of Granny's drinking hot chocolate. Ruby was behind the counter.

"Morning, Belle."

She smiled. "Morning, Ruby," she said, sitting on the stool next to Henry. She put Beatrice's Macbook down.

"What's that?," asked Henry.

"It's Beatrice's computer," said Belle. "I need your help."

"What are we doing?," asked Ruby, leaning in conspiratorially. "Reading her diary?"

"I would never do that," said Belle. "I don't know a lot about these things, but as I understand it,
"Everything is on something called the Cloud?"

"Yeah?," asked Henry, clearly unimpressed by Belle's technical knowledge.

"Back in New York, Beatrice had a friend. He was from our land," said Belle.

"Our land?," asked Ruby.

"He didn't come here with the Curse," Belle explained. "I was thinking he must have gotten here somehow and if we knew how..."

"Maybe we could use it to get back my mom and Mary Margaret!," Henry said excitedly. He then realized his error. "And Beatrice and Mr. Gold," he quickly amended.

Belle nodded, not offended by the oversight. At least he had an excuse, unlike most of the people in Storybrooke who seemed unmoved by the events where Rumple and Beatrice were concerned.

"Maybe it was a magic bean," said Ruby.

Belle shook her head. "No, I know who got the last one. It's not him."

"So, what do you want me to do?," asked Henry.

"I just need you to get into Beatrice's contacts," said Belle.

He opened the Macbook. "Do you know her password?"

"It's 'Come along, Pond.' All one word."

Henry typed.

"You know her password," said Ruby with a smile. "You are a sneaky mom."

"I am not," said Belle. "It was my condition for buying it. Oh, don't tell Rumple."

"She can always change it," said Henry.

"Or yeah, she could change it," said Belle.

In no time, Henry was in a page with Beatrice's list of contacts. "So, who are we looking for?"

"His name is Neal Cassidy," said Belle.

---

_Then_

Reinette returned to her room. It had been a long day at the palace. She had agreed after her début to come serve as Princess Eva's lady-in-waiting for a while. It was no real burden. She enjoyed the travel and she had finally gotten her friend to lose some of her less desirable behavior. In fact, they had even visited the kingdom of Prince Henry and Princess Cora and Eva tried her best to make friends. Cora pretended to accept, but Reinette had the distinct feeling that Cora was not the sort of woman to have a lot of friends.

Now they had resumed their search for a husband for Eva and it had taken them to King Leopold. Things seemed to be going well as Leopold kept conjuring new amusements to keep them in the kingdom. She just had to get the king to be alone with her friend. Reinette was certain a wedding would follow. Then perhaps her True Love would finally show himself.
She looked up to see Merlin waiting in a chair.

"My lady."

"Merlin," said Reinette, she said smiling. "What are you doing here? Do you have business with King Leopold?"

Merlin chuckled. "You really don't want to know what happens to King Leopold."

Reinette frowned. "I don't?"

"Trust me on it," said Merlin. "No, my business is with you. How goes the search for True Love?"

She sat. "Uneventful."

"No marriage proposals?"

"No, I've had about six. All from Sir Maurice."

"Well, that won't do," said Merlin.

"I much agree."

"I think perhaps it is time to enlist the help of your Fairy Godmother."

---

Now

Belle tried Neal's phone off and on for a while. He never picked up. Then one day in the shop, she had enough of combing through Rumple's books of magic and dialed the number again.


"Uh, hello," said Belle, shocked at actually getting an answer. "Is Neal there?"

"Yeah. Who is this?"

"Belle French."

There was a pause as Belle heard some sort of mild argument between Neal and the woman.

Neal finally came on. "Hello?"

"Neal, it's Belle. Do you remember me?"

He took a very long time to answer. "Yes, I remember you."

"I don't want to bother you, but it is sort of an emergency."

"What kind of emergency?"

"Beatrice was sent through a portal to the Enchanted Forest. I'm looking for ways to get her back."

"I'm sorry to hear that, but I can't help you. Maybe you should ask her dad," he added, the last bit sounding oddly bitter. "The Dark One."
"Well, I can't," said Belle. "He's gone with her."

There was a long pause. "He went with her?"

"Yeah," said Belle. "It's a bit of a long story."

"I bet it is," Neal mused.

"Look, I know you don't think you can help, but if you told me what you know, it might help."

"I don't..."

Belle decided to try something else. She wasn't too proud for it, not where Beatrice and Rumple were concerned. "Look, it's not just me. I know a lot of people don't really give a damn about the Dark One and his daughter getting back-"

"No, Belle, I didn't mean it like that-"

Belle continued. "Emma and Snow White are gone as well. Emma has a son and the prince is basically pointless without Snow."

"Emma has a kid?," asked Neal.

"Yes," said Belle. "He's almost eleven. Sorry, do you know Emma?"

Neal hung up.

---

_Then_

A few nights after their last meeting, Merlin led Reinette to a clearing where the Gold Fairy was waiting.

"Reinette, have you met your fairy godmother?"

Goldie glared at him. "That's not how it works."

"Yeah, yeah, tell it to Cinderella."

"Who?"

"Future, remember? So, Reinette, no progress as of late?," he asked.

"With my True Love?" Reinette shook her head. "Whoever he is, remains a mystery."

"Not any more. Goldie's going to speed things along."

"Speed things along?," Reinette asked incredulously.

"See, we're on a bit of a timetable. If you want to get to know your True Love, you need to meet him about now so you can get married and have a very lovely daughter who is of age and well past her awkward phase just about the time that the ogres invade."

"The ogres?," asked Reinette.

"Ogres?," emphasized Goldie.
"It's not as if I'm the one coming up with this," said Merlin. "Not all of it anyway. What are we standing here for? Goldie, do your thing."

The Gold Fairy sighed and waved her wand. Gold fairy dust flew into the air and plopped down.

"Goldie," Merlin said with irritation.

"I take it that was not supposed to happen?," asked Reinette.

"No," said Merlin.

"I don't know what happened. Fairy dust never fails," said the Gold Fairy.

"Maybe the dwarves who mined it were drunk," said Merlin. "Try again."

"I only have so much."

"Look, the next time you need a mouse to turn into a footman, I'll do it. It will take me all of two seconds and I won't have to spout any magic words," said Merlin. "Do it."

They watched again as the Gold Fairy waved her wand and the dust fell to the ground before Merlin's feet.

"Is this a trick by that blue nightmare?," asked Merlin.

"Do you think I would be here if she had any idea?," asked Goldie. "There has to be an explanation."

"Explanations? The explanation is that your wand must be warped from making too many ball gowns!," Merlin shouted.

"Shouting at me won't help," said Goldie.

"Twelve generations. Twelve generations of True Love!," said Merlin. "Only to be stopped now when I am so close!"

The Gold Fairy scowled and transformed back into her winged form.

"Where the hell do you think you're going?!," shouted Merlin.

The fairy didn't answer and just flew on.

Reinette looked at Merlin in confusion. "What does this mean?"

"I wish I bloody knew."

"What do you need twelve generations of True Love for?"

"I need fourteen."

"What do you need fourteen for?"

"I have a vision."

"A prophecy?," asked Reinette.

"It's both," said Merlin.
"I don't understand."

"I can see the future. I saw it centuries back, plain as day, unfolding in front of me and I set about making it a reality. The closer I've gotten to it, the more difficult it's become. This step eludes me. I just need to figure out this step. The next bit is easy. A beauty. A beast. A library. A tea cup. The thing writes itself. This can't end like this! I already gave him the tea set!"

Merlin looked back at Reinette who was staring at him.

"I'm sorry?," Reinette said uncertainly.

"I don't understand. You're her mother. She's the product of True Love, how else could it happen? Where's your True Love?!"

"I don't know and if this is what your help is going to be like, no thank you."

Reinette turned in a huff, smoothed her skirt and began walking back towards the castle.

Merlin rolled her eyes. "Every idiot princess in this bloody land can find her True Love and I get the one girl who can't."

Merlin stomped and began to follow her when he noticed the fairy dust on his boots.

He stopped and turned back to see the trail of gold dust from where he had begun to where he now stood.

"Oh, come on."

Now

After another sleepless night, Belle walked to the pawn shop. She stopped seeing an unfamiliar car with New York plates in front. She turned to the door to see Neal, sitting on the sidewalk.

"Neal!," she said in amazement. "What- what are you doing here?"

"Yeah," Neal stood, stretching. "I came to help."

"You did?," she asked in shock. "Have you seen your family yet?"

"I can't," said Neal. "They're sort of in the Enchanted Forest."

Belle frowned. "I don't understand."

"Belle, I'm Baelfire."

Belle was silent as she opened the shop and walked in. Neal followed her.

"Are you going to say anything?"

Belle turned around and crossed her arms. "Prove it."

"Prove I'm Baelfire?"

"Yes. August already tried this."

"He did?," asked Neal. "Asshole."
"I'm waiting," Belle said tersely.

"I can describe the dagger to you. The Dark One dagger? With his name on it?"

Belle shook her head. "I have half the town looking for that and August already tried that, too."

Neal shook his head. "My mom's name was Milah-"

"Not good enough."

"What do you want then?"

"There's something in this shop that belongs to you," said Belle.

Neal looked. There were about a million things in the shop. "You want me to pick it out."

"Well, Baelfire ought to be able to."

He nodded. "You're not a pushover."

"No, I'm not."

Neal started looking methodically. "You know, we didn't have anything when I was growing up. Our house had a thatched roof. You have to remake those every so often. They leak, they blow away. After he became the Dark One, he started collecting all this crap. Every time I see one of those reality shows about hoarding, I think about him."

Belle tried to hide her internal agreement of that assessment.

"He never got that I didn't care about that crap. I just wanted him back."

"It's different when you have children," Belle said, hating herself for cracking before she had proof. "I know he's caught up with the things, he can't help himself sometimes, but when you have a child, you can't just count on a wing and a prayer. It tears at you when you can't give them something."

Neal stopped and smiled as he spotted it. He pulled the brown leather soccer ball off the shelf and turned to Belle. She held her breath.

"He made this for me," said Neal. "I was playing with it, by myself because I didn't have a lot of friends after he became the Dark One. This farmer's wagon almost hit me and I fell and skinned my knee. So he turned the guy into a snail and stepped on him."

"You're Baelfire," Belle said in astonishment.

Neal shrugged.

"You told Beatrice not to call you anymore!," said Belle.

"Right..."

"You realized you were her brother, didn't you? You're the only person who understands what this is like for her and you told her not to call you!"

He shrugged again. "I didn't know what to do. I have a lot of issues with my father."

"Issues?," asked Belle. She walked up to him. "You have father issues?"
"He broke our deal."

"My father said he was dying to lure me home. Then when I got there, he held me prisoner and tried to abort my baby. After that, he let the Blue Fairy put me under a sleeping curse. Since the Curse ended, he's tried to steal Beatrice's baby tooth, used the possibility of a reconciliation as a distraction while his co-conspirators sent my daughter—your sister—through a magic hat to what they thought was a void. Since then, I have had to stop him from trying to find the Dark One dagger twice. I wish he would let go!"

"Okay, that's a lot of issues..." said Neal.

Belle shook her head. "I'm not saying you shouldn't be angry. He fully expects you to be angry, he expects you to hate him, but you need to know he has spent hundreds of years trying to find you. We were going to find you, but then..."

"What?"

"We found out that if you cross the town line, you forget who you really are. Your cursed self becomes your only self. He's been trying to find a way around it, but there's been a delay."

"Yeah, I guess," said Neal.

Belle smiled. "I'm glad you're here."

---

**Then**

"You've returned," said Goldie.

Merlin looked up at the Gold Fairy. He was watching from far away as Reinette and the other royal ladies in waiting hosted a picnic, meant to entertain King Leopold and his knights.

Reinette was singing again.

Her singing was all he wanted to hear.

"Did you figure it out?," asked Goldie.

"Figure what out?"

"Why the fairy dust did not move?"

Merlin cast a glance up at the fairy. "Did you?"

"I believe I did," said Goldie. "Prophecy is a treacherous magic."

Merlin snorted. "You're telling me."

"I suppose you'll have to quit your vision."

"Quit my vision?," he asked. "I can't quit my vision. I've put hundreds of years into it. She is my gift to this realm."

"She?"

"Never mind I said anything."
"These lines of True Love you've brought together, they often have magic," said Goldie.

"People with magic can have True Love as well." He looked back at Reinette. "Apparently."

"If you are trying to make a witch or a monster-"

Merlin turned to glare. "Don't you dare call her those names. You know not what you speak of."

"Then tell me."

Merlin looked back at Reinette, sharing some joke with Eva.

"I won't tell you. I'll tell her," said Merlin.

---

_Bow_

Belle walked down the street with Neal. The new visitor was attracting attention, especially since he was with Belle.

"So, what have you and this prince guy been doing?"

"Spinning our wheels, mostly," said Belle. "I've been looking through the books Rumple has. He's been helping the dwarves mine fairy dust and basically telling all to Mother Superior."

"Mother Superior?," he asked.

"The Blue Fairy," said Belle. She looked up at Neal. "It hasn't exactly been a smooth three hundred years between she and Rumple."

"No, I guess not."

"She's been against Beatrice for some reason, always. Rumple thought it was just him, but lately he's started to think there's something more to it."

"More? Like what?"

Belle shrugged.

"You know she used magic, right?," asked Neal.

"What?"

"In New York, she used magic on this guy who was trying to take her."

"Nobody should be able to do that," said Belle.

"I know."

"Why didn't she tell me?," asked Belle.

Neal shrugged. "You weren't really believing any of the things she was telling you."

"Right," said Belle. She motioned at the door. "Let's go inside. Wait, what should I say? I mean, what should I call you?"

"Well, Neal works-"
"No, but who should I tell them you are?"

"Oh." Neal shrugged. "You should probably just say the truth. It's all going to come out anyway."
Belle smiled. "Okay."

They went inside. David was sitting at a table with Henry, waiting for the daily meeting.

"Hi, Belle," said Henry.

"Hey, Henry," said Belle. She motioned at Neal. "This is the friend you helped me find."

"What friend?," asked David.

"Can you help us get my mom and Mary Margaret back?," Henry asked eagerly.

"Well, I don't know, but I'm here to help," said Neal.

"Who is he?"

"This is Rumplestiltskin's son," said Belle. "Neal."

"Rumplestiltskin has a son?," asked David.

Belle resisted rolling her eyes. He could be so thick headed. "He is sitting right in front of you."

"You're Baelfire!," exclaimed Henry. "You're in my book."

They did the wrap up. David explained Mother Superior still didn't know how to use the fairy dust to restore a portal which Belle didn't believe at all. They ended up chatting and Belle noticed Neal taking an interest in Henry.

A particular interest.

"What's going on?," asked Belle as she followed him out of Granny's.

Neal stopped and turned around. "What do you mean?"

Belle walked up. "I saw the way you looked at Henry. What's going on?"

"I don't know what you mean-"

"I know the look because a couple of months ago it was the way Rumple looked at Beatrice," said Belle. "I know I didn't have your attention on the phone until I mentioned Emma and I really didn't care because... because no one is ever going to care about Rumple and Beatrice the way I do, but you're Baelfire so... what's going on?"

"I know Emma."

"Oh, Gods," said Belle.

"We dated, sort of. We stole things..."

"What does that mean?"

"I didn't know who she was, but August found me and told me and I had to let her go so she could come back and break the Curse. So I let her go down for these watches I stole."
"Henry was born while Emma was in prison," Belle said with distaste. "Did you know that?"

"I do now," he said sheepishly. "Are you being judgmental?"

"Yes," said Belle.

"You've been hanging out with my dad and you're going to judge me?"

"Don't make this about you and your father. This is about you. As for your father, he has many, many faults and I know that better than most people, but he never would have left me to rot in a prison." Belle stalked off, clacking her heels against the pavement.

"Belle!," Neal called. "Where are you going?"

"Home! We'll talk in the morning! And don't you dare think of leaving!"

Belle walked away and then through the haze of her anger came the realization that the dungeon at the Dark Castle probably counted as a prison.

Never mind. She was making an exit.

She went home with plans to locate the finest bottle of wine Rumple had and have a glass.

Or two.

Or the whole damn thing.

Belle was suddenly aware of flames around her. She pulled her arms close to her and took in her surroundings.

She was in the Netherworld. She remembered coming her a few times after she had been set free from the Blue Fairy's sleeping curse.

It had always been the same. The darkness. Her screaming baby and having to find her. After the Curse broke, she finally realized this was probably where Beatrice's fear of the dark came from. This wretched place.

Belle waved her hand and the flames disappeared. She wasn't about to stand surrounded by fire the whole night.

That's when she heard sobbing.

"Beatrice!," she called, hurrying forward into the darkness. "Beatrice!"

"Mom?," Beatrice answered weakly.

Belle followed the sound of her voice to see her daughter huddled in a corner.

"Mom!" Beatrice got up and ran towards her, their embrace falling through each other.

"Hey, it's okay," Belle said reassuringly. "Neither of us is really here, remember?"

"What are you doing here?"

Belle shook her head. "I drank a whole bottle of wine."
"You what?"

"Apparently, if your natural defenses are lowered, you can end up here again."

"You drank a bottle of wine?"

Belle shook her head. "It is an incredibly long story. Now, tell me what's happening there. Are you safe?"

"I'm at the Dark Castle."

"And Papa's with you?"

"Yes."

Belle smiled and nodded. "Good. That's good. Emma and Mary Margaret are alright?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, then, what's wrong?"

She shook her head. "I keep screwing up. Oh, yeah, your fiancé was a rose-"

"Gaston was a rose?," asked Belle.

"And he's missing a foot-"

Belle gasped and covered her mouth in horror. Was Gaston that rose? Had Rumple given her Gaston?! "Some crazy woman has my glasses..." Beatrice continued.

"What crazy woman?"

"Cora. She wants to get back to Storybrooke to reunite with Regina and this is my fault-"

"Beatrice, listen to me," said Belle. "None of this is your fault. None of it. Just do what your papa says and I know he'll bring you home."

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't like it here."

Belle shook her head. "It's okay. You'll be home soon."

Suddenly, the ceiling opened and sucked up Beatrice.

"Beatrice!," Belle screamed after her. "Beatrice!"

Regina awoke to the sound of someone banging on her door. She wondered what it could be, since she didn't hear the rabble of the townspeople having decided to kill her again. She pulled her robe around her and went down to the front door.

Where she discovered Belle smelling like a cask.

"Are you drunk?," Regina asked incredulously.

"Cora. She's there. She's found them in the Enchanted Forest."
"What do you mean? That's not possible. My mother is dead."

"No, she's not, Beatrice has seen her and she wants to do something to her."

"How do you know this?"

"We met in the Netherworld. She got ripped away. What does Cora want with Beatrice?"

"I wouldn't know," said Regina.

"Yes, you would," said Belle.

Regina straightened. "I would think she most likely wants revenge."

"For what?"

"Because Rumplestiltskin turned her daughter against her and got her to send her to another realm."

Belle's heart sank.

"I'm sorry," said Regina, shutting the door.

Reinette walked into her room to once again find Merlin.

"My lady."

"Sir," she said. "If anyone sees you, it will be quite a scandal you know."

Merlin sighed. "Yes, I suppose it is generally heading in that direction."

"I was jesting."

He stood and walked to Reinette. "I wanted to apologize for my behavior the other night."

"You ought to."

"See, I have a vision and no one knows the truth of it, but I'm about to tell you."

"You are?" Reinette asked incredulously.

"Please have a seat."

Reinette did. Merlin pulled up a chair next to her.

"This land was not always here. It was created from the remains of another realm with all the magic that was left. The two people that created it, the original powers, disagreed on one thing."

"What was that?"

"Magic," said Merlin. "She thought magic would be safer in the hands of a sort of privileged class of magicians."

"Do you mean fairies?"

"Mostly. He wanted to distribute the magic evenly, but naturally, being a match of equals, they
went with her plan."

Reinette smiled.

"Yeah, yeah, it's funny from over where you're sitting," said Merlin. "Anyway, she double-
crossed him, tried to take all the power for herself and her fairies and has been using it to those she
thinks worthy and no one else ever since."

"Surely that's-"

"It's a decadent system, Reinette. The reason I care so much for the Land Without Magic is that
they evolve, they do things, they've got plans to explore the stars-"

"The stars? How can one explore the stars?"

"They'll figure out the how. The point is no one even dreams like that here."

"Except you."

"I've been trying to come up with a way to right the wrongs of this world and to that end I have-"

"Camelot?"

Merlin snorted. "I'm not even really bothering with that any more. No, there is a girl, a very
special girl, your granddaughter and I thought she would be the one to change everything."

"My granddaughter? Don't you think I ought to have a child first?"

"I think you ought to have a daughter called Belle."

Reinette was in shock. "Do you suppose I might find a husband?"

"No, I supposed you might find your True Love, the trouble is, I have."

"You have?," she asked in dismay.

"Yes. If you were to be connected with him, you would spend the rest of your life in shadows, not
to mention the child and I don't see how she is ever going to meet him if she's his daughter... He is
just a thickheaded bastard and won't fall for it at all."

"You couldn't be wrong about my True Love?," asked Reinette.

Merlin turned slowly. "How do you mean?"

He found himself quite surprised as Reinette kissed him.

"Reinette, I-"

"I didn't need fairy dust to tell me," said Reinette.

"You don't know what this means."

"I don't care."

He maintained their close proximity. "You see, Reinette, True Love is magic and all magic comes
with a price. Especially this."
Reinette smiled. "You once asked my parents what they were running from."

He had said that. True Love would always get you.

Belle tried to clean herself up after her early morning visit to Regina, but she was afraid it had no effect. Leroy had commented on how bad she looked.

Leroy.

So she sat at Granny's waiting for another conversation with Neal that would probably drive her to another bottle of wine. That or worrying about Beatrice and Rumple.

"You don't look good," said Neal as he sat down across from her.

Belle grimaced. "Thanks for that."

"Were you drinking?"

"Can you blame me?," asked Belle. She took another sip of coffee. "Oh, Beatrice is right. This is doing nothing for me."

"What happened?"

Belle leaned in to whisper. "You mean other than you telling me you think you're the father of Emma's son? And you had her sent to jail for stealing watches you stole?"

"I explained that-"

"Neal, you might imagine that I take a dim view of anything where the pregnant woman gets locked up."

"I didn't know she was-"

Belle held up her hand. "Just save this discussion for Emma and for when my head isn't throbbing."

"Given up on Rumple already?"

Belle looked up at Regina. "This is his son."

Regina frowned. "His son?"

"Neal, Regina. Regina, Neal," Belle managed to groan out. "Oh, by the way, Regina is Henry's adoptive mother."

"What?," asked Neal.

"Yeah, this is why I drank the whole bottle." Belle looked up at Regina. "What are you doing here?"

Regina surprised Belle by sitting down in the booth next to her.

"I am going to help you," she managed to choke out, brushing her hair from her face.

"You're going to help us?," Belle asked in disbelief. "Why? Why should I trust you?"
"Because I am doing this for my son. He wants Emma and Mary Margaret back and if I leave it to you..." Regina paused. "Well, you may yet be fairly competent because Rumplestiltskin must see something in you, but if we leave it to the Prince and all of his noble blundering, my mother will be here before you know it and then we're in real trouble."

Belle nodded. "So, what do we do?"

"As frightening as it is, we have to think like Rumplestiltskin," said Regina.

"Beatrice said they were at the Dark Castle," said Belle.

Regina nodded. "He'll have his magic there to protect them, but that wouldn't be his first order of business."

"He'll want a portal," said Neal.

"Where's he going to get one?" asked Belle. "There are no magic beans. I checked the shop. The slippers are here. A looking glass just sends you to Wonderland and he won't go to Wonderland."

"Peter Pan's Shadow," offered Neal.

"Neverland?" Regina asked skeptically.

"Her Majesty's right, he's not going to do that."

The three looked up to see Merlin standing at their table. He was dressed casually and has something that reminded Belle of her old satchel over his shoulder.

He continued. "The reasons are long and complicated, but I assure you Rumplestiltskin will not be making his way back to this realm with a layover in Neverland."

"Merlin?" Belle gasped.

"You're alive," said Regina.

"I know it's a letdown, Your Majesty, but the fact you hadn't killed your mother was something of a letdown for me so we are almost even," said Merlin, sitting down next to Neal. "Almost."

"Wait, you were there?" asked Belle. "How are they? What's happening?"

Merlin looked her in the eye. "They need our help."
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Author's Notes From The Past: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they take a perverse joy in making you cry.

Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest...

"What are you working on?"

Rumplestiltskin turned to see Belle had entered his workshop. She was holding a book as usual.

"Didn't I give you a library?," he asked.

She put the book down on an empty stool and placed her hands on his shoulders.

"You have been in here for hours," she said.

"I'm working on something."

"And what could be so important that it makes you not notice that the sun set hours ago?"

Rumplestiltskin looked up. She was telling the truth.

"Is it about finding Bae?," she asked, resting her chin on his shoulder.

"Yes."

"Can I help?," she asked.

He wanted to laugh. The idea that Belle could help with a Dark Curse? The idea that there was anything dark about Belle? No. She was light itself. His light and that idea would have been so laughable if it wasn't so true.

"No, sweetheart," he said.

"Is it to get to the Land Without Magic?"

"It is."

"Is it a portal or something?"

"Belle..."

She took her hands off. "You don't think you can trust me."
Rumplestiltskin turned around to face her.

"I don't trust anyone with these plans, Belle. It's to find my boy."

"And I don't get to know anything. I want to help."

"I know you do, but there are things that have to be done, Belle..."

Things that required manipulation? Things that required making deals with dubious characters? Things that involved making Regina completely and dangerously irredeemable.

Things that his darling Belle was in no way equipped to deal with.

Things that he would never ask his darling Belle to do.

Luckily, she provided him with an out. "You need magic."

"That's right," he said. He took her hands in his. "When I am closer to finding Bae, I can tell you more."

She nodded and wrapped her arms around him.

She couldn't know the truth. She would try to stop him.

And gods help him, he might let her.

Now In The Enchanted Forest...

"We start simple," Merlin announced, waving his hand to magically clear the table.

"I start," said Gold.

Merlin looked at Gold. "Do you think that's the best idea? Do you even know where to start? You've only started with spinning straw into gold or pushing an overbearing mother through the looking glass."

Beatrice's eyes widened. "The first one sounds kind of okay, but I definitely don't want to do the second one."


Merlin shook his head. "You can't start her on a spell book."

"What happens with a spell book?," asked Beatrice.

"It's like learning math with a calculator," said Merlin. "It's pointless."

"A jump start," Gold argued.

"She is far too gifted to be using shortcuts."

"Maybe it's not too late to get me into Hogwarts," said Beatrice.

Merlin shook his head. "If you haven't gotten an owl by now, it's not going to happen."

"What?," asked Beatrice. She turned to Gold. "Dad?"
Gold glared at Merlin.

Merlin sighed. "It was a joke, sweetheart. There's no Hogwarts."

"That was not funny," said Beatrice. "I kept my window open for two months after I turned eleven. I got pneumonia."

"That's surprisingly un-cynical for you," remarked Gold.

"It was a phase," said Beatrice, crossing her arms.

Merlin stood from the table and walked around. Waving his hand, he conjured a glass of water. He handed it to Beatrice.

"Make it ice."

Beatrice looked at Gold and saw his puzzled expression. She looked back at Merlin. "Which one of the X-Men do you think I am?"

"Your great-grandmother could do it easily. It came as naturally as breathing to her."

"And who was that, might I ask," Gold inquired.

"Why Catherine the Ice Princess, of course," said Merlin. He motioned at Beatrice's necklace. "She wears her pendant."

"Mom said it belonged to her mother," said Beatrice.

"Catherine the Ice Princess?," Gold asked in disbelief.

"Oh, wishing we'd bothered to ask Belle about herself, are we, sunshine?," asked Merlin.

"Catherine the Ice Princess?," asked Beatrice. "She didn't like go around slaughtering people with bolts of ice, did she?"

"She froze some people on occasion, but only when they really irritated her," said Merlin.

"Did she happen to mention how she did it?," asked Beatrice.

"The word 'how' isn't going to help you," said Gold.

"Then maybe you want to," said Beatrice.

Gold pulled a chair closer to her at the end of the table. He sat down. "Why did you spin that hat?"

"Because I'm a moron."

Gold shook his head. "No. Why did you really do it?"

"Because they said they would hurt Mom," she answered honestly.

"And how would you feel if something were to happen to your mother?"

"What?" The thought paralyzed Beatrice.

"How would you feel? Because, Beatrice, assuming we get out of here, if Cora follows us, she'll
want to use you to avenge herself on me and if that happens you and I both know who is going to
die first because she loves you and she will stop at nothing, no matter how powerful the woman
is-
"I think you can stop now, sunshine," Merlin said softly.
Beatrice realized her hand holding the glass was cold. She looked to see a solid cylinder of ice.
She looked back at Gold. "You manipulated me."
"I told you what you needed to know."
Beatrice stood up and marched off.
"Magic is emotion, Beatrice," Merlin called after her. "You need a direct line to the soul. Your
mother is your soul."
"Would you people just give me five minutes?!" Beatrice snapped as she stormed out.
"Which is what made that such a very clever choice," Merlin said as he turned to Gold.
"Happy?," asked Gold.
Merlin didn't answer right away.
"See, she's tried very hard to bury her feelings," said Merlin. "No friends, a world she wasn't
meant to be a part of and a father she wished for that never came. If she didn't bury them, well...
"We're done," said Gold.
"We're not even close to done, sunshine."
"Yes, we are. Whatever needs to be done, I'll deal with it."
"I didn't see her touch the doors," said Merlin. "Did you?"
Gold realized he hadn't.
"You flipped the switch, sunshine. You are so very good at that."
Rain started. Gold looked to Merlin.
"Tell me that's a coincidence," said Gold.
"That's a coincidence."
Gold glared. "That's a lie, isn't it?"
He walked back to the table and sat next to Merlin again.
"You mentioned the storm the night you came to my shop."
"Was it a storm?"
Gold tried to remember the event. Everything under the Curse was such a haze. He vaguely
recalled seeing the storm clouds, growing and some news reports about it. A storm that ran from
Maine, it now occurred to him, perhaps from Storybrooke all the way to Manhattan. There was
the usual weather panic: lots of rain and thunder, freakish October snow in some places.


"I did."

"And why did you call it that?," asked Gold. "What was happening?"

"Your daughter was being born, of course."

---

Then

Belle stood in front of the Dark Castle, ready for the magical carriage to take her to her father.

"You didn't have to put me in a new gown," said Belle.

"Yes, I did," he said, looking over his handiwork. It was a gold gown, actual gold thread that he had spun and woven into fabric. Her necklace was more gold he had spun, many threads he idly made into a braid that he had given her for her birthday. He didn't want Sir Maurice to think he was merely looking at a slave on furlough, that sort of thing was always important to these so-called noblemen and he had spent the night toiling on it. Belle, of course, didn't care, but that was Belle.

"Are you sure you won't come?," asked Belle.

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. He didn't want to send Sir Maurice any quicker to his grave. Well, mostly. "No, but you will call me if I'm needed?"

She nodded. "Of course."

She hesitated. He still couldn't shake the feeling that there was something she was not telling him.

"Was there anything else?," he asked.

She smiled and shook her head. "No." She hugged him. "I love you."

"And I love you," he whispered back.

She stepped back. "I'll be back soon. Well, I hope not too soon, but I'll be back."

Rumplestiltskin helped her into the carriage.

"Call me if I'm needed."

Belle smiled as if she thought he was being silly and the carriage set off on its journey.

---

Now

Beatrice had found the library.

The library.

The tale as old as time, song as old as rhyme library.

It was spotlessly maintained, she guessed through magic and showed no signs of age. She couldn't
ponder thumbing through the titles, though. She was too... well, she couldn't decide if it was sad or mad.

"Beatrice?," Gold asked softly.

He came up the stairs.

"I see you found your mother's favorite room."

She scowled and didn't answer. Gold nodded. This was how she was. He sat down next to her and she turned away.

"What I said was true."

"You said it to manipulate me into doing what you wanted."

"Beatrice, you have powerful magic..."

"So I hear."

"Though it pains me to say it, Merlin's right. It's too powerful to be left alone. Cora saw it immediately and will want to use it. Better me than her, you have to believe me on that."

"Right, this is great for you then."

"How is this great for me?"

"You get the kid you wanted, not me."

"What are you talking about?"

She shrugged. "I have to say it?"

"You think I don't want you?," he asked. "What could have possibly given you that impression?"

"No, I get it," she said dismissively. "Congratulations, you have a kid. Sorry, she's a totally pointless nerd who is just going to annoy you and not be anything..."

"Beatrice, the simple truth is that you don't have to be anything. You don't have to do anything. You're mine. I don't understand you, but that doesn't matter because you are mine."

"When I first saw you at Granny's, do you know what I was thinking?"

She snorted. "How could this freak show be related to Belle, let alone be her daughter?"

"No and you need to stop saying you're not beautiful because you are Belle's daughter and you're every bit as lovely as her, which is not a compliment I give to just anyone," he said seriously. "What I was thinking was 'Please, let her be mine because I don't think I could bear it if she wasn't.'"

Beatrice looked up at Gold. "What?"

Gold curled his lip. "That's the response I get?"

"Why? I mean, you didn't want to deal with some kid who wasn't yours-"

"No." Gold was still incredulous at this point. "Just being Belle's daughter would have been enough for me to care for you, but I wanted you."
Beatrice looked away. Gold knew she wasn't going to say anything, but took it as encouragement when she didn't shirk away from his hand in her hair.

"What if she had shown up with a husband?,” asked Beatrice.

Gold responded without thinking. "Well, her last romantic interest ended up as a flower, what do you think?"

Beatrice turned back at him sharply. "You have a jealous streak."

"I like to think of it as protecting what's mine."

"Right. Because that's not scary at all."

He leaned in. "It's meant to be scary."

---

Then

It had been days.

Then a week.

Rumplestiltskin has not left the Dark Castle. He had not gone on any calls, made any deals. All because he wanted to be certain he was here when Belle returned or when she called for him.

One visitor cared not that he was not doing business.

"Good morning, sunshine."

Merlin was waiting at the table in the great hall with breakfast as usual.

"I thought you might be hungry."

Rumplestiltskin took a piece of fruit off the table. "I'm not doing any deals, dearie."

"Oh, I'm not here to do any deals," said Merlin. "In fact, I might have some good news for you. This is a particularly joyous occasion."

"Joyous?,” he sneered.

"You'll see what I mean in a bit,” said Merlin. "Now, where is that maid of yours?"

"What do you care for my maid?"

"All will become evident soon. Where is she? Belle is her name, I believe?"

Rumplestiltskin narrowed his gaze. "What do you want with her?"

"Don't get any ideas, sunshine. As I said, there is joyous news. You may not see that at first, but life is what happens when you're making other plans."

"What?"

"It's an adage from the Land Without Magic. Do you like it? Now, where is your maid? She ought to be here for this. In fact, it's fairly important that she be here for this."
"She's gone home."

Merlin froze. He stopped and turned slowly towards Rumplestiltskin.

"She what?"

"I don't need to justify what happens with my servants to you."

Merlin looked at Rumplestiltskin in a manner that indicated he clearly thought he needed to justify himself. "Did you release her?"

"She's visiting," said Rumplestiltskin. "She found out her father was dying."

"And have you heard from her since she left?"

"She has not summoned me."

"She didn't send word to say she had arrived safely?"

"No."

Merlin narrowed his eyes. "And how long do you suppose her father needs to die?"

"I ask again, what do you care?"

"I merely say it seems suspicious, sunshine."

Merlin disappeared before Rumplestiltskin's eyes.

Which made him realize it did sound quite suspicious. It wasn't like Belle to not send word for a week.

---

**Now**

Beatrice wasn't used to being ripped from the Netherworld. She had learned to control it, but suspected several days of magic lessons had exhausted her. At any rate, she awoke in bed to see a man in black leather. He was holding her glasses.

With a hook.

"You don't look like a crocodile..." he remarked.

"Oh, you are kidding me," said Beatrice.

"It's a shame you're so lovely."

Beatrice sat up. "Okay, your creep factor is basically off the charts right now."

He frowned. "I don't think I understood any of that sentence. Allow me to introduce myself-"

"Captain Hook."

He looked taken aback. "That was surprisingly prescient."

"Hold that thought. Dad!"
Hook swung his hook forward towards Beatrice and they were both surprised when instead of it going in her flesh, Hook went flying back. Beatrice bolted towards the door and ran in the hall.

"Does anybody ever plan on coming when I shout?!," Beatrice screamed.

She marched downstairs to find Emma and Mary Margaret had returned, looking a bit rough after their journey.

"We'll figure out something else," said Mary Margaret.

"Yes, Your Highness, because there are so many other ways to transport oneself to another realm," said Gold. "I was just bored when I created the Dark Curse."

"Don't yell at her," said Emma. "This is my fault."

Gold turned to Emma. "Yes, dearie, I caught that from when you said 'I burned the wardrobe.'"

"Again, guys," said Beatrice.

"Give her a break, Gold. She's new here."

"I couldn't let Cora get to Henry," said Emma.

"Right, because I'm sure she just gave up."

Merlin cleared his throat.

Beatrice turned behind her. "Where did you come from?"

Merlin held up a vial. "I was just collecting the ashes of an Enchanted Wardrobe."

Emma looked at him in amazement. "Wait, could that work?"

"Cora seemed to think so when I found her," said Merlin.

"What did you do to her?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Took her ashes, used several cunning insults, might have said she had the face of a boiled hen..." Merlin shrugged.

"What do we do now?," asked Emma.

Gold examined the ashes in the vial. "Now we have the problem of navigation," said Gold.

"Oh," said Beatrice, "that reminds me. Captain Hook is in my room?"

Beatrice watched as her father's expression suddenly turned very, very frightening.

"Captain Hook?," asked Emma. "Really?"

"So, like, do you know him or-"

Beatrice didn't really get a chance to finish her question as Gold had already taken the sword Emma had been using off the table and headed upstairs.

"Gold!," Mary Margaret called after him. "What are you doing?"
She then followed him up the stairs. Then Emma.

Beatrice turned to Merlin. "You know, it seems like we spend a lot of time chasing after this guy because he's about to kill someone."

"What do you suggest?"

"Well, I don't know what the guy did."

"Stole his wife."

"What wife?"

Merlin shook his head. "Oh, that is so like him."

"He was married?"

"Gold! You can't do this!," shouted Mary Margaret.

Merlin sighed and looked at Beatrice. "Excuse me one moment."

Merlin disappeared into another plume of smoke.

Beatrice sighed and began up the staircase. "And now I'm a psycho if I don't go try to stop him from killing the Johnny Depp wannabe..."

Beatrice joined them back in the bedroom.

"What did I miss?," Beatrice whispered to Emma.

"Well, your dad ripped out that guy's heart and then Merlin made him put it back..." Emma said sideways to her.

Beatrice nodded. "Sounds about right."

"Now," said Merlin, removing Hook's hook, "what did Cora send you for?"

Hook looked at Beatrice. "Her heart." He looked up at Emma. "I don't believe we've been introduced."

"Are you serious?," asked Beatrice.

"I never jest around beauty," said Hook.

Beatrice looked at Emma. "Don't buy it. He called me lovely like five minutes ago."

Gold raised his hand. "And now he's dead."

"Gold, stop!," yelled Mary Margaret.

"For once, the fairest of them all is correct," said Merlin. He held up Beatrice's glasses. "How did she enchant these?"

"To see everything she sees," said Hook. "I used them to get past this crocodile's magic."

"Oh, he's the crocodile..." said Beatrice. She shook her head. "I don't get it."
Merlin threw the glasses in the fire. He looked at Gold. "Put the pirate in your bloody dungeon already."

"I'd really rather kill him."

Merlin glared. Gold waved his hand and Hook disappeared into a puff of garnet smoke.

"I thought I'd hang on to the glasses," said Beatrice.

"What do we do?" asked Mary Margaret.

Merlin and Gold exchanged glances.

"We need to move, Your Highness," said Gold.

"What about our navigation problem?," asked Mary Margaret.

"How long will it take you to get to the lake?," asked Merlin.

"We can travel through the night," said Gold.

Merlin nodded. "And we'll use blood to find blood."

"You're going back?" asked Gold.

"I really wish I could follow this conversation," said Emma.

"Tomorrow. Sunset?," asked Merlin.

Gold nodded. He looked at Beatrice. "Get ready. We're leaving as soon as I return."

Mary Margaret and Emma followed Gold.

Beatrice went looking for her shoes. She noticed Merlin had picked up a leather satchel and was putting books in it.

"You need reading material for wherever you're going," asked Beatrice.

Merlin smiled. "Something like that. You might want to find a cloak. The weather here has been quite erratic."

Beatrice nodded. "Right..." She walked to the wardrobe and opened it, finding an array of gold gowns. "Oh, look, straight from the Disney Princess collection. Yeah, there's a blue one."

Merlin smiled and put more books in the bag.

"Are you taking the whole library?" asked Beatrice.

"Not the whole library," said Merlin.

Beatrice selected what seemed to be a sort of aqua cloak.

"My mom and I met Princess Belle at Disney World, you know."

"Do you now?"

"Yeah, I've got a picture. It was pretty hilarious. Well, now it seems hilarious."
Merlin looked at her curiously.

"She told her that she thought the opening song was a little harsh on the villagers," said Beatrice.

Merlin smiled. "That does sound like her. This would have been your house, you know."

Beatrice looked up at him.

He continued. "You probably would have been born in this room. You might have slept in here when you were a baby."

"You like hypotheticals, don't you?"

"You never would have had a nurse, you see. No one would willingly work for the Dark One and your mother would never tolerate keeping a slave."

"Why do you know so much about my mom?" asked Beatrice.

Merlin shook his head. "Not that much."

Beatrice suddenly had a flash of Merlin. He was holding her hand.

"No, I know you," said Beatrice.

"No, I think you must be mistaken," said Merlin.

"I don't think I am."

Gold returned. He was carrying his own bag.

"Beatrice?," he asked. "Are you alright?"

"I'll see you on the other side, sunshine."

"You had better," Gold warned.

Merlin nodded and then disappeared.

"Sweetheart," said Gold, "you were supposed to get ready."

"Yeah, sorry." She walked back over to her shoes and started putting them on. She stopped and looked up at Gold. "Would I have lived here?"

Gold shook his head. "Of course you would have lived here. Where else would you belong?"

"Well," said Beatrice, starting to tie the laces, "that explains my whole life."

"What does that mean?"

"Nothing," shrugged Beatrice. "Let's go home."

---

Then

Since his daughter's return, Sir Maurice was not getting much sleep.

Especially with the Dark One standing at the edge of his bed.
"Where is she?"

Sir Maurice sat up. "I don't-"

"You're looking well, aren't you?," Rumplestiltskin interrupted. "I thought you were at death's door. A pity you didn't go through it."

"She's not here."

"I have eyes, don't I? Now, where is she?"

"I don't know."

"I saved you. I saved your whole kingdom. And what do I ask? All I ask is your daughter forever. I've held up my end of the agreement, what about you?"

"You will never have her," Maurice snarled.

"Then the deal's off."

Maurice looked out the window and gasped in horror as fires burned at the far corners of his lands. The footsteps of the ogres could be heard in the distance.

"You know where to find me if you change your mind."

"You beast!"

Rumplestiltskin stopped.

"You claim to love my daughter and this is how you show your love! By hurting the people she sacrificed herself to the likes of you to protect?!"

He turned slowly. "When did I claim to love your daughter exactly?"

The ogres screams stopped. There was a different look in the Dark One's eyes now. A new level of coldness.

Sir Maurice realized he had let his hand show. "I don't know, I-"

"Where is she?"

"No, I-"

"Where is she?"

Maurice fell back on the only explanation he could think of. The only one that would suffice. "She's dead!"

Rumplestiltskin froze in horror. Maurice continued.

"She's dead and it's your fault. The clerics tried to cleanse her soul and they couldn't! You have damned her with your black magic!"

"My fault?!," he asked. "My fault?!"

"If you truly care for her, you won't use your powers against the people she sacrificed herself to protect at such a cost."
"Are you daring to tell me what I won't do?"

Maurice shook her head. "I don't expect it to have any effect, beast."

Rumplestiltskin turned around. "I'm amused at this recent spat of bravery, but your words do move me. Instead of wanton death and destruction throughout your land, I shall use my powers on the people who deserve it." He pointed a finger at Maurice. "You."

The Dark One vanished as quickly as he had arrived.

When Maurice awoke the next morning, his men gave him word of the first peasant uprising.

Merlin finally found Belle. In the interim, Rumplestiltskin had gone mad, terrorizing Sir Maurice and his knights, killing the Gold Fairy and making himself a menace.

It had taken Merlin some time to find Belle in the woods. The Blue Fairy had hidden her well.

It didn't take the fairy long to find him.

"A blood tracking spell," said the Blue Fairy. "Whose blood did you use?"

Merlin turned to face the fairy. "Whose blood do you think I used, you trollop?"

"I always suspected," said Blue.

"And yet you did nothing to help poor Sir Maurice."

"Sir Maurice made his oath to the Round Table."

Merlin smiled. "Oh, the oaf made an oath, did he? That's a bit of word play, by the way. Release her from your curse."

Blue scoffed. "And let that monster inside her live? It would be the end of this realm."

"You will be the end of this realm, one way or the other, release her now."

"No."

"Very well," said Merlin. He shrugged off his coat. "How shall we do this? Swords, pistols or magic?"

Blue suddenly became human-sized appearing with a blade in her hand. "Swords."

"How very cocky for an elderly woman in a tutu," said Merlin, a sword materializing in his right hand. "En garde!"

They fought and the fairy was not much for sword play, but she lunged at him and nicked his arm.

That's when Merlin realized something was wrong.

"You tart," he said falling to his knees.

She panted, out of breath. "I had to."

"You tart." He looked up at her with a sneer. "It was the Sword of Damocles, wasn't it? You had it all this time."
"When will you see that my way is the only way for magic?," Blue asked as if she was tired.

"This is no way, Blue and I will have my vision." He felt himself slipping away. "This only works for so long, you know. I shall return and when I do, things will continue as I have planned."

Blue shook her head. "I don't think so, Merlin."

"I do, you winged trollop."

And that was the last thing he said for thirteen years.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

So I made this comment and I can't remember why. Was it the end of 3A? What?

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they take the past two and a half years and throw it into the crack in the universe from the fifth series of Doctor Who. Congrats if you got that reference. Thanks for all the reads and reviews, especially my new reviewers and we are almost at 100!

I mean, now I don't get that reference. I mean, I get what it's referring to, but now I don't know why I wrote it...

Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

Manhattan, 2000

Belle French walked down the street holding Beatrice's hand. The four year old gazed up at her from behind her glasses. It was a perfect morning.

"I want to go to school with you," said Beatrice.

Belle smiled. "I don't think you're quite ready for college, sweetheart."

"I am too! I can read!"

"Yes, you can," said Belle. She was particularly proud of the fact that Beatrice was such an early reader. Belle was pleased that her love of books had been passed along. "There's still a lot to do before college, though."

"Like what?"

"Well, Kindergarten, to start..."

"Do that! Take me to Kindergarten!"

"Next year, sweetheart. I promise," said Belle.

Beatrice scowled as they entered the school.

"Now, today, I have morning classes just like you," said Belle. "Then when I'm done, I'll get you and we'll go home and eat lunch, then we'll take a nap and go to the park. Okay?"

"Hello, Beatrice," said the teacher. "Hello, Miss French."

"Hi," said Belle. She leaned down. "One last kiss?"
Beatrice grudgingly obliged and Belle left her in the care of the teacher.

Beatrice was usually the first to arrive. The other mommies and daddies and nannies brought the other kids late. Her mommy had to go to her own school. It did mean, though, that she got to pick what toys she wanted to play with first while they arrived. She found one of the more ambitious puzzles and began taking out the pieces.

"Mr. French-

"Avalon. Mr. Avalon."

"She didn't say anything."

"Well, plans just changed. I'm sure she'll call, but I am on the pick-up list." Merlin knelt down next to Beatrice. "Hey, sweetheart, what are you doing?"

"Puzzle."

"How would you like an adventure?"

Beatrice nodded.

"Well, let's get your bag, then."

---

**Storybrooke, Today**

Belle, Neal, Merlin and Regina formed a line back to Gold's shop from Granny's. Belle opened up and they went inside.

"What are we looking for?," asked Belle.

"Rumplestiltskin can create a portal on the other side," said Merlin. "The trouble is we have to make certain that portal leads here."

"And my mother?," asked Regina.

"We have to hope she doesn't come through that portal," said Merlin.

"That doesn't reassure me," said Regina.

"Luckily I have a plan," said Merlin.

"So we're looking for some kind of signal?," asked Belle.

"In a way," said Merlin. "We need a specific kind of bottle with which to make a potion formed of blood."

"Whose blood?," Belle asked with alarm.

"I have someone in mind assuming you want all four of them back."

Regina narrowed her eyes. "If you're talking about a blood spell, you only get one shot. How are you going to use one drop of blood to get all four of them back?"

"Oh, Gods," said Belle, covering her mouth and looking at Neal.
Merlin looked amused at Belle. "Joining me at the end of the thought process, eh, darling? Quite a plot twist, that one."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Regina.

"We'll get to that in due time, Your Majesty," said Merlin. "Now, the bottle."

"Can we know what it looks like?" asked Neal.

"Like a potion making bottle."

"You're going to have to be more specific," said Belle.

"I'll get more specific," said Merlin. He looked at Regina. "Your Majesty, I wonder if you might find the other things we'll need."

Regina nodded and went past the curtain into the backroom.

Neal looked at Merlin. "How did you know?"

"I'm Merlin. What aren't people understanding about that?"

Belle motioned towards another case. "Rumple has some glasses and vases over here."

"Oh, yes," said Merlin. "This is quite a collection here, quite a testament to your father's love for you here, Baelfire."

"I sort of go by Neal now."

"Yeah, I don't have time for you people and all your second names," said Merlin. "So I can either call you Baelfire or forever refer to you as the Savior's baby daddy. It's your choice."

Neal rolled his eyes as Belle tried to hide one of the first smiles she had all day.

"This is all just a bunch of crap," said Neal.

"Yeah, but it's crap he acquired while trying to find you so have a little respect," said Merlin opening the case. He reached down to find a pearlized one almost like an upturned whelk shell. "This one."

"That's a bottle?", asked Neal.

"It's a mermaid bottle, isn't it?", asked Belle.

Merlin nodded.

"Why a mermaid's bottle?", asked Belle.

"What else would you use in water?", asked Merlin. "Mermaids can travel between realms. This is what they use to call each other home."

"And this will work?", asked Belle.

"Don't worry, Belle," said Merlin. "They were fine when I left them."

---

_The Enchanted Forest, Now_
"Are you kidding me?!," Beatrice shouted.

She was aware that she had shouted it for the fiftieth or so time in under five minutes. It had been about that long since Cora's zombie nation had come after them. Mary Margaret had gone all Katniss, Emma had gotten out a sword and tossed Beatrice a spare and her dad had started doing that whole fireball thing again.

Beatrice actually knew how to wield a sword. Fencing and yoga were the only P.E. classes her fancy prep school had offered that she had been interested in. Of course, before she had a helmet, a lot of padding and she and her opponent couldn't go past a line, which the undead did not seem to respect. The results were mixed.

Also, she had just cut one of their hands off, which made her scream.

"Beatrice!" Gold swung around with concern.

"How can he be bleeding?! It doesn't make sense!," she shouted.

Increasingly frustrated, she had put a hand forward and...

"Beatrice..." said Emma.

Beatrice opened her eyes. Several of the zombies were now encased in blocks of ice.

"Um, yeah..." She looked at Gold. "At some point, we're going to want to be specific on how that is happening..."

"I'm just glad it did," said Mary Margaret.

"Never mind that," said Gold, grabbing her hand and starting back down their route.

"So, Beatrice just turns people into ice now?," asked Emma.

"Yeah, apparently," Beatrice answered.

---

Then

Merlin sat on the bench of the park. Beatrice climbed down the castle and sat next to him as he had his drink.

"Where are we?," asked Beatrice.

"A little town called Storybrooke," said Merlin.

"How did we get here?"

He frowned, playing along. "Well, let's see, Beatrice, we didn't take a car, a train, a plane. One moment we were on the sidewalk in New York, next we were here. You're a smart girl. How do you think that happened?"

Beatrice frowned. "Magic?"

"Very good. Magic."

"Magic's not real."
Merlin groaned. "Oh, you are so young to be a skeptic. Do you have your book?"

"My book?"

"You know the one."

Beatrice opened her backpack and got out her storybook. She handed it to Merlin.

"Well, this is really an incomplete account, isn't it? I must have a talk with that wooden young man. Beauty and the Beast, here we are. Do you like this story?"

She shrugged.

"You should. It's all about your parents."

"Mommy said they weren't the same."

"Well, they are and she's just forgotten. So will you by day's end."

"Why did you take me?"

"Because where you were, it's a very bad day," said Merlin. "I had to make certain you would be okay."

"Why?"

"Because you're important." He looked up to see Mother Superior leading a group of nuns down the street. "Oh, excuse me, Mother Superior?"

The woman stopped and looked at him. She didn't have any idea who he was. "Can I help you?"


Mother Superior looked at him strangely, whispered quietly to the other nuns and hurried off.

Merlin smirked and turned back to Beatrice. "Now, sweetheart, can you spell Rumplestiltskin?"

"Why?"

Merlin shrugged. "I think you'll probably need it to fill out forms."

Beatrice eyed him skeptically. Merlin sensed he was losing her.

He held out his cup. "Want to try my drink?"

"What is it?"

"It's called espresso. It's magic."

"How?"

"It makes you miss nap time."

Now

Regina was not liking what Neal, Merlin and Belle had to tell her.
"You're Henry's father?" she asked with contempt. She looked at Belle. "How long have you known this?"

"I only found out yesterday," said Belle.

"I suppose you'll want joint custody," said Regina. "Is there anyone else related to my son that I should know about? Second cousins? Great grandparents?"

"If it's any consolation, I didn't know Henry existed until a few days ago," said Neal.

"No," said Regina. "No, I find it difficult to accept consolation from the man who framed his pregnant girlfriend who is the son of the imp that let his son go through a portal to another realm. Not to mention-"

"Regina, we could be here all day if you keep going like this," said Merlin. "You fail to see the silver lining."

"Yes, I'm finding it quite difficult," said Regina. "Enlighten me."

"We now have the one drop of blood we need," said Merlin.

Regina nodded. "Henry."

"I'll call David," said Belle. "He can meet us at the well."

---

**Manhattan, Last October**

Beatrice walked out of the school, feeling pretty good about the way everything had played out. Taylor was having a fit, the entire school was talking about it and so far she seemed to have gotten away with it.

"Hello, Beatrice."

Beatrice stopped putting her earbuds in and looked up at the man. Older, wiry with the eyes of a hawk. Normally, she would walk past a stranger without a second glance, but in this case, she just frowned.

"Do I-"

The man waved his hand.

"Merlin," she said, the word sounding completely ridiculous. It always did for a minute.

"Happy Birthday," he said. He motioned towards the sidewalk. "Shall we adjourn to Starbucks?"

Beatrice nodded and walked with Merlin.

"How is your mother?" he asked, once they had settled with their drinks and cake pops.

"Good. She's trying to acquire this new collection, she'll probably be working on it late."

"She means well," said Merlin. "She's just caught up with this world."

"I know," said Beatrice.

"Now this is a very important year, Beatrice. This is the year the Curse is broken."
"Really?," she asked.

Merlin nodded. "As was prophesied by your father. Or choreographed by your father. However you want to look at it."

Beatrice frowned. "Why do you keep doing this?"

"Doing what, sweetheart?"

"You find me, sometimes you take me places and then you take away the memory..."

Merlin shrugged. "Don't you have enough to do without this?"

"If this was a Curse, why didn't you break it?"

"It was the way in which the Curse was written. Now, for your birthday wish..."

Beatrice paused. "Storybrooke."

Merlin shook his head. "No."

"What kind of birthday wish is this?"

"You will be there soon enough and there's a lot that has to happen there today."

Beatrice scowled. "And I'm not important?"

"Very well. Anyone in particular you want to see?"

"I think you know."

Now

The four trudged through the woods to the well.

"David!," called Belle as they approached. "David, are you up here?"

The four were making their way up the path.

"We're here!," Henry cheerfully shouted back.

Belle smiled and finished hurrying up towards the well. Henry and David were waiting...

Along with Mother Superior.

"David, what's she doing here?," asked Belle, her blood running cold.

"She offered to help." David pointed at Merlin. "Who's he?"

"Someone you don't want to anger," said Merlin. He pointed at Mother Superior. "She has to go. Now."

"Mom!," said Henry. He was about to run towards Regina, but David held him back. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm here to help," Regina said coolly.
Mother Superior stood in front of David, blocking Merlin out. "He is a dangerous wizard."

"She is a devious winged tart," said Merlin, walking up to Mother Superior. "Now, if you don't mind, we are on a bit of a timetable if you would like to see your wife and daughter ever again."

"And prevent my mother from crossing over," said Regina.

"Cora?," asked David.

Belle motioned at Mother Superior. "David, you know who this woman is, what she's done-"

"What is it you're asking?," said David.

"We just need a drop of Henry's blood," said Regina.

"Why?"

Merlin looked up at the horizon. "Yeah, I really don't have time for this. Tell you what, blood now and we all go on a talk show together later."

The prince did not look as if he were buying the argument.

They had finally arrived at the lake.

Which was more of a lake bed.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "Okay, your lake is a bit of a letdown."

Gold smiled. "Oh, you'll like this."

He took his hand into the usual wave and raised it up, a spring of water came from the center of the lake bed.

"Whoa," said Emma.

"If only there was a way to market that," said Beatrice.

"Come on," said Gold. "We'll need to keep watch."

"What are we waiting for?," asked Emma. "Why don't we go now?"

Gold stared at the sun. "Merlin and I made an agreement about when they would light our way back to Storybrooke."

"Are you sure you can trust this guy?," asked Emma.

"Well, seeing as how I don't have a choice..."

Beatrice watched as Gold pulled a sword out of the bag.

"How did that fit in there?!," exclaimed Emma.

"Oh, God, please let me," said Beatrice.

"What?" Emma was confused.
"No. Seriously, I've wanted to say this for years." She turned back to Gold. "It's bigger on the inside?"

"It's magic, Beatrice," said Gold.

She shook her head. "You just couldn't let me have that..."

"Your Highness," said Gold, handing Mary Margaret the sword.

"I already have one," she said.

"Not this one. Merlin gave it to me. It's the Sword of Damocles, puts any magical person in a deep sleep with one touch."

"You want me to use it on Cora?," she asked.

"Well, that was the general idea, dearie. Certainly a better idea than using it on me since you need me to get home."

"What did Merlin mean about using blood?," asked Beatrice.

"You can use family links to guide you between realms," said Gold. "A drop of blood. That's all it takes."

"How very clever, Rumple."

They looked up to see Cora.

"Oh, great," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice, stay back," warned Gold. "It's over, Cora."

"There are four of us and one of you," said Mary Margaret.

"And you're not coming with us," said Gold.

"No," said Cora. "You're staying here."

She launched a fireball at them. Gold launched his own back as she vanished.

"Where is she?," asked Beatrice.

Gold waved his hand and the water in the lake flew up in the air.

"It's sunset," said Mary Margaret.

"Then we have to act now," said Gold. He took the vial from his pocket and poured it in the water. It soon formed another portal.

Beatrice looked down at the swirling vortex.

"And how do we know that goes where we want?"

"Give it a moment."

"Oh, Rumple..."
"Don't try me, dearie."

The three ducked balls of flames as Cora appeared in front of Mary Margaret.

"Stop it, Cora."

"What are you going to do? Scratch me?"

Mary Margaret lunged with the sword. Cora vanished again appearing behind her, as she swung around, Cora blew her back with a wave of magic.

"Mary Margaret!," Emma shouted, running towards her.

Cora reached around and grabbed for Emma's heart. Her hand went into her chest, but didn't seem to go through.

Which was when Beatrice noticed the sword was laying alone on the ground.

"Beatrice," Gold hissed as she scrambled.

Cora was still perplexed at her inability to rip Emma's heart out.

"Hey!," Beatrice shouted.

Cora turned. "Oh, you impudent little girl."

"I am not getting stuck here because- because I don't know why, but I am sure it's lame!"

Cora raised her hand to rip the sword from Beatrice's hand. It flew towards her and reached a stalemate as Beatrice raised her hand to stop it. Cora looked at her in irritation.

"You picked one of the four things I know how to do," said Beatrice.

Gold waved his hand, his magic joining Beatrice's and the sword flew back into Cora.

She turned back. "Did you help?"

Gold shrugged as he walked over and took the sword from the now unconscious Cora. "You'll get it next time," he said, putting it back in the bag. "Ready to leave, Your Highness?"

Emma helped Mary Margaret to her feet.

"What just happened?," asked Emma.

"We can stay and discuss that or..."

"Let's go," said Mary Margaret.

"Almost..." said Gold.

"Are we waiting for her to wake up?," asked Beatrice.

Back at the well, things had not progressed.

"You overzealous, ambitious, opportunistic winged tart!," shouted Merlin. He turned to David. "And you, you dolt fraudster, do you believe everything you're told?"
"David, you can't be serious," said Belle. "It's just one drop. Believe Regina if you don't believe us."

"And why would Regina help you?," Mother Superior added primly.

"Because I am doing this to help my son," said Regina. "David. This is the only way to get your wife and daughter back."

"You're not exactly known for being helpful, Regina," said David.

"Oh, look who just discovered sarcasm," said Merlin.

Regina ignored Merlin's barb and looked back at David. "If I didn't really want to help, I would just let them fail on their own. You're going nowhere, she's the imp's mistress and he's..." Regina motioned at Neal. "...well, I'm not entirely sure about him, but he has yet to impress me."

Henry looked up at David. "We have to try, Grandpa."

David released him.

"You're making a mistake," warned Mother Superior.

"Would you shut up?," hissed Belle.

"I'm sorry, sweetie," said Regina. "This might hurt just a bit."

She pricked Henry's finger with the needle and a single drop of blood fell into the shell bottle as Merlin held it. The blood dissolved in the rest of the potion and became a sparkling green substance.

"Oh, there we go? Hear that?," asked Merlin. Song seemed to echo from the shell.

David frowned. "What is that?"

"That is the call home," said Merlin, walking over towards the well.

He dropped the mermaid bottle as the sky lit with bright green.

Beatrice stood at the edge of the portal with Gold, Emma and Mary Margaret, watching it swirl.

"Like, seriously, is there a time limit? Do we have to go, do we-"

Gold grabbed her hand. "Hey. I've got you."

"She's got a point, Gold!," said Emma.

"What's that sound?," asked Mary Margaret.

Gold frowned. "You can hear that?"

"What's going on?," asked Beatrice. "Is that-"


Then they did.
Standing at the bottom of a well, Beatrice decided she was not a fan of portal jumping in any form.

"Dad!," she called.

"I'm fine, sweetheart!," Gold called back, echoing through the well.

"Beatrice, just climb up," instructed Mary Margaret.

Beatrice turned back to the brickwork. "Yeah, because I am really good at climbing..."

She started climbing and eventually she could just about see sunlight.

"Beatrice!," Emma shouted. "Do you want to get moving?!"

"It's only my second portal jump!"

"Beatrice?!," she heard Belle shout.

"Mom!"

"Here, grab my hand!," said another male voice. "Merlin, hold on to me."

Beatrice reached up and someone helped pull her up. As she got out in the light, she was surprised to find it was Neal.

"Neal?!," she asked as David went to help Emma and Mary Margaret. She looked to see Merlin, Regina and Henry. The Blue Fairy appeared to be leaving. "Are we having a party out here?"

She didn't get an answer as Belle threw her arms around her and grinned. "Beatrice! My darling girl!"

"Okay, Mom, you might want to go easy on the kisses," said Beatrice. "Seriously, Neal, what are you doing here?"

She didn't get an answer to that, either because as soon as Mary Margaret and Emma were out, Henry ran to hug them. Then Emma looked up at Neal and it was like she was looking at someone who had risen from the dead.

"Neal?!," exclaimed Emma.

Beatrice looked up at Belle. "What's going on?"

"Yeah, we're going to go over all of this later," said Belle.

"Oh, I'm fine," Gold muttered as he climbed up. "Don't worry about me, dearie..."

"I've got you, sunshine," said Merlin, lending the man a hand.

"Why is Emma flipping out?," asked Beatrice.

Again, she didn't get an answer because Belle ran to hug Gold without actually letting go of her daughter.

"Mom, Mom, seriously..."

"My darling Belle..."
Gold took her face in his hands and kissed her. Beatrice violently yanked her arm away, she would have been willing to dislocate a shoulder.

"Seriously! I was like six inches from your faces!" Beatrice looked at Merlin. "Come on!"

Merlin shook his head. Beatrice looked back at the Charming camp and saw Emma continuing her freak out. She looked up at Merlin. "Okay, do you have a clue?"

"Several."

"Bae?" Gold said suddenly.

Beatrice looked around. "Okay, who's Bae?"

"Well, he's Baelfire," Henry said, pointing at Neal. "You know, from the book."

"I didn't get that story!" Beatrice hissed.

"Come on, Henry," said Emma, taking the boy by the hand.

"Emma, come on!" shouted Neal.

"Emma!" Mary Margaret called after Emma. She started down the path after her with David following. "Emma!"

"Bae!" called Gold.

Neal turned back and looked plaintively at Belle.

"Two hours," warned Belle.

Neal nodded and hurried back down the path.

Gold looked up at Merlin. "What did you know and when?"

"Do you want to interrogate me or maybe explain yourself to her?" Merlin asked, motioning towards Beatrice.

Belle looked at Gold. "Rumple..."

"I have a son," said Gold.

"Oh," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice."

"I mean, that just might have been good to mention along with, 'Hey, I'm your dad, Rumplestiltskin, the Dark One, I was married to a chick who ran off with Captain freaking Hook, my ex-girlfriend is a total psycho- no offense, Regina- and like, I can make fireballs and stuff.' You know, just general, first day on the job stuff. Okay, where's the car?"

"You're upset," said Gold.

"No. Upset? Why would I be upset?" Beatrice turned towards the path. "Yeah, let's go home. We can all get cupcakes. Cupcake, Regina? Merlin?"
She marched down the path.

"Oh, great job, sunshine," said Merlin.

"Beatrice!," Belle called, hurrying after her.

"Seriously, Gold, 'You're upset', that's the best you could come up with?," asked Regina.

"I'm not taking criticism from you, dearie," said Gold.

Regina rolled her eyes. "Fine. What do I care?"

They suddenly heard thunder.

"I'm going to the car," announced Regina.

Merlin looked at Gold. "We may want to work on the weather thing. Or at the least keep a lid on it until she's done with puberty."

---

Then

Beatrice cautiously walked beside Merlin as they went down Storybrooke's main drag. There was something in the air, people just wandering through life.

"What if I just walked through here shouting 'You're all under a curse'"

"What do you think would happen?"

"We could try it."

"There's the man."

Merlin pointed and Beatrice looked down the street. There was a man in a suit, leaning on a gold-topped cane as he talked with someone.

"Be careful," said Merlin. "He's not very friendly."

She looked back at Merlin. "You mean his cursed self?"

Merlin thought on it. "He's not very friendly."

"I thought I made the terms of your tenancy quite clear," said Gold.

"I know, I know, Mr. Gold, but my car broke down-"

"And that's my problem why, Mr. Boyd?"

"Well, I have to get to work-"

"Again, why is that my problem?"

"I can get the money to you next week-"

"And yet rent day is today." He paused and looked straight at Beatrice. "Is there something I can do for you, dearie?"
She froze under his glare. What did she want? This man was her father, but...

What did that even mean?

"Uh..." was her brilliant response.

Beatrice turned around and hurried off.

Merlin groaned. "Great job, sunshine."

"Do I know you?," asked Gold.

Merlin waved his hand, again wiping another tiresome conversation from his memory. He turned after Beatrice.

"He doesn't know who you are."

Beatrice shook her head. "He doesn't care."

"It's the Curse. He doesn't remember who he is or that he loved a woman called Belle. When that changes-"

"So what?," asked Beatrice.

"Beatrice, you've got to trust me on this-"

"Who in their right mind would want me?!"

Merlin sighed. "Well, you just made up my mind."

"On what?"

"In light of the circumstances, since you would be coming back, I was going to let you keep this one, but..." said Merlin.

He waved his hand.

Beatrice was watching Doctor Who on her iPad, trying to remember when she had put this particular episode on when she heard her mother come in.

"Beatrice, where are you?," Belle called.

"In here, Mom!," she answered. She dabbed at her eyes, wondering if she had allergies. She stopped as Belle came in. "What's up?"
What I wrote this time was: I do not own Once Upon A Time, which is a show on ABC where they bring back your memory for twelve episodes, then take it away again.

I still stand by that.

Now

By the time Belle caught up with Beatrice, she had arrived at the bottom of the path and was pulling on the rear door handle of the car.

"I've got the keys," said Belle, fishing through her pockets.

Beatrice grunted and pulled the handle one last time, popping it open.

"How did you-" Belle began.

"Oh, yeah, I do magic now. See how I told you now instead of in a few months?" She sat in the backseat and slammed the door.

Belle stood dumbfounded as a rain cloud suddenly appeared. She got in the driver's seat and turned around to face her daughter.

"Beatrice, hear him out-"

"What's your excuse?," asked Beatrice.

"What?"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I-I was trying to help him with you."

"Oh, yeah, a lot of help."

Suddenly, the door opened and Regina was helping herself in the backseat.

"Seriously?," asked Beatrice.

"Regina, now is not a good time-" said Belle.

"Excuse me, I just helped you get your little family reunion. I think I'm at least entitled to not having my hundred-dollar blowout ruined by the rain storm that came out of nowhere."
"Don't you have your own car?," asked Beatrice.

"I rode here with Neal. Believe me, this day has not turned out the way I envisioned, either."

"Oh, join the club," muttered Beatrice.

The doors opened. Beatrice turned her expression to a frozen glare out the window as Merlin helped Gold in, then joined them in the backseat.

Belle sighed and drove.

---

**A Long Time Ago In the Enchanted Forest**

Reinette thought she would be ill as she looked upon the spectacle in Sir Maurice's Great Hall.

She was uncertain if that was the morning sickness or the way her husband paraded around with his hunting comrades, quite pleased with the manner in which he had managed to impregnate her. She thought it rather curious the manner in which men bragged about such matters, as if they were doing any of the work. Her father would have never dared to say such a thing. He was far too much of a gentleman and besides that, her mother would have beat him senseless.

Or rather her husband thought he had managed to impregnate her.

"Reinette?"

She had been daydreaming again. She turned to the lady to her left at the banquet, Queen Eva.

"I'm so sorry, Your Majesty."

"Not at all," said Eva. She leaned in. "Are you feeling quite alright?"

Reinette smiled. "I am quite fine."

Eva nodded sympathetically. "These men they can grow quite tiresome."

Reinette looked over to the corner where King Leopold was engaged in quiet conversation with some of the other nobles in stark contrast to Maurice's boisterousness. "I don't think you know that as well as you claim."

"Well, let us not speak of them," said Eva. "Tell me of Avonlea. What sort of land is it? I have not seen much of it."

Reinette shrugged. "The people are good. There is not much in the way of society here. Maurice's brother knights..."

"What?"

"There is something strange about them and the clerics in this land have such a hold. Magic is so mistrusted here. I dare not speak of my mother's background..."

"Or your father's," added Eva.

"Or my father's," Reinette confirmed. She shook her head. "Enough of my tale. Tell me of your travels."

"Well, you know we went to King Xavier's funeral."
"Such a strange death. And did you meet your old friend?"

Eva nodded. "Princess Cora. I've tried with her, I truly have and she says she accepts my friendship, but..."

"You don't believe her."

"No. I want to-"

Reinette shook her head. "I wouldn't. It's best to trust your instincts on such occasions."

Eva nodded. "Do you suppose you'll be well enough to come to the Summer Palace?"

Reinette stared off again. "I don't know where I shall be this summer."

---

*Now*

Beatrice was in the house quickly when they arrived home. Gold limped out of the car, his need for the cane returning. He retrieved the one from the stand by the door and followed Belle into the kitchen. He was puzzled by the sight of an empty wine bottle and more puzzled that Belle was pulling out another one.

"Do you want to tell me what's been going on?," asked Gold as Belle rummaged for the corkscrew.

"Well, Baelfire is Henry's father, that about covers it," said Belle, successfully pulling the cork out.

"And how did you find him?"

"What does it matter? Go talk to your daughter. Neal or Bae will be along as soon as he gets through his argument with Emma," she said as she poured herself a glass.

"You talk to her," said Gold, sitting on the stool at the counter.

"No."

"No?"

Belle shook her head and took her first sip of wine. "No, see, I'm going to go up there and apologize for my part in this which was not making you tell the truth to her right away-"

"I asked you not to."

Belle continued unabated. "But you, it's your story, Rumple. You have to tell it. I never lied to her until this."

"You never lied to her?," he asked derisively.

Belle's eyes shot up at him. Gold had been aware that a different Belle had emerged from the Curse even without the dubious benefit of Regina supplanting memories. There was an independent woman with a career. He had also caught flashes of something aimed at Moe and Mother Superior: the mother bear.

He really wished it wasn't aimed at him in this instance.
"No. I didn't and now she is broken-hearted."

"And why should she be?"

Then he really wished it wasn't aimed at him.

"For months, you have been asking her to trust you and you haven't told her this, this...!" Belle was so exasperated she couldn't finish. "If you want her to trust you, don't be too cowardly to trust her."

Belle put the glass down on the counter and hurried upstairs.

Beatrice wordlessly went upstairs and into her room.

She couldn't express how happy she was to be back in her own room.

Of course, she wasn't capable of expressing much at the moment. She walked over to her desk and sat. Her messenger bag was slung over the back, her mom must have gotten it from the school.

Oh, school. Now that she was home, she would be back at school. This was getting better and better.

Ignoring that, Beatrice turned on her TV, opened her Macbook and grabbed her iPhone from her pocket to put it on the charger. She reached in the bottom desk drawer where she kept her candy stash and found the espresso truffles she had left there. She had three and decided she needed a shower to wash the odor of Enchanted Forest off her.

She came out of the shower and went to brush her teeth when she caught her reflection in the mirror.

It was weird without her glasses. She had never seen herself without her glasses. They might as well have been attached to her face. She could better see that she looked more like Belle than she thought.

"Beatrice?," Belle called.

Beatrice rolled her eyes. Ah, yes, no doubt Princess Belle would be up here to try to make things right.

"I'm getting dressed!"

"I'll wait."

Beatrice groaned and put on her robe. She went into her room.

"Yes?"

"I was just coming up to apologize, Beatrice. I never should have let this carry on this long, I'm sorry."

Beatrice shrugged. "Fine."

"Not fine," said Belle with a frown of disapproval at her daughter's tone. "Your papa loves you. You need to let him explain himself."
"Well, he hasn't wanted to tell me anything before now, why should we change that?"

"You will understand better if you let him explain it."

"Yeah, well, we'll see about that..." She grabbed her pajamas and went back in the bathroom. "I'm sleeping. Is that okay with everyone?!"

Then

Reinette waited in her room. The candle grew shorter and shorter as the night dwindled.

"Were you waiting long?"

Reinette turned and smiled at Merlin as he sat in a chair. "You got my message."

"Indeed I did." He nodded towards her. "How are you feeling?"

"I can't possibly stay here one more day."

Merlin frowned. "Alright."

"I want to come with you."

"And where is it you think I live precisely?"

"It matters not."

"Doesn't it? Where do you suppose our child should be raised? Where she would be protected?"

"You can protect her."

"I can't protect her forever."

"Lock her in a tower then."

"I can't lock her in a tower. Listen to yourself."

Reinette threw her arms up. "Alright, perhaps that is too extreme..."

"Perhaps?"

"Yet I cannot stand Maurice."

Merlin frowned at her. "You said you understood my plan."

"I do."

"You had your choice of sham marriages and this is the one you chose."

"What are you saying?"

Merlin didn't speak.

"You intend to leave me here, don't you?"

"Do you not understand the plan?"
"Our daughter is to find her True Love."

"She must be here to do it."

"What?"

"I thought I was fairly clear on these points."

"But you know who he is," said Reinette. "Surely they can be introduced some other way."

"Yes, we'll just invite him to a ball or a house party," Merlin said dryly.

"Why not?"

"This isn't your usual fairy tale, Reinette. This is very much a man who does not go to balls or house parties and very much a girl who could never meet her True Love at one."

"Well, who is he?"

Merlin was silent. "I'm not telling you."

"You don't trust me?"

"Not when you act like this. You said you understood, you said you were prepared to pay the price that this sort of magic comes with."

Reinette nodded. "And the price is my suffering?"

"You're not the only one."

"Yes, but I am the only one that seems to care."

Merlin stood and walked over. Reinette shirked away from his embrace.

"Believe me when I say this is the safest place for her," said Merlin.

She didn't answer. Merlin waved his hand and a pendant appeared.

"You can't bribe me," Reinette snapped.

"This is a gift," said Merlin. "It was your mother's. I was going to return it to her, but I've just enchanted it. When you wear it, you will remember me, remember the plan, remember the sacrifice you're making."

She turned. "And when I don't?"

"You won't remember it and you'll be able to get through your days." He paused. "That magic will go away with you for someday it must be Belle's and someday it must be her daughter's."

Reinette took the pendant. "Do not return."

"I beg your pardon?"

She looked up at him squarely. "Never return. You are not welcome here. That is the price you must pay for this magic," she said, her voice dripping with anger.

She turned away.
Merlin nodded. "As you wish, milady."

Reinette turned back around, suddenly concerned she was about to regret what she had just asked.

He was gone.

---

**Now**

Angry sleep was something Beatrice could manage, especially after she had spent the better part of the day wandering the woods, fighting zombies and dealing with Regina's crazy mother.

Was she angry or was she sad? And why was it so hard to tell? Normal people didn't have trouble telling. Why couldn't she just be like a normal person?

Oh, right. She was living in a fairy tale freak show. Still, so was Emma and she didn't seem to confuse angry and sad.

Beatrice fell unconscious for a while. She awoke to the sound of the cane tapping.

She looked up. Gold was standing by her bed.

"Are you alright?"

"I just want to sleep."

He sat on the side of her bed. Clearly, he was not going to let her sleep. Beatrice grudgingly sat up.

"I crippled myself," said Gold. "I met a soothsayer and she told me I had a son and that my actions on the battlefield would leave him fatherless so I bashed my own leg in so I would be sent home."

"Okay..." said Beatrice, thinking that sounded kind of gruesome.

"With that act, I cemented my reputation as the village coward and my wife- Bae's mother- grew unhappy. She finally left me for that pirate you met. I had to raise him on my own. He was all I had."

He gave her a sideways glance, confirming he had her attention. He continued on with his tale.

"When Bae was almost fourteen, he was going to be sent to the Ogres' War. I tried to run and couldn't. The only power to save him laid with a magical dagger."

"A magical dagger?" she asked skeptically.

"Yes. All magic comes with a price. The power started to control me and Bae could see it so we struck a deal that if he could find a way to strip me of my powers, I would do it and he found the Blue Fairy who gave him a magic bean."

"To come here?"

Gold nodded. "When the moment came to go to this new world, I was a coward. I let go of him and he was gone. The price of my power was my son."
"The Dark Curse was about finding Neal?," asked Beatrice.

"Well, it wasn't quite as simple as that," said Gold.

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because you deserve to know how I failed him, how I failed you and how I am still a coward because I was too afraid you would reject me if you knew."

Beatrice's lip trembled. Her eyes stung.

"Beatrice?"

Gold looked at her in alarm as she put her face in a teal ruffled pillow and started sobbing.

Sobbing girls were not his specialty. This was one of the ways he had to conclude that raising a son was simpler than raising a daughter. She had such emotions and he had no idea where they came from.

"Be-" He had gotten half of the name out when he realized that he had done this. This was his to fix.

"Beatrice," he said, prying the pillow from her face. "Beatrice, why are you crying?"

She was red and splotchy, heaving with sobs. "I don't know..." she stammered out.

He hadn't been expecting that. She could at least provide him with a reason.

"Okay..." He took her in his arms. "Shh... It's okay. I'm right here. Your papa's right here... and I'm not letting go."

Belle walked in. "Rumple- Beatrice, what's wrong?"

She shook her head. Gold looked hopelessly at Belle.

"Neal's here," Belle said. "I'll tell him you'll be a minute."

Belle left.

"You had to be without me a very long time," said Gold. "I love you. What know you don't believe it yet, but I will spend the rest of my life proving it to you."

---

**Then**

Belle wandered the forest. She had been playing with the nurse and trying to get ahead at a game of hide and seek.

She might have hidden too well.

"Are you lost, sweetheart?"

She looked up at the man who seemed to be miles above her.

"I was playing and I ended up here."
Merlin knelt down. "Well, that's no way to behave, is it? A young lady can't wander the forest on her own. Anything could happen. You might run into a fairy."

"But the fairy could help me home," she objected.

"Belle, if you listen to me on one thing, let it be this: do not trust fairies."

"Why not?"

"Would you trust any other woman who wore a tutu and threw dust at you?"

Belle considered it. "No."

"Well, there you go." He took her hand and stood. "Come along. I'll walk you home."

They began walking.

"How do you know my name, sir?"

"Everyone knows you. You're Belle of Avonlea. A great beauty."

She sneered. "Who says I'm a great beauty?"

"Just wait for it."

"I don't know you. Are you from Avonlea?"

Merlin scoffed. "I should think not."

"Are you visiting? Have you come to see my papa?"

"Again, I should think not."

The forest thinned and they were at the back entrance of Sir Maurice's castle.

"You should go back," said Merlin. "Before they send out a search party and some knight rescues you. Then you'll have to marry him."

"Eww," said Belle.

"Exactly. Avoid the knights, Belle. Knights are boring. The monsters are far more interesting."

She looked up at him curiously.

"Run along," he said, waving his hand as he released hers.

"Belle!," Reinette called. "Belle!"

Reinette stood in the garden as Belle came running back to her. Merlin watched as Reinette scolded Belle, then hugged the girl and led her inside.

Now

Beatrice awoke. Belle had fallen asleep next to her after explicitly promising not to sleep in her bed. She should have known that was a lie. She heard a car pulling away and suspected that Neal had just now left. Belle had decided to let the reunion happen downstairs on its own.
She went downstairs finding Gold seemingly paralyzed by the front door.  
"What happened?," asked Beatrice.  
Gold turned. "Hey. You should be asleep."  
She shrugged. "So?"

"Bae is going to stay in Storybrooke for the time being, to get to know Henry. And you." Gold shrugged. "If he gets to know me again, that will be purely coincidental."

Beatrice snorted. "Like Mom's going to let him get away with that."

"Yes, your mother does have that effect on people," Gold said with a smile. "Do you want something to eat? A drink?"

"You know, you don't have to do that," said Beatrice.

"Do what?"

"Ask if I need things. I'm fifteen. I can make my own snacks. Not well, but the point stands."

"No, see, I really do because I'm here to take care of you and I need to know what you need, what you want."

Beatrice crossed her arms. "Pancakes."

"Pancakes?" asked Gold.

"I could go for some pancakes."

It was an odd request, but it did seem to be the first thing that she had willingly asked him for without looking as if she were being held at gunpoint.

So he was going to fulfill it.

He smiled. "Alright. Pancakes."

He started walking towards the kitchen. Beatrice followed.

"I don't know if you're a coward," said Beatrice, sitting on the stool on the counter.

Gold smiled ruefully as he gathered the pancake ingredients. "Trust me. I am."

"Well, maybe on the emotional stuff, but I don't know about the Ogres."

"I ran from the battle. I believe you'll find that's the definition of cowardice," he said starting the batter.

"Yeah, but basically we're talking about ogres, right?"

"Yes," he said, wondering what her point was.

"Well, you were in a war and then like fourteen years later the same stupid Ogre War is going on? What kind of crap is that? Not to mention that whole beauty and the beast thing gets rolling because of the Ogres and how long was that?"
"A few hundred years."

"See, a few hundred-" Beatrice paused. "Wait. How old are you?"

"Well, that's a rude question," he said putting a pan on the stove.

"Right..." Beatrice shook her head. She had thought he was older than her mom before...

"Anyway, doesn't it seem stupid to go die fighting something that everybody's been fighting for a really long time and making no progress at?"

"Stupidity wasn't at the forefront of my thoughts when I ran, but I see your point," he said as he started the burner. "It was its own madness."

"You saved Neal. Bae. Whatever we're calling him."

Beatrice stared off as Gold finished with the pancakes. He placed a stack in front of her.

"I'll get the syrup," he said.

"No syrup. I hate syrup."

Gold got the butter dish out of the fridge and handed it over.

"So, what do you suppose is with the empty wine bottles?" asked Beatrice.

"Well, I'm not asking," said Gold.

"Neither am I," said Beatrice.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

What I wrote this time: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they give you your memory back just so your boyfriend can go to freaking Neverland for nine episodes. Yeah, that's fair. Let's not even talk about what they do to him when he gets back.

I stand by this statement as well.

---

Then

Belle was four today.

She awoke early, as she was four and wanted to get the most out of her day. Her nurse had not even come yet to wake her and Belle quickly saw that her efforts were not in vain.

On her night table where boring things were usually kept like a glass of water and the prayer book her nurse insisted upon, she found a package wrapped in gold paper.

Belle smiled as she pulled it into her bed. Tearing at the paper, she found a book.

She did love books.

---

Now

Gold thought that he might have finally found the thing that might kill the Dark One besides the dagger.

Teaching Beatrice to drive.

Actually, knowing it couldn't kill him was part of the misery of the endeavour. The other part was that Neal was tagging along. Gold was pleased to have his son around, even if it was just to have him cackle in the back, but he made no secret of his enjoyment.

"Beatrice!," Gold shouted.

"What?"

"Stop sign!"

"I was stopping!," she protested.

The Cadillac lurched as Beatrice slammed on the brakes. Neal snickered in the back.

"Right..." said Gold. "What you want to do is gently press down on the brake, not smash it at the
last possible second."
"Fine."
She started driving again and then slammed again in a near collision with a truck.
Gold sighed. "It was a four way stop."
"Watch where you're going!," the man driving the vehicle shouted.
Gold also discovered the one area where Beatrice's temper was bound to show itself.
"Watch where I'm going?! Watch where you're going! It was my turn!"
"Yeah, why don't you come over here and say that?!"
"No, you come over here, pal!"
"Seriously, you're worse than a cab driver..." said Neal.
"And now he's getting out..." said Gold.
The man got out, slammed his door in a rage and walked over to the driver's side of the Cadillac, where he quickly realized who the occupants were.
"Uh, hi, Mr. Gold..."
"Hi," said Gold. "I'm just teaching my daughter how to drive."
"Right, yeah," the man said awkwardly. "Keep up the good work."
He hurried back to his truck and peeled out.
"So," said Gold, "let's go again and make sure it's clear."
She started again.
"Did you even look?," asked Gold.
"I'm in the intersection, how is it not my turn?"
"It's not about it being your turn, it's about whether another car is going to crash into you."
"I read the handbook, I'm pretty sure it's about if it's my turn," said Beatrice.
"Also, I don't know that starting fights with the other motorists is the best strategy," said Gold, earning another cackle from the backseat.
"I don't know, Pop, I think she might be able to handle herself," said Neal.
That's when they saw the lights on the sheriff's patrol car flash.
"Pull over," Gold said with a sigh.
Beatrice jerked the car to the side.
"It's not necessary to pull the car over all at once," said Gold. "Put it in park."
They waited. It was Emma.

"Hey, Emma," said Neal.

"Oh, hey." She tried to ignore him and leaned in on the window. "Beatrice, seriously, I've gotten ten calls about your driving."

"Is there nothing else happening in this town?" asked Beatrice.

"Mrs. Schuman says you almost hit one of her kids."

"There's like a hundred of them or something!" said Beatrice. "How am I supposed to know when they're still coming?! I was there like ten minutes, it's like waiting for a marathon to go by."

Emma looked at Gold.

"You must concede it's a fair point," said Gold.

Emma looked at Neal.

"There were a lot of them," said Neal.

"You can't run over kids!," said Emma.

"I didn't! Almost was the operative word! Also, not my fault," said Beatrice.

"Right, well, could you be more careful?" asked Emma. She looked askance at the Cadillac. "Maybe it's the car."

"What's wrong with the car?" asked Gold.

"It's a land yacht, Gold," said Emma. "How is she supposed to learn to drive in this monster?"

"Precisely. I want as much metal as possible between her and whatever she inevitably crashes into."

"Hey!," said Beatrice.

"I'm sorry, sweetheart, but it is going to happen," said Gold.

"It's not going to be my fault," said Beatrice.

"Of course not, sweetheart," said Gold.

They walked into the library. Belle looked up and smiled as she sat at the circulation desk.

"How was it?", she asked.

"Good," said Beatrice.

Belle looked up to Neal and Gold.

"She's progressing," said Gold.

"It's fun to watch," said Neal.

Beatrice shot him a glare.
"Is Tamara still coming?" asked Belle.

"Yeah. Are we still on for dinner?"

"Yes," said Belle.

"I've got to get going. I promised Henry I'd meet him."

They said their goodbyes and Neal left.

"Who is Tamara?" asked Gold.

Belle scowled. "His fiancee. He's told you. I told you."

"So, we're still pretending he doesn't have feelings for Miss Swan?"

Beatrice nodded. "Pretty much." She looked at Belle. "So, are we acting normal for this dinner? Because I don't think we can pull that off."

"I don't know," said Belle. "He hasn't said when he's going to explain everything to her. Beatrice, would you help me with the display in the children's section?"

"I'm not reading," she warned.

"I didn't say anything about reading."

Beatrice walked off to the children's area.

"What about reading?" asked Gold.

"Oh, in New York, she used to volunteer to read for the children's story hour sometimes. She was good at it. She won't do it here. I'm working on it," Belle said with a wink.

"And how is the library coming? Do you need anything else before the opening?"

"No," said Belle with a smile, "my benefactor has been very generous."

"Have you had time to give any more thought to what I told you?"

Belle looked down. "It's ridiculous."

"Belle..."

"I don't know what you want me to say, Rumple. My father is my father."

"It might explain some things," said Gold. "Such as his callous disregard for your health and safety in some circumstances. His total lack of concern for his only grandchild. Also, Merlin seemed fairly certain and..."

"What? He's never been wrong?"

It pained Gold to make his next admission. "Being wrong isn't really what he does."

"Then why don't you ask him?"

"I will, if you wish it, but this is your life. Your father."
"Then let's just leave it."

Gold sighed. "I think perhaps for Beatrice's sake we need to know. Understanding where her magic comes from may well be instructive in helping her control it."

"I never had magic. My mother never did magic."

"Yet her mother was Catherine the Ice Princess and now we find our daughter can turn people into popsicles."

Belle nodded. "You're right. I'll ask Merlin what he knows of it when I see him later."

Gold furrowed his brow. "You're seeing him?"

"He's coming by to help with the library tomorrow," said Belle. "I don't have a lot of volunteers. I didn't see the harm."

"That's the problem with him," Gold muttered.

---

Belle stirred awake in her room at the Dark Castle, finding she was alone.

"Rumple?," she asked into the air.

She was answered by the doors to the room opening and Rumplestiltskin entered carrying a tray.

"Happy birthday," he said, placing the tray on the bed next to her.

"You cooked for me?," she asked.

"Yes, it does seem to work better this way around," said Rumplestiltskin. "Though I suppose that's to be expected when you take a noblewoman for a maid."

She shot him a playful scowl and then broke into a smile. "Well, thank you. Breakfast in bed, what a treat, though I thought you would have had some other bed antics in mind for my birthday."

"You wanton girl," he said, sitting down on the edge.

"Wanton woman," she corrected as she took her tea. "I believe that's more correct."

"What will the people of Avonlea say when they discover how you've been corrupted?"

"Well, no man will have me," said Belle.

"How fortunate for me," said Rumplestiltskin. He held his hand out revealing a package wrapped in blue paper.

"What's this?"

"It was a gift for an innocent maiden, but seeing as she's not here..."

Belle took it. "You didn't have to get me anything."

"Go on."
Belle smiled as she unwrapped it. She opened the box to reveal a gold necklace which was several of the strands of gold Rumplestiltskin had spun braided together.

"It's beautiful," she gasped. "Oh, Rumple, it's too much."

"You do remember I make gold?"

"I've never had anything this valuable," she said.

Rumplestiltskin took the necklace from her and moved to be behind her. She held up her hair as he put it around her neck.

"You could have me spinning gold for you night and day and yet you never would," said Rumplestiltskin. "Which is why you deserve this and more."

Belle smiled. "Thank you. How do I look in it?"

"Beautiful," he said, kissing her shoulder. "Just beautiful. That's just the beginning, though."

"The beginning of what?" she asked.

"The rest of your gift, ' he said. "Which means unfortunately, I'll be out the rest of this morning."

"The rest of my gift? Rumple, I don't need anything else."

He got off the bed. "You deserve it, though."

"Nothing extravagant," Belle warned futilely. "What shall I make for dinner?"

"Belle, you can't make your own birthday dinner. I'll arrange for something." He kissed her hand. "I shall return."

Rumplestiltskin left.

"I don't want anyone's firstborn!," Belle shouted after him.

"I'll take that under advisement!," he called back.

Belle passed the rest of the morning agreeably, taking her time with breakfast, dressing and wandering over to the library.

When she arrived, she spotted something on the table. It wasn't entirely unexpected, not after this many years. A package wrapped in gold paper with her name written on the top. She opened it to reveal a book.

"Much Ado About Nothing," she read off the cover. By someone called William Shakespeare. She had strangely never heard of him and she had read everything she thought. Belle sat in her usual chair, warmed by the light of the window and sat.

It was a play, the first couple of pages were some nobleman and a messenger talking about a war. It didn't really pick up until the nobleman's niece began to speak.

I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed, for, indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

Alas, he gets nothing by that. In our last conflict, four of his five wits went halting off and now is the whole man governed with one!
Is it possible Disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain if you come in her presence.

I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow than a man swear he loves me.

The name of the nobleman's niece was Beatrice.

Now

Merlin entered the library carrying two cups.

"If that's for Beatrice, I sent her home. She's still catching up on her schoolwork," said Belle.

"No, it's for you," he said putting the cup down and pulling a straw from his jacket pocket. "Iced tea."

"Thanks," said Belle. "Beatrice said you prefer espresso like her."

"It's an addiction," said Merlin. "One I am unwilling to part with."

Belle nodded. "I don't know where Beatrice got hers. One time when she was four, she wandered off in Barnes & Noble and I found her at the café with an iced mocha. There was no going back."

"So," said Merlin, "what do you need help with?"

"I'm just finishing shelving the history section," said Belle.

"Almost to the end then," said Merlin.

"Not a moment too soon," said Belle. "The opening's this weekend."

"Well," said Merlin, "I'll get to work then." He began heading towards the staircase.

"Rumple was concerned..."

Merlin stopped and turned. "Yes?"

"He seems to think that there's some great mystery that we're not getting about Beatrice." Belle shrugged.

"And you?"

"She's my baby," said Belle.

"Well," Merlin began, "Rumplestiltskin knows this, I doubt he's said it to you. I've been following him with great interest since he was a very small lad."

Belle giggled involuntarily.

"What?" Merlin asked.

"It's just hard to picture Rumple as a boy."

"Well, I assure you he was. We must all begin somewhere."
"What was he like?"

Merlin considered. "Good and sweet and broken-hearted."

"Broken-hearted?," asked Belle.

"Very. He was without his parents early on. Even when his father was there, he would have been better off without him. He was raised by two spinsters, the first kindness he ever knew. He was clever, but see, he was the son of a coward so it never mattered."

"It sounds like a sad life," said Belle.

"It was," said Merlin. He took a sip of his espresso. "See, what he doesn't know is that I've followed your family for the same time."

"My family?"

"Yes, your grandparents, their parents and their parents and theirs and theirs. I can name them all, what they liked to eat for breakfast, what made them sad. All True Love."

Belle frowned. "All True Love?"

"Yes."

"You told Rumple that Beatrice comes from an unbroken line of True Love on my side," Belle began. "That's not right, though. My parents never loved each other."

"And how do you know that?"

"My mother told me."

"Your mother told you what you needed to know to keep you safe."

"So, she did love Maurice?"

"No," said Merlin.

"Oh, so..."

"Let's say the man who fathered you had many enemies, enemies who were waiting for the child of his True Love, enemies who wanted to put a stop to it."

"Like Beatrice?"

"Precisely. In fact, the same group."

"But my father is with them."

"Because to keep you safe your father cast a spell on Sir Maurice to make him forget all about the Knights of the Round Table and the oath he had taken. None of the other knights would dare storm Maurice's castle to harm you and even if they had... let's say it would have been unpleasant for them."

"My father has magic?"

Merlin paused. "He gets by."
"Then why did he abandon me? And my mother? She was so unhappy with my father."

"Well, he wasn't exactly enjoying himself, either."

"Why did he do it?"

"Your father didn't abandon you. He always looked after you."

Belle shook her head. "I went with the Dark One-"

"You chose that, remember? Besides, there was no place safer."

"Except for the Blue Fairy and Regina-"

"He couldn't help that. He was incapacitated at the time."

The door opened. Emma entered with Henry.

"Hi," said Emma. She looked awkwardly at Belle and Merlin. "Neal was going to pick him up for dinner, but I guess Tamara had car trouble? I have a call to go out on."

"Nothing serious?," asked Belle.

"Somebody stole the goose that laid the golden egg," said Emma. She shrugged. "I don't know."

"Is it okay if I hang out here and go home with you, Belle?," asked Henry.

"Of course it is," said Belle. "Merlin and I are just shelving some books. We'll be done soon. Shall I drive him back?"

"Anyone except Beatrice," said Emma. "See you later, kid. Thanks, Belle."

"I will go finish that shelving," said Merlin. He headed up the stairs.

"Is it okay if I go to the children's section?," asked Henry.

"Do you have your book with you?," asked Belle.

"Do you want to see it?," he asked.

"Please," said Belle. She came around the counter and joined Henry at one of the tables as he opened his backpack and pulled out the book.

"I don't have that many stories about you," said Henry. "Which isn't fair because you're pretty cool."

Belle smiled. "Thanks, but I was wondering if you had any stories about Merlin?"

"Yeah," Henry said cheerfully flipping the pages. "The Knights of the Round Table. Camelot. Oh, there's this one where he falls in love with an evil fairy but she just wants to take his powers."

"What?," asked Belle.

"Yeah, it's way before any of the stuff with the knights, though. They disagree about how to use magic."

Belle smiled in relief. "That couldn't be her then."
"There is the one with his daughter."

Belle's stomach flipped. "His what?"

"Yeah, right here," said Henry, flipping the pages. "He has a daughter, but he couldn't see her to keep her safe from the evil fairy, but he always watches her and every year on her birthday, he leaves her a gift."

"A gift?" asked Belle.

"A book. He always leaves her a book."

---

**Then**

Belle French awoke in her apartment to the sound of Beatrice crying softly in her crib.

"Beatrice," said Belle. The apartment was just a studio so she was at the crib in two steps. She picked up the infant and rocked her against her chest. "It's okay. You're okay. Did you have a bad dream?"

Beatrice's sobbing settled. Belle smiled.

"What about your new glasses?," Belle asked. She picked them up off her own night table. The baby had just gotten them a few days before. She hadn't liked them at first, but the doctor assured her it wouldn't take too long for Beatrice to realize she could see in them and act accordingly. Belle worked the strap around the girl's head and gave her a kiss. "There. That's so much better, isn't it?"

Beatrice cooed back something. Belle knew all parents thought their children were special, but she thought for certain Beatrice's cooing sounded different from other babies. It sounded almost... skeptical.

"Anyway," said Belle, "let's feed you."

Belle nursed the baby and then tried to feed her some strained peaches. After mixed results, Belle set some Cheerios in the tray on the high chair and sat across from her.

"It's my birthday," said Belle.

Beatrice stared at her.

"It's not like you had to get me anything," Belle teased. She got up and opened the curtains on the kitchen window. The baby whined. "It's spring, Beatrice, you'll have to let some light in."

She walked back around. "Anyway," said Belle, picking up some clutter in the small kitchen, "I was thinking we should do something special for it. A little cake? I could have a slice and you could make a mess of it. We could go to the zoo and the library."

That elicited another small shout.

"Well, it's my birthday," said Belle.

There was a knock at the door. Belle walked over to the door and opened it.

There was no one there.
She looked down to see a package in gold paper. Belle looked down either side of the hallway, then knelt down to pick it up. She took it and retreated back inside the apartment.

She sat at the kitchen table and sat to unwrap it as Beatrice watched.

It was a book.

Last year, she had still been in the hospital in Boston on her birthday when two books appeared: Much Ado About Nothing and Pride and Prejudice. She had taken Beatrice's first name from the former and her middle name Elizabeth from the latter.

This one was called "The Mayor of Casterbridge."

The story was about a man, a drunkard who sold his wife and daughter in an auction to a sailor. Belle didn't usually care for anything this depressing, but the language of the book was so beautiful she was forced to devour it, ever waiting for the happy ending. She read it throughout the day, at the park, while Beatrice napped in the stroller at the zoo and that night after she put the baby to sleep.

The man spent the rest of his life trying to make amends, trying to make it up to his daughter. In the end, he lost everything and died alone, asking that the daughter not even be told of his death, that no mourning be done, no bells tolled, no flowers laid and that no one remember him.

Belle thought it was the saddest thing she had ever read. If it was really a birthday present as she liked to imagine it was, she wondered why and of course, who had given it.
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they have The Bachelor in its time slot.

This annoyed me greatly at the time.

---

Then

Bernard was the eldest son of the Duke of Padua. After a long and happy life, the Duke was in ailing health and so it fell to Bernard to begin taking on some of the responsibilities for the duchy, not the least of which was the meeting he was about to take this morning.

"Try not to ramble on as you do," his father warned. "She doesn't like rambling."

"Yes, Father."

"Don't try to haggle with her. She abhors haggling."

"Then why do we even bother?," asked Bernard. "Why don't we just send a messenger with the gold?"

"You don't treat a weather witch like that!," the Duke hollered. "She must be treated with the respect due her station."

"Very well," Bernard sighed.

"Now, you must be off. Don't be late! She abhors lateness!"

Bernard rode his horse through Padua and followed the map to the witch's home. It was at the corner of four kingdoms that depended on her patronage and more modest than he would have guessed. Her father said he had been dealing with the same witch for his whole life and she had never aged a day.

He tied his horse to a tree and went to the door. He went to knock and it opened of its own accord.

"Okay..." He gingerly stepped inside. "Hello?"

"In here!," a female voice called.

Bernard tried to follow the sound of the voice and stepped into a parlor where a plate promptly went flying at his head. He ducked to avoid it, landing in a heap on the floor.

"Are you alright, sir?," a small voice asked.
Bernard looked up. A small boy and girl stood over him. Behind them was a woman in elegant dress, with extremely curly chestnut hair and not too bad looking if he was perfectly honest. Not bad looking at all.

"I'm fine, thank you," he said getting up.

"I am so sorry, your lordship," said the woman. "This is my niece and nephew- Cyril, Abigail, how do you greet the heir to the Duke of Padua?"

Cyril bowed and Abigail curtsied.

"Very good," said the woman. "Only on social occasions, though. Never show nobility too much respect in private. It ruins the whole balance of things."

"Sorry?," asked Bernard.

"I am prattling on, aren't I? I was just giving them their magic lesson for the afternoon and it seems I should have chosen something less breakable."

Bernard shrugged. "These things happen, I suppose."

"Do they?"

"I suppose."

"Children, you may play outside while I discuss business with his lordship."

The children scampered off.

"Business?"

"You came to speak to me, did you not?"

"You're the weather witch?"

"I prefer weather sorceress. Amelia is my name. Shall we sit?"

She motioned at a table and the chairs came out. Amelia took one and Bernard cautiously followed suit.

"How has the gardening been in Padua this year?," asked Amelia. She motioned and a book floated off the shelf and opened before her. She picked up a quill. "Your father worried about the roses last year."

"The gardening is good, I suppose..."

"The crops? You've been growing wheat?"

"Yes."

Amelia put her quill down. "You're new so let me walk you through it. We arrange a series of days: wet days, warm days, cold days-."

"Snow days?"

"I don't do snow. You want the Ice Princess."
"Oh, right," said Bernard.

"We arrange days for optimal growth of your crops and we arrange for a few wildcard days."

"Wildcard days?"

"A small flood here and there keeps the fairies none the wiser. No one is hurt, though, usually I just wash away someone's cart or boat and you give them a small amount of gold to buy a new one."

"Why are the fairies kept in the dark?"

"Treacherous creatures," said Amelia. "Don't you know that? Merlin said he knew you."

"You know Merlin?," asked Bernard. "Did you meet at some sort of guild meeting?"

Amelia ignored him. "Anyway, the Blue Fairy is in pursuit of a magical girl."

"A magical girl?"

"Yes. She thinks it has something to do with my line so the less I see her the better."

"Does it have something to do with your line?"

"I wouldn't know. It's in the future."

"Can't you see the future?"

"No, I can refer you to the Good Seer Octavia. There used to be another one, she had eyes in her hands."

"Eyes in her hands?"

"Yes, things did not end well for her."

"No?"

"Never mind that. Shall we discuss what wet days you would like?"

---

**Now**

Henry chatted excitedly the whole way home while Belle's mind raced. She entered the house in a haze.

"We're here," Henry excitedly announced.

"In here!," Beatrice called back.

Belle followed Henry in the kitchen to find Gold cooking while Beatrice sat at the counter.

"What are you doing?," asked Belle.

"Cooking for the dinner you insisted we have," Gold said pointedly.

"That's tonight?," asked Belle.
"Uh, yeah..." said Beatrice.

"That's why I came over here with you?," Henry added.

"Right," said Belle.

Gold frowned. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," Belle smiled. "Can I help?"

"Beatrice has set the table. The lamb is in the oven. I'm just working on dessert."

"Right," said Belle.

"And you're sure you're alright?," asked Gold.

"Fine," said Belle.

"Beatrice, why don't you take Henry in the other room?," said Gold.

"Every time I get sent in a different room I end up with a new magical power," Beatrice complained.

"Now, please."

Beatrice and Henry left. Gold turned to Belle.

"What is it?"

"Does Merlin have family?"

"What?"

"Henry had this story and-"

They heard a car and Belle stopped. Henry ran in.

"He's here!"

Beatrice followed. "Yea, I bet this dinner won't be awkward at all," she said. She glanced up at her parents' furtive looks. "As usual, we're off to a great start."

The door opened and Neal rushed in.

"Where's Tamara?," asked Belle.

"Yeah, I had to beat her in," said Neal. "She had car trouble and I haven't had time to explain the fairy tale thing."

"Oh, come on," said Beatrice.

"What?," asked Belle.

"You don't have to do anything," said Neal. "You just have to not mention fairy tale stuff."

"Right, yeah, let's practice that. Hi, Tamara, these are my parents Belle and Rumplestiltskin," said Beatrice.
"Okay, you shouldn't introduce people," said Neal.

"It's not my fault this is going to be a disaster," said Beatrice.

"Come on, Beatrice," Neal moaned.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "Back me up here."

"Hello?"

"That's her," said Neal. He walked into the other room.

"For what it's worth, Beatrice, I think you're correct," said Gold.

"Well, we'll just have to keep it together for one evening," said Belle.

Beatrice eyed her. "Are you okay?"

Belle sighed. "Can I have a hug?"

Beatrice rolled her eyes and put her arms around her mother.

"Thank you," said Belle, releasing her.

Neal led a woman in. "Okay, this is my family. My son, Henry and my little sister, Beatrice. My dad and uh, Belle."

Tamara smiled and started shaking hands. "Mr. Cassidy."

"Mr. Gold," he said without thinking.

"Oh." Tamara shot a quizzical look at Neal.

"Call him Rum," said Belle. She motioned at the next room. "Come on in."

---

Then

Bernard tried to listen. He really did, but it was tedious remembering what days Padua needed good weather for the spring fete, the Summer Equinox Lady, the harvest festival and the Winter Equinox Lady.

Then came the price tag.

"How many pieces of gold?"

"It's a standard agreement."

"Yes, but that much?"

"Yes, I suppose it is a great deal unless your people need to eat."

He sighed. "Isn't there some way to knock it down a bit?"

Amelia smiled in amusement. "Well, I've never known a noble who cared to haggle."

"Does it have to be gold?"
She stiffened. "If the form of payment is the problem, why don’t you go talk to the Dark One?"

"Does he do weather?"

"Yes, I believe I does. You weren't planning on keeping your first born child, were you?"

"Right... what if I were to pay you by season?"

"By the season?"

"Payment system, you know? We start with summer and see how that goes, then come back."

"You only want to pay me for the summer?,” asked Amelia.

"Is that a problem?"

"No, of course not," Amelia said through pursed lips. "If that's how you want to do business, who am I to stop you?"

---

Now

Dinner was going as well as could be expected when four-fifths of the room had to censor their conversation. Gold had moved to silence. Belle was distracted and Beatrice, well, she really didn't care to chat up her brother's fiancee.

It mostly was on Henry.

"So, how did you two meet?," Henry asked brightly looking at Neal and Tamara.

There was a knock at the door.

"Expecting someone?," asked Tamara.

"We never expect anyone," said Beatrice.

"What?"

Tamara looked at her curiously.

"I'll get it," said Beatrice.

She got up, went to the front door and opened the door, where she found a princess in a ball gown.

"Beatrice!"

"Aurora?"

"I found you."

"Um... come in..." said Beatrice.

Aurora came in and looked around. "Is this your castle? It's cozy."

"So, have you been in Storybrooke?"
"No, I just got here."
"You just got here?"
"Yes, I stowed away on a pirate's ship."
"On a what?"
"Yes, it was him and some man missing a foot. They're here to kill the Dark One."
"Hold on," said Beatrice.

She walked into the dining room.
"Everything alright, sweetheart?" asked Gold.

Beatrice leaned down by Gold. "Do you happen to remember my friend, Aurora?"
"I can't say that I do."
"You know, Aurora," she said. She began to hum "Once Upon A Dream."
"I don't know what that is," said Gold.
"That's the theme from Sleeping Beauty," said Tamara. "Right?"

Gold sighed. "Excuse me."

Gold got up and followed Beatrice back into the entry hall.
"So, Aurora, this is my dad," said Beatrice.
"You found him," Aurora said in astonishment.
"Could you go back to the part about the pirate and the one-footed guy?"
"Hook?" asked Gold. "Hook and Gaston?"
"Yes, they're on some quest to kill the Dark One," said Aurora. "Gaston made it sound as if he's cast a spell on some poor girl."
"Yeah, that's my mom," said Beatrice.
"Oh," said Aurora. She looked at Gold. "And that makes you?"
"Who do you suppose?"
"Well," said Aurora, trying to regain her royal composure, "it's a pleasure to meet you."

Neal came out. He spotted Aurora. "I say no fairy tales and this is what happens?"
"She just sort of got to town," said Beatrice.
"Yes, how exactly did this turn of events come to pass," asked Gold. "Did Hook kidnap you?"
"Hook?" asked Neal.
"I called this," said Beatrice.

"I stowed away on his ship," said Aurora.

"And why would you do that?," asked Gold.

"My fiancé, Philip, is in love with someone else," Aurora said with contempt. "She's called Mulan."

"Whoa," said Neal.

"Wow, okay," said Beatrice. "So not in the Disney version."

"Is that lamb?," asked Aurora.

"Beatrice, would you help our guest find something to wear?," said Gold.

"Then what?"

"Then take her into dinner."

"Oh, come on, no," said Neal.

"What do you propose I do with her, then?," asked Gold. "Put her under a sleeping curse and lock her away in a tower?"

"What about Hook and Gaston?," asked Beatrice.

"I shouldn't worry, sweetheart. I've dealt with them once. I can do so again."

"Maybe I should call Emma," Neal suggested, clearly uncomfortable with the tone his father was taking.

"No, I can handle this," said Gold.

Neal turned. "Belle!"

"You don't need to-"

Belle came in the living room. She saw Aurora. "What's going on?"

Neal pointed at Gold. "Talk to him." He walked back into the dining room.

"Oh, so this is how it's going to be?," asked Beatrice. "That's just great!"

"Beatrice, take your friend upstairs," said Gold.

She groaned and motioned for Aurora to follow her.

Beatrice watched as Aurora hunted through her closet, then not finding anything acceptable she hunted through Belle's.

"Why are all of your mother's gowns so short?," asked Aurora.

"Because we live in the twenty-first century?"

"What about this one?," asked Aurora, pulling out a dress Belle had worn to a library fundraiser.
"No." Beatrice sighed and pulled out a pale blue vintage forties dress of her mother's. "What about this one?"

"Well, I suppose that's acceptable. I shall have to learn the ways of this new land."

"Yeah, about that," said Beatrice, following Aurora back to her room, "why are you here?"

"I told you. Philip is in love with someone else." She stepped in the bathroom.

"I thought he was your True Love or whatever."

"Yes, well, that doesn't seem to matter as much to him."

Aurora emerged wearing the dress and her tiara.

"Not going to ditch the tiara for dinner?"

"Aren't you wearing yours?"

"I don't have one."

"Oh." She looked at the TV. "Is this your magic mirror?"

"No, that's the TV."

"The what?"

"Yeah, we can go over this later. Let's go eat, Dowager Countess."

Aurora followed. "I'm not a countess and I'm certainly not a dowager."

"Yes, Lady Grantham."

They entered the dining room. Neal and Tamara stopped regaling Belle and Henry with some story.

"Guys, this is my friend Aurora Grantham, you know my mom and Neal. This is my nephew, Henry and my brother's fiancée, Tamara."

"Aurora?," asked Henry.

Belle quickly shushed him. The two sat down.

"It's lovely to meet you all," said Aurora.

"That's a cute hair comb," Tamara said motioning at the tiara.

"It's a tiara," Aurora corrected before anyone could stop her.

Beatrice looked at Belle. "Yeah, this is going downhill fast."

"Oh, hello, everyone!," a voice boomed.

Beatrice looked up to see Merlin coming in.

"So," he said jovially, "I hear that the murderous one-handed pirate and the potentially murderous one-footed knight are on their way here to kill our Mister Sunshine." He picked a dinner roll from
its basket and looked at Tamara. "Now, what shall we do and who are you exactly?"

Tamara looked at Neal. "What the hell is going on?"

"Pirates?," asked Henry. "Cool."

The doorbell rang.

"That ought to be Regina," said Merlin.

"What? Did you put it on Facebook?," asked Beatrice.

"I texted her," said Merlin. "You can't leave the Evil Queen to her own devices in these circumstances. She'll get ideas."

"I'll get it," Belle said quietly.

"The Evil Queen?" Tamara asked harshly.

Merlin sat down at the table and started making himself a plate. "Someone's a bit behind."

"This is my fiancée, Tamara," Neal said quietly.

"Hi, Tamara. I'm Merlin."

"What is going on?," Tamara demanded.

"Well, once upon a time a queen cast a dark curse-" Beatrice began.

"Beatrice," Neal warned.

"What? Should I start further back?" asked Beatrice. "How far back? Stable boy far back or ogre wars far back?"

"Neal, can I speak to you in the other room?" asked Tamara, getting up and walking away.

"Thanks, thanks a lot," said Neal.

"Oh, no problem," said Beatrice as he hurried after her. She turned to Merlin. "I so told these people we couldn't act normal."

"The day you do act normal, that will really be something."

Regina entered, closely followed by Belle. "Henry, come on."

"Not so fast, Regina," said Merlin.

"He's my son and I'm going to keep him safe from the pirate and the floral arrangement," said Regina.

"But for one thing," said Merlin. "Your son is still Rumplestiltskin's grandson and Hook is not terribly interested in how he hurts Rumplestiltskin, only that he does."

"I'm familiar with the man," said Regina. She looked at Aurora. "Aren't you supposed to be asleep?"

"Wait," said Henry, "the pirate is Captain Hook?"
"Oh, to be ten." Merlin looked up at Belle. "You're very quiet."

"No," Belle protested. "I should see what Rumple is doing."

"The Enchanted Forest?!," Tamara shouted from the other room. "Get real with me, Neal! If you want out, just say it!"

"That's going well," said Beatrice.

Belle walked into the workshop just in time to see Gold dissolve some gold into a potion.

"Don't ask."

"I think Merlin's my father," said Belle.

He paused.

"That's not funny," said Gold.

Belle didn't say anything.

"You're serious?," asked Gold.

Belle nodded.

"Did he say that?"

"Not in so many words, but I've been getting books on my birthday for as long as I can remember," said Belle. "I got them in the Enchanted Forest, in your castle and in New York. Henry's got a story in his book about Merlin and a daughter who gets books for her birthday."

"He's..." Gold sat back down on the stool. "I don't understand."

"I'm still trying to process it myself." She looked up to see Hook running in the cellar behind Gold. "Rumple!"

Gold snapped around and with a wave of the hand, Hook was paralyzed against the wall.

"Do you mind, dearie? We're in the middle of something. Now, where's the flower?"

"You have magic," said Hook. "There wasn't supposed to be any magic in this land."

"Did Cora tell you that, dearie?"

"Where is Gaston?," asked Belle.

"I assume your fiance went looking for you, love."

Inside, the fight between Neal and Tamara had not lessened.

"Seriously, you think I believe your dad spins straw into gold?!"

"I think we should make popcorn," said Beatrice, assessing what she could gather from the doorway.
"Why doesn't she believe him?," asked Aurora.

"Oh, yeah, just fyi," said Beatrice, "everyone thinks you're just a story."

"What's fyi?"

"What's the matter, Your Majesty?," asked Merlin.

"Nothing. I'm just mad Rumplestiltskin can cook this well," said Regina, finishing the piece of lamb she had gotten.

The doorbell rang again.

"Should I get that?," asked Beatrice.

"No, I'll get it," said Merlin.

Merlin got up and walked into the living room.

"Is my mom ever coming back?," asked Beatrice.

She went out the back door from the kitchen. "Mom!"

Getting no answer, she went further down the steps.

"Mom!"

She felt a hand clamp over her mouth and a knife at her throat. She caught Gaston's profile in the moonlight.

"Where is Belle, witch?"

She squirmed and his hand became tighter. Beatrice wondered which of her semi-useless magical powers she ought to deploy. The throwing back thing? Popsicle mode? The candle lighting thing was out, taxi hailing wouldn't help even if that was a thing.

She tried to shake him off and had no luck since Gaston was as stupid as he was strong. She saw lightning in the distance, growing closer.

"Hey!"

Gaston turned and Beatrice was treated to the sight of Princess Aurora with a rolling pin. She swung it at him, baseball bat style and he didn't even stumble. Beatrice kicked at the wooden peg that replaced his foot and ankle, the knife nicking her in the process.

"Sir Gaston, what poor manners."

Beatrice looked up to see Regina, with Henry not far behind.

She waved her hand and the knife fell from his hand.

"It's terribly rude to show up at a house uninvited and interrupt dinner. Now, let her go or I'll have to teach you a lesson about manners."

"And why should I listen to you, Evil Queen?"

"You should listen to me," Beatrice heard Merlin say. He put his index finger and Gaston and he
unceremoniously flopped to the ground.

"He wounded you," Aurora said.

"I'm fine," said Beatrice, feeling woozy.

"Whoa, sweetheart, I've got you," said Merlin, catching her.

"Gold!," Regina shouted. "Belle! Get out here!"

Merlin eased her to the ground. She saw her parents rushing out. Merlin's hand became glowing blue and Beatrice felt the same tingling over her neck as she had with her wrists and her eyes.

"Beatrice, sweetheart," said Belle, cradling her.

"She'll be alright," said Merlin.

"Hello?"

They looked up to see Emma, David and Mary Margaret arriving.

"Is everything okay? What happened?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Where to begin with that," remarked Beatrice, still feeling very out of it.

"Sheriff, you can do your job and get this and that pirate off my property or I can kill them," said Gold. "Either way."

"Guys, what happened?," Neal asked from the back porch.

Then

It was a very wet ride to the weather sorceress' house.

Too wet for the harvest.

Bernard had been learning the rest of his duties and had lost track of when the summer ended. He had gotten his reminder a few days before when the rains began in Padua.

He finally arrived, sopping wet though the rain broke when he arrived at the border of Padua. He could see the great storm cloud hanging in the sky over his land.

"Well, well, well," said Amelia, "look who's come to call."

"You didn't really leave me a choice. I rode in the pouring rain the entire way here."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said. "Let me help."

She waved her hand and a blanket appeared on his horse, a roaring fire in front of him. The horse neighed in appreciation as Bernard dripped.

Amelia shrugged. "I have a soft spot for animals. So much more pleasant than people."

"How do I make the rain stop?"

"Well, you could begin by paying my fee."
"For the year?," he sighed.
"For the year, else what will happen when autumn runs out? It might be a very cold winter."

Bernard grudgingly took a sack off the steed's saddlebags. He handed it to Amelia.
"Thank you," said Amelia.

She smiled and the cloud cleared from Padua. The sun shone down on the land.
"I think it ought to clear in time for the harvest," said Amelia.
"It happens just like that?," Bernard asked in amazement.
"You should have seen it when I was a teenager," said Amelia. "Rain when I was sad. Wind when I was mad."
"Thunder and lightning when you were angry?," Bernard offered.
"Thunder, yes. Lightning when I was scared." She walked back to the cottage. "Have a pleasant journey home."

Now

Before long, Beatrice was in her room, crashed out on the bed. Belle came in.
"So, dinner went well," said Beatrice.

Belle smiled and tucked the covers around her. "I think Tamara got an idea."
"Why are you tucking me in?"
"Because I'm your mother, I love you and you've had a trying evening." She kissed her on the cheek. "Good night."
"Good night," said Beatrice.

Belle started downstairs as the Doctor Who theme began to play. She smiled and went down to see Merlin still in the entry way.
"Rumplestiltskin will be back. I told him I would wait," said Merlin.
"Right..." said Belle. "Thank you for your help. Again."
"No thanks needed."

Belle nodded.
"You're very quiet this evening," said Merlin.
"The weather," said Belle. "That's been Beatrice, hasn't it?"
"What made you put that together?"
"My great-grandmother was a weather sorceress. I knew her when I was very young and I don't think I believed her, but she told me stories about how when she was upset, the sky would open."
Belle shrugged. "The same thing happens every time Donna Noble loses her memories."

"Who?," asked Merlin.

"It's from Doctor Who. Beatrice feels these things deeply. I was the same when I was her age, just with books."

"Like mother, like daughter."

"Have you ever read a story called The Mayor of Casterbridge?," Belle managed to stammer out. "Thomas Hardy?"

"Yes," said Merlin.

"That's a sad book," said Belle. "I cried for an hour and I was twenty. I had just turned twenty that day."

Gold entered. He looked from Belle to Merlin. "Am I interrupting something?"

"I was just leaving," said Merlin. "Good night, sunshine. Good night, Belle."

Merlin hurried out. Gold turned to Belle.

"Well?," he asked.

Belle just shook her head and threw herself into his arms.

"It can't be as bad as all that," Gold ruefully remarked.

"I don't have any idea what to do," Belle admitted.

"You'll figure it out. You always do."
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Tonight's blast from the past:

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time, which is a show on ABC where they let your boyfriend live and then you became some pool-playing hussy for the rest of the season. I am totally running out of these soon. Anyway, thanks for your reads and reviews. I think I've gotten back to most of you, if I haven't, I'm sorry. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Now

Beatrice walked downstairs for another normal day.

Rumplestiltskin was making her espresso, while Belle gave her a plate of fruit and Princess Aurora sat next to her at the counter. Gold had been in a generous mood that Beatrice knew was her mother's doing and was letting the princess stay in one of the guest rooms for the time being.

"The party for the library starts at four," said Belle.

"I'll come after school," said Beatrice.

"I can help you," Aurora offered.

"Thanks," said Belle. She exchanged glances with Gold and looked back at Beatrice.

She hated when they did that.

"So," began Belle, "your birthday is coming up."

"Your birthday?," Aurora asked excitedly.

"It's not a big deal," said Beatrice.

"I wouldn't say that," said Gold. "It's your sixteenth birthday."

"Sixteenth?," Aurora shrieked. "Are you having a ball? What's the theme? What color dress should I wear?"

Aurora could be exhausting.

"She can have whatever she wishes," said Gold.

"I'm not having a ball for a number of reasons," said Beatrice. She looked pointedly at Aurora. "Like people don't have balls."
"You must want something," said Gold.

"There's a remote control that looks like the Doctor's sonic screwdriver," said Beatrice. "I'll email you the website."

"Beatrice, we have to do something," Belle insisted.

"No, we don't," said Beatrice. "Is someone going to drive me to school?"

Then

Belle had been staring at the gown for an hour.

It was gold. She did like gold. Her father had overseen its creation to the dressmaker's dismay. Of course it would have been Reinette's purview were she still alive. She would have even rather had her grandmother do it. Catherine, not Maurice's mother. She was a rather tedious woman who clung to the clerics like a life preserver and had never approved of anything even mildly amusing ever.

It didn't make a difference if she stared at the dress for another hour. She still had to put the down on, go downstairs and meet her fiancé. They had been betrothed since Belle was fourteen, but never met. Reinette had cleverly put that off time after time. Then she had died. The mourning period had bought more time, but now Maurice had decided it was time to move forward.

She thought back to the last summer she had spent at the palace and the Good Seer at the party Queen Eva gave. She had promised True Love, "with the most powerful man in all the realms." Whoever Gaston was, she was sure he wasn't that. He was a knight, apparently Maurice thought highly of him. Whenever Belle tried to inquire after his interests, her father laughed. He claimed there was no need for a husband and wife to have similar interests.

Her maid, Viola, entered. "What are you still sitting around for? Sir Gaston has just been seen entering the village."

Belle didn't care for Viola much. The maids her mother had brought on had all left since her death. She had no confidantes left in the castle. So she dressed and went downstairs.

Belle sincerely hoped that seeing Gaston would change something in her.

It did not. He was a great hulk of a man, the other ladies fawned over him, but Belle couldn't see anything that pleased her.

"I'm Sir Gaston." He spoke his own name as if it were the most important thing anyone was ever going to tell her.

Belle was completely certain it was the least of her concerns.

"We're going hunting tomorrow," said Gaston. "Your father said you would."

Yes. The least of her concerns.

Now

Beatrice was silent. Gold was silent.
"Beatrice," he began.

"No."

"You didn't even let me speak."

"Fine..."

"I have missed fifteen of your birthdays," said Gold. "Is it so wrong that I want to celebrate this one?"

"Fine. Get a cake and ice cream. You can get a banner if that will help you."

"Why don't you want a party?," he asked as he pulled the Cadillac into the drop-off queue for the high school.

Beatrice sighed and collected herself to look her father straight on. "Look, Mom may have that whole Disney mentality going, but you and I both live in the real world and we both know that no one is going to come to a party for my birthday so let's just save a step and not have one."

"Beatrice...

"I have to go," she said opening the door.

"Beatrice, look at me."

She sighed and turned. Gold kissed her on the forehead.

"Have a good day, sweetheart."

Beatrice got out of the car and shut the door.

"It'll be good when it's over," Beatrice muttered as she headed into the school building.

"I think you should throw her a party anyway," said Aurora.

"I think that's a terrible idea," said Merlin.

Belle was treating two of her most loyal library volunteers to lunch in preparation for opening day.

"Why is that so terrible?," Aurora asked. She seemed to have no problem taking on the ancient wizard. "You have balls to meet people, she obviously needs to meet people."

"People don't want to meet her," Merlin reminded them. "They're all morons, but that's how it is, I'm afraid."

"Because they don't know her," said Aurora. "If she never meets them, how can they know her? I had a ball for my sixteenth birthday."

"And we see how well your life has worked out thus far," said Merlin. "You've run away to another realm because your fiancé is having an affair with the warrior princess."

"Is she a princess?," asked Aurora. She shook her head. "Not that I care."

"Honestly, I was probably overhearing," Belle admitted. "She hasn't had an actual party since she was ten and..."
"And what?," asked Aurora, picking at her salad.

"Well, no one came," said Belle. "I don't think it was some great conspiracy, but all the other girls came up with excuses and after that, she wasn't interested. We should do something."

She looked up to see Mary Margaret approaching.

"Belle," said Mary Margaret. "How's the library coming?"

"We'll be ready for this afternoon," Belle said brightly. "Are you coming?"

"I wouldn't miss it," said Mary Margaret.

"Thanks. I keep thinking no one will bother coming," said Belle. "Hey. Do you have plans on the twenty-second?"

"Of October? Yeah, it's Emma's birthday." She stated it as if it were obvious.

Belle's face dropped. "Emma's birthday is the twenty-second?"

"Yeah, we're planning this big party, but don't tell her. It's a surprise."

"Oh," said Belle.

"Sorry, I've got to run," said Mary Margaret. "I'll see you at the library."

Mary Margaret hurried off. Belle turned back to her table mates.

"That's the worst," said Aurora. "Another princess with the same ball date?"

Belle knew full well how these things worked even if her father hadn't let her have one for her own eighteenth birthday. She had attended her share while Reinette was alive. "I can't possibly go into competition with Emma's party. It's ridiculous."

"I suppose since everyone loves her for breaking the Curse," said Aurora. "It's not even fair really. You can't be that old, unmarried and taking up ball dates. It's unfair."

Belle shook her head at Merlin's bemused expression.

"We have to go over some things about this land later," said Belle. "Besides, I can't put her into competition with family."

Aurora nodded. "We should get back."

Aurora walked ahead.

Merlin turned to Belle. "Something else preying on your mind, my dear?"

"No," said Belle. "Right now, I'm just hoping the opening goes well."

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Then

Gaston had been in the castle for a week. Belle had done everything her father required, organizing all the meals, showing him around the province and the absolute boredom of going hunting. If she were to be perfectly honest, the entire business was boring. She felt like little more than a decorative centerpiece at meals, no one so much as spoke to her. She wondered why they
even required her presence. They could do everything without her. Perhaps they could do the
wedding without her.

Today, rain called off the hunt and this meant Belle was trapped in the study with Maurice, his
knights, Gaston and his sycophant, a funny little man called Lefou. He urged Gaston on into
braggery, as if the man needed an invitation.

"You're like the son I never had," Maurice said, incensing Belle. "You'll see that Avonlea is
prosperous."

Gaston probably didn't know what prosperous meant. Too many syllables.

"The fact that Belle has been my only heir has troubled me for a very long time," said Maurice.
Gaston laughed. "Well, you can bet that won't happen to me!"

Belle suddenly had a vision of a house full of mini-Gastons. A horde of tiny, shallow brutes who
had never seen a thesaurus. Or knew what it was.

That was it.

Belle had enough. She couldn't do it anymore.

"Sir Gaston, have you met the king of Avonlea's neighbor?," she asked.

"No."

"What was his name?"

"I can't say I know."

"It's just you'll be dealing with him a great deal," said Belle. "For matters of diplomacy."

"Well, I'm more into fighting than talking."

She nodded. "I see. How many troops does Avonlea have at the ready?"

She caught the first of Maurice's glares.

"I-"

"What's the weakest line? Which sentry towers are in need of repair?"

"You needn't worry your pretty head, Belle," said Gaston.

"Of course not-" said Maurice.

Belle tartly cut off her father. "I think someone ought to worry, preferably someone that can
answer anything about Avonlea."

"I'll see you in the hall, Belle," Maurice said gruffly.

"No, I'm interested to hear Sir Gaston's answer."

Maurice grabbed Belle by the arm and took her in the hall. As he slammed the door, Belle heard
Gaston and the others laughing.
"What do you think you're doing?!," asked Maurice. "What was the meaning of those questions? Why would you want to show up your future husband?"

"Those questions are important to this land, Papa. I thought you would know that."

"He will learn in time."

"He can't learn manners or how to have interest in me!"

"Of course he's interested in you!"

"He is interested in me as a brood mare."

Maurice shook his head. "What do you want, girl? This is the way things are done."

"Not for everyone," said Belle.

"I see. This is your mother's doing, putting girlish notions into your head."

"It is not a girlish notion to wish to be valued as something more than an ornament."

"That woman always had ideas that were above her place."

"Please don't speak ill of her, Papa."

"This is my home and I will speak how I wish. Your mother never even tried to have a happy home. I would hope you'll have more maturity."

"Because you never listened to her!," Belle finally shouted. "How is anyone supposed to be happy if nobody cares what they think?"

"You may be excused to your room. I'll explain you're not feeling well," said Maurice. "Don't even think of composing a letter."

"Am I forbidden to write now?"

"I know you'll write your grandparents for help. Overindulgent people that they are, they will doubtless come to your aid, which would be a mistake," said Maurice. "Avonlea needs this match. This is your purpose."

Belle walked away.

Now

Gold picked up Beatrice as usual and they made their way to the library. There was already a decent sized crowd inside. Granny and Ruby manned a snack table. Belle was doing her best to make her way around. She caught sight of Beatrice and Gold and quickly excused herself to come over.

"Well, it seems you have a success," said Gold.

"I had a lot of help," said Belle. "Speaking of which..."

Belle reached around the circulation desk and pulled a book out from behind the shiny new Mac.

"The Story of Babar?," Gold asked.
"No," said Beatrice.

"What's it about?," asked Gold.

"An elephant who dresses well. You would like him," said Belle. She looked at Beatrice again.

"No," she repeated.

"You love Babar. Remember when you made me read it to you in the original French?"

"Mom, nobody wants me to read."

"I want you to read. I don't have anyone else and I have a room of children waiting for story time."

"Get Aurora. She's a princess. People like princesses."

"She doesn't know the story. You do."

Beatrice looked down.

"On occasion, I have to ask you to be brave because if you never have to be brave, nothing good will ever happen. So, I'm asking you to be brave."

Beatrice took the book and walked to the reading room.

A hush fell over the room as Beatrice entered. Only Henry smiled at her.

"So," she said, taking a chair, "Our story is going to be Babar by Jean De Brunhoff. He was French, it's actually based on a story his wife made up for their children. There's also some French colonial undertones, but since this was written in 1931 it's more about longing for a bygone era..."

The children stared at her, a mixture of fear and stupidity.

"But you don't care about that, so..." She began reading and holding the pages up. "In the great forest, a little elephant is born. His name is Babar. His mother loves him very much. She rocks him to sleep with her trunk, while singing softly to him."

She changed pages as the first worried mother arrived and rushed her son out.

"Babar has grown bigger. He now plays with other little elephants. He is a very good little elephant. See him digging in the sand with his shell?"

She showed off the pictures as more parents arrived with looks of grave concern.

"Babar is riding happily on his mother's back when a wicked hunter, hidden behind some bushes, shoots at them."

Most of the kids got up then.

"Like this is worse than the Enchanted Forest with the heart ripping and the child soldiers," Beatrice muttered. "The hunter has killed Babar's mother! The monkey hides, the birds fly away, Babar cries. The hunter runs up to catch poor Babar..."

"Babar runs away because he is afraid of the hunter. After several days, very tired indeed, he comes to a town..."
Babar had just begun his tutoring when Beatrice finally gathered the courage to look up.

Henry was the only one left.

"Well," she said, closing the book, "that went great."

"I liked it," said Henry. "You're a really good story reader."

"Thanks," Beatrice said half-heartedly.

"Maybe they just went to get snacks," Henry offered.

"No, they didn't," said Beatrice. "They left because I'm me."

She got up and walked out to where her mother was chatting up Doctor Hopper and Marco. Gold stood next to her, making no secret of his boredom.

"Why do you do this to me?" Beatrice asked.

Belle was blind-sided as the book went in her hand. "What's wrong?"

"What's wrong? I just got rejected by a roomful of children. Children! That's a new record! That hasn't happened since I was a child! Thanks for that!"

Belle looked across as most of the mothers of the children she had seen go in the kids' room stood in a huddle and whispered conspiratorially as they cast glances at Beatrice.

"What happened?"

"What always happens! I can read books to kids and old people, I can try to chat up strangers every day for the rest of my life, but it is never going to make a difference! I'm never going to be as popular as you!"

"Don't raise your voice at your mother," Gold warned.

Belle shot Gold a look that clearly meant for him to not interfere. She turned back to Beatrice. "Just take a breath and we can talk."

Beatrice shook her head, unable to speak and just walked out.

"I'll get her," said Gold.

"No, I have to," said Belle. "I'll be right back."

Belle quickly tracked Beatrice down to a gazebo in the Town Square, where she sat alone on the floor as a light rain fell. Belle rushed in and sat down. Beatrice rolled her eyes.

"You didn't really think I wouldn't come after you?," asked Belle.

"I wish you wouldn't."

"Why would you ever wish that?"

"Because you would be admitting the truth, that I am not a girl people care about and I never will be."
"That's not the truth," said Belle. "That's just a bad thing you think about yourself."

"Do you know what my days are like? Really?"

"You don't tell me," said Belle.

"Because you'll worry!"

"Tell me," said Belle, straightening herself. Beatrice looked away and Belle took her chin back to face her. "Tell me. How was your day?"

Beatrice took a moment to look at her mother. She then steeled herself.

She was going all in.

"I went to my first class that's usually okay because I'm not in deep yet. I could still ignore people. In second period, we had to work in groups and no one picked me. Third period Pre-Calc, the teacher ignores me which is driving me crazy because that whole class is so far behind. Fourth period physics, again, no one will work with me. Fifth period, there are these boys who make a big show of pushing their desks away from me. Sixth period, well, that's French, insults in a whole other language. Seventh period, there are these girls who always talk about me. I thought at first they didn't think I could hear them. Now I think they only talk about me because they know I can hear them."

"What do they say?" asked Belle.

"It doesn't matter."

"It matters, what do they say?"

She shrugged. "The same things everyone says. I'm weird, I have no friends, I'm going to smite everyone, why don't I just kill myself and save us all the trouble?"

Belle was horrified. She wasn't naïve. She knew there had to be some things thrown at Beatrice just for being her father's daughter, but not something so terrible. "Do you think that?"

"God, Mom, I'm not going to kill myself..."

"Do you think that?"

She sighed. "If I died, face it, no one would care besides you and dad. If anybody felt bad, it would be like 'Oh, no, what could we have done differently?.' Probably not be bitches..."

"You're right," said Belle. "When I was your age, I was very popular."

Beatrice frowned. "Oh, good, I feel better."

"You told me once before the Curse broke that the most important thing in life is to be pretty and likable. The thing is, though, I was popular because I was pretty and I suppose, likeable. Nobody cared what I wanted from life, what books I read, what my dreams were. Your father says I saw inside him, well, he was the first person to ever bother seeing inside me. When you find someone who wants to know who you really are, pretty and likeable won't even enter into it."

"Great. I just have to hold out for True Love."

"Yeah, that's all."
Beatrice shook her head. "It's never happening."

Belle smiled. "If you could see what I see, you would know I'm telling the truth." Belle crawled across the floor of the gazebo next to Beatrice and embraced her. "I'm sorry you've had such a rough time and I wish you would have told me sooner because you are the most important thing in my life. I want you to be happy."

Then

It was the morning after her eighteenth birthday and Belle was having the fitting for her wedding gown. She had written her grandparents, though it took a small bribe and a smile to get one of the hall boys to pass it on to a messenger. Maurice had been stopping all her mail for some reason.

She felt awful sneaking around her father. She knew she had a duty to Avonlea, but she couldn't imagine a life with Gaston that didn't involve throwing herself off one of the towers. There had to be another way.

"That will do very nice," said Viola.

Belle looked in the mirror at the frock. White monstrosity was the first thing that came to mind.

She looked at the seamstress. "Does it need so much fabric?"

"The clerics are prescribing the more conservative these days and your father says you have an example to set."

Now she was also to be denied a wedding gown she could tolerate. She could only imagine the clerics advised so much fabric so it would be more difficult to run away. That would be something if she did. She could run off and join her old friend, Snow White, in the woods. Hopefully she would get over her clumsiness in time.

Belle's fantasy was interrupted by the sound of something in the hall. She stepped off the pedestal and rushed out her door to see two of the footmen taking her mother's portrait down.

"What is this?," Belle demanded.

"Sir Maurice wants it down to make room for your wedding portrait," one of the footmen answered timidly.

Belle marched back into her rooms. "Get me out of this dress now."

Belle marched downstairs.

"Where is he?," she asked Jean.

"The receiving room. You shouldn't go in there-"

Belle ignored him and walked in.

"The ogres marched last night, crossing over the border here..." said one of the knights, pointing at the map.

"Do we know what incited them?," asked Maurice.

"No," said the knight. "One minute, all was calm and the next it was as if something had been
No," said the knight. "One minute, all was calm and the next it was as if something had been unleashed."

"How many dead?"

Belle listened as the facts came out. The dead, the injured, the destroyed farms. Avonlea was in great peril and they made it sound like a matter of days.

"Belle," Maurice finally said. "You shouldn't be in here."

"I want to help," said Belle.

Gaston all but scoffed. "Leave this to the men."

Now

"You've been reading that page for ten minutes," said Gold.

Belle looked down. It was. They had gotten through the rest of the library reception without incident, come home for dinner and now Belle tried to enjoy her usual pre-bed ritual with a book as Gold read some finance magazine or other. It wasn't working.

"Is it Merlin?," he asked.

Belle shook her head and put the book on the night table. She turned towards Gold and propped herself on her elbow. "I'm tabling that for a while."

"Do you think that's wise?"

"We need to focus on Beatrice," said Belle. "We have to help her."

"She doesn't want a party, Belle, she's made that perfectly clear and after today's incident who can blame her?"

"What did you do after I left?"

"I might have mentioned that were I planning some nefarious scheme, I would hardly need Beatrice. There were two children in that room I never collected on."

"I can't believe you."

"Oh, sweetheart, I thought you knew me better."

"No. I can't believe there were two children in that room you never collected on."

"Well, frankly, I took one look at them when they were born, decided they were somewhat homely and didn't want to be stuck with them if I couldn't find a buyer."

"I need some of your specialized skills," said Belle.

Gold raised an eyebrow. "Well, there's a promising sentence."

"There are two wretched girls in Beatrice's art class."

"What would you have me do? Trap them in glass? Cast them to another land? Curse them to everlasting spinsterhood?"
"I was thinking we would talk to their parents."

"That doesn't sound very satisfying."

"I thought you would do most of the talking," said Belle.

"Oh," Gold said, his lips forming a smile. "Now that could be interesting."

"Mom! Dad!," Selena called.

"Selena, get in here now."

She rolled her eyes and followed her father's voice to the living room where she soon saw the cause for the seriousness in her father's tone.

"Selena," said her mother, "have you met Mr. and Mrs. Gold?"

The Dark One and Belle sat on the sofa, sipping tea. Of course she knew them and immediately feared what was about to happen and wondered what that little weirdo had told her parents.

"I don't believe so," said Gold. "You're in class with our daughter, Beatrice. Isn't that right, sweetheart?"

"Yes," Belle confirmed, nodding as Selena's parents looked terrified.

"You see, it's been a difficult transition for Beatrice. New school, new town, you understand," said Gold.

"Yes, of course," the mother said nervously.

"It seems that some of her classmates have been less than kind to her," Gold continued. "I wondered if you knew who that might be."

"No," said Selena, lying as badly as a teenager could while her parents continued looking nervous.

"Are you certain? Because if you did, that would be something that would displease me and I would have to take action to put an end it." He stared at Selena. "Are you certain, dearie?"

"Mr. Gold-" the father began.

Gold raised his hand to silence him. "Are you certain, dearie?"

"Yes."

Gold smiled. "Good. Then I won't be hearing any more of it, I'm sure. Thank you for your time. We'll see ourselves out."

Belle primly put her tea-cup down. "Yes, you have a lovely home."

"Yes, no fire damage at all. Come on, Belle."

Gold and Belle walked out and down the family's front steps.

"Oh, wait for it," Gold whispered.
"What are we waiting for?" asked Belle.

An argument suddenly erupted from the house, with parents asking Selena what she had done to offend the Dark One and did she want them all turned into snails?

"Oh," said Belle.

"I don't know that it will make her any friends."

"No, but it will get the bullies to shut their stupid mouths and once they do, perhaps some decent children won't be intimidated."

"I like this side of you," said Gold.

Belle smiled. "Do you?"

"Well, to be fair, sweetheart, I do like every side you have."
Chapter 29

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC made by sadists. Thanks so much for your reads and reviews and follows. I am so sorry I am so behind on getting back to you, but kind of had a vacation. Also, get ready for me to wreak havoc with mythology if that sort of thing bothers you. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Now

"Happy birthday!"

Beatrice bolted awake. Belle was carrying a tray in her room, complete with espresso and flowers in a vase. Gold was right behind her.

"What?"

"There," said Gold dryly. "That was precisely the reaction we were hoping for."

"Sit up," Belle ordered and Beatrice did. Belle set the tray down on her lap.

"Sorry? What's going on?"

"It's your birthday," said Gold.

"Well, thanks, but I have to get ready for school," said Beatrice.

"You're not going to school today," said Belle.

"I'm not?"

"No," said Gold. "Did you really think we would subject you to your schoolmates' tiresome company on your birthday?"

"Yeah," said Beatrice.

"Well, we're not," said Belle. "The day is yours to do with as you wish."

"Really?"

"Yes, really," said Gold.

"So," said Belle, "what are you going to do?"

"I don't know," said Beatrice.
"You're going to just sit here and watch Doctor Who, aren't you?," asked Gold.

"Yeah, pretty much," said Beatrice.

"We'll leave you to it, then," said Belle.

"Call if you change your mind or when you want lunch," said Gold.

---

**Last Week**

"Hey," said Belle, hurrying in the pawn shop where Gold waited behind the counter. "I came as soon as I could. I had to shove Mrs. Schuman and her children out. I swear they all have Cheetos powder on their fingers."

"Do you have any idea what they've done now?"

"Who?"

"Our charming in-laws."

Belle rolled her eyes. "I told you, I don't-"

"They've reserved the park."

Belle was surprised. "I thought the party was at Granny's."

"It was at Granny's. Then more people wanted to come. Now it's at the park."

"How many people?," asked Belle.

"I've lost count," said Gold. "It seems that most of the town is coming."

Belle leaned against the counter. "So, we just keep Beatrice out of the park. Maybe she won't even care."

"Oh, she'll care."

"She didn't want a big party."

"No, she wants one, she can't have one, so there we are so I suggest we revisit what we can do." Gold reached under the counter and put a stack of brochures on top.

Belle looked over. "A car? You want to get her a car?"

"She is turning sixteen. I believe that's the custom in this land."

"Only for spoiled rich kids. Especially when the person in question only has a learner's permit."

"Yes, I've spoken to the Storybrooke Department of Motor Vehicles and I believe something could be arranged."

Belle shook her head. "It's too much. What about that thing she wanted?"

"Yes, I've already ordered it and according to the 'support monkey' I spoke with, it should arrive tomorrow. That aside, I have not given her anything for fifteen birthdays. The car won't even approach the value of what I would have given her on those occasions." He held up the
brochures. "I'm leaning towards a Volkswagen. The Audi looked promising, but I didn't like the
tone of the salesman."

Belle put her hands over Gold's. "I know you want to give her everything, but this is not the right
time for this."

"It will give her some distance from me," said Gold.

Belle shook her head. "I don't understand."

"She could drive herself to and from school and about town. She wouldn't have to arrive with the
most hated and feared man in Storybrooke."

Belle leaned across the counter on her toes and kissed him. "You're a good papa. You don't need
to prove it with things."

Now

Belle drove along the road as Gold spoke on the phone.

"I was told that I could expect delivery today," Gold said sternly.

Belle rolled her eyes.

"I am aware of the additional charges because I read the agreement. Did you happen to read the
agreement?"

"Well, you ought to know no that one has ever broken an agreement with me," said Gold.

"Really, Rumple?," Belle whispered.

"No, it most definitely would not suit me to take delivery in Boston."

Belle stopped in front of the park. The seven dwarves appeared to be building a dance floor and
there appeared to be a sound system going up.

"They can't be serious."

Gold glanced up at Belle's comment. "The vehicle will be delivered this afternoon at the time I
requested or I will have no need of it or you. Is that understood, dearie?" He paused. "I thought
so."

Gold hung up.

"This is just out of control, isn't it?," asked Belle.

"Sorry, have you met Prince Charming?"

Then

It was market day in the coastal village. The town was bustling and at the shore the mermaids sold
seashells in exchange for trinkets. Merlin quite enjoyed this: blending. Seeing what people did,
pretending he was one of them. Though that was not why he had come today.

He was here on business.
Merlin made his way to them.

"What do you want?"

Merlin sat on a rock where the waves lapped against the shore.

"Oh, come now, Cousin Alope, I did you a favor, didn't I? Or aren't you enjoying life under the sea?"

"What is it?"

"I'm looking for a book. I heard Ursula might have seen it."

"A book?" she asked.

"The book."

Alope's face dropped. "Cousin..."

"I want it."

"What for? You know what that book does."

"You were always somewhat simple-minded. You need not concern yourself with what that book does, just that I want it."

Alope softened. "Ursula traded it."

"And to whom did she trade it?"

She smiled. "The three."

---

**Last Week**

"Has Rumplestiltskin come up with a plan yet?," Merlin suddenly asked.

"A plan for what?"

"Beatrice's birthday, of course."

"Oh, right," Belle smiled. "We're keeping it low key. Just the family and Aurora."

"Wise move."

Belle hesitated. "Would you like to come?"

"Would I like to come?"

"Yes," said Belle. "Unless you have plans or something."

"What? Like attending the Savior's carnival?"

"You aren't, are you?"

"What would I do that for?"
"So, you'll come?"

"I'll come. Be sure to warn the Dark One."

Belle looked up to see Mary Margaret and David entering the library.

"Hi," said Belle.

"Henry told us about Beatrice's birthday," said Mary Margaret. "I had no idea it was on the same day as Emma's."

"Right," said Belle. "We're keeping it small. I realize it is his mother, but we would love to have Henry over for just a bit."

"We're sort of having a pretty big party," said Mary Margaret.

"Oh?," asked Belle. There really was no need to share that Rumple practically knew the catering menu.

"Maybe Beatrice could do something a different night?"

"Well," said Belle, "I would have to talk to Rumple."

"They could share," said Mary Margaret. "How many people do you have coming?"

Belle shook her head. "I would have to get a final count..."

"How many could it be?," asked David.

Mary Margaret cast David a glare.

Belle cleared her throat. "It might not be the best idea."

"Why not?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Well, I don't know how many people you have coming, but I would hate to invite the comparison..." said Belle.

"What comparison?," asked David.

"The comparison that Beatrice would feel as if she were tacked on to Emma's party," said Belle.

"No..." Mary Margaret said, shaking her head.

"We just want to help," said David. "We know she doesn't have a lot of friends."

Mary Margaret shot him another look.

"Yes, I had noticed that," Belle said tartly. "Sorry, I'll have to talk this over with Rumple."

"Right," said Mary Margaret. "We didn't mean to offend you."

"No, just because your husband's pointed out that my daughter's a pariah..."

"We were trying to help," said Mary Margaret.

"Yes, I'll consider it..."
Belle looked across the street from the bakery at Game of Thorns.

"Well," said Gold, "the birthday girl has put in her lunch order. What are you staring at?"

"I think my father is supplying flowers for Emma's party."

"Look on the bright side, he's probably not your father."

Belle cast a glare at him. "He's still the man who raised me. The least he could do is not give flowers for someone else's party..."

"No, sweetheart, the least he could have done was not try to murder his unborn granddaughter," said Gold. "The least the Charmings could do is not have anything to do with him."

"He's the only florist in town," said Belle. She looked back at the abandoned dessert case. "What is taking so long?"

"An excellent question," said Gold. "Oh, Mr. Drury?"

Mr. Drury emerged. "Uh, yes, Mr. Gold?"

"Is there a problem?"

"Well, it's just that the cake isn't quite finished."

"I ordered two weeks ago," Belle protested.

"It's just we had a large order come in at the last second."

"Let me guess," said Belle. "For Emma's party."

"It'll be just one moment," said the baker, rushing away.

"This is getting ridiculous," said Belle.

"I should have a word with him," said Gold.

"No," said Belle.

"As you wish," he said with resignation.

Beatrice was enjoying her birthday. She was lounging around the house, dressed in yoga pants, one of her Doctor Who tees with her hair piled on top of her head, moving from room to room in
no hurry. She never got to look like a slug in Storybrooke, she always felt like people were watching her. It was nice just to not have anyone looking.

The doorbell rang and she went to get it.

"Emma," she said.

"Hey."

"Hey. If you want my dad, he's out."

"No, actually, I brought you something."

"Oh," said Beatrice, stepping aside. "Come on in."

Emma walked in. "Have you been crying?"

"What?" She sniffled. "Oh, I was just watching 'The Angels Take Manhattan' then you know Rory, then Amy and she says 'Goodbye, Raggedy Man."

"Why do you watch a show that makes you cry?"

"It's hard to explain."

"Well, anyway," said Emma, holding up a small paper bag, "Henry said you would like this."

"Thanks," said Beatrice, taking it. She opened the bag. "You got me River Song's journal!"

"Yeah, I still don't know who that is," said Emma.

"Thank you," said Beatrice.

"You're welcome. I have to get going. I've got all these weird calls coming in."

"Isn't it your birthday?," asked Beatrice.

"Yeah, it's not a big deal. I'm not even having a party."

"What kind of weird calls?"

"You know, jumping cow, guy fell off a wall. Why?"

"You're having a party."

"I just said-"

"It's your birthday and your guilt-ridden parents who sent you through a tree to Maine aren't at your side? You're having a party. Try to act surprised."

"No, I don't think so."

"Gotta go."

"You'll see I'm right," Beatrice called after her.

---

Then

The three fates looked up to see Merlin standing among their threads.
"What do you want?," asked Morta.

"Why does no one say hello to me anymore?"

"We're busy," said Nona as she continued at the wheel.

"I know, I know, life, death, etcetera," said Merlin. "I was just wondering if I might have that book."

"What book?," asked Decima as she measured threads with the rod.

"The Book of the Dark Princess."

Nona stopped spinning and exchanged glances with the other two.

"I traded for that book for a reason," said Morta.

"You don't know what type of monster it might reap," said Decima.

"Nor do you," said Merlin. One of the threads on the wall hung much longer than any of the others. "Who is this?"

"No one you know," said Decima.

"Just born."

"I know..." mused Merlin. "The child of a god? I didn't know anyone was expecting."

"Consult an oracle if you want details," said Morta. "We only spin, measure and cut."

"Such a strange thing you do," mused Merlin. "You spin the thread of life, you measure how much one gets and then you cut it. Don't you ever feel like you're murdering them the moment they're born?"

"Don't be absurd," said Morta. "It's fate. It's decided."

He held the long thread in his hand. "And yet this one gets to live so long." He looked up. "Aren't you tired?"

"Of what?"

"Of being gods," said Merlin. "Of deciding who lives and for how long. Suppose you just stopped?"

"We can't stop," said Decima. "This world would descend into chaos like the other-"

"Just suppose," said Merlin. "Suppose they got to decide for themselves. What sort of world would that be? See where I'm headed with this?"

"And what would this Dark Princess have to do with it?"

"Give me the book and we'll find out," said Merlin.

---

**Last Week**

Belle walked into the pawn shop, fuming.
"Back so soon?," asked Gold.

Belle stopped at the case as Gold put up his bookkeeping. "Mary Margaret just paid me a visit. She found out Beatrice's birthday is on the same day as Emma's."

"Judging by your mood, I would say she made a proposal."

"She suggested that we do something on another day or better yet, Beatrice could share with Emma."

"Beatrice could share?," Gold asked his voice dripping with contempt.

"I have never been this mad. What does she see in that man?"

"She means our daughter could have the leftovers from her daughter's party?"

"And what's worse is that she thinks she's being nice!"

"Careful, sweetheart, you're sounding a bit too much like Regina for my taste, though I am enjoying this side of you." He put the car brochures back on the counter.

"Rumple, it's still..."

"I'm proposing this: a day off from school to do with what she wishes, a small dinner with her family, the whatever it was and a brand new car. Now, what discerning sixteen year old can argue with that and won't that prove a big enough distraction from Miss Swan's party?"

Belle grudgingly picked up a brochure. "Do these things have safety information?"

"I've already underlined it."

"And they have license plate frames and things that say 'My other ride is a TARDIS.' She'll want that."

"I'll call the customer service monkey."

Now

Beatrice came downstairs.

"There she is," Belle said in an excited voice.

"You look lovely," said Gold.

Beatrice looked down at the purple dress. "Not really. I only got out of yoga pants because you people threatened me with pictures."

"Speaking of which," said Belle, hurrying back towards her phone on the table in the hall. She held it up. "Smile!"

Beatrice rolled her eyes.


Beatrice smiled and waited as Belle got several shots.

"We're still waiting on our guests," said Belle.

"Guests? We have guests?"

"Of course we have guests," said Belle. "Your brother and Merlin. Not to mention I am not sure what's happened to Aurora."

"Oh, you know her, probably saw a spinning wheel or a prince or something," said Beatrice. "Let's get going."

"We're going to give them a bit," said Belle.

"It's not the only thing we're waiting on," said Gold, checking his watch. "Excuse me one moment."

Belle turned back to Beatrice. "Do you want a drink or anything?"

"Okay."

"Okay," Belle smiled. Unable to resist, she gave Beatrice a kiss on the cheek. "You are becoming a beautiful young woman."

Belle walked off. The door opened and Merlin entered.

"There's the birthday girl," said Merlin.

Beatrice frowned.

"What's wrong?," asked Merlin.

Beatrice got a flash. "Nothing..."

"Are you certain?"

"Yeah."

"Very well. Where are the rest of our revelers?"

Beatrice shrugged. "I don't know."

"At any rate, happy birthday," said Merlin, handing her a gift wrapped in gold paper.

"Thank you," said Beatrice.

Belle came in the entryway. "Merlin."

"I got a present."

"I see that," said Belle.

"Should I wait?," she asked, motioning at the gift.

"No, go on," said Belle.

Beatrice opened it, revealing a book. It was a great, thick thing with red leather and her name in
gilded letters. Beatrice flipped through, puzzled. The first pages were written and then it just went blank.

"Okay, I don't get it," said Beatrice.

"Simply put, the book is the story of your life," said Merlin. "Unwritten for the most part, but it will write itself. Or rather you will write it."

"Okay, thanks for the weird magical book." She caught her mother staring at the book. "You okay?"

"I'm fine," said Belle. She looked up at Merlin. "Did you want a drink or something?"

Aurora entered, carrying cotton candy. "I am so sorry. I got distracted in the town square."

"You have cotton candy?," asked Beatrice. She took a piece off. "Is there a carnival or something? I could go for cotton candy."

"Well, it's Emma's party-"

Belle motioned for her to shut up and the princess acted too slowly.

"Emma has a party in the town square?," asked Beatrice. "And there's a cotton candy guy?"

"And something called funnel cakes," said Aurora.

"Seriously?"

Gold entered, hanging up his phone. "What's this?"

"Emma's having some giant party," said Beatrice.

"Is that so?," asked Gold.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "That was so unconvincing."

"I wouldn't concern yourself with it," said Gold.

"I wasn't going to," said Beatrice.

"It's just awkward you two having the same birthday," said Belle.

"Well, there's like seven billion people on the planet," said Beatrice. "I probably have the same birthday as a lot of people. Wait, I can do this, seven billion divided by three hundred and sixty-five, no wait, three hundred and sixty-six..."

"Well, good," said Belle. "We're just waiting on Neal."

"Oh, I saw him at Emma's party," said Aurora.

"He was where?," asked Gold.

"It's not a big deal," said Beatrice.

"Sweeheetheart, on this occasion, I'm going to have to disagree with you," said Gold.

"Mom!," said Beatrice upon noticing her mother was practically at the front door.
Belle stopped and turned. "I'll just be a minute."

"Whatever, can I just have dinner?"

Belle nodded. "Okay, we'll eat," said Belle.

---

Then


"Merlin."

He recoiled at the sound of her voice. He wanted to wretch. Merlin turned to see her.

"You've really gone all in for the whole fairy bit, haven't you, Viviane?"

She rolled her eyes as her wings fluttered. "Blue."

"Ah, the blue trollop. How are things? You know, in whatever you're calling it, in Pixie Hollow?"

"You made your choice."

"I could never be like you. Glitter wreaks havoc with my complexion."

"What do you want with the book?"

"What do you care?"

"That book is the story of a Dark Princess."

"That's where you're wrong, you short-sighted sparkling tart. This is many possible futures. It is as yet unwritten."

"And you want to write it?"

"I'm just going to do the set dressing."

"Merlin, I'm begging you to reconsider..."

"Really? Begging? Oh, well, then, by all means, let me stop."

"You have Camelot-"

"Camelot will fall as quickly as it rises. And why? A woman. I've figured a way around that."

"A Dark Princess," Blue said, her voice dripping with contempt.

"I've always wondered about that title, 'The Dark Princess.' What do you suppose it means?"

"Isn't it obvious?"

"I don't think it is, though." He locked eyes with her as she floated above. "And don't begin to think you can get your little glowing hands on this book."

Merlin disappeared before her eyes and found himself back at his cottage.
"Now, Book of the Dark Princess, where do you begin?"

He opened the book and waved his hand. A magnificent illustration of a tree appeared with many branches and a few names filled in at the top of the mother's side.

There was the most curious thing on the father's side. Just one name.

"Rumplestiltskin? How do you even say that? What sort of sadist calls their son Rumplestiltskin?"

He thought back to the long thread in the Fates' room.

"Now, how do you manage that?," Merlin asked the page.

_Beatrice_ made it through dinner. She tried unsuccessfully shove the attention off herself and they had finally ended up in the living room eating more cake as Beatrice tried out her sonic screwdriver remote.

"I don't understand," said Aurora. "Why is that skeleton walking?"

"The Vashta Nerada are making it move," said Beatrice.

"And what are they?"

"They're the creatures that live in the shadows."

"And what's happening with the red-headed woman?"

"Donna's trapped in the computer core," said Beatrice.

Aurora paused. "Okay, I need you to start over again."

"We have restarted four times," said Merlin. "Go with it."

"Mom hates this episode!," Beatrice called, teasing at Belle in the kitchen.

"I'm not watching it!," Belle called back.

"Why does she hate it?," asked Aurora.

"The Vashta Nerada are in the books," said Beatrice. She looked at Gold. "Are we done yet? You've been standing there like an hour!"

"We most certainly are not," said Gold as he stared out the window.

"Yeah," said Beatrice, taking another bite of cake. "If we're waiting on Neal to show, I don't think that's quite happening. Speaking of which, we're all agreed this Tamara thing isn't going to work out, right?"

"Most definitely," said Merlin.

"Without a doubt," said Aurora.

Her musing was interrupted by the sudden boom of fireworks.
"Okay, seriously?," asked Beatrice. "Did Emma's birthday become an actual national holiday or something?"

"That's nothing," said Merlin. "You should have seen the spectacles made in the Enchanted Forest over these things. Great balls, days of dances and fireworks on the hour..."

Aurora looked up. "I'm sorry. Are you mocking my ball?"

"Oh, was that your ball?," asked Merlin.

"It was wonderful. Everyone said so."

"You mean the people you invited?"

"I'm getting more cake," said Beatrice.

Beatrice walked back in the kitchen. Belle was wrapping up dinner.

"I am going to give Neal a piece of my mind," said Belle.

"I don't care," said Beatrice, lifting the glass dome off the cake dish.

Belle shook her head. "You can care, you know. You're allowed to care."

"I don't care."

"What is it you think would happen if you said how you really felt for once?"

"Why does it matter so much to you? If I was popular, would that make you happy?"

"It is not the popularity, Beatrice. It's that you don't think you're worth a big party. You don't understand just how extraordinary you are."

Beatrice shook her head. "I'm not-"

"Beatrice!," Gold called.

She looked at Belle. "What is that?"

Belle smiled. "You should go see."

Beatrice walked out front. There was a car. A cute, deep blue hatchback.

"What's that?," she asked.

Gold was signing some papers as a young woman stood nervously by it.

"What does it look like?"

"It looks like a car."

"Very observant. Of course, it would have been easier to observe in the daylight," said Gold, glaring at the woman.

"Once again, I am very sorry, Mr. Gold. I had trouble finding this place on my phone's GPS and then I got turned around by the carnival."
Gold handed the papers back. "Will that do?"

"Yes, Mr. Gold and thank you for your business..."

The woman handed him keys.

"Beatrice," said Gold, turning towards her.

She carefully descended the front steps. "Sorry, what is happening?"

Gold put the keys in her hand. "Happy birthday."

"You got me a car? Like a normal car? It's not to drive to Hogwarts in?"

At this point, Miss O'Malley looked extremely confused.

"Good night, Miss O'Malley," said Gold.

The woman nodded and quickly left.

"You got me a car." Beatrice shook her head.

"Do you like it?"

"Yeah, but, you shouldn't have gotten me a car..."

"Yes, we've seen you drive," muttered Merlin.

"Beatrice, this is not one one hundredth of what you deserve," said Gold.

Beatrice slowly smiled. "I have a car." She turned back to look at Belle. "I have a car."

"I see that," said Belle.

"You have a car," Gold repeated.

"I have a car." She suddenly turned to Gold and hugged him. "Thank you, Dad!"

Gold was taken aback by the sudden display of enthusiasm. "Well, that made it worth it."

"Hey, guys."

They looked up to see Neal coming.

He held his hand up. "I'm sorry. I lost track of time. I know you're pissed."

"Oh, you know?," asked Belle.

Neal pointed at the hatchback. "Is this Beatrice's?"

"Yes," said Beatrice. "So, what was so great about Emma's party?"

"Yeah, she's pissed."

"Really?," asked Beatrice.

"Yeah, she said she didn't want a party let alone a fair. It got pretty intense."
"Well," said Beatrice, "I'm going for a drive and you can't come."

Belle smiled. She was actually standing up for herself.

"Sunshine is not always wrong. A well-timed gift can do wonders," Merlin whispered to Belle.

"Yes," Belle said, thinking back to many birthdays and many books that came at the moment she needed them. "I think you're right.."

"I can't come?," asked Neal.

"No, you missed dinner. You're lucky you're getting cake," said Beatrice.

"I sort of filled up on cotton candy," said Neal.

"Oh, well, too bad," said Beatrice. She jingled the keys. "Who wants to come with me?"

Gold grimaced. "Legally, I think I have to..." He looked at Beatrice. "Around the block, that's all. It's dark."

"Aurora?"

"I distrust these carriages..."

"Is that your excuse?," asked Merlin.

"Yes!," Aurora hissed back.

"Too bad. Mom, come on," said Beatrice.

"Okay," said Belle, following them.

They got in and were soon off on all the adventure the drive around the neighborhood could offer.

"Now, Beatrice," said Gold, "it's a newer car and lighter, you might find that you-"

She slammed her foot on the brake, lurching them forward.

"That you don't need to push as hard on the brake," finished Gold.

"Right," said Beatrice. "I get that."

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I don't usually do this, but to clue in non-Whovians and spoiler alert, I guess, the episode they're watching is called Forest of the Dead, the episode after Silence in the Library. It concerns flesh-eating aliens that have sort of attacked a giant library planet and thus I figured would be Belle's least favorite episode of Doctor Who ever
Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

Remember, I wrote this sometime during 3B: Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they just keep adding characters when we have more pressing issues like, "Hey! What happened to Rumple?!" Does that bug anyone else? It's not a dealbreaker or anything, I'm just pointing it out. Also, using Hart Archer today who you may know from the DVD extras. Anyway, thanks for the reads and the reviews and sorry I have not gotten back to anyone, but I'm doing this half marathon a week from Sunday and I have to train. On a related note, this half is at Disney and I am not sure if I will be able to get another chapter out before I leave. We'll see, but expect a half marathon related delay of some sort. Thanks again, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

Now

"Hello."

Beatrice looked up. It was a boy, he was in the year ahead of her. Artie. He was on the debate team and the basketball team, though she still wondered how Storybrooke had a team for everything when the only other school they could play was the convent school since no one could leave town. Then again, logic and high schoolers were never easy bedfellows.

"Artie, right?"

"That's right," he said. "Or you may know me by my other name: Arthur, King of the Britons."

This was really too good to pass up.

"King of the who?"

He looked irritated. "King of the Britons."

"King of the who?"

"King of the Britons!," he said in exasperation.

"Well, I didn't vote for you," said Beatrice.

"What?," he exclaimed.

"Not a Monty Python fan?"

"You're Merlin's new protegé."

She shrugged. "I guess. Maybe."
"You should know something. I am the once and future king."

Beatrice frowned. "Of the Britons? I think they have that covered. Charles, Wills, Harry. I mean, I think they might get down to David Tennant and Benedict Cumberbatch before they go looking for some teenager in a Coldplay t-shirt in Maine." She paused. "No. Wait, I'm sorry. David Tennant's Scottish, but there are other Doctors-

"What are you talking about?," Artie exclaimed.

"Story of my life. Except on tumblr."

"Do you know why I'm a teenager? Merlin did this to me after Camelot fell."

Beatrice narrowed her eyes. "Are you trying to scare me?"

"Just warning you."

"My dad is the Dark One."

"Yes, I caught that. Have you met my sister?"

A senior girl with heavy makeup appeared next to Arthur.

"Oh, right, Morgan," said Beatrice. "Yeah, still betting on my dad. Look, guys, I don't get this thing people do here where we stare each other down and make thinly veiled threats, I'm not that into it and anyway, I don't think that King of the Britons thing is happening for you. If you wanted to be king, try to catch up on some of the culture." Beatrice shut her locker and walked away.

"This isn't over!," Artie shouted.

"Go to my dad for the thinly veiled threats! He's really good at that!"

Beatrice left.

"I don't understand anything she says," remarked Artie.

"Don't worry, brother," said Morgan. "I have a plan."

"Which is?"

"It involves a trip to the archer."

"Hi, Beatrice."

Beatrice stopped and turned. It was rare that she spoke to anyone, even rarer that anyone said hi to her, especially when she was on her way to her father's shop.

"Uh, Duncan, hi."

"Pretty crazy exam today, huh?"

"Physics? Yeah, I guess. Did you need help with it?"

"No, I mean, no, thanks..."

"Okay, well, see you around," said Beatrice, turning back towards the shop.
"Do you have a date for the fall formal?"

Beatrice stopped and turned again.

"What? Me?"

"Because I was thinking maybe if you didn't, you could go with me."

"Is this a joke?"

"What? No-"

"Because I just got around to reading the book of Carrie and if you guys dump pig blood on me, I literally do not know what will happen. For real. I don't know."

"What? It's not a joke."

Beatrice pointed at the shop sign. "You know Mr. Gold is my dad, right? Also known as Rumplestiltskin, also known as the Dark One, the... no, that's everything, but really, he does this thing with a fireball and it's not good. It's good if you're fighting zombies, but I can't really imagine another instance where it would be good. Camping, maybe."

"So, you don't want to go?"

"I don't know..."

Belle peered out the shop window, hiding behind a grandfather clock in the window display, completely watching what was happening.

"Belle!," Gold called from the backroom. "Maybe you should call her!"

"I'm sure she's fine, Rumple," said Belle as she watched Beatrice talk.

"This is unlike her. She said she would be here."

"Well, you know, Rumple, she might have found something that interested her..." Belle said, turning her attention back outside.

"I just want to be clear," said Beatrice. "You are asking to go on a date with me?"

"Yes."

"I could be crazy. My father may turn you into a flower."

"Well, I'd like to avoid that..." said Duncan.

Beatrice's phone buzzed. "Sorry," she said to Duncan. She picked it up and saw a text from her mother.

She darted her eyes back at the shop window and Belle hid from view.

Beatrice rolled her eyes. She looked back to Duncan.

"Okay, here's the deal," said Beatrice, "I will go, but it's strictly on a friendship at best level."

"Okay..."
"We will go to the dance and maybe coffee or something. You will try nothing because I am not going to be responsible for your death, maiming or possible transformation..."

"What's this?" Gold asked.

Belle nearly jumped. "Where did you come from?"

Gold pointed at Beatrice and Duncan outside. He would not be distracted. "What's this?" he repeated.

"I guess he and Beatrice are just talking."

"And how long have they been talking?"

"Do you know him?"

"I know his father was a farmer and he delivers papers. I know he should probably stop talking to my daughter-"

"Oh, Rumple..." Belle said with exasperation.

The bell rang as Beatrice came through the door.

"Okay, how long were you both watching?"

"How long should we have been watching?" asked Gold.

Beatrice pointed at Belle. "Blame her. I have a date. What do I have a date for?"

"A date?" asked Gold.

"Where are you going?" Belle asked, her voice tinged with excitement.

"The fall formal. I'm going to a dance. Are you happy?"

Gold looked at Belle. "You are happy," he said, his voice dripping with contempt. "What are you happy for?"

"I think it might be good for her to get out and do things that other girls her age do," said Belle. She looked at Gold. "And so do you."

"No, no, I don't," he said.

Belle looked back at Beatrice. "You will need a dress. When is this dance?"

"Friday."

"Friday!," Belle exclaimed. "We should go look now."

"No, you really shouldn't," said Gold.

"It's already Wednesday, Rumple," said Belle. She looked at Beatrice. "Come on."

She was already ushering Beatrice out when Gold called after them. "I never gave my permission!"
"Okay!," said Belle.

**Then**

"Rumple..."

Rumplestiltskin looked past the spinning wheel to see that Belle had entered the room. She came and stood beside him.

"What are you doing up?," she asked softly.

"Nothing," he answered. "Go back to bed."

"I don't like the idea of you alone here in the dark," said Belle. He scoffed. "I'm fine."

"I know, but I still don't like it," Belle protested.

Rumplestiltskin smiled slightly. "Oh, Belle, I've endured more loneliness than this."

"I'll get a book," said Belle.

"My darling Belle, there's really no need."

"Do you want me to be in bed alone?"

"You were asleep," he argued.

"Come back to bed," Belle insisted. "I'll make it worth your time."

She smiled at him, he involuntarily smiled back.

Then there was a knock at the door.

"Who is that?," Belle asked.

"Go back to bed, Belle," said Rumplestiltskin.

---

**Now**

Gold tried to busy himself at the shop on the day of the dance. The dance. Belle wouldn't talk about anything else, fussing over every detail, hearing none of his well-reasoned arguments. So he went to the shop and cleaned and restored and did the books and thought of new ways he could destroy Duncan if he laid a finger on Beatrice. He was still trying to work out how to keep it from Belle and was leaning towards cursing the boy so it was as if he never existed, which was an option.

A distraction arrived in the form of the doorbell ringing. He looked up at Emma as she strode in.

"Okay, Gold, do you have it?"

Gold frowned at Emma. "Is it all that much trouble to ask for a greeting?"

Emma rolled her eyes. "Hi, Gold. Do you have it?"
"Well, I can hardly say if I do, if I don't have any idea what 'it' refers to, can I?" asked Gold.

"Hart Archer came to me. The guy from Good Morning Storybrooke?"

"I know him better than you, dearie."

"His house got broken into. He's missing some arrows."

"So naturally you thought of me."

Emma nodded.

"What would I need Cupid's arrows for?"

"What would you need any of the stuff you have for?" asked Emma.

"If those arrows were good for anything, I would have them. Lust I can concoct on my own."

Emma frowned. "Can't they make you fall in love?"

"There's a difference between thinking you're in love and being in love. Take my son for instance. He thinks he's in love with Tamara."

"Could we not,?" asked Emma.

"You came here, dearie. Now-"

"I hear Beatrice has a date," Emma shot back.

"How do you know that?"

"Belle told Mary Margaret."

"And now the entire town knows my daughter's personal business."

Emma snorted. "Please. The entire town already knows everything about Beatrice. They don't watch anyone closer, even when she's not driving." Emma waited as Gold went back to his books. "So, do you like the kid?"

"No."

"I always thought he was sweet, maybe a little dopey-"

"There's problem number one..."

"What? Okay, he's not a genius..."

"And Beatrice is a brilliant girl. Anyone less intelligent will bore her."

"It's just a dance, Gold."

"Exactly. It's pointless."

"Wow, you're fun," said Emma.

---

Then
"Rumple!," Belle hissed following him to the entry way of the Dark Castle.

"I told you to go back upstairs," said Rumplestiltskin as she quickened her pace to follow him.

"It's the middle of the night," said Belle. "Who would dare come up here in the middle of the night?"

"Exactly what I intend to find out, sweetheart," he answered. He turned back to her and cupped her face with his hand. "Now, please go upstairs."

Belle nodded and went up the staircase. Rumplestiltskin turned towards the doors and waved his hand to open them.

A man stumbled through. Nice clothes, velvet, not the sort of unannounced guest he was used to. Most of the peasants who were desperate enough to venture to the Dark Castle in the dead of night barely had the clothes on their backs.

"Dark One," he said, bowing his head.

"Yes, yes, dearie, what can I do for you?"

"I am Harold. My daughter, Enid, she's only eight and she's ill..." he stammered. "No medicine can help her, the clerics' prayers to the gods have failed and she's dying..."

Thank the gods Belle hadn't heard this, she would have already-

"Rumple."

Exasperated, Rumplestiltskin turned to see Belle back down the stairs.

"Yes, Belle?"

"Aren't you going to help him?"

"We were just getting to that part, where he tells me why I should help him-"

"I'll pay," said Belle.

Rumplestiltskin rolled his eyes. "You can't do this every time. I would already have your eternal servitude a dozen times over if I wanted it."

"I had no idea I was worth so little," said Belle.

"Don't try to get clever with me-"

"I don't mind paying, my lady," said Harold. "Enid is all I have. She's worth everything to me."

Rumplestiltskin turned to the man. "Then you have a payment in mind, dearie?"

"Yes, see, I keep the clerics' library," he said. "I lock away their forbidden books of dark magic. I would gladly let you take whatever you need in exchange for my daughter's help."

"Well," said Rumplestiltskin, "you are unusual, aren't you? I almost forget what it's like to deal with intelligent people, it happens so rarely."

He caught Belle's glare.
"Present company excepted, of course," he added.

He paused as the man stared back at him.

"The deal is struck."

---

*Now*

Gold arrived home to a strange sight.

Belle was cooking.

"What are you doing?," he asked.

"I thought I would get dinner done early," said Belle. "That way Beatrice can eat before she leaves."

Gold rolled his eyes.

"I saw that," Belle warned as she stirred the tomato sauce. "She's nervous, you know. This whole thing terrifies her."

Gold remained silent.

"I wish you could at least pretend to be supportive," said Belle.

"Am I not?"

Belle ignored him. "No one has ever asked her to anything like this. You know what it's like for her. Maybe things are finally changing for her."

"Mom!," Beatrice shouted.

"Coming!," Belle called back, turning off the heat on the stove.

---

The skirt was ripped.

Beatrice was starting to panic.

It was a sign. She wasn't supposed to go, this was a stupid idea, she didn't belong at a dance anyway. Belle had been so pleased with the choice: a purple bodice with a sweetheart neckline and a beaded purple skirt. It was pain enough selecting it with everyone in the store staring.

"Rumple!," Belle called.

"What? He's not going to help! This was a stupid idea, anyway, why did you make me do this?!," Beatrice shrieked.

"What seems to be the matter?," asked Gold.

Belle held up the piece of skirt with the ripped hem. "I don't know what happened."

Gold came over and examined it. "I can fix it."

"I don't see a magic wand," Beatrice muttered.
"Don't be silly," said Gold.

Beatrice paused. "Wait, you sew? You sew things?"

"Of course he does," said Belle. "Your papa is a man of many talents."

"Belle, could you get my sewing kit?"

"You have a sewing kit?" asked Beatrice.

Belle quickly returned with the item. Gold took out a pincushion.

"Ow!," said Beatrice as a pin stabbed her.

"Sorry," said Gold.

"What are you doing?"

"This dress doesn't fit you," said Gold.

"I put it on in the store, it went on," said Beatrice.

"The bodice is too loose and the skirt you just ripped is slightly too long for your height." He looked up at Belle. "Which your mother knew I wouldn't be able to stand."

Belle feigned an innocent expression.

"You bought me an ugly dress?" Beatrice asked in disbelief.

"It is not ugly," said Belle. "I just knew your papa could make it better."

"Because you are too pretty a girl to wear a dress that doesn't fit you," said Gold, putting in the last pin. "Alright, your mother will help you out of it and I can finish it."

"Duncan said he would be here in like two hours," said Beatrice.

"He can wait," said Gold.

"We can do your hair," said Belle.

"Great, we'll do whatever magical princess thing you do with your hair," said Beatrice.

Belle frowned. "What magical princess thing?"

---

Then

The library was empty of the clerics. No one dared come down to the vault where the books of Dark Magic were locked away.

"I think you wanted to help him," Belle whispered.

Rumplestiltskin looked up from the bookshelf. There was no stopping Belle from accompanying him on this trip as it contained two things she had great affection for: a selfless man willing to sacrifice all and a library. She had forced him into healing the child before they even went and now she stood at his side.
"Wouldn't you like to look at some of the other sections?," asked Rumplestiltskin. "I'm fairly certain we can take whatever we like."

"That's just it, though," said Belle. "This vault isn't protected by any magic. You could have come in whenever you liked if you wanted something. You felt sorry for him."

"He was desperate," said Rumplestiltskin. "It's good for business."

"I know you. You sympathize with anyone wanting to protect their child."

"Belle..."

"That's why you missed Robin Hood."

He looked back at her.

"Why do you insist on goading the beast?"

She leaned closer. "Because you're not a beast," she whispered.

"Harold!," he called for the librarian.

The man returned. "Yes, Dark One?"

"There's something missing here," he said.

"What? No-"

"Don't toy with me, dearie."

"Harold wouldn't do that," said Belle.

Rumplestiltskin rolled his eyes. "There's a volume here. It's missing."

"Oh, you mean 'The Book of the Dark Princess.'"

"The what?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"It exists only in legend," said Harold.

Belle frowned. "You have a spot on the shelf for a book that only exists in legend?"

"The monks believe it exists, that it came from the very first of the gods," said Harold. "I've gathered everything about it, what's been said, whispered, written."

"And what do they say of this Dark Princess?," Rumplestiltskin asked skeptically.

"There are many tales," said Harold. "She is thought to be powerful in all things, some say she is the end of the world."

"Do you believe that?," asked Belle.

"I believe in reason, my lady," said Harold.

Rumplestiltskin snorted as he looked at the monks' library. "Odd profession you've chosen then."

"There is one fact of the Dark Princess that is known for certain which makes me doubt all this,"
said Harold.

"Which is?" asked Belle.

"That she has not yet been born," said Harold.

"How do you have a book about someone who hasn't been born?" asked Belle.

"Precisely, my lady," said Harold.

"I think we're about done here," said Rumplestiltskin waving his hand. Various books vanished from the shelves. "We'll be off."

Belle looked at Harold. "Won't you get in trouble for the missing books?"

"Come along, Belle," Rumplestiltskin grumbled, taking her by the arm as he strode out.

"I just want to see that he's alright," said Belle as they walked towards the carriage.

"You can write him," Rumplestiltskin muttered as he helped Belle inside.

Now

Gold opened the door. There stood Duncan, the farm hand turned paper boy turned the fool that had dared ask his daughter to a dance.

"Uh, hi," Duncan stammered. "I'm here to pick up Beatrice."

Gold stood aside and the young man didn't move.

"She's in here and she's not going anywhere if you don't come in here, so make up your mind, dearie."

Duncan timidly came inside and Gold let the door slam behind him, making him jump just an inch.

"So, Duncan, have you had many girlfriends?"

"Uh, a couple."

Gold frowned. "Is my daughter merely another one of your conquests then?"

"Uh, no."

"Can you answer a question without saying 'uh'? You see, that suggests that you're thinking of the answer."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Gold. I- I guess I'm just nervous."

"As well you should be," said Gold. "She's to be back at eleven in exactly the same condition as she is leaving this house. If I find that she is not, well... that wouldn't be good for you. Do you understand?"

"Rumple! We're coming down!" Belle shouted before Duncan could answer.

"And she won't be able to help you," Gold added in an even lower voice.
Belle came down, quickly followed by Beatrice.

Gold really wished he hadn't altered that dress. He was struck not for the first time with how like Belle his daughter looked, though it did finally occur to him for the first time that Beatrice was just two years younger than Belle had been when he met her.

He didn't think any good could possibly come of that.

"Do you have anything planned beside the dance?" Belle asked.

"They're back at eleven," Gold answered.

"Yes, Mr. Gold," said Duncan.

"We should be going," said Beatrice.

"Let me get a picture," Belle pleaded.

"Definitely going. Come on, Duncan."

They were gone and Gold was left standing there.

"He seems nice," Belle remarked.

"What the hell just happened?," asked Gold.

Belle smiled and wrapped her arms around him. "Don't worry, Rumple. She's coming back."

---

The hush.

Beatrice was used to it.

"What happened?," asked Duncan.

"I walked in," said Beatrice. He looked at her inquisitively. "That's what happens when I walk in places."

The room was staring. Curious at who had actually asked Beatrice out, curious still that he was not an insect.

She caught the amused glances of Artie and Morgan. They weren't the only ones staring, but there was something different about their stares.

"Want to dance?," Duncan squeaked out.

"Not really," said Beatrice, reluctantly holding her hand out.

---

Gold looked out the window.

"Rumple," Belle sighed, "it's nine. You said eleven. You can't stare out the window for two more hours."

"I wouldn't have too if you hadn't encouraged her to accept this young man's proposal."

Belle laughed. "They're just going to a high school dance, not getting married."
"You let her go out with a farm hand."

"He asked!"

"Well, in the future, let's see if we can be more discerning than that."

"I thought it was discerning. He had the courage to ask," said Belle.

"Gall is more like it."

"Instead of staring out the window, can you think of anything else we could do for two hours?"

Gold looked to Belle. "How can you think of that at a time like this?"

She smiled. "Come upstairs and I will show you."

Gold was sorely tempted, but all thoughts were interrupted by a ring of the doorbell.

He opened it to find Emma and Mr. Archer.

"What is it this time, Sheriff?"

"Where's Beatrice?"


Emma looked to Hart and back. "Someone stole one of Cupid's arrows..."

"I don't have it," said Gold. "I thought we cleared that up."

"You don't think Beatrice..."

"No," said Emma. "Where is she?"

"The high school formal," said Belle. She watched as Gold grabbed his coat and keys, then quickly followed suit as they walked down the steps and to the car. "What is going on?"

"I just saw Duncan," Hart explained. "He's under the effects of the arrow."

"Yeah, it gets better. Hart says it's about to wear off," said Emma.

"Oh, gods," said Belle, hurrying to the car.

The dances at her prep school were held in the ballroom of some fancy hotel usually. Beatrice had never been to those and was now thinking they had to be a little better than Storybrooke High’s gym decorated in fake autumn leaves and glitter-covered banners. Why was it always the glitter?

The others had been surprised to see her, but had not said anything. Beatrice was still surprised to be here.

And dancing. Why was she dancing?

"So," said Beatrice, "do you watch anything on TV?"

"Hockey," said Duncan.
"Oh," said Beatrice. "What about Doctor Who?"

Duncan paused. "Is that the show about the phone booth?"

This probably wasn't going to work.

Beatrice looked up to see Gold coming in.

"Dad-"

Before she could finish a question, Gold had pulled her aside and taken her hand.

"You're leaving. Now," said Gold.

"But you said-"

"Where's your coat?," asked Gold.

"Mr. Gold-" Duncan began to object.

"You. Shut up," Gold instructed.

"Dad, you said-"

Gold leaned forward and whispered. "If you have ever trusted me about anything, you will leave now."

They now had the full attention of the entire dance, clearly waiting for someone to turn into a snail. Beatrice did manage to catch the amused glances of Artie and Morgan.

"Sorry, Duncan," said Beatrice.

"Don't apologize to him," Gold added distastefully. "Come along, sweetheart."

From the gym to the parking lot, Beatrice fumed, finally bursting as they hit cold air.

"What is your problem??," Beatrice shouted.

Gold let go of her arm. "You didn't answer your phone."

"It was in my coat!" They got outside and she looked up to see her mom, Emma and Hart.

"What's going on?," she asked.

"Someone stole from Mr. Archer," said Gold.

"What?" She looked over at him.

"Yes, sorry about that. I didn't realize it until I saw Duncan with you," said Hart.

"So the only way someone could like me is if they were under a spell from a magic arrow?," asked Beatrice. "Thanks!"

"No, no," Hart said, trying to back pedal. "You're very cute, especially since you ditched the glasses."

"Okay, maybe you want to watch what you say about the sixteen year old," warned Emma.
"Yes," Gold added.

"I should be going," said Hart.

"Yeah," said Gold.

Hart hurried off.

Emma looked at Beatrice. "You okay?"

"Yes, I'm enjoying this new level of humiliation in my life," said Beatrice. "Now I'm dressed up and humiliated. This is just great. Where's the car?"

"Beatrice?," Belle asked.

She walked in the room. Beatrice was in the process of disassembling her carefully crafted look for the dance.

"Did you have fun at least, while it lasted?," asked Belle.

Beatrice didn't answer.

"This wasn't my fault. The least you could do is not be angry with me-

Beatrice spun around. "Not your fault? How do you suppose that? You told me to say yes, you dressed me up and did my hair and sent me out there to look like an idiot!" She shook her head. "I need to stop listening to you."

Belle collected herself. "Alright. Duncan wasn't the one. I never thought he was. The point was for you to be out there, with people. You'll be alone forever if you don't let people in."

"I will be alone forever no matter what I do."

"No, of course you won't."

Beatrice sat on the bed. Belle carefully sat next to her and ran her fingers through her daughter's hair. "Somewhere out there is a boy who has no idea how dull his life is because you haven't walked into it yet."

"I don't think so."

"And why not?," Belle demanded.

Beatrice scoffed. "Fourteen generations of True Love. You don't think the luck's run out?"

"It's not luck," said Belle. "It's destiny."

---

Then

Rumplestiltskin couldn't believe it. Belle took the letter from the bird with a smile.

"You actually wrote him," he said as the bird delivering Harold's letter flew away.

"You said I could," Belle said plaintively, opening the envelope.
"That's not what I meant," said Rumplestiltskin, sitting back in his chair.

"Then you ought to have chosen your words more carefully," she said.

Belle sat on the arm of his chair. "Enid's doing well," said Belle.

"Oh, good," he said flatly.

"You're pleased and you know it," said Belle.

"Why did you write Harold?"

"I asked him more about that book," said Belle. "I think he thought it was you asking so he's sent me copies of everything."

"The Dark Princess? Why would I be interested?"

"You are the Dark One."

"And yet I know no Dark Princess. "Besides, if she hasn't been born by now, I wouldn't be worried."

"I'm not worried," said Belle. "I'm just curious."

"What for?"

"It's a book about someone who hasn't been born yet," said Belle. "How is anyone not curious? How can the monks be so concerned about someone who hasn't done anything yet?"

"Don't look to the monks for reason, darling Belle."

Belle moved from the armrest into his lap, curling against his chest.

"You're just going to sit there to read that?," he asked.

"Do you mind?," asked Belle.

He didn't answer.

"Other noble ladies don't have this annoying curiosity," said Rumplestiltskin. "They have hobbies. Gardening, weaving..."

"This is my hobby," Belle protested. "Besides, noble ladies don't have hobbies, they have children."

She saw him recoil.

"Was there something in there to help you find Bae?," she asked.

"We shall see," he answered quietly.
Chapter 31

Upon further reflection, I think I wrote that last note during 3A when Rumple was in Pandora's Box...

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they like to torture you and call it a happy ending. How was that a happy ending?! Nobody was happy except Emma and Henry and that's because they didn't remember the truth! Okay, that's done... Anyway, thank you for the reads and reviews. I was so busy with work-vacation-half marathon-work that I haven't gotten back to anyone and I am sorry. I really do appreciate them. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Then

Belle spun around in front of the mirror, the skirts of her new ball gown flying.

Reinette laughed at her daughter's exuberance. "Well, now, who was it that didn't want a new gown?"

Belle smiled at the deep blue fabric. "It is nice."

"You will look so lovely attending the season."

"The season?," Belle asked. "Papa said I couldn't."

"Belle, you are a young lady from a great family. You must be in society." Reinette sat on the bench and motioned for Belle to join her. "The balls will be abuzz with the talk of you and your beauty."

"Papa says I'm promised to Sir Gaston-"

"Belle, you are not condemned to that life. You will be meeting with the greatest and the best in the kingdoms. Remember what the seer said?"

Belle rolled her eyes. "You actually believe her?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"My tutors-"

Reinette nodded with contempt. Of course the tutors Maurice selected would say such things. "Your tutors don't know what they're talking about." She shook it off. "Never mind that. You are going to have a lovely summer."
"Belle," said Aurora, "your father is here."

"Good. We need someone to sort the periodicals," Belle said absent-mindedly, looking through the paperwork at her desk.

Aurora frowned. "Moe French?"

Belle froze. She couldn't believe she had made that mistake. Without any overt declaration, Merlin had eased his way into their family, joining them for dinners and continuing his work at the library. Rumple hated the man like a father-in-law and his nature with Beatrice was easy, like they had known each other years.

Belle sighed. "I'll be right there."

She made her way from the office back to the Circulation Desk. Moe had a bouquet. She crossed her arms.

"What do you want, Father?," she asked.

"I came to beg you to listen to reason, Belle," said Moe. "I truly don't want to see your soul condemned."

"You should leave before I call Rumplestiltskin."

Moe seethed. "That beast is part of the problem."

"And Beatrice is the other part?"

"Belle, you don't know what she is, what a monster she will become. You have been used to unleash this great darkness-"

"How dare you call my daughter names. She is innocent. You and the other knights are the ones full of darkness."

"I did what was necessary, Belle."

"Oh! Sir Maurice!"

Belle looked to see Merlin coming in with a tray of drinks.

"Are you yet living?," Merlin added.

"Merlin," Moe hissed. He looked at Belle. "Have you been listening to this man?"

"You know," said Merlin, "I was incredibly disappointed when Rumplestiltskin chose to permit you to live. I think he hoped you would die slowly."

"I'm speaking with my daughter."

Merlin eyed him as he put the drink tray down. "Has your head grown fatter?"

Moe turned to Belle. "You have no idea what ideas this man put in your mother's head. What he's done to manipulate her family. They thought he was their friend, all the time trying to create a Dark Princess."
"Oh, yeah, because you were her friend when you tied her down and forced poison down her throat."

Belle's mind raced as the argument continued. The Dark Princess. The unknown book. All those years ago.

"Belle! Are you going to listen to me?!," demanded Moe.

Merlin looked at her expectantly.

"I think you should leave, Father," said Belle. "Please don't return."

Moe did not look happy.

"Take the flowers," Belle instructed.

Moe grumbled as he took the bouquet and left.

Merlin looked at Belle. "What did he want?"

It was finally enough Belle decided.

"We need to talk."

Merlin nodded. "I believe we do."

---

**Then**

King Midas' castle was unlike anything Belle had ever seen. She had spent many of her summers at King Leopold and Queen Eva's summer palace up until Eva's death. The new queen had never really resumed entertaining in the same fashion and for the most part, society was grateful as whispers had always surrounded her and that mother of hers. Midas' palace was laden with gold and beautiful gold-trimmed mosaics.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?"

Belle looked up from her staring at the mosaic to see her grandparents, the Duke and Duchess of Padua.

"Grandfather!!," Belle cried, running over.

"Oh, my beautiful girl," said the Duke, all grins. The years may have aged him, dared to slow him down even, but never soured him. He embraced his granddaughter with his usual enthusiasm. "Oh, I missed you, Belle!"

"I missed you, too, Grandfather."

"And what am I exactly?," asked the Duchess with playful scorn.

"Grandmother," Belle smiled and hugged the woman. She looked to Reinette. "Mama didn't mention you'd be here."

"It was a surprise," said Reinette.

"A not unpleasant one, I hope?," asked the Duke.
"Of course not," said Belle.

"Your mother told us of her plan to launch you into society and we thought we might be of help," said Catherine.

"I don't understand," said Belle.

"To remind people that you are the granddaughter of the Duke of Padua, descended from royal blood," said Catherine.

"Grandmother, you know I don't care about such things," said Belle.

"Oh, Belle, come now," said the Duke, taking her by the arm. "Don't be such a snob. Some dukes are perfectly nice people."

The Duchess snorted.

"Oh, do you have some disagreement, my lady?" asked the Duke.

"Yes, quite a virulent one," she replied.

The Duke leaned towards Belle conspiratorially. "She doesn't know what she's talking about. Ignore her. I'll introduce you to King Midas. Whatever you do, don't shake hands."

They walked ahead as Reinette took her mother's arm to follow them at a leisurely pace.

"Who is it we're looking for exactly?" asked Catherine.

"The most powerful man in all the realms," said Reinette.

"All the realms?" asked Catherine. "Curious choice of words."

"It's what she said."

"Well, if he's here, I think Belle will shine."

"It's Princess Abigail's ball."

"Yes, she is lovely, but she only has eyes for one of her father's men. Fred or someone. Belle has the added benefit of novelty."

"I'm determined that she get settled," said Reinette.

"You can't rush these things, darling."

"I have to hasten it somehow. Maurice would hold her in a tower if he could until she marries Sir Gaston. I've done everything I can to stop an official engagement. Last time I had to declare the castle rife with elfin plague."

"Is that an actual disease?" asked Catherine.

Reinette shook her head. "I'm not sure."

Now

Belle put Aurora in charge of the circulation desk and took Merlin upstairs to the caretaker's
apartment. There wasn't really anything in it except for atrociously out of date encyclopedias and an old sofa, but it would do for this conversation.

"What do you want to know first?" Merlin asked.

Belle sat down on the sofa. "Who's the Dark Princess?"

"You know, that title is misleading..."

"Is it Beatrice?"

"Do you know what the villagers called you when you came down from the Dark Castle? Not at first, but later, when it became clear you were not a slave."

Belle shook her head. "I didn't know they had a particular name for me."

"The Dark Mistress."

The title surprised Belle. She had been called "Mistress of the Dark Castle" a couple of times, but that moniker sounded detached, like she was just a housekeeper.

"You're the Dark Mistress in the same way that Beatrice is the Dark Princess," Merlin explained. "It took me a long time to understand that title. I had to learn to understand Rumplestiltskin, the way he loves his children. She was always going to be his princess."

"The Dark One's Princess," said Belle.

"Yes."

"I used to think about it," said Belle. Merlin glanced at her curiously. "I didn't have much time to fantasize after I realized I was pregnant, but I had seen him with the infants from his deals and I knew the way he spoke about Bae. I knew he would worship the ground she walked on."

"Why didn't you tell him?" asked Merlin.

She shrugged. "I was trying to think of a way."

Merlin smiled and shook his head. "There's never a good way."

"Then I got word about my father and..." Belle was tearing up. She looked at Merlin. "I knew if I told him he would never let me see my father."

"Indeed not."

Belle tried to hold back tears. "It's my fault, don't you see? Beatrice lived without her father for fifteen years because I didn't tell him. I stole another child from Rumple, all their firsts, maybe the Curse would have never happened-"

"Oh, Belle, no," said Merlin. "There were two people that could have stopped the Dark Curse: Regina and Rumplestiltskin. That's all."

Belle shook her head. "What about you?"

"I came to Rumplestiltskin, not long after you departed," said Merlin. "I didn't realize that. I knew you were pregnant, but that the future of the Curse hadn't changed, so I knew you hadn't told him. I was going to make you."
"Make me?"

"Yes," said Merlin. "I was rather looking forward to it. I imagine he might have fainted or at least turned a very pale shade of green."

Belle tried to picture it and couldn't help but smile. Her standing before the all-powerful Rumplestiltskin and watching as he fell to the floor with the news.

"And what about the Curse?"

Merlin shook his head. "The future is a dangerous thing. It's hard not to beat yourself over what might have been. I was hoping to make a deal with him, to come up with a plan to find Baelfire. At the least, I wanted to secure your place inside the Curse, to make you and Beatrice safe."

Belle nodded. "We would have been together."

"That was my plan. That was always my plan, Belle."

"What happened?"

"The Blue Fairy," said Merlin. "She found me as soon as I found you and she stopped me."

"You looked for me?" asked Belle.

"Of course I looked for you. As soon as I awoke, I looked for you."

"Why?" asked Belle.

Merlin didn't answer.

"What are you really asking, Belle?"

Belle tried to summon the courage to ask the question she had wanted to, the question she already knew the answer to.

"Are you my father?"

"Yes."

Belle shook her head. "I don't understand. Why did Maurice raise me? You didn't even-"

"To keep you safe. To go with the plan, to give you what your mother and I couldn't have, your True Love." Merlin leaned in. "If I had just dropped you off at the Dark Castle on your eighteenth birthday and told Rumplestiltskin here was his True Love and go make a Dark Princess, do you think that would have worked?"

Belle scoffed. "No."

"And you never would have had the thing you love most." He paused. "Your library."

She shook her head. "You're not funny."

"Yes, I am."

"Okay," said Belle. "What is the Dark Princess for?"

"You surprise me, Belle. You seem to have forgotten something that I told you once on the day
you were born. Something you remembered your whole life."

Belle tilted her head at him, at a loss.

"No one decides Beatrice's fate but Beatrice."

Belle smiled.

"There's something else I should probably tell you."

"Do you think I could take more?"

"I dare say you can."

---

**Then**

Reinette entered her chamber at Midas' palace. The ball had been a success, both for the Princess and Belle. No one had particularly caught Belle's eye, but she had been noticed and she had enjoyed herself. Reinette sat at the dressing table and started removing her jewels.

"Hello, Reinette."

Reinette spun around. "Fairy Godmother."

The Gold Fairy smiled. "It's been a long time."

"Indeed it has." She motioned at the settee. "Please sit."

"I take it you're looking for Belle's True Love," said the Gold Fairy.

"Most desperately. Maurice has her set to marry Sir Gaston."

Goldie nodded in understanding. "He doesn't have her best interests at heart."

"Do you have a suggestion?," asked Reinette.

Goldie held up her wand. "What do you say we give it one last shot?"

"Can you spare the fairy dust?"

"I knew this day would come. I've been saving it up for a while," said Goldie.

"Is there any way to do it without her coming along?," asked Reinette. "Belle is so headstrong if we took her to him."

Goldie nodded. "Get one of her books."

---

**Now**

Belle entered the pawn shop.

"Hey," she said flatly, turning the shop sign to closed.

The action surprised Gold. "Hey."
She walked over.

"Sweetheart, what is it?," Gold asked, thinking there had to be something wrong.

"I just had that chat with Merlin."

Gold dreaded the result. "And?"

Belle nodded.

"No worse than Moe, I suppose." He looked up at Belle. "Is there something else?"

"Do you remember 'The Book of the Dark Princess'?"

Gold searched his memory. "Vaguely. What made you think of that?"

"Our daughter."

"Oh, Belle, don't be ridiculous."

"The book Merlin gave Beatrice for her birthday is the book. He had it all this time because... because she's special."

Gold shook his head. "No. She is not-"

Seeing he needed help, Belle walked over and hugged him. He squeezed back, despite his worry.

"It's just a book title, Rumple," said Belle. "You can't get a whole book from the title."

---

Then

Reinette met Goldie in King Midas' statue garden that she strongly suspected was made up of former family members. With a wave of her wand, the Gold Fairy enchanted the book and it flew, they followed.

They flew a long way, to a land that Reinette had never seen, finding themselves in the mountains and ending up at a great castle. They landed in the gardens.

"This is remarkable," said Reinette. "Such a great house. Very far removed from things."

Reinette looked back at Goldie. The fairy wasn't speaking much.

"What's the matter?"

"The matter is the owner of this castle," said Goldie.

"What of him?"

"We should leave."

"Is this indeed the home of Belle's True Love?"

Goldie didn't speak.

"What is so horrible?" Reinette demanded.
"Cat got your tongue, Goldie?"

Reinette spun around to see Merlin standing in the gardens next to them. His appearance was a shock, she hadn't seen him in years.

"Merlin," she gasped, unable to say anything more coherent.

"Did you know this all along?," demanded Goldie.

"Know what?," said Reinette. "Is someone going to tell me what's going on?"

"This is the Dark Castle," said Merlin.

"The Dark Castle?," asked Reinette. "Is that not a bit melodramatic?"

Merlin shrugged. "The owner has a flair for the dramatic."

"And the owner is Belle's True Love?"

"Yes, he is."

"And what sort of man owns a Dark Castle?," asked Reinette.

"You knew this all along," Goldie accused. "What sort of monster are you trying to make?"

"Choose your words carefully, Goldie," said Merlin. "Or risk choking on them."

"You would hand over your own daughter to the Dark One," said Goldie.

"The Dark One?," Reinette asked, remembering her meeting with him years ago and his curious refusal of her deal.

"First off, I'm not handing her over. When Belle goes to him, she goes willingly."

"He is capable of-

"Not when it comes to Belle," said Merlin. "He could never hurt her. In fact, she'll be safer here than she would most other places."

"Safe?," Goldie snorted.

"This is really a conversation for Reinette and I to have," said Merlin. "Why don't you fly off?"

"If Blue finds out-

"Then Blue will have me to deal with."

Goldie vanished into a gold dot and flew off. Reinette turned to Merlin.

"You did know."

"I've always known."

"This special girl, our granddaughter, she is to be sired by the Dark One?"

"Rumplestiltskin is more than you know."

"I should hope so."
"Shall I show you?"

Reinette scoffed. "Do you suppose a dinner party would sort us out?"

"That was not what I had in mind, though he is a rather good cook," said Merlin. He snapped his fingers. "We are now invisible."

"And what's the point in that?"

"To show you what he is when he doesn't think anyone's looking."

They went inside the great castle. Reinette observed the first great room, full of eclectic treasures.

"It's filthy," she remarked.

"All in good time," said Merlin. "This way."

They were half up the stairs when Reinette heard a baby cry.

"What is that?", she demanded.

"It's Rumplestiltskin. What do you suppose it is?"

Reinette rushed up to follow the sound. She found a simple nursery, no flourishes, but comfortable. There was a screaming, red-faced newborn.

"This is someone's child he's taken?," demanded Reinette.

"This is someone's child he's dealt for."

"Oh, I feel much better."

"Yes, yes, what?!," came a sing-song voice.

Rumplestiltskin entered the room and Merlin pulled Reinette away from the crib. She watched as Rumplestiltskin picked up the child.

"You're not wet," remarked Rumplestiltskin. "You just ate. What is it?"

The infant continued to cry.

"It's that mother of yours, isn't it?," he asked. "Are you crying over her? You're wasting your tears, little one. She just traded you for two cows. Only two! She sold you under market value."

The baby cried.

"Hush, hush, now," he cooed. "Tomorrow I'll take you to your new family. They took something from a very wicked queen to get you. They won't give you up as easily."

They watched as Rumplestiltskin rocked and soothed the infant, then left it to sleep.

"Have you seen enough?," Merlin asked.

Reinette nodded wordlessly.

Merlin returned Reinette to King Midas' statuary.
"So?," asked Merlin. "Are you still going to lock her in a tower?"

Reinette shook her head as she took a seat on a bench. "I don't know what to think." She looked back up at him. "He's her True Love?"

"Indeed. She'll be able to see the good in him."

"And the child?"

"You don't actually believe what the Gold Fairy said, do you?"

"I have to ask, don't I? I am her mother."

"No child born of True Love can be a monster." Merlin sat next to Reinette. "Belle will have everything she needs to make her happy. She will be able to have a life raising her child with her True Love. Also, there's a rather large library involved."

"And will she be corrupted?"

"She will be changed, as all love changes us," said Merlin. "Belle cannot be corrupted, in fact, quite the opposite. Her goodness will corrupt his darkness."

Reinette nodded. "Then I will be pleased for her."

She stood and walked away.

"Reinette," Merlin called.

She stopped and shrugged. "What more is there to say?"

"Anything."

"What difference would it make?"

"All the difference."

Reinette walked away, leaving Merlin alone.

---

**Now**

Belle walked into Beatrice's room. As usual, everything was going. Her textbooks were out on the bed. The TV was on. The iPhone was playing music and Beatrice was painting her toenails as she read.

Belle shook her head. "How can you think?"

Beatrice shrugged. Belle kicked her heels off as she moved the textbooks aside to join Beatrice on the bed.

"You're not sleeping here again, are you?"

"That was once," said Belle. "You had been in another realm and you are my only baby."

Beatrice cringed as Belle squeezed her affectionately. "God, Mom!"
"You are so wonderful," Belle said, giving her a kiss. "Turn these things off. We need to talk."

Beatrice released herself from Belle's grip and turned off the music, then muted the episode of Sherlock she had on. "Yes?," she asked, twisting the nail polish closed.

"I just had a talk with Merlin," said Belle, playing with Beatrice's hair.

"Oh, God, what do I have to do now?," she asked.

"Nothing," said Belle, grateful that she, Rumple and Merlin were the only ones appraised of that knowledge for now, such that it was. "Merlin told me something and I wanted to tell you."

"And that is?"

Belle took a moment. "Merlin is my father."

"Okay..." Beatrice took that in. "Are there any more relatives you guys want to clue me in on? We could get this all done at once. Should we just run downstairs and check with Dad?"

Belle smiled. "I think we're done with surprise relatives."

"So Moe's definitely out of Thanksgiving?"

Belle hugged Beatrice tightly. "He's always been out, whether he was my father or not, he tried to hurt you and you're... you are everything."

Belle caught sight of the book Merlin had given Beatrice sitting under the nail polish bottle.

"Beatrice!," she exclaimed, rescuing it from having something sparkly from the Katy Perry OPI collection drip on the cover.

"Sorry," she shrugged.

"You need to be more careful with this," said Belle, wiping the dripped polish off. "Extremely careful."

"I know, I know, books are..." She shook her head. "You need a catchphrase. For books. You've already got that 'No one decides my fate but me' thing. Work on that."

Belle was dumbstruck. Her beautiful girl, as she always was, not knowing her future was in her hands.

"Can I borrow this?," asked Belle.

"Sure," said Beatrice. "It's a bunch of blank pages and a really weird family tree."

"Thank you," said Belle, getting up. "I'll keep it safe."

"Okay..." said Beatrice, un-muting the Sherlock episode and getting her Pre-Calc book out.
Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

Previously in my rants...

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they rip out the hearts of their characters and their fans. Thank you so much for the reads and review and favorites and follows. I so appreciate them, though I haven't gotten back to anyone because I've been writing this chapter. So, please, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

*Now*

Belle watched Gold in frustration as they stood behind the counter in his empty shop.

Since borrowing the book from Beatrice, Gold had cast several wards over the object to keep it from ill-intentioned hands, then he had tried to figure out how to use it himself.

"I have tried every implement I can think of," said Gold as Belle leaned on the counter to stare at the book. "Every magical quill, every type of ink. The only thing left to try is blood."

Belle frowned at him.

"Which, obviously, I won't do."

Belle flipped through it again. "Maybe the pages are enchanted?"

"It's no enchantment I know of." He looked back up at Belle. "When did Merlin say the title changed from 'The Dark Princess' to Beatrice's name?"

"He said it must have been just after I realized I was pregnant with her. I had just finished with Much Ado About Nothing not long before and I liked the name."

Gold thought on it. "You got it on your birthday."

"Yes," she said with a smile.

Gold's mouth curled into a smile. "That was a good birthday."

Belle nodded in agreement. "Very good."

"I should ask Merlin," Gold said, returning his attention to the book.

"Which you can do later," said Belle, wrapping her arms around his neck and leaning up to kiss him. "We have date night."

He frowned. "I thought that was merely a clever ploy we were using to not have Beatrice around when we discussed the book."
"I thought it might be more convincing if we did the date part. I've made reservations at that nice restaurant at the waterfront, but that's not for an hour."

"I don't suppose you have any idea what you would like to do with that hour?"

"We could re-enact my birthday..." Belle said, teasing him with another kiss.

"Is that when you think Beatrice..."

Belle smiled. "Maybe or it might have been on that trip we took to the Island Kingdom?"

Gold's mouth curled into a smile once more. "That was a good trip."

They kissed again.

"Is the door locked?" asked Belle.

"With the spell I cast, no one is getting in here."

Beatrice used to look forward to Friday evenings in Manhattan. Anything was possible when she and her mother went out on the town in search of something new and exciting. A movie. Snagging a table at Serendipity. They had once found a restaurant that only served different types of lasagna.

Storybrooke had considerably less options.

Even less tonight.

Her mother had casually mentioned it was "date night" and that perhaps it would be a good night for Beatrice to have dinner with Merlin or Aurora, who had recently moved out into one of Gold's vacant properties. Merlin was shutting down the library and Beatrice was waiting at Granny's, getting dessert out of the way.

"Hey, Beatrice."

Beatrice looked up. It was Leroy/Grumpy coming in with the other six dwarves. For some reason, he had a soft spot for her. She suspected it was actually a soft spot for her mother, but she was just happy enough to not have someone drop the Dark One bomb at her every meeting.

"Hi, Leroy."

"Where's your mom?"

Beatrice took a breath. "Date night."

Leroy's face contorted in disgust as Beatrice's did much the same.

"Yeah, I know," she confirmed.

"You can eat with us if you want," said Leroy, motioning at where the dwarves had sat.

"Oh, thanks, but I'm supposed to eat with my grandfather."

Leroy frowned. "Moe?"

"No, Merlin. Has that not gotten around yet? I thought there was an email or something."
"No, not yet."

He paused and Beatrice turned behind her. Mother Superior had entered with some of the nuns. She stared icily at Beatrice.

Ruby was on it, walking up to the former fairy. "Come on. You know what Mary Margaret said."

Beatrice frowned and strained to listen. What had Snow White said?

"I'm not doing anything," Mother Superior said huffily. "I didn't even know she was here."

"Maybe we should go," one of the other nuns offered, glancing back at Leroy and Beatrice.

"Quiet, Astrid," Mother Superior said in a curt tone.

"If she's here, you can't be," Ruby said quietly. "Don't make me get Granny."

"Do you know when you might be done?" Mother Superior asked, suddenly turning towards Beatrice.

"Sorry?"

"When do you think you might be done?," she repeated. "So I can know when to come back."

Suddenly all eyes in the diner were on Beatrice which was not a sensation she enjoyed.

"Come on. You're better than this," Ruby implored.

Defeated, Mother Superior turned in a huff, running smack into Merlin.

"Oh, the Blue Trollop," he said. "How not nice to see you again."

"Merlin. Enjoy dinner with your monster."

"Big talk for someone who hasn't gotten her wand back."

"I will."

"And I will be here as ever. All roads go through me."

Mother Superior left with the nuns.

"Bye, Astrid," Leroy let slip.

Beatrice turned back to him as Merlin came to sit across from her in the booth.

"What did she say?," asked Merlin.

"I don't know. It was weird," said Beatrice. She motioned at the space formerly occupied by the nuns. "Was that Nova?"

Leroy put his gruff demeanour back on. "What? Who?"

"Astrid. She's Nova."

"Yeah, what about it?"
"Um, Nova? The woman you were in love with?"

Leroy shook his head. "Dwarves don't fall in love."

"Except when they do," she contradicted.

She just then noticed Merlin watching her as Leroy went back to his table.

"Why don't you ask her out to coffee or something?," asked Beatrice.

"She's a nun."

Beatrice nodded. "Yeah, because Regina made her a nun. She's the Evil Queen, not the Pope. What is she even actually queen of?"

"Look, she's a fairy. I'm a dwarf. That's how it is."

"Why does that mean you can't do what you want?"

Ruby came over. "Hey, give him a break, okay?," she asked softly.

"Why is it, even with the Curse broken, nobody can tell me why they do what they do?," she asked.

"Our land was different," said Ruby. "Now, what can I get started for you guys?"

---

**Then**

The Duke of the Frontlands kept meticulous records of every child who was born. Merlin had tried many lands before, but once he arrived at the Frontlands finding a child called Rumplestiltskin was a simple thing.

He walked out to the cottage. Less of a cottage, more of a shack with a thatched roof in bad need of repair. Merlin spotted several empty bottles in the grass surrounding the home and one look inside the hole in the wall passing as a window revealed that there was no furniture merely a pallet on the floor.

He walked around the house, looking for the occupants when he found a baby in a basket.

He knew him as soon as he saw him.

"Rumplestiltskin..." he said with a smile.

"Stop!"

Merlin turned to see a gaunt woman with even thinner red hair brandishing a shovel.

"Back away from him," she instructed.

Merlin motioned at the baby. "Are you this boy's mother?"

"Yes, I am," she said. She suddenly looked stricken. "You haven't bought him, have you?"

"Bought him?," Merlin asked in disbelief. "Is he on the market?"

"Not exactly," the woman muttered, putting down her shovel. "My husband, you see, he's got a
"Just a bit of gardening..." She paused. "Sorry, who the bloody hell are you?"

"My name is Merlin. And you are?"

"Gormlaith."

Merlin nodded. "So Rumplestiltskin wasn't that much of a leap."

"Steady on! What's that supposed to mean? Why are you showing up at my house, asking questions about my baby?," she demanded.

"Do you believe in True Love?"

"Princes kissing girls to wake them up from curses? That sort of nonsense?"

Merlin nodded. "So the romantic part is coming from the other side of the family. Understandable."

"What are you talking about?"

"Who's this?"

Merlin turned to see a man stumbling over.

"Malcolm," said Gormlaith nervously, "we have a visitor."

"Yes, hello, I'm Merlin," he said. "I was just telling your... I was just saying what a handsome boy you have here."

Malcolm shot a look. A look that suggested how little regard he had for his offspring. He walked back into the house and Merlin watched Gormlaith cringe as they heard the sound of the family's few possessions clattering and breaking.

"You should leave," said Gormlaith. "It's never good when he's in one of his moods."

"And what about you?"

"I can handle him."

"And the boy?"

Gormlaith picked up the baby's basket and headed back towards the shack.

"Look after him," Merlin instructed. "We'll talk later."

Gormlaith shot him a look and went inside.
Now

Beatrice was cautious as she entered the house, knocking on the door and stomping in. "I'm home! In the living room!," she added for good measure. No way was she going to share Emma's fate of walking in on her fairy tale parents...

Not happening.

Belle entered from the kitchen. She had on her robe and nightgown. "How was dinner?"

"Good."

It was then that Gold joined them. "And Mother Superior?"

Beatrice shrugged. "I don't know. She barely said anything to me."

"Yes, but what did she say to you?"

"Rumple, Ruby would have said if it was important," said Belle.

"Sorry, Ruby talked to you?"

"She texted," said Belle.

"Why?"

"Because I asked her to look out for you," said Belle.

"Great. Just so I know, is there anyone else keeping an eye out for me?"

"Beatrice," said Gold, "I don't know that you're appreciative of the contempt that Mother Superior has for you."

"Yes, she traded me for a tree and stole my baby tooth," said Beatrice. "I get it."

Gold looked pointedly at Belle.

"Just be careful around her," Belle implored.

"Beatrice, we brought you an extra dessert," said Gold. He looked at Belle. "Could I speak to you alone?"

"Yes," said Belle.

Beatrice tried not to think about what Gold wanted to speak to Belle about. He gave her a kiss and said good night, then Belle followed suit.

Then

Merlin had been not far from Longbourne when he heard there was a market day. His hosts sought to entertain him by saying that there was often very fine wool for sale there.

That's when the market had attracted his interest because he thought his spinner might be there. He had not looked in on him in a while since the spinsters who raised him died and wondered how
Rumplestiltskin might be getting on.

That's when he got a surprise and Merlin did not get surprises often.

He was looking at the various stalls when he did find Rumplestiltskin selling wool. That's when he noticed the lovely dark-haired young thing next to him.

A wife?

Rumplestiltskin had a wife?

Given the man's quiet nature and the considerable emotional wreckage that his childhood had done, Merlin had almost entirely expected Rumplestiltskin to remain a bachelor the three hundred or so years before his True Love came into his life.

"Can I help you, sir?," he asked.

Merlin frowned. "Do you not remember me?"

"I'm sorry. I don't."

"Merlin. I was a friend of your aunts."

"Rumple..." said the woman.

Rumplestiltskin glanced back and saw her disapproving look staring at a customer with coin in his hand. Rumplestiltskin excused himself and went back to the man.

"We were just talking. I'm Merlin. I knew his aunts."

"Milah," she said shortly.

"So, Milah, are you from Longbourne?"

"No. I'm from the same village as Rumplestiltskin."

"Ah."

"And would I know your father?"

"You might. He's the cheesemonger."

Cheesemonger's daughter. He recalled the man had many children that he put to work for him.

"It must be a very different life for you then," said Merlin.

"Of course. I am married."

"Such different work. Not as taxing."

"I do my share."

"Oh. Why don't you show me which wool you spun?"

"I'm afraid I'm still learning. My hands aren't as skilled as Rumplestiltskin's."

Merlin smiled. "Oh, darling, you're not fooling me."
"Excuse me?"

Merlin leaned in closer. "He is not your end game, is he? He was just the first road out for you."

"I don't like-"

"Don't waste both our time with denying it," he hissed. "I'm usually right about these things. Actually, I am definitely right about this thing, but you are not his end game, either."

Milah looked at him in a way that clearly betrayed she didn't believe that.

"Yet," Merlin said considering, "you may yet serve a purpose."

---

**Now**

The story of Dreamy and Nova had always been a favorite of Beatrice's, regardless of the Belle cameo. It had made her sad. In fourth grade, they had all been assigned to make their own fairy tale book. Beatrice had been surprised to hear that nobody knew the story of the dwarf who fell in love with the fairy, nor did they understand why it needed a sequel.

Then again, she had once failed a reading comprehension quiz in the second grade when it had revolved around the story of Snow White and Prince Charming. Beatrice had not bothered to read the story given in her primer and instead moved on to the test relying on the book August had given her. It had been open-ended with questions like "Who is the Evil Queen?" To which Beatrice naturally answered, "Regina, the daughter of Prince Henry and the Queen of Hearts, who was worse." Another question asked "Why did Snow White bite the apple?" Beatrice had answered that it was of course to save her True Love, the Big Bad Wolf, her grandmother and the Seven Dwarves. The last question on the quiz had been "What happens to the Evil Queen?" The answer to that had taken an additional page and had caused her teacher to send Beatrice to the school psychiatrist and bring Belle in for a parent-teacher conference to discuss why Beatrice was so fixated on the Evil Queen ripping her father's heart out. When they asked her, the answer "It was the thing she loved the most" had gotten her sent back to the school counselor for a session a week until the end of the year despite Belle's explanations.

With a sequel to the tale of Nova and Dreamy in mind, Beatrice made her way to the convent. There was the church, the house where the nuns lived, the school and then the community center.

"Hi," she said. "Sister Astrid?"

Astrid looked up in shock.

"We haven't met yet. I'm Beatrice French. Or Gold. It's definitely one of those."

"Yes, I know who you are," the woman said meekly.

"Well, Jamie told me that you are having a food drive for the Thanksgiving dinner," said Beatrice.

"We are," said Astrid in surprise. "Jamie told you?"

Jamie actually hadn't. She had been talking about it in English class, not acknowledging Beatrice's existence, intending to blow off the whole project.

"Anyway, here's the deal, my high school resume is looking a little thin lately since I moved here and there's now a big gap in my transcript from when I was stuck in the other realm. I could really use another community service project. I've done this before, in New York."
"Well," said Astrid, "our donations have been rather light. We still need most of the supplies for our Thanksgiving dinner for the homeless."

Astrid motion at the donation box which was at the moment four jars of beet borscht, a can of sardines and one can of pumpkin pie filling.

"Storybrooke has homeless?," asked Beatrice.

"They used to be trolls," said Astrid.

"Oh."

Astrid moved closer to Beatrice. "Do you really think you can get people to donate to you?"

Beatrice nodded. "Yeah. I've found the trick is all in who you ask first."

Regina opened her front door to find Beatrice.

"I'm confused," said Regina.

As she would be, but Beatrice had practiced this strategy before among the well to do mothers of her school. Start with the one who has the most to prove. In this case, it was Regina.

"I was going to say hi first," said Beatrice.

"Does your father know you're here?"

"Not so much. Anyway, I have an idea that I think can help the both of us and hopefully some other people. Are you aware of Storybrooke's homeless problem?"

"I created it."

"Yeah, I was planning on not mentioning that, anyway, Sister Astrid is in charge of the food drive for Thanksgiving dinner at the soup kitchen and I was thinking you could make a donation."

Regina narrowed her gaze at Beatrice. "Why?"

"See, I have several donation stations set up at my dad's shop, at the library, the grocery store and Granny's."

"And why would I care about feeding a bunch of ex-trolls?"

"Because if you came into Granny's while it was particularly crowded and made a sizeable donation, I think it would show Henry and the rest how committed you are to changing."

"But I'm only doing it to toy with them?," she asked.

Beatrice shrugged. "Not toy exactly. Does it really matter why someone donates to a food drive?"

"What's in it for you? You're Rumplestiltskin's daughter. There must be something."

"If you donate first and you donate a lot, when I go around and ask other people, I can tell them 'Well, Regina donated.'"

"And you use me to shame them?"
"And you have the moral high ground over everyone who doesn't donate."

Regina nodded, finally appreciating the thought process. "That is clever."

"Just nothing to do with apples. People are still kind of leery about that."

"Why are you really doing this?"

"Would you believe me if I told you it's all part of an elaborate plan to get a dwarf and a fairy together?"

"No."

"Never mind then."

Then

Rumplestiltskin sat alone in his magical carriage.

At least he thought he was alone.

"Is this really fun for you?," Merlin asked.

Rumplestiltskin looked to see the wizard sitting across from him.

"What precisely is it you see in Cora? I mean, for one thing, she's heartless. Literally heartless as in remember that time she ripped her heart out?"

"What do you want, Merlin?," he growled.

"I was just checking up on you," said Merlin. "Big events are on the horizon."

"I would take a closer look at your plans."

"Yes, yes, time of the Curse approaching. We all know. Well, actually, we all don't know. You and I know."

"And yet you haven't done anything about it."

"Back to my question, what is it you see in Cora? Is it the sneaking around her idiot husband? Oh, by the way, even though he is an idiot, you're probably not fooling him."

"What do you care?"

"I'm curious."

"We have things in common."

Merlin laughed.

"What?," Rumplestiltskin asked in offense.

"You two have nothing in common with the exception of some very strange personal habits. That woman ripped her own heart out for the opportunity of being fifth in line to be queen of a third tier -at best- kingdom."
"We were both looked down upon by the nobles."

"Some princess tripped her, they tried to draft your son into the Ogres War. Those are two very different things."

"I need her."

"No, you need her daughter. I can only guess at Cora as being a result of your very twisted issues with women."

"I'm tiring of this conversation."

"Did you ever think through running off with Cora? What would have happened if you had been the father of her first born?"

Rumplestiltskin was silent.

"You would have been the thing she loved the most and she would have had to rip out the heart of the thing she loved the most and that would have been your heart and well, it's no use going to a Land Without Magic you haven't got a heart when what's left of you gets there. It won't be easy to find your son then and what were you going to do? Be cruel to one child to find another? What would Baelfire say?"

Merlin rolled his eyes as Rumplestiltskin pretended to ignore him and glanced out the window of the magical carriage.

"Have you ever thought of having more children?," asked Merlin. "You know, other than that one time."

"No."

"Perhaps you should think on it."

"I can't replace my son," Rumplestiltskin seethed.

"Of course not, but perhaps things will be different. You may have a daughter. You may not have a woman who uses you to her own end."

Now

Saturday morning. Beatrice sat at Granny's with her mother, Mary Margaret and Henry. Belle and Mary Margaret were working out the details of Thanksgiving dinner, word of which was not supposed to reach Gold or David until about the time one of them started looking for the meal itself. Both women thought it would work better this way and with things starting to settle, conversation drifted towards Beatrice's project.

"I think it's so great that you're taking on this food drive," said Mary Margaret.

Beatrice shrugged. "It's not a big deal."

Belle shook her head. "She's too modest. She did things like this all the time in New York."

"Because people left me with it," said Beatrice. That was the truth. She was the unpopular girl who could be counted upon to finish a project while the popular girls texted and took the credit.
"She has gotten McDonald's Grocer to donate all the turkeys," said Belle. "Not to mention Mr. Drury is donating fresh bread and pies."

"It wasn't like it was hard," said Beatrice. "I just asked while Dad stood in the corner and glared."

To be honest, that had been the bulk of her strategy.

Mary Margaret smiled. "I don't remember Mr. McDonald donating anything, ever. I think it's about time you got out there and let people see who you really are."

"Mom!," said Henry.

They looked up to see Regina entering the diner carrying two heavy grocery bags. A hush fell over the diner, one that Beatrice realized was not dissimilar to when she arrived somewhere.

"Henry," said Regina, all smiles as the boy hugged her around the waist.

"What are you doing here?" asked Henry.

"I was just coming to get coffee and drop these off," said Regina, placing the grocery bags in the donation bin.

"You're donating?," Henry asked in surprise, a surprise shared by the rest of the diner.

"Of course I am," said Regina. "Why don't I buy you a hot chocolate and you tell me how things have been?"

"Okay," Henry said happily as he and Regina sat at the counter.

Mary Margaret turned back to Beatrice in astonishment. "How did you do that?"

"I just asked," said Beatrice.

"Wow. I guess she really is trying to change," said Mary Margaret.

"Hello, sunshine," said Merlin, entering the pawn shop.

"You're late," said Gold.

"Yes, well, we're both immortal, I think we'll cope with the loss."

Gold put the book on the counter and laid his hand on it. "What is this for?"

Merlin motioned at it. "I gave that to Beatrice. Why doesn't she have it?"

"Because she used it to paint her toenails."

Merlin shrugged. "Well, teenage girls, what are you going to do?"

"I want to know what this book is. What it does and what it is for."

"I've already said. The book is her future."

"It hardly has anything."

"Because the future is unwritten and no one can write Beatrice's fate but Beatrice and I hope you
have not been playing with it, sunshine."

Rumplestiltskin leaned forward. "Do you think I am going to allow my child to be hurt by this? I
don't care about your vision, my loyalty is with her."

Merlin leaned towards him. "Have you had a chance to think? What the blue tart did, actually,
everything the blue tart has ever done, it wasn't about you, it was about Beatrice."

"And what about Beatrice would scare her?"

"Obsolescence, of course."

Beatrice opened the hatch of her car. It was practically lowered from all the groceries she had
collected in it over the past few days. Her Regina strategy had worked well and all of a sudden,
people were hurrying to donate. The dwarves were following with the other donations, Mr.
Drury's donations would come in the morning before the meal was served. She started moving the
groceries onto the curb and after several times, looked up to see Mother Superior.

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm bringing the donations for the food drive," said Beatrice.

"We don't need your help."

Beatrice frowned and took out another bag. "I think you kind of do."

Mother Superior shook her head. "I won't allow it. Take these things away."

Beatrice sighed. "Look, I don't get all of this, but I know my dad's the Dark One and you frown
on that. You had to trade my mom for a tree for Emma, okay. Maybe that was the right thing. I
wasn't there. The tooth thing was weird... Do we need this whole bitchy thing, though? I can be
civil."

Mother Superior looked at her in what she supposed was amusement. "They haven't told you."

"They haven't told me what?"

"I never gave you your gift," said Mother Superior.

"My gift?"

"When you were born. When a child is born, all fairies bestow a blessing."

Beatrice frowned. "Yeah, I think I'm good."

"No, I insist," she said, taking out her wand. "I bless you with the gift of humility."

"Uh, okay..." Beatrice said frowning.

"Beatrice!" Belle shouted.

She looked back. She hadn't noticed her mother's car pulling up. Belle quickly parked and ran out
of the car, putting herself between Beatrice and Mother Superior.

"What are you doing here?" asked Beatrice.
Belle ignored her. She looked back at Mother Superior. "What did you do to her?!," she demanded.

"I gave her a gift," said Mother Superior, starting off.

Belle followed, grabbing the woman by her shoulder and spinning her around.

"What gift?!," Belle shouted. "If you cursed her-"

"I don't curse people. Perhaps Rumplestiltskin could tell you more about that."

Mother Superior walked away. Belle rushed back to Beatrice.

"What did she say?," said Belle. "What did she do? Was there fairy dust?"

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't know. I have to get this stuff inside."

Belle got out her cell phone to call Gold as Beatrice walked over to the groceries on the sidewalk, then froze.

"Beatrice?," Belle asked in concern.

"I don't know what to take in first..." she said, not sounding like herself.

"What?" Belle walked over. "Beatrice, tell me what's wrong."
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

Today's blast from the past Author's Note:

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they made a joke about something in this chapter and then never did it. Why not? Anyway, thank you for the reads and reviews. As usual, I need you to get back to you reviewers, so sorry, but I appreciate your reviews and reads and follows so much. Also, hi, lurkers! Anyway, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Though I do want you to let me know what you think and happy reading!

Now

Belle rushed into the shop, dragging Beatrice every step of the way.

"Mom, I-"

"Rumple!"

Gold was out of the back in no time. "What is it?"

"Mother Superior has done something," said Belle. "I don't know what."

Gold turned to Beatrice with concern. "What is it, sweetheart?"

"I don't know..."

"You don't know?"

"I'm not sure?"

"What do you mean you're not sure?," asked Gold.

"That. Whatever that is," said Belle. "She's been doing that."

Beatrice frowned in concern. "Doing what?"

Gold put his hands on either side of her face and his expression dropped. "Beatrice, what did she say?"

Merlin entered. "I came as soon as I could put that bloody Goldie Loxley in a state of suspended animation before she unshelved every book in the library trying to find one that was just bloody right. What's happened?"
"You did what?," asked Belle.

"She'll be fine," said Merlin. "Well, assuming she didn't have dinner plans. Now, what's happened?"

He walked over to Beatrice. It didn't take him any effort to decide something had happened.

"What's the winged tart done now?," he asked.

"I..."

"She’s changed something within you. Something in your essence."

Beatrice shook her head. "She just said she never gave me my gift."

"What gift?," asked Gold.

Merlin grimaced. "Don't you know your fairy rules, Rumplestiltskin? The gift that she ought to have gotten when she was born. You know, from her fairy godmother? But you know, that fairy met with a sudden end..."

"The Gold Fairy? What happened to her?," asked Belle.

"On to Beatrice," said Gold. "What gift did she give you, Beatrice?"

"It was the blessing of humility, I think..." Beatrice managed.

"Oh, I'm going to give her back wings just to pluck them from her..." muttered Merlin.

"What does that mean?," asked Belle. "Humility? Is that bad?"

"Humility is not a bad blessing in and of itself," said Merlin. "The trouble comes in choosing the appropriate blessing for the princess. For instance, giving you the gift of beauty would have been overly redundant so the Gold Fairy chose to give you the gift of love in your heart. Now, for Beatrice, someone who is plagued with self-doubt and low self-esteem it's a blessing that's designed to break her spirit."

Aghast, Belle pulled Beatrice closer to her.

Gold had a different reaction.

"I'm killing her."

"Rumple!," said Belle.

"I said I wouldn't, but that was before this. She's dead."

"And how are you proposing to kill her, sunshine?," asked Merlin.

"I'm going to find the last of my squid ink and stab her in the throat."

Merlin nodded. "That's actually not a bad plan."

"Rumple, that won't help..." said Belle.

"She's right. The curse only becomes stronger with her well-earned death."
"She will stop at nothing, Belle," said Gold. "Don't you understand that? She tried to kill her in your womb!"

"Yes, I remember, I was there!," Belle snapped back.

"She what?," asked Beatrice.

Merlin shot the couple a look and they suddenly remembered that when the Curse had first broken, they had agreed Beatrice did not need to know that Mother Superior had tried to murder her.

"I mean, she must have had a reason..." said Beatrice.

Merlin turned to her. "The reason is she is a vicious, jealous and vain trollop."

"Is that why she called me a monster?," asked Beatrice.

"Beatrice!," Belle exclaimed. "Not another thought like that!"

"Your mother's right," said Merlin. "Not another thought like that. In fact, don't think."

"Don't think?," asked Beatrice.

"Yes, I realize it's going to be difficult for you," said Merlin. "Take her home, do not let her think, every negative thought will make the Blue Fairy's magic that much more difficult to undo."

Belle looked from Beatrice back to Merlin. "Everything she does is thinking. Everything she's ever done is thinking."

"I don't know. Isn't there a Kardashians marathon on somewhere?"

A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest

"What happened to your frog, sister?"

Catherine tried to hide the twinge of regret she felt. Well, it was more than a twinge. Every day since she had sent Alec home she had thought of him, torturing herself by imagining a life she could never have.

Because her life was here.

In the ice.

"Don't call me 'sister', Ailie," Catherine warned. "We haven't been anything near that in a very long time."

"Why do you insist upon being so uncivilized?," asked Ailie.

"Because you insist upon being a brat who's more interested in a tiara than the blood of her people. Now, what do you want?"

"Why? Do you have a new book to read?"

"Books make better companions than my present company," said Catherine. "Now, state your business."
Ailee approached. "I have an agreement to put to you," she said, taking a parchment from beneath her heavy cape. "It regards my new partnership with Prince Xavier."

"Prince Xavier?," Catherine asked. "What could he possibly want with you?"

Catherine took the parchment and then something went very wrong.

She was frozen. She tried to use magic to free herself but it was as if she had been cut off from magic, suffocating without it.

Ailee smiled.

"What have you done?," Catherine demanded.

"I consulted with the Blue Fairy. Oh, I know she's not our fairy godmother, but she was surprisingly receptive to my request for aid. She said we couldn't let you continue or one day this whole realm would be ruled by a Dark Princess."

"What are you talking about?"

"Didn't Merlin tell you? You and the frog were meant to have a daughter, then she would have a daughter and then she would have a daughter, the Dark Princess." Ailee seemed to take pleasure in taunting her with the future that was impossible.

"And why would the Blue Fairy help you?"

"Because my first sad, sad duty as the sole ruler of our land will be to see to your execution."

"Ailee, without my magic the ice will melt and the ogres will come. If I die with no one to take my power, there will be no stopping them."

"We will fight them."

"Do you know how many will die? Don't you remember the Ogres War of the Frontlands? It was only the power of the Dark One that could stop it."

Ailee's soldiers joined them.

"Take her away and lock her in the dungeon," said Ailee.

Now

The nuns were awoken with a start as the door to the convent house blew down.

Merlin strode in as the frantic women gathered in the hall.

"Viviane!," called Merlin.

Mother Superior entered, cutting a path through her subordinate fairies.

"Go back to your rooms," she instructed.

"Oh, no, no, I think we ought to have everyone stay," said Merlin. "I'm certain everyone would love to hear you defend yourself after your latest act of cruelty."

"I gave a blessing."
"You gave the wrong blessing to the wrong bloody girl."

"I'm surprised at you, Merlin. I thought you would want your monster to have an air of humility about her."

Merlin shook his head with gritted teeth. "That girl has been struggling with who she is since she was born and that's your fault."

"My fault? I never created the Dark Curse."

Merlin looked at the fairies. "I will have you know that this blue tart right here, she created a ruse to draw Belle home to where she believed her father was dying. Once there, she informed Sir Maurice- the fat-headed bigoted oaf that he is- that his daughter was pregnant with the child of the Dark One and advised him to take action, then watched as Belle was tied down and poison poured down her throat and clerics tried to cleanse her."

The nuns had a mix of reactions, but the main one was horror.

"To stop a monster."

"Pray tell what prophecy says that she is a monster." Merlin motioned at the other fairies. "I believe we're all waiting."


"Nice try, but you've never read it."

"She's the daughter of the Dark One. Isn't that enough for you?"

"What do we know of children born of True Love?" Merlin asked turning to the nuns.

Mother Superior rolled her eyes. "This grows tiresome, Merlin."

"We know that they always have magic and we know that they can never be monsters, so please tell me how the product of fourteen generations of True Love can be a monster."

"The Dark One corrupts everything, even your line of True Love."

"Oh, is that why you tried to stop that line before the Dark One was in it? As when you sided with Ailie the Summer Princess? When you tried to imprison Amelia the Weather Witch? Or when you gave a young boy called Baelfire a magical bean to take his father to a Land Without Magic?"

"Leave."

"What's the difference? Rumplestiltskin ought to have this place burned down by dawn. I believe he's planning on using your femurs for kindling."

Mother Superior stepped up to him. "I have won. Game. Set. Match."

"All you have done is bully a teenage girl," said Merlin. "Do you remember what it was like to be that young? When the world was new and frightening and you had no idea what to do or where you belonged? Remember?"

She gave away nothing.

Merlin leaned in and whispered, "Remember, I am the only one who knows who you really are
and I will ruin you and take great pleasure in it. I will rip your wings off and give them to Rumplestiltskin as a Christmas present."

"You wouldn't dare."

"Oh, don't test me, he is very difficult to shop for."

Merlin walked out, leaving Mother Superior to face the nuns.

It had been months since he had heard her scream.

It had been his fault. On Beatrice's first night at home, he had stopped by the guest room just to look at her. She had been conked out in an antique bed that had never had a guest before and had fallen asleep with an ancient television he didn't remember having on.

So he had turned it off.

Maybe twenty minutes later, he and Belle had been talking when her scream broke through their reunion.

The room was different now. The TV was a large flat screen he had bought her first to try to make up for turning the other one off. The walls were covered in posters for British television shows, the bed was still an antique but now it was covered with a teal ruffled bedspread and pillows, the shelves had her trinkets and school things. The room was hers now.

It was the screams that didn't belong.

He hadn't slept so he beat Belle to the room and to Beatrice's side.

"Beatrice?," he said getting in the bed beside her. "Come on, Beatrice, waken up, sweetheart."

He took her into his arms, just as she stirred.

"There we are, sweetheart," he cooed like he had when he'd rocked an infant Bae to sleep. "There we are."

Enough time had passed for Belle to join them sitting on the bed. "Beatrice, what was it?," she asked.

"Was it the Netherworld?," Gold asked.

"No," she said. "Just bad."

Gold held her tighter against his chest. "What bad?"

"I couldn't save anyone."

Belle took Beatrice's hands in hers. "It was just a dream, right?"

"No, it was all Hunger Games, everyone was there and then Sherlock fell and the Doctor got shot..."

Gold looked at Belle. "Why do you let her watch these things?"

"As opposed to what? My normal life?," she muttered weakly.
Belle ignored Gold and touched Beatrice's cheek. "It was just a bad dream."

"Except for Sherlock..."

"We've been over this, he's not really dead," said Belle. "You said yourself that writer just likes to make people suffer."

Gold kissed the top of Beatrice's head. "I'm going to get you a snack."

"Don't bother," she muttered.

Belle followed Gold back down to the kitchen.

"What does it mean?," she asked as he began getting together cookies and milk.

"It means that the Blue Fairy's curse has begun to eat at her soul. As Merlin said, it's designed to break the spirit." He finished pouring the milk. "It also means I have a fairy to kill."

"Rumple, that won't solve anything," Belle pleaded.

"No, see you're wrong actually. It will mean that she can no longer hurt Beatrice. What she did to you will be avenged and I will feel better. All in all, I would say her death will solve a great many things."

"Is that what you want your children to see?," asked Belle.

"I wasn't planning on doing it in front of them."

"If you care about your daughter, you won't make things worse for her," said Belle.

"I won't let this stand, Belle. This is too far."

Then

It was two weeks of hard riding from Padua to the Far North Kingdom. Alec made the journey alone, stopping only to rest his horse, his thoughts consumed every step of the way with Catherine. Lovely Catherine.

He was here now and the land seemed warmer than he had remembered it. He made his way to the village just a stone's throw away from Catherine's Ice Palace and found a gathering in the square.

He tied up his horse and walked over.

The village crier was speaking. "It is announced that the wicked Ice Princess Catherine has been captured and her magic made impotent so that summer may once again come to these lands!"

The people cheered.

Alec looked at them in dismay.

"Princess Ailie shall now rule this kingdom, today and forever! Three cheers for Princess Ailie!"

The villagers cheered. Before the crier could speak again, Alec spoke up.
"Sorry, don't you know about the Ogres?"

All eyes turned to him.

"What Ogres do you speak of?", asked the Crier.

"The ones just over the glaciers. They come over when they melt in the summer. They'll slaughter you all," said Alec.

"Nonsense!," said the Crier. He returned to his announcement. "Princess Ailie announces feast days-"

"It's not nonsense," said Alec. "I've seen them myself. You can just look over with a telescope."

Some of the villagers seemed worried by this.

"And who are you, sir?," asked the Crier.

"I'm Alec, the Duke of Padua."

"You're a long way from your kingdom."

Alec turned around to see Prince Xavier. "You are as well, Your Highness."

"You should leave, Your Grace."

"I have business here. And what is your business here?"

"I'm getting married."

"Is that so? Who's the woman of dubious luck?"

"Princess Ailie."

Alec let that hang.

"Well, isn't that a coincidence?"

Xavier raised his hand. "Guards! Take him to the dungeon!"

Guards came out of the crowd and grabbed Alec.

"What do you say now, Your Grace?," asked Xavier as the guards dragged Alec away.

Alec thought on it.

"I never liked you!," Alec shouted back. "And you're a cheat at billiards!"

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Now

After a sleepless night, Gold worked in the kitchen at the Thanksgiving meal. He stopped when he heard the doorbell ring, expecting to find Bae and Tamara. Instead, he found the Charmings complete with Emma and Henry, all holding covered dishes.

"Did you evict the nuns?," asked David.
Mary Margaret shot him a look.

"As ever, your tact is impeccable," said Gold.

For reasons Gold didn't understand, Mary Margaret appeared to be allowing herself in as she balanced a casserole dish.

"Mother Superior came to us this morning and said Dove had already been by to serve notice," said Mary Margaret. "That wasn't in our arrangement."

"Are you trying to lecture me on a contract, dearie?," asked Gold.

"I've never known you to go back on one."

"I said they could remain so long as they did not bother me or my family," said Gold.

"Did they do something?," asked Emma.

"Can I put this down?," Henry asked holding up a pie dish.

"What is it?," asked Gold.

"Pumpkin pie."

"Why is it here?"

"Belle!," called Mary Margaret.

"Go put it in the kitchen, kid," said Emma. She looked back at Gold as Henry hurried off. "What was it, Gold?"

"Mother Superior has bestowed Beatrice with the blessing of humility," Gold said, his voice dripping with contempt as Belle arrived.

"Yeah, I'm missing something," said Emma.

"As you often do."

"Rumple," Belle warned as she arrived.

"But Beatrice is so unsure of herself as it is," said Mary Margaret.

"Thank you for joining me at my point, your highness," said Gold.

"Beatrice? Unsure?," asked Emma. "She was pretty decisive when she torched my car."

"She's scared, Emma," said Mary Margaret. She looked at Belle. "Is it bad?"

"It's terrible," said Belle. "She can't put a thought together without second guessing it."

"Can't you undo it?," asked Emma.

"Fairy magic doesn't mix well with mine," said Gold.

"Gold, if you're planning something-" said David.

"If I'm planning something, what?"
"No matter what she's done, you can't go killing her," said David.

"If I was planning on killing her, how would you stop me?"

It was at that moment Neal and Tamara arrived.

"Yeah, I can see Thanksgiving's going well already..." said Neal. "They haven't even taken their coats off and you're threatening people."

"Mother Superior's done something to Beatrice," said Emma.

"What's wrong with her?" asked Neal.

"She's cursed her," said Belle.

"Cursed her?" asked Tamara, sounding skeptical.

"Hey, Dad!" said Henry, running over for a hug.

"Hey," said Neal, returning the gesture.

"Fairies curse people?" asked Tamara.

"Who cursed who?" asked Henry.

"Hey, kid, put this up," said Emma passing him her dish.

"What's going on?" asked Henry.

"Hey, do what your mom says," said Neal.

Henry grumbled silently and went to the kitchen.

"What kind of curse?" asked Neal.

"Crippling self doubt," said Gold.

"I'll go check on her," said Neal.

"Emma, go with him," said Mary Margaret.

"What? Why do I have to go with him?"

"You're her friend." Mary Margaret looked at David. "Come on. Let's go help in the kitchen."

They left and Tamara went with them. Gold turned to Belle.

"Why are all these people in my house?"

"Surprise?"

"Belle..." he grumbled.

"It was the only way to keep Henry from being shuttled around all day and for you to have Thanksgiving with Neal. Not to mention it would have been awkward for Tamara to have dinner at Mary Margaret and David's-"

"What do I care if it's awkward for Tamara?"
Belle narrowed the distance between them. "You need to start making her feel more welcome. She's going to marry your son," said Belle quietly. "What about when they have kids? Don't you want to be included in your grandchildren's lives?"

"It's never going to work," said Gold.

"Just try," said Belle.

Emma followed Neal into Beatrice's room. She had never been all the way in before and looked around at the collection of stuff.

"Hey, Bea," said Neal.

Emma looked to the bed. Beatrice was curled up in the fetal position hugging a pillow. Neal sat next to her.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"The Blue Fairy tried to kill me..."

"What? Just now?," asked Emma.

"No. Before I was born."

"What?," asked Neal.

"Yeah, I'm evil or something."

"Oh, come on!," said Emma. "You are not evil. You're a bad driver and an arsonist, but come on."

"You just organized a food drive. What evil person does that?," asked Neal.

"Me, I guess."

"Come on, get up. Everyone's downstairs," said Neal.

"No, thank you," said Beatrice, turning away.

"I'm going to go talk to my dad," said Neal, getting up.

Emma nodded and sat down next to Beatrice. That's when she spotted the ever-present police box tucked under a night table.

"Do you have a fridge?," Emma asked, opening the door to find assorted sodas and candy.

"Yeah."

She looked over to the shelf. "Is that a Keurig?"

"Yeah..."

"This room is cool," said Emma, taking a soda. "I would have loved a room like this, but seriously, I would have loved a room."
"Might as well take it. You're the special one."

"Hey," said Emma. "Whatever Mother Superior said to you, it's crap. You decide who you are."

Then

The guards threw Alec in a cell and locked him away.

"Is this meant to be a rescue?"

Alec smiled. He would have recognized that judgmental tone anywhere and looked up to see Catherine's lovely glare in the next cell.

"Because it's rubbish."

"Your Highness."

She scoffed. "Not much longer. Can't wear a crown when your head is chopped off."

"Oh," said Alec, nodding. "I don't suppose you've given any thought to reconsidering my proposal then?"

She glared at him.

"I admit being Duchess of Padua is a step down from being the Ice Princess, but it's certainly a step up from being executed."

"It depends on who the Duke of Padua is, I suppose and whether he is also sitting in a cell."

"They'll have to let me out."

"Is that so?"

"Yes! I'm the Duke of Padua!"

Catherine paused in consideration. "So, you've brought an army then?"

"Not exactly..."

"A regiment?"

"Well..."

"Some children with rocks?"

"I may not have thought out my entire strategy," Alec admitted.

"You don't say."

Alec stood. "I didn't think. I just rode."

"You just rode?," she asked with contempt. "It's two weeks journey from Padua. You didn't think?"

"My thoughts were only of you."
"I told you..."

Alec shook his head. "I care not. We will find a way to stop the Ogres, rid this kingdom of your sister and save your people. Then we shall marry and begin our life together." He quickly added. "If that's alright with you, Your Highness."

"Well, that is quite a plan," said Catherine. "I only have one question about it."

"Only one? That is an improvement."

Catherine nodded. "How do you propose we get out of these cells?"

"Yes," said Alec, looking back at the iron bars, "that is a worry."

---

**Now**

Gold opened the door to find Regina.

He was really hating opening the door.

"What are you doing here?"

"Henry invited me. Belle said it was fine."

"Belle!" said Gold.

Belle entered and spotted Regina, immediately realizing what the problem was. Gold bored holes into her.

"Regina," said Belle. "Welcome."

"Thank you," said Regina, stepping inside. She cast a look at Gold. "It's nice to see someone in this family has some manners."

"Henry is out back, playing football," said Belle.

Regina left.

"Why did you invite her?," asked Gold.

"Because I didn't like how upset your grandson was at the prospect of his adoptive mother spending Thanksgiving alone."

"Need I remind you that Her Majesty locked you in her dungeon, then an asylum and sent you away with the intention that you would be killed."

"No, you don't, but I have no interest in holding a grudge against Regina," said Belle. "Neither should you."

Emma came downstairs. "Is that Regina's car?"

"Yes," said Belle, stalking back into the kitchen.

"Uh, okay," said Emma, sensing any argument would be futile.

"Can I interest you in a drink, Sheriff?," asked Gold.
"Yeah," said Emma, following him to an antique drinks cart. "Great way to kick off a family Thanksgiving."

Gold chuckled. "I believe it may be the only way."

The time for dinner finally rolled around and Beatrice dragged herself down. The huge mahogany table that usually only had one occupied end was full tonight. Beatrice ended up taking a seat between Regina and Merlin, opposite the Charmings. Her parents were together at one end. Tamara, Neal and Aurora filled the other.

"I hear the Blue Fairy cursed you," said Regina.

"No more cursed than I already was," Beatrice muttered.

"Which will all be rectified in good time," said Merlin.

"Before we get started, I thought we could all say what we're thankful for," said Mary Margaret. Regina rolled her eyes.

"Oh, God, she's one of those," muttered Beatrice.

"She's the poster child for one of those," Regina quietly agreed.

"I'll start," said Mary Margaret.

"Of course you will," muttered Regina.

"I am thankful to be back with my family," Mary Margaret said, smiling at David and Emma.

"Because we wouldn't have guessed that," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice," Belle implored quietly.

"Beatrice, I know you're upset right now-" said Mary Margaret.

Beatrice laughed. "Upset? Upset doesn't begin to describe it. Let's look at my life. I was a social pariah until I got the brilliant idea to go to Maine where oh my God I am an even bigger social pariah, only now I have fairies taking my teeth and cursing me and people throwing me into hats-"

"What is she talking about?", Tamara asked Neal quietly.

"Would you try to keep up?! We're all getting sick of explaining things to you!," Beatrice snapped at her. "And this is all because apparently they think I'm all four horsemen of the apocalypse or something. I brought it all on myself! Which must make me the biggest moron to ever walk the Earth! So, yeah, let's all be thankful."

"Okay," said Emma, hoping to bail Beatrice out of this. "Merlin, could you pass me the corn?"

"Oh, forget this," said Beatrice, getting up and walking out.

"Beatrice!," Belle called, chasing after her.

Then
It seemed that hours had passed in the dungeon. Finally, Ailie arrived.

"Well, is this your frog?," asked Ailie. She looked Alec up and down. "What a fine specimen."

"Eyes on your own man," said Catherine.

Ailie grimaced. "You never did like sharing, did you?"

"Why don't you go back to your betrothed?," asked Catherine. "Or have you tired of the scent of pomade and cologne?"

"It is rather harsh, isn't it?," asked Alec.

"You can smell it from two kingdoms over," said Catherine. "Mind you, not that you smell all that much better with two weeks of horseback on you."

"I was trying to get to you."

"Well, could you have gotten to me with a bath?"

"I didn't want to stop."

"Yes, because it's a good thing you were on time to be locked up in a dungeon."

"Are you two quite finished?," asked Ailie.

"No," said Catherine.

"Your execution has been scheduled," said Ailie. "But there's something I want first."

"I'm not giving you grandmother's necklace."

"Not that," said Ailie. "Though I do want that."

"There is a lot of history I'm not getting here," said Alec.

"Indeed," said Ailie. "I want your magic, sister."

"And I want a never-ending chocolate river, but it's not happening," said Catherine.

"Things are different now. You finally have something to lose," said Ailie.

They both turned their eyes to Alec.

He looked behind him, saw nothing and back at the sisters.

"Oh, blast..." he muttered.

Ailie opened the cell door and reached inside Alec's chest to take his heart. Catherine gasped. As she did, Ailie was knocked back by a wave of magic.

Alec stared at her on the ground.

"What was that?," he asked Catherine.

"True Love," said Catherine. "Now open the cell unless you had other plans."
Now

Dinner disbanded. Merlin disappeared. Neal, Tamara, David and Henry went back to the backyard to play football. The women gathered in the living room. Regina walked up to Gold at the drinks cart.

"So, that was less spectacular than I had hoped, Gold," said Regina.

"Sorry to disappoint you, dearie," said Gold, pouring another drink.

"I'm being serious. Besides being with my son, the only thing I was looking forward to about this dinner was Beatrice's sniping, though even depressed she managed to get a few good ones in."

"You can imagine I have bigger concerns."

"Yes, I can. What are you planning?"

"Why would you be interested?"

"I'm not exactly friends with the fairies."

"Really, dearie? I hadn't noticed."

Regina spoke in a low voice, glancing at the other women. "Killing her won't help. It will only make her curse stronger."

"Oh, I know the rules better than you, dearie."

"So you have to undo her curse and then I assume you'll want her dead."

"Is life without magic getting so boring that you have to live vicariously through me?," asked Gold.

Regina shot him a dirty look as Merlin entered.

"Is this the Plotting Society?," asked Merlin, siding up to them. "Why didn't anyone invite me?"

"Unless you have a solution to offer-" Gold began.

"Calm down, sunshine," said Merlin, holding up a book with gilded pages. "I have solved everything."

"The fairy rule book?," snorted Regina.

"You have?," Belle asked, her attention suddenly piqued.

"Have you?," Gold asked with contempt.

"I have," said Merlin. "It's all in the book. See, the Blue Fairy loves rules. She's got this egomaniacal need to control absolutely bloody everything."

"What's the solution?," asked Belle, trying to hurry him along.

"See, you can't fight fairy magic with dark magic. They don't mix. You can only fight fairy magic with fairy magic."

"Do you need fairy dust?," asked Mary Margaret.
"No, we need fairies," said Merlin.

"I'll go get some," said Gold.

"What do you mean?," asked Belle.

"See, the Blue Fairy gave Beatrice the so-called blessing she ought to have gotten when she was born."

"What?," asked Emma.

Mary Margaret turned to Emma. "In the Enchanted Forest, all children got a blessing from a fairy when they were born."

"Then there's the princesses," said Merlin.

"What? Like Sleeping Beauty?," asked Emma.

"Precisely, only this book gives different rules for princesses and ordinary children," said Merlin. "Princesses are entitled to blessings from all the fairies."

"How does that help us?," asked Belle.

Merlin turned to Belle. "The title of the Ice Princess passes mother to daughter. Catherine to Reinette to you to Beatrice."

"But my grandmother wasn't Ice Princess for years before my mother was born."

"She had to surrender her powers, she never gave up her title entirely. You have always technically been the Ice Princess. According to this, you should have had a Blessing Ceremony for Beatrice when she was born and invited all the fairies."

Regina scoffed. "Yes, Rumple, you should have invited all the fairies to the Dark Castle. That would have gone over well."

"But we were cursed..." said Belle.

"Yes, this book has an exception. If the Blessing Ceremony cannot be conducted because of a curse or imprisonment in a tower..."

"This book is awfully technical," said Emma.

"A conclave of five princesses can approve a delayed ceremony."

"Five princesses," said Mary Margaret, eagerly latching on the plan. "That's me, Belle, Aurora, oh, and Emma..."

Emma frowned. "I'm not a-"

She looked up as everyone in the room stared at her as if she was stupid.

"Oh. Right," said Emma. "Yeah, count me in I guess."

"We still need a fifth," said Aurora. "Does anyone know someone?"

"Oh, I can think of someone," said Merlin. He looked back at Regina.
"You're not serious," said Regina.

"As I recall, you were born Princess Regina."

"I never had a Fairy Blessing Ceremony," said Regina.

"Your mother ripped hearts out for fun," said Merlin. "It put people off."

"Regina, please," said Belle.

"I have better things to do than be part of some idiotic princess ceremony," said Regina.

Gold scoffed. "Do you now?"

"Yeah, I don't see you doing a lot of mayor-ing lately," said Merlin.

"Fine, I'll help," said Regina. "I don't know what good it will do. You'll still have to find a fairy to show up and not curse her more."

"Trust me. They're not going to curse her more with a known fairy killer in the room," said Merlin, casting a glance at Gold.

"Fairy killer?", asked Aurora.
Now

Beatrice stared incredulously at her mother, Mary Margaret, Emma, Aurora and Regina as they stood in her room.

"Did the Enchanted Forest have meth labs?," she asked.

She drew blank looks from Mary Margaret, Aurora and Belle.

"Because the only way that I can think you came up with that plan is you all started using crystal meth after I left."

"Unfortunately, no," said Regina, peering on the shelves at a collection of Doctor Who figurines. She picked up a Dalek. "What the hell is this?"

"It's a Dalek," said Belle. She turned back to Beatrice. "Merlin came up with this plan."

"Why does it have a whisk and a plunger?," asked Regina.

"Regina, put the robot away," said Emma.

"It's not a robot," said Beatrice.

"Could we focus?," asked Mary Margaret.

"It's a cyborg," said Beatrice. "There's a difference."

"Regina, put up the cyborg," said Mary Margaret. "Now, Beatrice, you have to believe this will work."

"Why? Because my life has worked out great so far?"

"All fairies are not alike," said Belle. "We'll find one to undo this."

"Even if they don't think I'm evil, none of them are going to stick their necks out for me," said
"You don't know that," said Mary Margaret. "People can surprise you."

"Yes, like they suddenly curse you for no apparent reason."

"What's crystal meth?," asked Aurora.

Then

Belle had been with Rumplestiltskin in the Island Kingdom for a week.

Frankly, she was done with it.

It was hot. And sticky. The women wore hardly anything and stayed separate from the men most of the time, making it so Rumple hardly brought her anywhere. There were no books and she had tired of the ones she brought.

She was hot.

The insects were enormous and she had just barely avoided being eaten by a huge snake no less than five times. She was fairly convinced the snake was out to get her.

Also, it was hot.

She once again tugged at the bodice top of her hunting outfit. Rumplestiltskin looked across at her from the hut they had been given.

"Perhaps you should change your clothes," he suggested for not the first time.

"If I change into anything else, the insects will eat me alive."

"I can concoct another potion."

"That hasn't worked yet," said Belle. "These creatures are immune to your magic."

Rumplestiltskin turned back.

"How much longer will it be?"

"It's a very rare parchment I'm after, Belle. Any spell written on it is said to be the most powerful of all."

"What do you need something like that for?"

Rumplestiltskin gave away nothing. "It's good to have these things on hand."

Belle nodded.

He turned back. "What say we go on a hike to Pele?"

"The volcano?," asked Belle.

"Yes," said Rumplestiltskin. "It's perfectly safe."

Belle gave him a hesitant look. "Okay."
Anything was better than sitting here.

Now

Belle looked through the rack of dresses as Mary Margaret stood next to her, looking through another.

"What about this one?" asked Mary Margaret, holding up a yellow dress.

Belle shook her head. "She won't wear yellow, she says it's my thing."

Mary Margaret considered this and put the dress back on the rack. "Well, what's her thing?"

"Purple, I think, but I'm not seeing anything that says Fairy Blessing."

"Maybe white?" asked Mary Margaret.

Now Belle shot her a look.

"Okay, I understand how that sounds coming from me, but she would have been a baby if you had this when it should have been."

"If we had this when it should have been, Rumple would have locked up the Dark Castle and never let a fairy near it," said Belle.

They moved to a rack of white dresses and started sorting through them.

"I remember when your mother used to help us pick our ball gowns," said Mary Margaret. "She had such a good eye."

Belle smiled. "I used to think it so tiresome. It's a wonder she had any patience for me."

"She adored you," said Mary Margaret. "What about this one?"

Belle looked up at the white tulle dress with gold embellishments. "Oh, yes."

"Is it her size?" asked Mary Margaret.

Belle looked at the label. "It might be a little big, but Rumple can alter it."

Mary Margaret shook her head. "I still can't believe he does that."

They paid and Belle carried the garment bag out onto the street where they immediately ran into Sister Astrid.

"Sister Astrid," said Mary Margaret.

The woman froze.

"How are you?" asked Belle.

"Fine. Thank you."

"How was the Thanksgiving dinner?" asked Belle, feeling a little pushy as Mary Margaret cast a glance at her. "I'm sorry Beatrice wasn't in good enough spirits to come."
"It was quite a success. The homeless really appreciated everything she did."

"I'm glad," said Belle. "We'll see you at the ceremony then."

Sister Astrid nodded nervously and walked away.

"What if no one comes?," asked Belle.

"You can't give up hope. There has to be one good fairy out there."

Beatrice opened the front door of the pink house. It was supposed to be Mushu's delivery and instead, it was Duncan.

"I was just dropping off the bill for the paper."

Beatrice snatched the envelope from his hand. "Yeah, thanks."

"You haven't been at school."

"Yeah, my parents have this thing about me going places that are soul crushing right now."

Duncan pretended to understand. "Look, I never got to say I was sorry about the whole Cupid thing..."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Yeah, save it."

"No, it's just you're cool and all, you're just not my type."

"Your type..." It was less of an inquiry, more of a resignation.

"Yeah, I'm just more into girls like-"

"I'm interrupting something."

Regina's voice cut through the air and Duncan turned. She came up the steps.

"No, just Duncan was about to explain to me how I'm not pretty or something..." Beatrice shrugged. "No surprise there."

"No, I wasn't-"

Regina turned her glare towards Duncan. "Do you know this girl's mother was known as the Beauty of Avonlea? She had men from all across the realm begging to court her. So she is far better than some farmhand could dare aspire to. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Madame Mayor, uh, Your Majesty-"

Regina pointed down the steps to the sidewalk. "Go!"

Duncan did as he was ordered. Regina followed Beatrice in the house.

"Pay no attention to him, dear. He's not worth your time."

"Whatever."

Regina eyed her. "Do you really think you're not pretty?"
"I know I'm not."

"That's absurd."

"Please don't tell me that. Now I have to be worried about apples."

"You look like your mother."

"Yeah, people keep saying that, but I'm not, so here we are."

Gold emerged, glanced at Regina. "What's happened?"

"Nothing, here's the bill for the paper," said Beatrice, handing him the envelope. She went up the stairs. "Call me when there's Chinese food."

Gold looked to Regina. "What did you do?"

"I did nothing. If you want to blame someone, blame the paper boy you let her go out with."

"Well, we can't all find suitors the way your mother did. What are you doing here?"

"I came under the pretense of finalizing the guest list for the Fairy Blessing."

"And without the pretense?"

"I had an idea."

"Oh, we all know what happens when you get an idea..."

"Not as much as when you do. I'm trying to help. Do you know who has the Black Fairy's wand?"

"Not in your vault?"

"Not in your shop?"

They were both silent.

"What are you proposing, dearie?"

"I think we know who the one other person in Storybrooke who is likely to have it is."

"Mother Superior."

"It's as powerful as hers. Of course she would have it locked away."

"You are just itching to do some magic, aren't you, dearie?"

"I'll admit I miss it, but I made Henry a promise. She smiled. "There's nothing to stop you from getting it, though."

---

_Then_

Belle had once wished for adventure in the great wide somewhere.

She now wondered what the hell she had been thinking. She didn't want to be back in Avonlea,
that was for certain, but perhaps somewhere cooler and doing something more interesting than following Rumple up a path to a volcano.

Though following Rumple up a path did provide a nice view.

The greenery thinned out and there began to be the most noxious fumes as the ground beneath them became the deepest black.

Then she stopped in her tracks, thinking she must have heard something.

Rumplestiltskin turned to look at her.

"What's wrong?"

"I thought I heard something."

"Heard what?"

"Growling. Like a bear?"

"Belle, there are no bears on this island," he said, turning and resuming his walk.

"Rumple, is it much farther?" she asked. She felt she was becoming woozy, waving the air in front of her to catch a clean breath.

"The lava from this volcano is said to have magical powers," said Rumplestiltskin, not noticing her distress.

Belle stood and held her hands at her ribcage, trying to take deep breaths as if she had a corset that was too tight. Rumplestiltskin didn't seem to be stopping.

"Rumple?" she called. He continued on. "Rumplestiltskin!"

Belle didn't think she could follow one more step once she had stopped.

That's when a new fountain of lava sprang from just beside her feet, splashing onto her leg.

---

_now_

"Rumple," said Belle, coming into the cellar. "What are you doing down here?"

"Ah, I was just about to come get you," said Gold.

"I just got in," said Belle.

"I've been working on something on the off chance that ceremony your father was so keen to suggest doesn't work," said Gold. "I need your hair."

"My hair?"

"Just one will do."

"For what?"

"True Love."
Belle sighed and took a hair from her head, handing it over. Thanking her, Gold placed it in a bottle.

"So what? You just put some hairs in a bottle?"

"I put our hair together. Don't worry. I did this with Snow White and Prince Charming. One drop of a True Love potion made from her parents' hair ought to break any fairy's curse."

He shook the bottle and it burst into light, then exploded, breaking the bottle, leaving them staring at shards of glass.

"I take it that wasn't supposed to happen?"

"No."

"And you wanted to give that to our daughter?" Belle accused, pointing at the glass.

"I don't understand."

"I went to the dress shop," said Belle. "I got one for Beatrice, I know you'll want to look at it. It's in the hall closet."

"You chose it without Beatrice?"

"Rumple, a teenage girl who is having confidence issues and dress shopping do not mix."

"Then perhaps we shouldn't put her on display," he said following her up into the house.

"Well, I don't have a better plan and I just saw yours."

Gold went into one of the spare rooms. Belle was hard asleep and Beatrice hadn't made a sound for a change. He had some non-magical tools locked away in here that the cursed Mr. Gold had found quite useful for getting into places that he needed to be.

Like wherever Mother Superior was keeping the Black Fairy's wand locked away.

He was about to leave when he heard Beatrice crying in her sleep. He put the toolkit down and hurried into Beatrice's bedroom.

"Beatrice, waken up, sweetheart."

Beatrice again found herself in her father's arms.

"There we are..."

She looked up. "Were you going somewhere?"

"No," he said. "Not anymore."

"Why?"

Gold frowned. "Because you need me."

Beatrice sat up. Without thinking about it, she rested her head on Gold's shoulder.

"Do you think this stupid ceremony will work?"
Gold was silent.

"That's a no, then."

"Any curse can be broken."

"Yeah, True Love's Kiss. I heard about that happening once to this girl and this beast and it didn't go so well."

"That was mostly down to the beast in that instance."

"Well, at least I don't have that guy working for me on this."

"If it doesn't work, I will find something that does," said Gold. "I don't give up easily."

Beatrice came down the stairs in the white dress with gold embroidery and her pendant.

"You look lovely," Belle said with excitement. She had on her own gold lace dress. "Rumple?"

"Very lovely," he confirmed.

"Yeah, well, you people have to say that, don't you?," asked Beatrice.

"We don't say it because we have to, we say it because it's true," said Belle.

"Okay, maybe you have some sort of evolutionary blinders on, same difference. Let's get this freak show on the road," said Beatrice, grabbing her coat.

**Then**

Belle howled in pain, struggling to stay upright so that she didn't fall into something more unsafe. Pain and burning, she couldn't fathom anything else until she felt Rumplestiltskin's hands around her and they vanished into a puff of smoke.

"There we are, Belle," he said softly, lying her on the floor of some hut he must have just conjured. He struggled to remove her boot, it was seared to her leg and the attempt made her cry more.

With a wave of his hand, the boot disappeared, along with the rest of the outfit. Belle found herself in a simple white linen shift as Rumplestiltskin again waved his hand healing the blistered skin.

Once healed, he rubbed his hand over the leg in circles.

"You foolish girl."

Belle sat up. "I'm foolish?!"

"You should have stayed with me where it was safe."

"Perhaps I shouldn't have followed you up the volcano in the first place!"

"I only took you because you've been pouting all week when you don't get to go somewhere!"

"Well, what was the point in bringing me if all you wanted me to do was sit in a hut and get ill
from the heat!

"Because you wore that stupid leather!"

"Look who's talking!"

"You're infuriating," he said, turning away as one of the Island Kingdom's signature rainstorms broke out.

"You're infuriating," said Belle. "You have been dragging me place to place and not telling me why. I know it's something."

"You don't need to know."

"I'm not a child and I'm certainly not your child!," said Belle.

He spun around and was in her face with unbelievable speed. "Even if it was to go to a Land Without Magic?"

"Where Baelfire is?," she asked softly. "Is that what this has all been for? Why didn't you just say so?"

He grimaced. "Because you could never want to go."

"Of course I would go with you. I want to help you find your son."

"And then when I'm powerless?"

"You'd be free from your curse," said Belle. She smiled. "I could kiss you."

"Oh, you silly, lustful girl..."

"I'm not silly! I love you and I will go anywhere with you." She leaned forward, closing her eyes as she rested her cheek against his. "This is one of those times I wish I could kiss you."

"Oh, Belle," he breathed softly as she shoved his coat off his shoulders. "Belle, what are you doing?"

"Making the best of being stuck in the rain," she said. "Unless I'm being too silly and lustful..."

"I got more than I bargained for with you..." he murmured quietly as she started on his vest.

---

**Now**

Emma walked into the banquet hall where the Fairy Blessing was to be held.

Aurora spotted her first. "Are you wearing that?"

Emma looked down at her usual boots and jeans. "What?"

"It's a fairy blessing, not a hunting party. Where's your tiara?"

"I don't have a tiara."

Aurora looked horrified. "Mary Margaret! We have a problem!"
"You're wearing that?"

Emma spun right to see Regina in a shimmering grey cocktail dress.

"I didn't know there was a dress code for this. Besides, I didn't think you cared."

"I don't, but I won't have people thinking I've done something poorly even if I don't really care."

"Emma, what are you wearing?," asked Mary Margaret.

Emma looked at her mother wearing a white tea length gown and oh, yeah, a tiara.

"Did we discuss this?," she asked.

"You still have time to go home and change," said Mary Margaret.

Emma couldn't believe the request. "Really? Go home and change?"

Mary Margaret gave her a look. "Emma..."

"Fine, I'm going..."

Emma walked out running straight into Gold, Belle and Beatrice.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm changing," said Emma, she said continuing out.

"Oh, Beatrice, you look beautiful," said Mary Margaret.

"Yeah, sure," said Beatrice, walking over and sitting down at a table.

"She has a serious problem taking a compliment," said Regina.

"Can we just get the fairy clock ticking?," asked Beatrice. "You know, so no one can show up, so I can go home and then live a miserable life and die?"

The guests arrived. A small gathering including the dwarves, Neal and Tamara, who kept asking questions. Henry and David. The offerings for the fairies were laid out next to rose and white myrtle flower arrangements.

There was just one thing missing from the Fairy Blessing Ceremony.

A fairy.

Regina sat down across from Beatrice.

"You know, I think I understand you," said Regina.

She snorted. "Really?"

Emma came in. "Okay, what did I miss?"

Regina looked up to see Emma in a tight pink dress and heels she struggled in.

"That is not acceptable," Regina said, pointing at the garment. "We are at a Fairy Blessing, not in the club, Miss Swan."

"Give me a break, okay? This was all I had."
"Is that a price tag?" asked Beatrice.

"Yeah, I sort of bought it for a job," said Emma. "I was going to return it."

"A job?" Regina asked with an arched eyebrow. "Finally the truth comes out."

"Not like that! It was this date-"

"Whatever you want to call it," said Regina, walking off.

"Oh, come on, Regina. You know I'm not a hooker!," Emma shouted.

"Well, that's the first time that was ever heard at a Fairy Blessing," said Merlin.

Emma shot him a look and headed towards Regina.

"Well, quite a turnout," Gold said, walking up to him.

"Give it time," Merlin insisted.

Gold looked at Beatrice as she idly stared at her iPhone. "She's not much for parties where no one shows up for her."

"I don't think it's quite as hopeless as you. Unless you have a better idea."

"I did. I tried to make a True Love potion fashioned from our hair."

Merlin smiled. "How did that go, sunshine?"

"It blew up. Don't suppose you could tell me why?"

"Belle gets that from my side of the family. I wouldn't try that again. Face it, sunshine. You got more than you bargained for with her."

Belle sat next to Beatrice.

"How are you holding up?" she asked.

"Well, I suppose I'm technically no worse off than I was when we started this stupid ceremony..."

Belle shook her head as Gold joined them. "Why is it so difficult for you to believe how beautiful you are?"

Beatrice groaned. "Because I'm not..."

Belle looked at Gold.

"I've told you before you're as lovely as your mother."

"This is about Beatrice, Rumple." Belle sighed and rested her head on Beatrice's shoulder. "The most beautiful girl I have ever laid eyes on."

"The worst thing to ever happen to you..." Beatrice muttered.

"And what would make you say that?" Gold asked in disbelief.

Beatrice shrugged. "Easy. If I hadn't existed, Mom wouldn't have been held prisoner, put in a
sleeping curse, you might have avoided your whole crazy period, she never would have been in an asylum—"

"Stop," Belle demanded. She pulled Beatrice against her and kissed the top of her head. "Stop right now."

The door opened. Everyone looked up as Sister Astrid stumbled in.

"I... I'm sorry, did I miss it?"

"No, no, you didn't miss it," said Mary Margaret, leaping forward as Belle joined her.

"Would you like something to eat or drink?," Belle asked, pointing at the table of offerings. "Anything?"

"Gold made from straw?," Beatrice muttered.

That earned a look from Gold.

"No, thank you," said Sister Astrid. She turned to Beatrice. "Beatrice, you have been good and kind—"

"You don't know me that well," said Beatrice.

"Quiet," Gold said in a low voice.

Astrid took out her wand. "Princess Beatrice, my gift shall be—"

The door opened and Mother Superior arrived, using her wand to snatch Astrid's from her hand.

"Oh, come on," groaned Emma.

"Well, that figures..." Beatrice muttered. She went back to her phone.

"And the Blue Trollop arrives once again to ruin another perfectly good gathering," said Merlin.

Belle was the one to stalk up to Mother Superior. "You get one gift to give to Beatrice and you gave it. You can give Astrid her wand and leave."

Mother Superior gave Belle a smug look. "You can't command me, Dark Mistress."

"Well, don't tempt me, dearie," said Gold.

Mary Margaret joined them. "This has gone too far. Undo the blessing you gave Beatrice. She doesn't deserve it."

"Even if she's a Dark Princess?"

"Her name is Beatrice," said Belle. "You have hated her for longer than she's been alive."

"Then you've chosen the darkness over good again."

"I have chosen my daughter."

"Then you're a fool like your mother."

Mother Superior walked off.
"Belle?," asked Gold.

"Mom?," asked Beatrice, her attention taken away from the iPhone.

Belle didn't answer, she hurried out after Mother Superior.

"Belle!," Gold called, hurrying after her.

Beatrice ran out, then Mary Margaret and David, the rest of the party eventually following them.

Except for Emma, who teetered on her impossible heels.

"Mom! Come on!," Henry said excitedly.

She grunted and balanced on one foot at a time while she took off her shoes, then held them in her hand as she ran to join the rest in bare feet.

"Mom!," Beatrice called, catching up to Belle. She put her arms around Belle. "Please don't get hurt because of me again."

Belle looked at Beatrice. "I protect you. You don't protect me," she said placing Beatrice's hand in Gold's.

"Belle, sweetheart-" Gold began.

"No! She can answer me now! Why did you say that about my mother?!"

The party goers watched as Mother Superior turned.

"What are you asking?"

"My mother got ill very suddenly. She was never sickly and no one else had whatever illness she had."

Merlin was now intrigued. "Answer her."

"What are you accusing me of?"

Belle got closer. "You killed her because she was going to make certain I found my True Love."

"Because she was going to lead you into the path of the Dark One."

There was an audible gasp. Mary Margaret covered her mouth.

"You evil tart..." said Merlin.

Belle was stunned beyond belief. She wanted to scream and leapt at Mother Superior. The fairy took out her wand and before anyone knew what had happened, Beatrice had freed herself from Gold's grasp and jumped in front of her mother, taking the brunt of the fairy magic.

Then something else happened.

As Belle screamed for her daughter, a pulse of magic burst forth, knocking Mother Superior back. She grabbed Beatrice.

"Beatrice?," Belle asked urgently. "Beatrice?"
"Sweetheart, say something," Gold implored her.

Beatrice looked at Belle. "What did you do?"

Belle shook her head. "I didn't do anything. Are you alright?"

"She's powerless," Regina said suddenly, looking at Mother Superior. She followed the nun's gaze to Belle. "Belle took her power away."

"Belle does magic?," asked Henry.

"Family secret," said Merlin. He looked at Mother Superior. "She's vanquished your power with True Love."

"Okay, that's new..." said Beatrice.

"That's impossible," said Mother Superior.

"Oh, I think it's possible, dearie," said Gold.

"I don't understand," said Belle. "I'm not-"

Beatrice looked up at Belle. "I kind of think you are."

Mother Superior started running.

"Well, that's undignified," said Merlin.

"Emma, go after her," said Mary Margaret.

"Oh, come on," Emma grunted, putting her heels back on, teetering after the nun. "Mother Superior! Mother Superior!"

"Can you undo the curse now?," Belle asked, looking at Astrid.

Astrid eyed Beatrice, then took her face by the chin. "I think you just did."

"True Love can break any curse," said Gold.

---

**Then**

Belle smiled as she nuzzled against Rumplestiltskin's chest.

"I trust that will stop all the whining," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Yes, I think I found something to do," said Belle.

"You have a filthy mind."

Belle smiled. "The rain stopped."

"Yes."

She looked up at him. "Could we maybe look at the stars?"

He eyed her and waved his hand, the thatched roof vanishing. "Poor Belle with her head in the
stars.
"See the blue one? Someone told me it was a wishing star."

"And what have I told you about wishes?"

"We don't want wishes," Belle said, mocking his tone. "What about one wish? Has anybody ever gone very wrong with one wish?"

"Ask the Evil Queen's mirror some time."

Belle raised an eyebrow. "Ask her mirror?"

"Oh, Belle, it's a long tale that he really ought to have seen coming."

"He?"

"Long tale."

Belle looked back at the sky. "When I was a little girl, I got a book once and someone had inscribed it with the incantation for wishing upon a star."

"An incantation?," he asked, vaguely intrigued.

Belle nodded.

"When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are, anything your heart desires will comes to you. If you heart is in your dreams, no request is too extreme, when you wish upon a star as dreamers do. Fate is kind, she brings to those who love, the sweet fulfillment of their secret longing. Like a bolt out of the blue, fate steps in and sees you through, when you wish upon a star, your dreams come true."

Rumplestiltskin sighed. "Well, you might as well make your wish since you already said it. Try to keep it small and don't say I didn't warn you."

Belle smiled. "I don't need anything," she said, looking back at the spot of blue in the sky.

Belle did have everything she wanted. A man she loved who valued her, listened to her. She might hope for the day to come when his curse broke, but never until he had his son.

If she had to be honest, there was only one other thing she would wish, a wish that she had since she was a little girl that she had never said aloud to anyone except that stranger she met the night before the Ogres came.

A little girl.

Not all sweetness and light like everyone thought little girls ought to be. She ought to be clever and curious. She could be kind, but strong and funny.

She could have Rumple's eyes. His real eyes that he had only seen briefly. Rumplestiltskin would adore her and she would be loved by both her parents.

She would have the kind of life where she decided her own fate.

"Belle, I think that's Venus."

"Oh," said Belle with a frown. "Never mind, I suppose."
"You lost her," Gold said to Emma.

"I'll find her," said Emma as Belle looked on. "She's in the woods. There's only so many places she can go without crossing the town line."

"She should cross the town line," said Belle.

"She can't hurt us now, Belle," said Gold.

Emma eyed Gold. "What are you planning on doing to her if you find her?"

"Less than she deserves."

"You know I can't let you kill her."

"People keep telling me that."

"I'm going to go check on Beatrice," said Belle, going upstairs.

Emma looked back at Gold. "Should I be worried about you?"

"I suppose that depends on you, dearie."

Emma narrowed the distance between them. "How about this? You don't go hunting down Mother Superior. I'll find her and we'll lock her up."

"And why would I agree to that?"

"Because if she comes after you first, you can do what you want and we don't have a problem."

"How very pragmatic of you. I suppose those terms are amenable," said Gold.

Belle came in Beatrice's room.

"Oh, come on," said Beatrice. "You saved me, now can I please sleep alone?"

"We need to clarify something," said Belle, taking Beatrice in her arms. "You said you were the worst thing to ever happen to us."

"Eh," Beatrice shrugged.

"You are the best thing that ever happened to us and whatever pain I went through, I would do it again if it meant I got to have you."

"I'm sorry about your mom," said Beatrice.

"Hey, that's not your fault," said Belle. "My mother told me that one day when I had a daughter I would understand why I was all she ever worried about. She was right. I'm not happy that she died, but I understand it because she would do anything for me, just like I would do anything for you."

It was Beatrice who squeezed Belle this time. "Don't do anything for me, just stay."
Belle shook her head. "I'm not going anywhere."
Now

It was another unsuccessful day of fairy hunting. Even without the help of magic, Mother Superior somehow managed to elude them again.

"I'm sorry, Emma. I don't know what happened," said Ruby.

Emma shrugged as they entered the sheriff's station. "Hey, I guess we just have to keep looking."

"I can't believe Mother Superior did all that," said Ruby.

"Oh, believe it my dear lupine girl, you have so much to learn."

Emma and Ruby looked up to see Merlin sitting at one of the desks in the sheriff's station.

"Hey, Merlin," Emma said cautiously. "What are you doing here?"

"Visiting with our friendly local pirate here," said Merlin, motioning at Hook in his cell.

Hook nodded. "Yes, I have enjoyed my conversation with the wizard here. His company is superior to that of Gaston's, but no match for your lovely presence, Swan."

Emma frowned.

"I should get back to the diner before the dinner rush," Ruby said excusing herself.

"Why is Gaston sleeping?"

"Because he was boring me," said Merlin. "He'll wake up. Though that's not why I'm here. I want to volunteer."

"Volunteer?" asked Emma.

"For the posse to hunt down the blue trollop."
Emma sat down on the desk and eyed Merlin. "Did Gold tell you about the deal I made with him?"

"Yes, he did, which is why I'm here."

"She killed Belle's mother. You can't tell me you're not angry about that."

"Indeed I am quite angry, but she and I have been adversaries for so long that I have had to learn to take these things in stride."

"And why should I believe you?"

"Listen, Rumplestiltskin will not break your deal, but he is also very clever. He will find a way to make that tart come after him and then he will kill her because frankly he's wanted to for several centuries and while I may share the sentiment, it which would not help me."

"Why not?"

"Because I need some information from her."

"What kind of information?"

"That's my business."

"And making sure I don't get double-crossed is my business."

"Long ago, she cast someone from the Enchanted Forest and I believe to this land. I've never been able to find him."

"Who is he?"

"Beatrice's True Love."

Emma arched her eyebrow. "You're serious?"

"Would I jest about that?"

"Where's your sense of romance, Swan?," asked Hook.

"Nobody was talking to you, Hook. I don't know. True Love and... she's just a kid!"

"I'm not marrying her off," said Merlin. "Beatrice is the product of fourteen generations of True Love. Her future happiness will depend on having it herself. The sparkling winged trollop cast this person away as a boy with the obvious intent that even if Beatrice was born, she would be miserable."

"Did you tell Gold this?"

"Alas, he is quite protective of his princess. Fathers rarely wish that their daughters have their own loves. So I decided not to tell him." He shrugged. "Until the day when I inevitably have to in order to save the boy's life."

"Aye, that day will come as sure as the north star..." said Hook.

"Do you mind?," asked Emma. She turned back to Merlin. "Says the guy that let his daughter marry Rumplestiltskin."
"You think they're married?"

"Okay, this is more information than I need..."

"Who would perform the ceremony? Who could they even find to print the invitations?," asked Merlin.

"Who would be there to receive the invitations since he's driven away or killed everyone he's ever cared about?," asked Hook.

"You did steal his wife," said Merlin. "You do remember that, don't you? And please don't wax poetic about Milah yet again."

Emma rolled her eyes. "Okay, I guess you can help. It's not like anything else is working."

---

Then

The topic of the day's fairy meeting was inevitably Rumplestiltskin and how the Dark One seemed determined to go on a rampage.

"This can all stop, you know," said the Gold Fairy, once the others had gone.

Blue turned. "And what do you know about it?"

"Rumplestiltskin is hurt, he's mourning the loss of his True Love and I think we both know he need not be."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Have some sense, Blue. The revolt in Avonlea rages. How much more suffering must there be for this land because you are terrified of an infant?"

"That infant is a monster."

"Perhaps. Then again perhaps not. Either way, I have a solution."

Blue watched as Gold opened her hand.

"A magic bean?," asked Blue. "Where did you get it?"

"From a gentle giant who knows all too well the pain of being alone."

"And what do I do with that?"

"You go to Rumplestiltskin, you tell him where to find Belle and how to awaken her and you give him this so they can go to the Land Without Magic and find his son."

Blue scoffed. "He would never give up his power."

"He only needs it to find his son. That's what this has been about. That's what this has all been about. Give him the chance to have his True Love and his children and he will take it."

"You don't know him."

"I think I do." Gold handed her the bean. "I have to go. The hour has finally arrived for Cinderella's ball."
"Good Morning, Storybrooke!"

"Good morning!"

"I'm Goldie Loxley."

"And I'm Hart Archer."

"We'll have the weather report as well as the big happenings in Storybrooke for this holiday season and a gift-giving guide to find one that's just right for everyone on your list!"

"Looking forward to that, Goldie, but first the big story that everyone is still talking about. Fairy Hunt '12."

"Oh, God, they made a graphic," said Beatrice motioning at the TV as Gold handed her a plate of pancakes.

"It's Day Twelve and Mother Superior a.k.a. the Blue Fairy has been evading Sheriff Swan by hiding in the woods. We went to Sheriff Swan for comment."


"We'll go back to the Sheriff's Office for more developments as they occur," Goldie promised.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "If the outside world could see this, do you think they'd figure it out or just think this town was the biggest cosplay ever?"

"What's a cosplay?" asked Gold.

Beatrice shook her head. "Never mind."

Belle entered. "Rumple, turn the TV off. I don't even know why you got one for the kitchen," she said, sitting next to Beatrice at the counter.

Gold motioned at Beatrice. "Because if I want to see her face while BBC America plays Doctor Who for five days, this is apparently what I must do."

Belle looked at Beatrice. "Off."

"Ah, but what if we miss Fairy Hunt '12?"

Belle grimaced. "I don't even want you thinking about that terrible woman."

"Um, I kind of have to," said Beatrice. "Since we're arch enemies or something."

"You needn't have arch enemies, sweetheart," said Gold. "You have me."

"Yeah, what's your plan?," asked Beatrice.

"Emma is going to find her," said Belle. "Besides, she's powerless. She can't hurt us. Right, Rumple?"
Gold nodded as he sipped his coffee. "Quite right." He tapped his watch. "Eat up."

Beatrice really wondered why she came to Granny's.

Oh, right. Because she lived in Storybrooke and Granny's was the only place she could come and play on her iPad while she drank coffee, ate pie and not be accosted by someone who had sold their first-born or feared "The Dark Princess," whatever that was. Granny and Ruby didn't stand for it, even if they weren't Gold's biggest fans.

Granny and Ruby were not here today. They were at Fairy Hunt '12.

That left Ashley Boyd.

Ashley was also known as Cinderella. The girl who Beatrice had realized at the age of three was an idiot for not reading that contract. She had not gotten an order of Beatrice's correct since her arrival. Beatrice had naturally attributed this to her intelligence or perhaps forgetfulness. One time she had given Gold a grilled cheese instead of a cheeseburger and he had been certain to mention it.

Contract law for him also extended to the dining experience.

So the order mistakes had never happened with him again. They didn't happen with Belle. They didn't happen when Granny or Ruby were in the diner. It had taken Beatrice this long to put together the pattern that they only occurred when Ashley was in charge and Beatrice was alone.

She had tried to give the benefit of the doubt, she didn't want to give Ashley a hard time for picking on her if it was just idiocy.

Days on end of Fairy Hunt '12 had given her significant doubts. Emma needed Granny and Ruby for the search and that meant more often than not Ashley was in charge.

Beatrice stared at her empty mug and the empty space where her cheeseburger and fries should have been. She looked back up at Ashley as she talked on her phone to her husband.

"Ashley?," she asked as she noticed the meatloaf that Archie and Marco ordered after hers arrived.

"One second," she said dismissively. "No, I miss you... No, I miss you more."

"Ashley?"

Ashley gave a dismissive look and turned away.

"Ashley, do we have an ETA on that cheeseburger?"

She didn't answer, only giggling as she spoke to her husband.

"Right," said Beatrice.

Ashley giggled again. Beatrice picked up her mug and stood as the restaurant patrons began to stare, save for Ashley.

She marched over and put her mug on the counter. She picked up the order pad and wrote her order down pushing the slip across the pass to a very confused cook. She then took the pot of coffee and refilled her mug as the others stared at her.

"Does anyone else need a refill?," asked Beatrice. It was only now that Ashley turned. She held
"Archie? Marco?"

"No, thank you," said Archie.

"I'm fine," said Marco.

"Right. Awesome," said Beatrice. She looked at Hart Archer sitting at the counter. "Your iced tea looks low. Let me top that off for you."

She took the glass from a befuddled Hart and Ashley quickly excused herself from the phone.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"I am waitress-ing." She refilled the tea and gave it back to Hart. "Here you go."

"Do you have any Splenda?" asked Hart.

Beatrice passed him the caddy of sweeteners.

"Get out from behind the counter," said Ashley.

"No, no, no," said Beatrice. "You're busy on the phone. I've got this."

The door opened. Leroy entered with two of the other dwarfs.

"Hey, guys," said Beatrice. "Welcome to Granny's. Go ahead, sit anywhere you want."

"Why are you doing this?" asked Ashley.

"You can figure that out yourself," said Beatrice. She took the pad and walked to the dwarves' table. "So, guys, do you need a few minutes with the menu or do you know what you want?"

"What's going on?" asked Tom, just before he sneezed.

"Yeah, do you work here now?" asked Walter.

"Doesn't Gold give you an allowance, sister?" asked Leroy.

"You can't do this, you can't take orders!" said Ashley.

"It seems to be going quicker this way," said Beatrice. She looked back at the dwarves. "Guys, what about drinks?"

"Coffee, please," said Walter.

"Coffee."

"Coffee, sister."

"She is not a waitress!" Ashley protested.

"Three coffees coming up," said Beatrice.

Archie threw his mediator hat into the ring as Beatrice got mugs of coffee. "Now, Ashley, I did hear Beatrice ask about her food a few times before she got up. Maybe you didn't hear her?"

"I wasn't on the phone that long," said Ashley.
"Yes, because time is a relative construct," said Beatrice, giving the dwarves their coffee.

"You got any cream, sister?"

Ashley scowled as Beatrice's comment went over her head. She looked back to Archie. "I was asking about the baby. The one your father tried to steal."

Beatrice handed Leroy his creamer as the tension in the restaurant grew thick.

"And here we go," said Beatrice. "How long did you make it in that argument before you played the baby card? A whole two minutes?"

"Seemed like less," said Tom, sneezing again.

"Now, Beatrice, Ashley does have some reasonable anger," said Archie. "Even if it is misdirected."

"Misdirected?," Ashley sneered. "Mother Superior is a fugitive because of her."

"Or because she tried to kill me or because she cursed me or because she killed my grandmother. Or because now she's powerless and totally scared," said Beatrice, shrugging. She looked back at the dwarves. "Guys, how are we coming with those menus?"

"What's the vegetarian special?," asked Walter.

"That would be the FLT with faux bacon, lettuce and tomato on a sourdough bun," said Beatrice. "I would order it with avocado because the faux bacon usually leaves me wanting."

"How did you know that?," asked Ashley.

"It's on the chalkboard, it's not nuclear launch codes," said Beatrice.

"I'll have the hamburger," said Leroy.

"And how would you like that done?"

"Ashley, you can't blame the sins of the father on the child," said Marco.

"He's a monster," said Ashley.

"That was three minutes for her to play the monster card," said Beatrice. "Tom? Walter?"

"I want the FLT with the avocado like you said," said Tom.

"I'll have that, too," said Walter.

"What? You guys are gonna be vegetarian now?," asked Leroy.

Beatrice took the ticket to the pass. "Next order!"

Ashley took her argument back to Archie and Marco. "What? The daughter of the Dark One isn't a monster?"

"Wow, didn't even hit four minutes," said Beatrice.

"Look, Ashley," said Leroy, "I'm not the guy's biggest fan, but Mother Superior isn't all she's cracked up to be. Besides, if Gold's good enough for Belle, there's got to be more to him, it's not
"Really our business anyway."

"Everyone always thought Belle was strange," said Ashley.

"Yeah, I know," said Beatrice. "It's crazy how she does things like reading, which I know some princesses have serious trouble with like if it's a contract."

"Cheeseburger's up!," called the cook, breaking into the silence.

"Beatrice, Ashley knows she made a mistake-" said Archie.

"He tricked me!," said Ashley.

"Yeah, really owning up to that," said Beatrice.

"Could we just get our check?," another customer asked from the corner.

Beatrice went back and collected her cheeseburger from the pass as Ashley threw her apron down, took her coat and stomped out, almost slamming into Doctor Whale as he entered.

"Ashley-" Archie called after her.

"Did she just quit?," asked Beatrice, eating a fry.

"Uh, check?," asked another customer.

"Uh, what's the point of this?," asked Emma, following Merlin into the woods as he carried a statue into the woods.

"Concordia."

"Yeah, still no clue," said Emma.

"Not much for Classics?"

"What? Like Casablanca?"

"Tragic ending, that, but much older." Merlin put the statue down and waved his hand. "Viviane, I speak to you under the auspice of Concordia."

The statue lit up and beamed a bright light into the trees.

"Wait, that statue is magical?," asked Emma.

"With it, we are kept from doing each other harm. Isn't that right, Viviane?"

There was a sigh and Mother Superior's voice echoed. "What do you want, Merlin?"

"I believe the Savior wishes to speak with you."

Emma awkwardly stepped forward. "We need to talk about your surrender."

"For what?"

"You confessed to killing Belle's mother. We can't let that go," said Emma. "You have to know that."
"There are issues at play you couldn't possibly understand."

"Okay," said Emma. "So, I'm not fully versed on fairy tale rivalries. I do know bail bonds, though, and I know about being on the run and I know that the longer you wait, the worse it always is. So, come in with me now and I promise nothing will happen to you."

There was a long pause.

"And why do you want to help her, Merlin?"

"I'm in a generous mood."

"What do you want?"

"I want to know about the boy. Where did you send him?"

The light vanished from the statue.

"So, I guess she doesn't want to help you," said Emma.

"No, I suppose not."

"Hey," said Belle, walking into the shop. "Did you get it?"

"Did I get what?"

"Rumple, please don't torture me."

Gold smiled and put a box on the top of the case. He took off the lid and Belle peered inside.

"You got it," she gasped.

"Much Ado About Nothing from a 1632 folio, remarkable condition."

"Do I want to know how much it cost?," asked Belle.

"A bargain at six thousand dollars."

Belle gasped. "You never said it would be that much!"

"You asked me to get the oldest edition of Much Ado About Nothing I could find. The perfect gift for our daughter, though I thought you would want one she could read without you worrying about nail polish."

"She's read it, she knows the whole thing." When Gold looked surprised, Belle shrugged. "David Tennant and Catherine Tate did a production on the West End. She has the download and everything."

"Well, she'll appreciate this," said Gold, taking it out.

"Shouldn't you have gloves or something?," asked Belle. "At the library, we always kept things like this in the archives."

"I've enchanted it," said Gold. "It will never age, it can't be damaged."

With obvious delight, Belle took the book in her hands. "It's so beautiful," she said. "We need a
box she can keep it in."

Gold nodded.

"What is it?," Belle asked, detecting a note of unhappiness. "Was it really too much?"

"No."

"Then what?"

Gold motioned at the book as he put it back in the box for safekeeping. "It's simply that you are getting our daughter a Christmas gift that celebrates her namesake and lets her know how special she is in your eyes and I've managed to secure a talking TARDIS cookie jar."

"Rumple..."

"No, no..."

"You love her. It's not about the gifts. Besides, you just got her a car."

"A token from a man that doesn't know her that well."

"Why don't you share the book with me?"

"No, it's yours."

"I never would have gotten it without your help. Perhaps it's too big anyway, we should save it for something like high school graduation."

Gold frowned. "High school graduation?"

"Well, it's not so soon, Rumple-"

"Two and a half years."

Belle smiled. "Then you ought to take advantage of them. Christmas break is coming up. You can spend more time together."

"Doing what?"

Belle took a breath. "I know it's a sensitive subject..."

"Belle, no."

"Merlin says you haven't taught her anything since you returned from our land and that's been months."

"Magic is a dangerous path-"

"But if it's her path to follow, Rumple, she needs to understand it and you can help her."

Leroy entered the shop.

Gold sighed. "And what can I do for you, dearie?"

"I just thought you would want to know Beatrice is waiting tables at Granny's."
"She's what?," asked Gold, acting more like he had been told she was pole dancing.

Belle shook her head. "Beatrice doesn't work at Granny's."

"Uh, I'd check again, sister."

Gold and Belle walked into Granny's. The place was busy as the lone waitress hurried to and fro. It took them both a minute to notice that the waitress was in fact their daughter and only took Gold a second longer to notice Whale watching her, giving a little too much appreciation to Beatrice's black tights and tartan miniskirt.

Gold gripped the doctor's shoulder and Whale straightened up, immediately guessing whose hand was on him.

"Leave now or I will rip out your arteries with my teeth," said Gold.

"Rumple..." said Belle.

Gold turned back to her, fully expecting to hear an impassioned argument about why he shouldn't threaten to rip out the doctor's arteries and instead all she said was, "Make sure he pays his check."

"I only have a twenty," said Whale.

"Leave it," hissed Gold.

Whale put the money down and left, just as Beatrice turned to see the twenty.

"Did Whale leave that?," she asked, picking up the bill. "He only got coffee."

"It's a tip," said Belle.

"Sweetheart, what is going on?," asked Gold.

"Well," said Beatrice, "I was just trying to get a cheeseburger when Ashley Boyd wouldn't stop talking on the phone..."

"Could I get some ketchup?"

Beatrice took the customer the ketchup. "Anyway, so I took some initiative which led to the inevitable 'your dad tried to steal my baby, your mom is weird and you're probably evil' line of argument..." She picked up Mrs. Schuman's check and payment as she led her children out. "Hey! Did you seriously mean to leave a three dollar tip on a party of ten?!"

Mrs. Schuman hurried her children out.

"Beatrice, what do you mean the inevitable-" Belle began.

"Uh, the usual, inevitable? Not to mention I think Ashley had intentionally gotten every order of mine wrong since the Curse broke. Then you know, I accused her of not reading..."

"A fair point," said Gold, eliciting a look from Belle.

"And then she stomped out and quit at which point there was no waitress, so I felt kind of bad, so I kept waiting tables and I tried to call in the other waitresses, but I get the feeling they don't answer the phone on their days off. Also, I have made almost fifty dollars in tips. That TARDIS cookie jar is so mine."
Gold looked at Belle. "Oh, sweetheart, don't spend your money on that," he said futilely.

"I've been waiting on my vegetarian lasagna forever!," another customer complained.

"I told you that item is made to order," said Beatrice, cleaning up the Schuman table. "Why do we not have a busboy?"

Beatrice walked away. Belle turned to Gold.

"I have the feeling we should be angry," said Belle.

Gold scoffed. "I don't."

"Well, maybe not so angry..."

"Let's take her home."

"This restaurant is full, Rumple," said Belle. "Granny and Ruby are out there hunting for Mother Superior. I hate to have them lose out on this much business."

Before Gold could figure out what she was hinting at, she took her coat off and went behind the counter.

"Belle..."

"You can work the register," said Belle.

---

_Then_

It was unlike Blue to have a pang of conscience. She had gotten rid of it long ago. There was that which was necessary for the good and there was that which was not necessary. All else was superfluous.

Yet the Gold Fairy's death elicited that attack of conscience. Perhaps there was a way to dispense with Rumplestiltskin.

So Blue visited the Sage, told the old woman of the proposed plan and asked if it would work.

She waited hours for an answer as the Sage consulted crystal balls and incense.

"Yes," said the Sage, her eyes obscured so that she might more clearly see the future, "yes, that might well work. If you embark on this course of action, things will go as you wish. The Dark One will leave and the child will be born into the Land Without Magic."

"Thank you," said Blue.

"Save for one."

"Who?"

"One of the first ones."

Blue felt relief. "Merlin is not a factor."

"No, it is not Merlin's wrath you should fear. This anger comes from a power above him."
"Above him?"

"Directly above him." The sage turned to Blue. "And you know the things she will do to make certain one of her daughters has her True Love."

"True Love? The Dark Princess has a True Love?"

"He is a but a boy now, but someday they will meet and he will know her for what she is."

"Where?"

"It's unclear. A darkness clouds the vision and two realms will intersect."

"Who is he?," Blue demanded.

Now

It was two hours after Gold and Belle arrived when the restaurant finally thinned out. Granny, Ruby, Emma and Merlin entered, completely befuddled by Belle and Beatrice waiting tables while Gold sat by the register.

"Ah, finally," said Gold, not wasting a minute leaving the register behind. "This adventure in the food service industry is at an end. Belle, Beatrice, we're leaving."

"What happened?," Granny asked.

"Mostly Ashley walked out," said Beatrice, untying the apron she had confiscated. "I may have criticized her never putting my cheeseburger order in and her talking on the phone and then from there it went where it usually goes when I talk to people."

"So, what?," asked Ruby. "You ran the diner?"

"She had a little help," said Belle.

"No dark magic, I hope?," asked Granny.

"Well, if your busboy hadn't called out, there wouldn't have been," said Beatrice.

"We don't have a busboy," said Ruby.

"I stand by my decisions."

"Let me guess," said Gold, gathering his coat as he walked towards Emma and Merlin. "No sign of Mother Superior?"

"I'll find her," said Emma.

"Well, let's hold out hope," Gold said with a smirk.

"What about a tie?," asked Belle as she put the returned books on a cart.

Beatrice scowled from her spot behind the circulation desk as she did her homework.

"What?," Belle asked.
"Sixteen years and you think my first Christmas present to the guy should be a tie? How predictable is that?"

Belle had to remind herself to not laugh out loud at her daughter. How she couldn't wait for Christmas Day to come so she could tell the two of them how alike they were.

"Beatrice, you're over-thinking this. Your papa will be thrilled with whatever you get him." Which was the truth and she knew it.

"Great, mediocrity can be the hallmark of our relationship."

"Well, think about what he likes."

"Right. Spinning wheels. Gold. First-born children..."

Belle smiled. That was when Ashley Boyd came in pushing her daughter in a stroller. Beatrice hid her face. Belle collected herself to be friendly to the woman.

"I was just returning these," said Ashley, holding out a selection of children's books.

Belle smiled as she took them. "And how did Alexandra like these?"

"Fine."

"Beatrice just did a wonderful Christmas display in the children's section," said Belle.

"No, thank you," she said crisply.

"We're having a Christmas party next week," said Belle.

"I don't think we can come," she said, looking at Beatrice.

"Perhaps Sean could bring Alexandra."

"What?"

"Because I would hate for her to miss out because her mother insisted upon acting like a petulant child."

Beatrice looked up. Ashley was in shock.

"Excuse me?," said Ashley.

"My daughter has done nothing, but some people in this town like yourself seem to insist that she be treated like the worst kind of criminal and I am really not in a mood to tolerate it anymore."

"Then maybe you should have thought about that when you made your deal with that imp."

Belle put the books down. Beatrice knew it was getting serious.

"My deal with Rumplestiltskin- which is his name by the way - was to save my land from Ogres, not to get to a ball to meet a prince."

"And we know how you got out of that."

Belle scoffed. "If you think sex could get me out of eternal servitude to the Dark One, you obviously don't know him that well."
"Oh, ew..." said Beatrice.

"Well, now we all know what you really did," said Ashley, she said pointing her eyes in Beatrice's direction.

"Is your worldview so dim that you think that I would carelessly trade away a child for comfort just because you did?"

"How else do you explain it?"

"My daughter is the product of True Love, not a deal, not a demon, not any of the hundred other things stupid people have said since we arrived," said Belle. "So, why don't you go gossip about that?"

Ashley shoved the stroller around and left in as much of a huff as she could manage.

Belle turned back to Beatrice.

"So, where did that come from?", asked Beatrice.

"It's what I should have done all along," said Belle. "You have nothing to be ashamed of and you don't need to take any more abuse from morons. Is that clear?"

"Clear," said Beatrice.

---

Then

Blue hovered outside the cottage. It was comfortable.

They weren't poor. They weren't desperate. The parents were both scholars, even the mother most unusually. Three sons and it was the youngest she had to look at.

So she had to try to reason with the parents.

She hated trying to reason with people. Of course the parents would be the only people in the Enchanted Forest dependent on reason.

"I just want to make certain that I have this right," said the man, glancing over at his wife. "There is a Dark Princess who has not yet been born and our youngest son is to be her True Love?"

"Yes."

"So, you think we should send our youngest son through a portal to another realm because..." The mother just shook her head. "Do people just normally do whatever you say when you show up?"

"She will be a terrible darkness."

"Do you have any more specifics on that terrible darkness?"

The Blue Fairy did not.

"Well, thank you for coming..."

The boy had one downfall that the Blue Fairy easily discovered.

He was terribly curious.
So if a portal opened he just had to see where it led to.

Now

"How do you two know each other?," asked Emma.

"Pardon?"

"You heard me," said Emma as she and Merlin trudged through the woods. "You and Mother Superior. The Blue Fairy, whatever. Beatrice thought once she was your ex and Henry's book has this story about you and an evil fairy you have to keep your daughter safe from. The daughter sounded an awful lot like Belle."

"Well, savior, you've used your miraculous truth telling powers to discern that I slept with her. No wonder they made you sheriff."

"I get the idea it was more complicated than that."

"Things always were more complicated in our circle."

"Your circle?"

"Yes, the blue tart and I are part of a very exclusive club. We were there at the beginning."

"The beginning of what?"

Emma didn't get an answer out of Merlin because Ruby shouted out.

"I've got her!," Ruby shouted.

They hurried up to where Ruby and Granny stood frozen.

"What? Why aren't you guys going after her?," asked Emma.

"We can't."

Emma and Merlin's gaze went down to the demarcated town line.

"She saw it," said Ruby. "She saw it and just went over."

"What are you talking about?," the clipped tone of Mother Superior came from across the line. Emma hurried over, grabbing the nun.

"Sheriff Swan, what is going on?," she asked. "What are we doing out here in the woods?"

"Come on," said Emma, taking her by the arm. "You're going back to the station."

"You evil soul," said Merlin.

"Do I know you?," Mother Superior asked in shock.

Emma took Mother Superior.

Merlin turned to Granny and Ruby. "Did she say anything before she went across?"
"It didn't make sense," said Granny. "Game, set, match?"

"Not by a long shot, Blue," said Merlin. "Not by a long shot."
The crowd at Granny's usually tried not to look when Mr. Gold came in and he usually didn't make too much of a spectacle of himself.

This was different.

Gold came in and let the cold wind slam the door shut. Granny and Ruby looked up first.

He had that look on his face. That look that said someone was going to die.

"Has anyone seen my daughter?"

No one answered.

"You see, that was not a rhetorical question," Gold said. "I would never ask any of you a rhetorical question because I don't have a month."

Gold took his cane and lifted it to where it could be swung. Fearing broken glass and property damage, Ruby spoke up.

"She came in, but she didn't stay," said Ruby. "She didn't even order."

Gold put his cane back in its usual position and looked at Ruby. "Was that so hard to answer? Now, what do you mean she didn't order?"

"I don't know," said Ruby. "She walked in the door, looked in and left."

Gold grimaced and left, making more noise in his exit than anyone would have previously thought humanly possible. Ruby looked at Granny.

"Better call the sheriff," said Granny. "If anything happened to that girl, there's gonna be hell and someone's gonna pay it."
In the library, three very angry women had grown quiet.

Belle was fuming. "Who exactly does she think she is?," she asked.

Mary Margaret nodded. "She had no right to say those things to you."

Regina had her arms crossed and the definite look that someone was going to die. "If she thinks she can take my son, she does not know who she's dealing with."

"Regina, Tamara was just talking about joint custody," said Mary Margaret.

"Out of town," said Regina. "In New York and she doesn't think she has to run it by us when she wants to abduct a boy from his family?"

"Look, I'm not happy about it, either," said Mary Margaret. "But maybe this is between Emma and Neal."

"Excuse me?," asked Regina. "Some stepmother walks in and gets more say than me? The woman who raised him, more say than you his grandmother and you, his sort of grandmother?"

Belle frowned at Regina.

"Don't give me the dirty look," said Regina. "I wasn't the one who walked in here and practically called you Rumplestiltskin's concubine. I'm one of the few people that understands you actually love the twisted little sociopath."

Belle tried to take a deep breath as the door opened.

Regina motioned. "And here he is. Do you know what your son and his potential bride are up to?"

"I called," said Gold, looking at Belle.

"Sorry, we were in the middle of something," said Belle.

"Is Beatrice not here?"

"No, she hasn't been by all morning," said Belle, her face dropping. "What's wrong?"

"I sent her to Granny's to get lunch and she never returned."

"Have you tried calling her?," asked Mary Margaret.

"No, because I am an idiot," said Gold, shooting her a glare.

"What about her car?," asked Regina. "She didn't drive off to Waterville for Starbucks again and not tell you, did she?"

"Her car is still parked outside the shop. Again. Not an idiot."

"I'll call David and Emma," said Mary Margaret.

"I'll go ask around," said Regina.

"You're helping?," Gold asked with a sneer.

"Doctor Hopper told me to find different outlets for my anger and I think yelling at some of the
town morons to look for Beatrice would be a great outlet," said Regina, picking up her coat.

Mary Margaret shook her head. "I'm not sure that's what Archie meant."

Regina stalked out as Mary Margaret followed.

Beatrice awoke in the woods.

It was cold. Like really cold.

She sat up and looked around. Yeah, the woods. Though she could have sworn it was almost dark when she came out here and now it was light. She couldn't have just fallen asleep in the woods, could she? Surely there would be a search party by now and her father threatening people.

Suddenly Beatrice found that she did not remember why she had walked into the woods.

She stood up and found that she had clothes on she didn't remember: high black boots, a deep blue dress and a cloak.

A cloak. That was new.

She did see a red leather messenger bag on the ground, though and looked inside in search of her iPhone.

No iPhone. No iPad. Just books.

Beatrice considered this. She was in the woods, knocked out and robbed? That was an answer. Still, she wondered about the cloak. She put the messenger bag over her shoulder and started walking.

She walked down the path where she encountered a man in brown clothes with two boys in similar garb.

"Hi!," she said hurrying over.

The man's eyes widened in shock at her and he fell to his knees. He quickly signalled his boys to do the same.

Okay, that was weird.

"Hi, sorry, didn't mean to bother you, but could I borrow your cell phone?"

"My cell phone, your highness?," he asked, sounding it out.

"Yeah, do you have a cell phone? I am just kind of lost out here and I was hoping to call my dad."

The boys looked up at her in terror.

"Or my mom..."

"Please, Princess. That's not necessary."

Beatrice looked around. "It's a little necessary, I'm kind of lost."

"If you just go up the path, you can see your home from there."
Beatrice frowned. "Really?" She couldn't remember her house being by anything heavily wooded.

"Please don't summon the Dark One."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Oh, we're gonna do that whole thing again? Fine. Whatever."

Beatrice continued up the path and she did not see the pink Victorian.

She saw the Dark Castle.

"Right..." she said. "This is about to be the weirdest dream ever."

---

It had grown dark. And cold. They had split up the search party. Emma was set up at the side of the road with Merlin, Neal and Ruby. David and Mary Margaret had taken the dwarves to another location. Belle was pacing, but Emma kept looking at Gold. The guy was a hair's edge on this side of sanity.

"Tell me why your blood magic thing doesn't work again," said Emma, glaring at Merlin.

"Because I spent a great deal of time making certain that Beatrice could not be traced by blood magic," said Merlin.

Emma frowned as she flipped through the maps. "And why the hell would you do that?"

"Everyone has relatives they don't like," said Merlin.

Belle walked back and joined them. "She's still not answering. She always answers."

"Well, her phone's off but the last known location was out here," said Emma.

"It hasn't been off since she got it," said Belle.

"We'll find her," said Merlin. "Try not to worry."

"We've got half the town out here," said Emma. "And Regina's back checking on Moe and the knights."

"The usual suspects," Belle said with a grimace.

"If there is anything for Her Majesty to discover, I'm certain she will," said Merlin. "She's not had a chance to shout abuse at people lately."

Belle chewed her lip nervously as she tried Beatrice's phone again. Emma caught sight of Gold staring at something.

"Gold?," asked Emma, walking over. "Did you find something?"

Gold rubbed his hand over the burned tree trunks. "She was here."

"Beatrice starts forest fires now?"

"What are you teaching her, Pop?," Neal asked.

"How to defend herself," Gold said sharply. "Which she obviously needs."

"How do you know it was her?" asked Belle.
Merlin waved his hand over the tree. "Magic is like everything else in the universe. It always leaves fingerprints."

Emma looked closer. "Okay, so let's look at this like a crime scene. Whoever Beatrice was... doing the fire-ball at was right here. Neal, you stand here."

Neal did.

Merlin nodded. "I see. Belle, go over there."

"What?"

"You're her height," said Emma. "It'll help."

"And what does this reenactment prove?," Gold sneered as the others went into position.

"Well," said Emma, "Beatrice came out here for a reason. Like she was following someone. Whoever that was made her think she needed a fire-ball and judging by the usual level of Beatrice's magic she needed it pretty bad. So she had to have a reason, right? She didn't just run."

Merlin and Emma started looking at the ground.

"What are you looking for?," asked Belle.

"Cause for defense," said Merlin, moving further down towards the tree. He picked up something metal and held it up for Emma. "Will this do, Savior?"

"Shell casing," said Emma. "Someone fired a gun at her."

"Perhaps our lupine search party ought to look from here," said Merlin.

On the way to the Dark Castle, she decided that was it. She was having an incredibly lucid dream. That always happened with Midol PM. Usually it was just episodes of Doctor Who and Sherlock that didn't make sense and then when she woke up, she realized it was because her subconscious just did crappy writing. Dreaming about the Enchanted Forest, that was new, but maybe it was the Christmas break magic lessons? There would be time to dissect this all later and eventually in the office of the psychiatrist she was going to desperately need someday.

She went through the gardens and opened the door, finding herself back in the Great Hall.

Though it wasn't as dark as when she saw it. The torches were lit, there were candles and roses on the tables.

"Beatrice, where have you been?"

She turned to see her mother emerging from the side door, dressed in some sort of garnet gown with gold accents.

"Oh, like the Christmas video, nice."

"What?," asked Belle. She looked Beatrice up and down. "Your cloak is soaking. You're ice cold."

"Oh," said Beatrice. She did feel quite cold. "I think I passed out in the snow."

Belle's eyes widened. "You did what? Go upstairs and get yourself in a hot bath."
"Right..." said Beatrice. "So, where is that?"

Gold paced up and down the strip of road that Ruby had begun searching from.

"Rumple?," asked Belle.

"I am pointless."

"What?"

"I couldn't protect her. I'm not even helping. I can't even find her," he seethed.

"We will find her," said Belle.

"I didn't raise her. I can't teach her. Exactly what have I done for her since the moment I sired her?"

"Rumple, don't speak like that. You love her and she loves you. She's so excited you're teaching her, even if she doesn't show it."

"I've got her!," Ruby shouted.

Emma and Neal ran down, Gold followed cursing his cane. Belle tried to help him and he shook his head, urging her on.

He was the last to arrive, watching as the others huddled around her. Belle held her.

"Beatrice? Beatrice?" She looked up at Gold. "She's ice cold."

"Here," said Gold, taking off his coat, helping Belle wrap her in it.

"Rumple, just fix her," said Belle.

Gold waved his hand.

Nothing happened. He looked over at Merlin who shared his expression of dread.

"Rumple?," asked Belle.

"Get her in the car. Now," said Gold.

It was with some relief that Beatrice got escorted into her own room. Dream Belle had fussed over her, hadn't even left the bathroom while Beatrice soaked in the hot bath. She then handed her a silk nightgown and a velvet robe trimmed in fur.

The room seemed like something she might like. It did have her lamb on the bed. It was purple with tapestries, silk sheets and a roaring fire. There were books and journals with her handwriting. She took the one at her bedside.

"A History of Magical Intervention in the Far North Kingdom." She shrugged. "Okay, I guess that makes sense."

She started to hear her mother's voice as her worry carried down the hall. "I don't know, Rumple, she's not acting like herself. I'm afraid she's hurt her head or something."
"No need to worry yourself, sweetheart. I'll soon have it taken care of." The door opened. "Well, well, I was summoned to attend to a beautiful princess..."

Beatrice flipped through the book, finding that it had an account of her great-grandmother, Catherine the Ice Princess. "Yeah, laying it on a little thick, aren't you?"

She looked up and froze.

Okay. It was definitely her father. There were some changes, though. Like the greasy hair and the weird gray, gold, green skin. What color was that? Oh, the creepy nails. And the eyes. And...

Oh, God, what was with the teeth?

She just needed to breathe.

Seriously, the teeth.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?," he asked.

"Um..."

"Beatrice, why are you looking at your papa like that?," asked Belle.

Rumplestiltskin cupped her face with his hands. "Something is terribly wrong."

"Yeah, have you not seen a dermatologist for that?," asked Beatrice.

"A what?," asked Belle.

"Someone's cast a terrible spell on you."

"No, I'm pretty sure this is just a dream."

Belle looked at Rumplestiltskin. "What sort of spell?"

Beatrice now moved to the clothing. "What are you wearing? Were you at a steampunk convention?"

"Nothing she has said since she got home makes sense," said Belle.

"Yeah, but you're kind of used to that, right?," asked Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin smiled. "Well, you sound like yourself at least. What do you last remember?"

"Waking up in the snow."

"Before that?"

Beatrice searched her memory. "We were at your shop."

"My shop?" He seemed amused.

"Yeah, you were showing me how to conjure something."

"Conjure?"

"Yeah, then you sent me to get lunch. I went to Granny's and I thought I saw..."
"Saw who, sweetheart?"

"Owen."

"Who's Owen?"

Beatrice motioned at Belle. "They had Thai food once."

Rumplestiltskin turned to Belle. "Who is Owen?"

"Rumple, I have no idea."

Beatrice was distracted. "Now, what was it about Tamara? Did I see Tamara?"

"Beatrice, where was this shop of mine?," Rumplestiltskin asked, sounding rather skeptical.

"In Storybrooke."

"And where is Storybrooke?"

"Maine."

"Maine?"


"And what do you know of the Land Without Magic, Beatrice?," asked Rumplestiltskin. "What were we doing there?"

"Um, you know Regina cast the Dark Curse?"

Beatrice watched as their expressions turned grave.

"Beatrice, who told you about the Dark Curse?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"It's not really a secret." She watched as they exchanged glances. "Is it?"

"Rumple, what does that mean?," asked Belle.

"That evil soul." He looked at Belle. "Well, isn't it obvious? Finally, the Evil Queen has come to seek her revenge for me not allowing her to enact her glorious curse!"

"After so long?," Belle asked in disbelief. "Rumple, I don't think Regina has that in her anymore."

"Which was obviously part of her plan."

"So," said Beatrice, "just to clarify, you think Regina's cast a spell that has made me remember a whole other world and that's a lie?"

"Yes."

"Doctor Who is not a lie."

"I'll have to pay the Her Majesty a visit..." Rumplestiltskin seethed.

"Rumple, you can't," said Belle.
"Don't worry yourself, Belle."

"It's Emma's ball," she protested.

"It's Emma's what?," asked Beatrice.

Belle followed Rumplestiltskin. "Beatrice has been waiting for this for months. She's her best friend."

"Whoa, Emma's my best friend?," asked Beatrice.

"I don't really concern myself with Emma throwing herself in front of suitors," said Rumplestiltskin.

Beatrice snorted. Her parents looked at her.

"Sorry, it's just that's pretty funny from where I'm sitting."

Rumplestiltskin grimaced. "Fine. You may go to the ball, but I will accompany you lest the Evil Queen accelerate her plans."

Belle smiled. "I know it's the right decision."

Rumplestiltskin looked at her. "I'm going to get you something to eat."

Belle looked at Beatrice. "This must be so confusing for you, sweetheart."

"No," said Beatrice. "See eventually the Doctor or Sherlock will pop up and I'll know what's what."

Belle frowned. "Who's the Doctor?"

"Oh, you know he's a Time Lord."

She looked at her curiously. "A Time Lord? From what land?"

"Gallifrey."

It was the quickest anyone in Storybrooke had ever seen the Cadillac go as it hurried towards the hospital. They were soon met in the ambulance bay as Neal and Merlin got Beatrice out and helped the nurses get her on the stretcher.

Doctor Whale was out first. "What happened to her?," he asked, shining a light in her eyes.

Neal shook his head. "We don't know. We found her passed out in the woods."

They tried to hurry her into a trauma room. Belle wasn't far back, pushing open the doors with Gold a step behind her.

"Family's not allowed," said a nurse.

"Really?," asked Gold. "How do you propose to keep us out, dearie?"

With the threat of the Dark One issued, the nurse backed down.

Belle stood at the foot of the gurney as the doctors and nurses flew around Beatrice, bringing out
blankets and hanging bags of warm saline. Gold took her hand.

Mary Margaret looked nervously at the door to the trauma room.

She looked back at Emma. "And Gold couldn't just fix it?"

Emma shrugged. "He warmed her up in the car. He couldn't do much else."

Mary Margaret shook her head. "That is so not good."

"I don't understand," said David. "Everyone who would want to hurt Beatrice is locked up. Who could have that much magic?"

"Maybe," said Emma. "Or maybe she just ran into something. Or maybe it's not magic at all."

The door opened to the waiting room. Regina and Henry entered.

"What are you guys doing here?," asked Emma.

"He was worried about Beatrice," said Regina. "We heard you found her."

"Yeah," said Emma.

"Is she going to be okay?," asked Henry.

"The doctors are with her right now to make sure of just that," Mary Margaret said with a reassuring smile.

"Where are Gold and Belle?," asked Regina.

"They're with her," said David.

"You see, Henry?," said Regina. "She's with her parents and the doctors. I'm sure she'll be just fine."

"Here, Henry, let's get a snack," said David, leading him away.

Regina looked at Emma. "How is she really?"

"We don't know," said Emma.

"Well, Gold hasn't fixed her. That's not a good sign. Where's Merlin?"

Emma looked around. "He was around here somewhere."

Regina looked over at Neal pacing. "Where is that woman? Shouldn't she be here?," she asked, her voice dripping with contempt.

"Tamara?," Emma asked. "He said she was out for a long run, he couldn't reach her."

Just then, Tamara entered.

"Oh, good," said Regina. She looked at Emma. "Did your mother tell you what happened?"

"Now is so not appropriate, Regina," said Mary Margaret.

Tamara and Neal shared a hug and whispered. The door to the trauma room opened and the
gurney went out. They crowded towards the door as Belle and Gold came out.

"How is she?," asked Neal.

Belle shrugged. "They don't know. She's getting an MRI. I can't go in."

"Do you want to get something to eat?," Mary Margaret asked.

Belle shook her head. "I'm going to follow her as long as I can."

"I'm so sorry Mr. and Mrs. Gold," said Tamara.

Gold glared as Belle pulled him away.

Beatrice came downstairs and into the Great Hall. "So, the Enchanted Clock told me to meet you here?"

Belle nodded. "I told your tutors not to expect you. I don't want you walking all on your own under these circumstances."

"Yeah," said Beatrice. "Not great."

"Besides, I have some tutelage of my own to give," Belle said with a smile.

"Oh?"

"Your first ball, remember?," asked Belle. "You have to learn to dance."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Come on."

"I am serious. I won't have people up there saying the Dark Princess is so uncivilized she can't dance."

"Since when do you care what people think?"

Belle laughed. "Alright, you caught me. I want you to enjoy yourself and I know you will be all to eager to play the wallflower." She held her arms out.

Beatrice took her arms. "Dancing with my mom. This isn't pathetic at all."

"Now hands," said Belle, "your partner's above your waist. If he doesn't do that, correct him and if he goes lower again, try to excuse yourself before Papa can turn him into something."

"So, no pressure there," said Beatrice.

"I'll lead," said Belle. She then started Beatrice on a series of simple steps, during which they both kept fouling up.

"We're both clumsy, this is never going to work," said Beatrice.

"She's right, you know," said Rumplestiltskin.

"I am trying, Rumple," said Belle. "Don't break my concentration."

"Perhaps she needs to see it done properly," he said. He turned to Beatrice. "May I cut in?"
"Go for it," said Beatrice, stepping back.

Rumplestiltskin waved his hand and music came from nowhere. He bowed and she curtsied with smirks on their faces.

They took each other's hands and began to dance.

Then Beatrice realized what was happening.

Beauty was dancing with the Beast in Beast's Castle.

Then she might have started singing.

"Tale as old as time... song as old as rhyme... ever just the same, ever a surprise, finding you can change, learning you were wrong..."

"Beatrice, what is that?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"That's just this thing..."

"A thing?"

"If you're so quick to mock, you should practice with your papa," said Belle, handing her off.

"What? No."

Before she realized it, she was dancing with Rumplestiltskin.

"Chin up," said Rumplestiltskin. "Remember who you are."

Beatrice suddenly had a vision of herself in this same room, only she was younger. Rumplestiltskin was playfully dancing with her before he picked her up and let her swing around in the air as she squealed with delight.

"Beatrice, what is it?"

"I'm having a flashback."

"A flashback?"

"Beatrice?," asked Belle.

Beatrice stopped dancing. "That never happened."

She started getting more. Her mother reading to her in the gardens out front. Her father playing tea party with her, dolls as guests with the teapot and cups flying in the air?

The chipped cup.

She looked over to a pedestal. The chipped cup sat on it. She walked over.

"Beatrice?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"You keep that thing in your shop, behind a lock and a spell. I've seen it once. I've never even touched it."

"Of course you've touched it," said Belle.
"Here," said Rumplestiltskin, taking it off the pedestal, placing it in her hands.
Beatrice frowned. "I've never held it. How do I know what it feels like?"

"What do you mean?"

"In a dream, you can only do anything with information you already have so how do I know what the cup feels like?"
Belle and Rumplestiltskin exchanged their umpteenth look of concern.

"How am I having flashbacks to things that never happened? We never played tea party."

"Of course you did," said Belle.

"You knew about that?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Well, don't worry, I haven't told anyone the Dark One liked to play tea party."

"I wouldn't say I liked it."

"No, no, no..." said Beatrice. "Why is this as real as that was?"

"Beatrice," said Belle, "this other world the Queen's put in your head. What happened in it?"

"Long or short?," asked Beatrice.

"Long, I should think," said Rumplestiltskin.

"The Dark Curse was cast, but you thought she was dead. She was really in Regina's dungeon, only thirteen years later Regina found out Mom was pregnant with me and sent her out of town. Fifteen years later, we came back and I met you for the first time."

"For the first time?," asked Rumplestiltskin. "You mean I didn't raise you?"

"No, I actually thought you were kind of creepy..."

"Creepy?"

She looked down to the distinct lack of a cane. "That seems so real."

"Beatrice," said Belle, smiling as she took her hands. "You were born here. We've always lived here together and your papa and I have raised you together."

"I know," said Beatrice. "Wait. How do I know that?"

"We should eat and depart for the Winter Castle," said Rumplestiltskin. He looked at her in concern. "Beatrice?"

Beatrice screamed, bolting up.

She was blinded by fluorescent lights and found herself connected to tubes that she tried to claw at.

"Beatrice, it's alright." She realized her mother was at her side, trying to keep her from taking out an I.V. She wasn't in her gown, though, just a fairly ordinary dress. She looked towards the door.
"Rumple!"
"Mom?"
"Yes."

She looked around. "I'm in the hospital."

"Yes, we found you in the woods, what were you doing out there?"

The door opened. Gold rushed in with Neal and Emma.

"Oh, sweetheart..." said Gold, hugging her.

"Your skin's normal."

"What?," asked Emma.

"It was weird in my dream," said Beatrice. "Like this weird green gray with gold?"

Gold looked at her in shock.

"Bea, how did you know that?," asked Neal.

"Wait, your skin used to be a different color?," asked Emma.

Gold looked at Belle. "Did you-"

"No, I never said anything."

"Beatrice, why were you in the woods?," asked Emma.

She looked up at Gold. "I was going to tell you something. Wait, no, I already told you."

"What was it, sweetheart?," asked Gold.

Suddenly, a bolt of pain raged through Beatrice and she screamed.

Then it went black.

"Beatrice?," Belle asked frantically. "Beatrice?"

Emma ran to the door and shouted for Doctor Whale.

Whale and a nurse rushed in, pushing Belle to the side. She threw herself in Gold's arms.

"What is wrong with her?!," Belle demanded.

Whale shook his head. "I don't know. Her MRI came back clean. There's no cause for this."

Emma had heard words like those before when Henry had been in the hospital. "Like magic."

She caught Gold's glance as he seethed.

It was definitely his 'Someone is about to die' face, not that she could blame him.

"Gold?," she asked as if that could stop the upcoming homicide.
"Pop?" asked Neal. "What are you thinking?"

Merlin entered. "Emma."

Beatrice awoke on the floor of the Great Hall.

"There we are, sweetheart," said Rumplestiltskin.

"I was back, for a minute. I was in the hospital."

"The other world?" asked Belle. She looked at Rumplestiltskin. "What does that mean?"

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "It must be part of the Queen's curse, trying to make that world seem more real."

"No, pretty sure it was real." She paused. "Or maybe not."

Emma followed him out and down the hall. "She was awake for a second. She said she was going to tell Gold something."

"I have someone I think you should meet."

"Where are we going?" asked Emma.

"I did some investigating, you know. I'm a big Law & Order fan."

They walked into the ICU.

"Should we be in here?" asked Emma.

Merlin pulled open a curtain revealing nurses working around a man whose head was wrapped in gauze.

"Burn victim?" asked Emma.

"Now, either, this total stranger with no connection to Storybrooke had the misfortune to have his car catch fire on the exact same day...""Or we just found who Beatrice was throwing a fire-ball at." She looked at Merlin. "And who she had to tell Gold about."

Merlin nodded.

"What's his name?"

"Greg Mendel."
Chapter 37

Then

Rumplestiltskin awoke with a start on the floor of his cottage.

He wasn't supposed to wake up.

He looked up to see Merlin sitting at his table, eating an apple.

"Good morning, sunshine."

"Merlin..."

"Good. You remember me."

"I haven't seen you in years."

"Did I miss anything?," he asked, taking a bite.

"Well, I am the Dark One now. I've lost my son, my wife-"

"To be fair, you did rip her heart out and crush it," said Merlin. He shrugged. "I'm just saying you may want to think about your life choices before you lament your tragedies."

"What do you want?"

"Obviously, to drag you out of your stupor," said Merlin. "Look at yourself. While you've been off in some kind of fantasy land, in the real world you've been lying in your own sick."

"I can't die."

"Yeah, well. I'm going to have to suggest doing something other than escaping your life."

"What the hell do you care?"

"Because I have plans for you, Rumplestiltskin and those plans do not involve you spending an eternity in a purple haze."

"The only thing I want is my son and I can't get to him. I had one chance and the pirate took that."

Merlin sat back. "I am so disappointed in you."

Though he wouldn't say it, Rumplestiltskin couldn't help but agree.

"You've said it yourself, but here's the proof before me. Without your son, you will turn to dust. Unfortunately, I can't have that." Merlin reached into his breast pocket and pulled out the Dark One's dagger.

"What are you doing with that?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"I'm going to eat a steak. What do you think? I'm controlling the Dark One." He saw
Rumplestiltskin's glare. "Yeah, sunshine, not your best hiding place."

"And what do you bid me do?," asked Rumplestiltskin, his voice dripping with contempt.

"Oh, don't worry, sunshine. I'll give it back to you."

"When will you do that?"

"After I find you something to do for the next three hundred years."

Now

Emma looked at Merlin. "So, what's your plan?"

"You may not like it."

"I don't know if there's any of this that I like," said Emma.

Merlin walked into Greg's room. Emma followed.

"You can't be in here," the nurse protested.

"Do you know who I am?," asked Merlin.

"Yes."

"Then save yourself the trouble," he said, motioning for her to leave.

The nurse left. He turned to Greg.

"Now, do you know who I am?"

Greg moaned.

Merlin waved his hand.

"What? What just happened?," he asked.

"I have healed you," said Merlin. "Now, tell me who you are."

"What? I'm Greg Mendel."

"I'm not worried about your name," said Merlin. "Who are you and who are you working for?"

"I don't know.-"

Merlin waved his hand again and Greg screamed.

"What did you do?," asked Emma.

"I un-healed him," He looked at Greg. "What I give, I can take away. Understand?"

Merlin waved his hand again. "Now, what did you do?"

Emma found his bag on a nearby table and started going through it. "There's a shipping receipt for an address here in Storybrooke."
Merlin looked at Greg. "Setting up shop, are we?" He leaned in. "Tell you what, why don't I have a look around and then maybe you'll be more likely to tell me what you really want."

Beatrice sat in her guest room at the Winter Castle and looked through the trunks the servants had brought up. There were dresses galore and books and jewels.

Without warning, the door opened and a sixteen year old Emma strode in, wearing a long blue dress with dirt at the hem. Her hair was a wreck and she looked as if she would rather be anywhere else as she flopped onto Beatrice's bed.

"You look different," said Beatrice.

She grimaced. "My mother says I have to learn to walk like a lady, whatever that means. She is such a hypocrite. When she was my age, she was living in the forest, fighting Black Knights."

Beatrice frowned. "Yeah, I think that mostly has to do with the Evil Queen that was trying to kill her."

"Whatever," said Emma. "My father is worse. He won't even let me go anywhere with the knights. What is the point in being a princess if all I get to do is be locked in a castle learning to dance?"

"I think that's pretty much in the princess job description," said Beatrice.

"Not for you," Emma whined. "You get to do magic and have actual tutors."

"I can't help the magic part, really."

"Yeah," Emma snorted. She laughed. "Remember that time we were five and you made it rain for a week so we could have a moat?"

"No..."

Emma leaned up on her elbows. "Yeah, I heard our mothers talking. She said there was some spell, giving you memory problems."

"Yeah, that's one opinion."

"What? You've got another theory?"

"I think I'm in a coma."

"A what?"

"God, you guys don't really know anything here."

"Sorry, we can't all be as gifted scholars as you, Princess Beatrice." She turned on her side. "Speaking of which, I tried to invite your boy."

"My boy?"

"Yeah, yeah, I know, he's not your boy, whatever. It seems that whatever he's doing at the university is too important to be interrupted, but he's sending his brother in his place. Sherrinford, not the other one."

Beatrice tried to process. "Sorry, I have a college-aged boyfriend?"
Emma eyed her. "Wow. That spell must be really bad. Do you remember Alexandra?"

"Alexandra?" Beatrice searched her mind. She only knew one. "Cinderella's kid?"

"So you do. Bad luck there. Anyway, my mom made me invite her so you can look forward to the part of the evening where her mom and your mom get into their usual thing. Still, if we didn't the party would be completely boring."

"Anyone else coming?" asked Beatrice.

"Princess Melody. Briar Rose, though, she's just been weird since her mom ran off with that warrior chick-" "Sorry, who is Briar Rose?"

"Wow, you're missing that, too? Queen Aurora? Ran off with Mulan? All everybody in the whole realm talked about for months?"

"Whoa, Aurora did what?"

"Ran off!" Emma smiled. "Though I did hear your mom had an adventure with Mulan once."

"Eww," said Beatrice, recalling the story in her book. "It was totally not like that, though, if it was so what? Lots of people have experimental phases."

"Come on, your mom's whole life is an experimental phase."

"Hey!"

"I admire her. I could use an experimental phase myself. End up with a guy everybody hates and nobody tells you what to do ever again."

"Emma, this whole conversation is getting so beyond weird you have no idea..."

Emma sat all the way up. "In this other world Regina put in your head, who am I?"

"Who are you?"

"Yeah. Tell me. For fun."

"You're the Savior."

"Are we still best friends?"

"Not really." Emma looked concerned and Beatrice shrugged. "It would be weird. You're thirteen years older than me. You have a kid."

"I have a kid?," Emma asked with a sneer. "How old was I?"

"Eighteen. You kind of had him in jail."

"I was in jail!," Emma squealed almost gleefully.

"Then you sort of reformed and became a bail bonds person, then sheriff."

"What? Like the Huntsman?" She leaned in. "Is it just me or does that guy have a really great
The door opened and Rumplestiltskin came in.
"You don't knock?," asked Emma.
"I don't need to knock, dearie. I know Beatrice isn't up to anything. I can't say the same for you."
Emma bounced up and gave Rumplestiltskin a hug he seemed to reciprocate.
"Oh, my God I need my iPhone," said Beatrice.
"Your what?," asked Emma.
"You know our Beatrice isn't feeling well," said Rumplestiltskin. "I came to make certain she was resting and instead I found you. Gossiping I take it? Or some chat about boys you're far too young for?"
"We're sixteen," said Emma.
"Get ready for bed," said Rumplestiltskin.
"It's barely eight," Emma moaned.
"Seriously, is that it?," asked Beatrice. "Time without TV is slow."
"I'll get in my night-clothes, I won't keep her up, I promise," said Emma.
"Fine," he relented. "I'll have the servants bring your supper up here."
He left.

Belle came out of the room.
"Any change?," asked Tamara.
"No." Belle looked at Neal. "Would you mind sitting with Rumple?"
"Sure," said Neal.
Neal got up and went inside.
"Are you getting something?," asked Regina. "Do you want me to go with you?"
"No, thank you," said Belle. "I'm just going to the restroom."
"I could sit with Beatrice for a while if you wanted to go home or get a nap," said Tamara.
"No, thank you, I'm fine," said Belle, walking off.
"It is painfully obvious you don't have children."
Tamara rolled her eyes. "Is there a reason you hate me?"
"I wouldn't say hate. I don't know you well enough." Regina put her paper down and eyed Tamara. "Belle is one of the few people I would trust with my son and that's why. You aren't even on the list."
"And why's that?"

"You underestimate that woman. She was a prisoner in my castle and she never played her trump card."

Tamara rolled her eyes. "And what was her trump card?"

"She was pregnant with that girl. If she had told me, I would have gladly handed over anything for Rumplestiltskin's child. Most people would do anything to get out of my dungeon. Some have made worse bargains for less. She never did. She angered me at first, but when I became a mother, I finally understood. I respect her for it. So don't think you're going to be able to smooth over what you said to her earlier with some pathetic offer to help."

"It must be a sick world you come from."

"And what sort of world do you come from where you think you can take my son?"

"And you wonder why Neal and I want to get away from all this crap. You're threatened by me."

Regina smirked. "I would laugh if that wasn't so pathetic." She leaned forward. "You don't want to try me, dear."

Then

"What are we doing here?" Rumpelstiltskin demanded as he and Merlin materialized.

Merlin glanced back at him as they approached the manor house. "On occasion, people ask for my help. The trouble is, I don't really do house calls."

"Oh, you don't?"

"Not for the general public, my help is reserved for a special few."

"And what did I do to become so special?" asked Rumpelstiltskin.

"It's not what you've done, it's what you're going to do."

Rumpelstiltskin followed Merlin to the entrance of the home. A servant let them in and went to get the master.

"The lord here is a baronet," said Merlin. "He would like to be a higher rank, even married one incredibly stupid girl to get her dowry to buy a title. I mean, really stupid. She asked her servants for lizard's milk. Not once, not twice but every bloody morning."

"And why are you telling me this?"

Merlin eyed him. "You haven't been around the nobles much, have you? I mean, the only time you've stepped in a castle is to burn it down and I can't imagine you spent a lot of time chatting."

"Your point?"

"The art of the deal involves knowing what your adversary wants. Once you know what they want, you can predict what they're going to do. How many deals do you think you'll have to make to get to the Land Without Magic?"
"And what does this baronet have to do with getting to the Land Without Magic?"

"Nothing, but I'm the one holding the dagger, sunshine."

"My Lord Merlin," said the baronet as he entered.

"Ah, Lord Melchett," said Merlin.

Melchett looked at Rumplestiltskin. "And your friend?"

"Don't mind him," said Merlin. "He's the Dark One."

"Oh."

"Now, I've explained to the Dark One a bit about your problem and he is going to help you."

"I am?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Yes, our baronet needs a new rank..." said Merlin. "It's too bad there's not some nobleman out there in need of being removed. Yes, just too bad, some Duke perhaps..."

"I don't want anyone to die," said Melchett.

"Look, did you come to play or not?," asked Merlin. "Because I am trying to do something here and I really can't have people wasting my time."

"What about my time?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"You have three hundred years, sunshine. I don't really care what you do between now and then so long as you keep yourself off dangerous conscious altering roots."

"What happens in three hundred years?"

"Not telling," said Merlin. He paused. "Though I do need you to get a nicer house."

"Excuse me?"

"Well, it's a step up from your hut, but it's too small and in a bad neighborhood. I know a nice quiet place in the mountains."

"I'm not moving."

"I have the dagger, remember?," asked Merlin. "Besides, the fresh air will be good for you. So, why don't you think of a title you would like to obtain?"


"Oh, look he hasn't completely rotted his brain," said Merlin. He looked back at Melchett. "You can be Duke of the Frontlands."

"I don't know how to repay you-"

"Well, the price is for the Dark One to think of." Merlin turned. "Try to think of something."

"Gold?"

Merlin rolled his eyes. "Use your imagination. I find it's often a good idea to ask for what
someone would least like to give."

"His firstborn child."

Merlin paused. "Well, that got dark quickly, then again, you are the Dark One. Alright, Melchett, your firstborn child for a dukedom. What say you?"

Melchett paused and Rumplestiltskin found his contempt for the man grew unimaginably in a matter of seconds.

Even more when he agreed.

"Alright then," said Merlin after they left. "Dark One, I command thee to make Melchett the Duke of the Frontlands and then buy a nice castle in the mountains."

"And how am I to do that?"

"You're clever. You'll figure something out."

"Anything else?," Rumplestiltskin sneered.

"Yes, why don't you go spin straw into gold?"

---

Now

Beatrice awoke in her bed.

In the castle.

In the Enchanted Forest.

If this was a dream, she really wished it would sort itself out.

She got into her trunk and put on one of the outfits that didn't require two people to help her get into. She went into the hall where she ran smack into Snow White.

Looking a little older and a lot more pregnant.

"Beatrice," she said with a smile. "I hope Emma didn't keep you up all night. Your father wanted you to get some rest."

Emma had kept her up almost until sunrise. It turned out Enchanted Forest teenage Emma could go on forever about boys and had even regaled Beatrice with a somewhat traumatic tale about how she had made out with Pinocchio.

"I was wondering if you could help me," said Snow White. "We've had some cancellations for the ball and I wondered if you knew anyone. Your mother mentioned you knew a Time Lord? He might be interesting."

"Oh, right, that would be the Doctor from the Land of Gallifrey. Yeah, definitely invite him and you know, Lord and Lady Grantham and Lady Mary, Lady Edith and Lady Sybil. Oh, don't forget Matthew Crawley. Amelia Pond. Rory. Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Watson. Yeah, you should definitely invite all those people."

"Anyone else?"
"You know what? Martha Jones and Mickey Smith because those two don't get enough appreciation."

"Hating on them?," asked Snow White.

"Yeah, so invite all those people and maybe I can get this sorted out."

Snow White eyed her. "Are you certain you got enough rest?"

Beatrice didn't get a chance to answer because twin boys came barreling down the hall with wooden swords, crashing into them.

"Boys!," Snow White shouted, chasing after them. "What have I told you?"

Beatrice shook her head. "This is so weird..."

She walked out to the gardens in an attempt to get away from the screaming children.

"Beatrice?," asked Rumplestiltskin. "What are you doing out here without your cloak?"

He waved his hands and a white fur cloak appeared. He draped it over her shoulders.

"Something's wrong," said Beatrice.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?," asked Rumplestiltskin. "Tell me what it is and I'll fix it for you."

"I'm not sure you can."

"I'll try."

"It's this weird hallucination thing."

"The Queen's Curse?"

"Yeah, sure, if that's what you want to call it... anyway, so if this is all my subconscious, what's with all the weird stuff going on? Like why am I at Emma's ball? Why is Snow White pregnant-"

"That's more a question for your mother."

"No, no, no, we're not even having that discussion," said Beatrice. "I mean, why are there all these weird subplots? Also, there should have been a Dalek or a Cyberman in here by now."

"This is not a dream, Beatrice."

"Yeah, but like am I going to be a police officer in the seventies? Or what if I've been dead since the plane crashed? Is that even what happened? Because I sort of gave up in the middle of that show and the internet confused me."

Rumplestiltskin stared at her.

She knew that look.

"What has Regina put in your head?," he asked.

"That's the other thing," said Beatrice. "See, the Regina I know, doesn't have a really great imagination. Her whole idea for revenge was to just have everyone hang out in Maine. Okay, they were unhappy, but lots of people are unhappy. I would have had people doing crazy stuff, like
have Mary Margaret robbing liquor stores and have Archie be a compulsive gambler or something. So how could she have come up with the sixteen years worth of stuff stuck in my brain?"

"The Queen can be resourceful when she wants to be."

"Okay, let's try the fractured universe theory."

"The what?"

"Hey, what I know is already consistent with the chaotic inflation theory," said Beatrice.

"The what?"

"See, the multiverse is stretching, but in some places it stops stretching and there's a bubble universe. Different bubbles have spontaneous breaking resulting in different physical constants, which is why that whole Land Without Color even exists."

Rumplestiltskin motioned at a bench. "I'm going to sit down."

"So, everything that happens in the universe is the result of a choice. Every choice creates a different time line. Now, the only thing is whether your doppelgänger is somewhere in Hilbert space or actually occupying different physical space. So somehow I am in some universe where the Dark Curse never happened, but where's sideways me? Is she back in my universe? Has she crashed my car? Does she even know how to use my iPad? Oh, God, she doesn't know the lock screen code. What if everything gets deleted?"

Belle walked up to them with a smile. "What are you two doing out here? Rumple, she could have frozen to death two days ago, why are you letting her stay out here?"

"Beatrice was just telling me some things..."

Beatrice's jaw dropped. "That stupid Sideways Beatrice! What if she breaks my sonic screwdriver remote?"

Belle looked at Rumplestiltskin. "Sideways Beatrice?"

Rumplestiltskin shook his head.

"We should go inside," said Belle. "What about a nice cup of tea?"

"Tea? I don't like tea." She paused. "I haven't had any coffee today or yesterday or the day before that."

"What's coffee?," asked Belle.

"So, where's the caffeine withdrawal headache that should have me writhing on the ground by now? I'm not really here. Sorry, one second."

Beatrice walked off.

"Rumple..." Belle implored as she followed.

Belle and Rumplestiltskin found Beatrice just as she punched her hand through one of the castle's smaller windows.

"Ow! That was not a good idea!"
She blinked.
"Beatrice!," Belle shouted,

Blinking, Beatrice awoke again to the hospital room's fluorescent lights as Belle held her arms.
"Beatrice," said Belle, her eyes full of water.
Then the pain started again, making her cry out.
"It hurts..." she couldn't help but whine.
"Well, of course it hurts," she heard, blinking again to see Rumplestiltskin. "You put your hand through a window!"

Beatrice turned to see Gold.
"What hurts, sweetheart?," asked Gold.

It wasn't just the hand, which really was not a good idea, but it was everything. Everything.
"I know, baby, hang on," said Belle, kissing her on the forehead.
"Wow, it must be bad," said Beatrice.
"Why?," she heard the echo of two Belles say.
"You only call me baby when it's bad..." she said, half-conscious as she slumped against her mother.
"Nothing I can't fix," said Rumplestiltskin.
She felt herself slipping away.
"No, Beatrice, hang on!," said Belle. "Beatrice!"

She blinked again to see herself in the garden, Rumplestiltskin doing some magic over the hand she had not brilliantly stuck through a window.
"Why did you do that to yourself?," asked Belle.

She looked at Belle and Rumplestiltskin's befuddled expressions.
"It totally would have worked on Doctor Who."

"Well, who is he?," asked Mary Margaret as they arrived outside the abandoned cannery.
"That's what we're trying to find out," said Emma.

David picked up the bolt cutters and walked to the door.
"Big lock for someone who just drove into town," he remarked.

David opened the lock and they went inside. Emma flipped on the light to see all manner of electronics and a table with straps and wires.
"What the hell is this place?," asked Emma.

"Someone's idea of fun," said Merlin.

"Someone's building a torture chamber in Storybrooke?," asked Mary Margaret.

"It would appear so," said David.

"This guy just got to town," said Emma, heading to a counter with a laptop. "Someone else must have been here, getting this place set up."

"Well, how long has Storybrooke been watched?," asked Mary Margaret.

Emma opened the laptop and put her spyware tool in. "Whoa..."

"What is it?," asked David.

Mary Margaret and David looked over her shoulder.

"There's files on all of us," said Emma.

"Is there one on Beatrice?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Yeah," said Emma.

She opened the file and pages of information opened up. Emma scrolled back.

"Hers goes really far back," said Emma. "To when she was in New York. God, her report cards are in there, pictures, her birth certificate. And the weather report? Someone's been stalking her."

"This is crazy," said Mary Margaret.

"Merlin, you should look at this," said Emma.

"I'm looking for something else," said Merlin. He waved his hand and opened a metal case. He pulled out a Ziploc with a syringe inside.

"What is that?," asked David.

"Well, I'm guessing it's whatever's in Beatrice."

"You think she was poisoned?," asked Mary Margaret.

He opened the Ziploc.

"How do you know it's what's in her?," asked Emma.

Merlin sniffed. "Because her blood is the only reason to keep the syringe."

"Yeah, you're going to have to explain that blood magic thing to me again," said Emma, getting up to walk over.

He opened the syringe and took a sniff. "Very interesting."

"What is?"

"I know where she is," said Merlin.
"What do you mean where she is?", asked David. "She's in the hospital."

"Her body is, but her soul is in a netherworld."

"Like from the Sleeping Curse,? asked Mary Margaret.

"Not quite. This netherworld was originally designed to be a curse world for one's enemies, to expose weaknesses, to learn secrets."

"Originally,? asked David.

"Someone took ownership of it, made it his own personal paradise or purgatory depending on his mood. The herb in this syringe transports one's mind there."

"So how do we wake her,? asked Mary Margaret.

"Excuse me."

Then

Rumplestiltskin nailed the curtains into the wall of his new castle.

"I think your interior design needs some work," said Merlin.

He grimaced. "Is that to be your next command, Master? To redecorate?"

Merlin looked around at the empty hall. "Well, I think you have time for that."

"Three hundred years," said Rumplestiltskin.

"I trust you shall find a way to pass the time. How did you come out with Melchett's firstborn?"

"I found a farmer and his wife who longed for a child. She'll be better off, I don't even think the Duchess noticed I had taken her."

"As I said, not very smart. I've brought you something."

Rumplestiltskin turned to see the dagger.

"All yours," said Merlin putting it down on the table.

"You think I have a reason to stay here,? he asked as he came down off the ladder.

"I think some time away from that world has allowed you to realize what you knew all along: it was a lie. You are too smart to be truly happy in it."

Rumplestiltskin sniffed. "Well, aren't I lucky?"

"Now, would you like to know where to find the Seer who told you your future back during the Ogres' War,? asked Merlin. "Perhaps you would like to know what else she has seen."

"Where is she?"

"Everything has a price, Rumplestiltskin and my price for this is that you not return to your little world."
"And why would I want to do that?"
"Because there are better things planned."

Now

Gold's phone rang. Belle looked up at him.
"It's Merlin."
"Well, answer it."

Gold picked up the phone. "Yes?"
"So, sunshine, remember that little world I had to drag you out of?"
"I'm afraid I don't."
"You know, the happy little one you made for yourself to wallow in after you murdered your tramp wife?"

Gold walked away from Belle into the waiting room. "And why bring this up now?"
"Well, I happen to be staring at the empty syringe of your favorite consciousness-altering plant that someone must have injected into Beatrice."
"Did you make a counter-potion?," asked Gold.
"I don't have a counter-potion. I don't have the counter agents because they were in the part of the realm you helped destroy. You know the only way to get out of there. The question is, do you still have a way to get in, sunshine?"
"The deal?"
"Deal rescinded. Obviously, as I suspect you may have broken it anyway."

Gold hung up wordlessly.
"Sweetheart, there is something I must do."

Belle looked back "What is it?"

He waved one hand over the other and a vial of sparkling purple potion appeared in his hand.
"Rumple, why do you have that?," Belle asked in alarm, getting up from the bed. "You told me that was dangerous."
"It is."
"Then what are you doing with it?"
"This potion is made from a plant, it sends you to a netherworld."
"Like the one from the sleeping curse?"
"Not quite. This world is far more pleasant and far more deceptive."
"What do you mean deceptive?"

"It's a place I went when I didn't want to think about the things I had lost. I took all the things I held most precious and left them there."

"You mean Bae?"

"And you and the life I robbed you of. I fear Beatrice is wandering among my imaginings."

"So, are you going to use that to make a potion to get Beatrice back?"

"There's no counter potion, Belle. There's only one way out and I need to go show her."

Belle shook her head. "Rumple, no-"

"It's the only way, sweetheart." He kissed her. "Try not to worry. I'll have her back to you soon."

He sat down and drank from the vial.

The ball finally arrived. Beatrice sat in her room, getting ready with her mother's help.

"Sweetheart?," asked Belle, standing behind her at the vanity. "Is everything alright?"

"Yeah, just great."

"What's wrong?"

"You know, I'm just a little bummed about my entire life being a lie, but mostly Doctor Who," said Beatrice. "What if Doctor Who's still real and I miss an episode? Next year's the fiftieth anniversary."

"I am sure Papa will set everything right and you'll feel differently once he has."

Beatrice turned around. "Am I still a complete social outcast?"

Belle hesitated. "I wouldn't say complete."

"Right, if I had friends, I would know it wasn't real."

"No one understands you yet, that's all. Papa and I haven't raised you as most people think daughters should be raised in this land."

"Also, there's that whole Dark Princess thing. So glad I got to hang on to that."

Belle helped her stand up and look at herself in the mirror. The dress was elaborate, a delicate lavender with gold trim she suspected was the same gold string she was used to. The skirt seemed to be layer after layer of tulle. She had on her usual pendant and Belle had fixed her hair down, though it usually wasn't the way she said, but Beatrice wasn't a usual girl.

"You are going to be the most beautiful girl at the ball," said Belle.

"Ladies," said Rumplestiltskin, entering, "may I escort you?"

They made their way downstairs. Beatrice spotted Cinderella and a not baby Alexandra with her. She caught a glare off the elder princess as she walked past.
"Oh, get a grip, I've already had this argument with you," Beatrice snapped. "So over it."

Rumplestiltskin smirked as they walked over to Snow White.

"Beatrice, you look beautiful," said Snow White, giving her a hug. "I'm so sorry, though, I couldn't find any of the people you mentioned for the guest list."

"That is disappointing," said Beatrice.

"It's almost your turn," Belle said excitedly.

"My turn? For what?"

"To be introduced," said Belle. She gave her a kiss on the cheek. "You will be wonderful."

She looked at Rumplestiltskin. "You guys aren't coming?"

"I trust you can walk down stairs by yourself?," he asked.

"Well, I don't," said Beatrice. "Have you seen this dress? And the shoes?"

Then it was too late. The page called out her name.

"Princess Beatrice, Heiress to the Far North Kingdom."

Beatrice looked down the grand staircase as the menagerie of royal guests turned. There were the looks of fear, but they were mixed with admiration, wonder and even a couple of smiles. Regardless, all eyes were on her.

"Don't fall," she muttered under her breath. "Don't fall. Don't fall. Don't fall."

She stopped her incantation as she finally arrived at the ballroom floor.

A man approached her. He was a little awkward, very tall. "Princess Beatrice?"

"Yeah?"

He frowned at her. "Has it been that long? Sherrinford."

"Right, Sherrinford," she said, recalling Emma mentioning the name. "You're the guy who is brothers with the other guy."

"I suppose I am. My brothers are sorry they couldn't attend. They know full well it was you that suggested Princess Emma invite them and they didn't come anyway. As usual."

"Yeah, well, I'm sure they're busy..."

"You know how they are."

"Not really. Would you mind elaborating?"

He looked at her curiously. Before he could formulate an answer, the trumpets sounded and the guests once again turned their attention to the grand staircase as Charming led Emma down as they applauded. It was then that Beatrice noticed Belle and Rumplestiltskin had disappeared from her view.

The orchestra began to play music as Charming and Emma began to dance. That was quickly
interrupted by a scream, followed by another. Remembering an episode in the second series of Doctor Who, Beatrice briefly held out hope the party was about to be invaded by Cybermen.

Then it was pirates.

And Hook.

"Oh, come on. Are you serious?!" Beatrice said, involuntarily stomping her foot as the other guests ran.

"Guards!," shouted Charming.

The guards entered and began sword fighting Hook's gang of pirates. Charming stepped forward and began fighting. Emma dropped back which Beatrice thought was odd, but maybe Sideways Emma was weird like that.

Beatrice felt someone grab her.

Then a hook.

"Are you serious?!," she shouted at Hook. "You can't be serious! He is so going to rip your heart out! And I don't know what else! None of it's good!"

Gold shook his head, looking down to see a dragon skin coat, reptilian skin and claws.

"Rumple, are you alright?"

He looked up to see Belle in a gold gown, staring at him with worried eyes, not unlike the ones he had just left.

"Rumple?"

"Belle..." He squeezed her hand. "I'm fine, sweetheart. Where's Beatrice?"

"She's at the ball, Rumple. Are you sure you're alright?"

He tried to draw on the borrowed memories of this world to get up to speed. They had led her to the staircase and watched her walk down. Then he had excused himself with a headache, the result of his real self replacing the self he left in this world.

"Yes," he said. "I need to speak to her."

"It's her very first ball, Rumple. Can't you let her have a bit of fun? Those dance lessons will all be for nought."

"Dance lessons?," he asked.

They heard the music stop, then a commotion and screams.

"That's the ball, Rumple," she said in concern.

Gold flew out the door, Belle wasn't far behind as they met a pregnant Snow White leading a herd of children out of the chaos.

"Boys, help your sisters."
"What's happened?," asked Gold.

"Pirates," she said, grabbing a sword.

"Where's Beatrice?," asked Belle.

"I'm sorry, I'm not sure, it was so chaotic-"

Gold ignored her, tearing back down the hall. Belle was close behind him, carrying a sword.

"Belle, stay behind, sweetheart."

"I'm not just going to stand here while my daughter's in danger!"

Why was it even his imaginary Belle liked to argue with him?

"You're the clumsiest woman alive! You shouldn't run with a sword!"

"Dad!," Beatrice screamed. "Dad!"

Gold tried to hurry, but it was difficult with the crowd of party guests running against them. They arrived at the balcony just as the pirates were leaving.

"Beatrice!"

They arrived at the ballroom. Charming's arm was bleeding. Belle raced for some table linens to help him.

"Who was it?," Gold demanded. "Where did they go?"

"I don't know," he said, shaking his head. "Some pirate in black leather with a hook."

"That cur..." Gold seethed. "I thought I had killed him here."

Charming looked around. "Emma? Emma!"

"We have to find them," said Belle.

"No," said Gold. "I have to find her."

He stalked out and saw Belle following him.

"You're still following me."

"Has our daughter still been kidnapped by a pirate who hates you? Yes, I'm still following you."

Emma and Merlin walked in the hospital room.

"Gold, wake up," said Emma.

"He can't," said Neal.

"What do you mean he can't?," asked Emma.

"He's gone after her," Belle said quietly.

Emma looked at Merlin.
"To the netherworld," he added as he went to hold Belle's hand.

Emma nodded. "That world. It belongs to Gold, doesn't it?"

"Indeed it does."

Emma stepped closer. "I'm sorry, Belle, but I have to ask you about something."

"What?"

She opened the folder of the things she had printed out. "The man we think attacked Beatrice, he had an address he shipped to here in Storybrooke. We found all of this and a lot more on the computer there."

Belle took it, hesitating to have her hand leave Beatrice's arm.

"This is all about her..." Belle said, thumbing through. "This is her whole life. Whoever this was, spied on us, her whole life?"

"Yeah," said Emma. "I've got a picture of the man. Do you maybe recognize him?"

Belle looked at the driver's license photo and gasped. "That's Owen."

"You got a last name?"

"Owen Flynn," said Belle. "We went to dinner once while I was still cursed. He asked me all sorts of questions about Beatrice's father..."

"The one Beatrice threw zombie powder on," said Neal.

Emma looked at Neal. "What?"

"She was with August. The guy tried to get her to come with him using some B.S. story about how Belle was in the hospital. August fought the guy, but Beatrice froze him with this zombie powder."

"Zombie powder? You're serious?," asked Emma.

"It's from a kingdom in our land," said Belle. "It just freezes an enemy for months or years even if it's strong enough. Why didn't she ever say anything?"

Neal shrugged. "You didn't really believe her back then."

Belle shook her head. "She didn't trust him. I thought she was overreacting. Oh, gods, what did I do?"

"Hey, Belle, don't beat yourself up. You didn't know," said Neal.

Emma finished up and left, running into Regina.

"Are you still here?," asked Emma.

"I came back," said Regina. "Did anything turn up with that man?"

"Yeah," said Emma. "Belle knows him by another name. Owen Flynn. They went to dinner
once.

Emma watched Regina's face fall.

"What?," asked Emma. "Do you know him?"

Regina looked around at the waiting room. "This is not an appropriate venue."

"Then let's go somewhere that is."

Regina nodded. They walked and ran into Tamara.

"Oh, hey, Emma," said Tamara. "Could we talk?"

"Now is not a good time," said Emma.

"Do you know when would be?"

"Yeah, when I'm not running an investigation and Neal's baby sister is not in the hospital. That would be a good time."

Regina smiled icily at Tamara as she and Emma left.
So, here's the thing, when I wrote this part of the story there was no one cast as a 15-16 year old Emma yet so rereading this today, this now seems kind of weird/slightly problematic because of an age gap between Emma and her love interest whereas I had only pictured J Mo before. It's still my fault and I'm sorry. I hope that doesn't ruin this for anyone, nothing actually happens. Again, my apologies and if you feel like you have to skip, I'll meet you at the next chapter.

Not Long Ago...

Gold carefully cracked the door open to peer into the guest room. Beatrice was asleep on the bed, looking decidedly more placid as she slept. Without her glasses, she looked so like Belle and he wished she had let him fix her eyes. It still stung that she didn't trust him.

There was a TV on the dresser. It hadn't been in this room before, it had sat unplugged in one of the other rooms. He supposed children of this world weren't used to going without these things but he didn't think it should be on while she slept. Making light use of his cane, he went in and shut it off.

Gold made his way to his own bedroom. Belle was sitting on the bed, heels off, not having gotten out of her clothes.

He had ideas for that.

She smiled at him and motioned for him to join her. Sitting at the edge of the bed she cupped his face in her hands.

"Rumplestiltskin," she breathed and leaned up to kiss him. She giggled.

"What?"

Her grin threatened to cover her face. "I still can't believe I can do that."

Gold shook his head. "You strange girl."

"Well, I'm hardly a girl anymore," said Belle. "I have a girl who is almost the age I was when I met you."

Gold nodded.

"We have a girl," said Belle, sensing his discomfort. She held his hand. "This is the land Baelfire is in, yes?"

"Yes."
"Do you know where he is?"

"No, I suppose I'll have to look."

"It's a big world out there, Rumple. You have no idea. It makes our realm seem tiny."

"You've seen it then?"

"A bit," said Belle. "There's no way to see all of it."

"Ah." Here he was so close to what he wanted and still so far away.

"We can help you look," said Belle, squeezing his hand. "We'll find him."

"What is she like?" He looked up at Belle. "I can tell she's smart."

She nodded, realizing what he was asking. "Yes, she's so smart, Rumple. She always has been. She started reading when she was three."

"Well, is that a surprise considering her mother?"

Belle smiled. "She's not just good with books. She likes physics and astronomy. She's very good at math. She speaks French, started taking Spanish, last summer she did an extra session to start learning Japanese."

"All things you're good at."

"She's a hard worker," said Belle. "She's always helping with these donation drives and things at her school."

"You said she doesn't have friends."

Belle nodded. "She's introverted. She has some classmates she works well with, I think, but she's at this age where the girls all care about boys and who wore what outfit. It's hard for her to tolerate them, I think."

"She doesn't care for boys and clothes?"

"Oh, no, she likes clothes," said Belle. "When you see her closet, you'll understand. She has about a hundred nail polishes. They're not the only thing for her, though."

"And boys?"

Belle frowned. "What are you asking?"

"What am I asking?"

"Are you asking if she's a lesbian?"

"No, I- is she?" Far too much was happening for Gold at this point.

Belle shook her head. "I don't think so. I've never seen her have a crush on a girl. She has her crushes from television."

"From television?," asked Gold.

Belle nodded. "It's not unusual for girls in this land."
Gold shook his head. "I wouldn't know if it's usual or not, I've barely had contact with anyone who was too young to owe me rent for twenty-eight years. The habits of young girls are somewhat beyond my scope of knowledge."

Belle grinned and hugged him. "Well, you have time to learn."

Suddenly, a scream broke through their happy haze. Belle leapt to her feet and was down the hall. Gold struggled to follow.

"Beatrice?," she said, racing in the guest room and flipping on the light. "Beatrice, it's okay."

Belle sat on the bed and tried to stir Beatrice, pulling her into her arms.

Gold got a closer look at Beatrice. She was shaking, covered in sweat. She struggled to find her glasses on the night table.

"It's okay, baby," Belle said softly. "Mommy's here. You're not there."

Beatrice relaxed, seeming to understand. She sat up and looked to the television.

"Why is it off?," she asked.

Gold frowned. "You were asleep."

She turned her glare towards him. "You turned it off?"

"Hey, Beatrice, Papa didn't know, okay?"

"I'm sorry," said Gold.

Belle looked up at him. "She's terrified of the dark."

"I'm sorry," Gold said again. "Can I get you anything?"

"No," said Beatrice.

Gold left the room as Belle soothed Beatrice, feeling like an idiot and a failure.

Now

It was cold and dark and Beatrice began to remember some of why she didn't like the Enchanted Forest. Hook dragged Beatrice out and into the getaway pirate wagon because apparently that was a thing. He parted ways with the others and took Beatrice with him.

"Try not to panic, Princess," said Hook.

"Oh, don't panic?! Really?!!" Beatrice elbowed Hook in the gut which got him far enough away to hold her hand out.

"Beatrice, no-"

She shoved her hand forward, not entirely certain which power would come out, but got the one where Hook went flying into a tree.

"Killian!"
Beatrice turned to see Emma running towards her, the princess dress having been ditched for leather pants, boots, a tunic and a sword. She ran towards Hook.

"Beatrice, what did you do that for?"

"Did I just wake up in crazy town again?!," she demanded. "He kidnapped me."

"Yeah, I know, he shouldn't have done that, but it was all part of my escape plan!"

"Your escape plan?!"

"Yeah, I told you all about it."

Beatrice shook her head. "Uh-uh. Sideways Beatrice may not know how to use an iPad, but I know there's no way she went along with a plan to get kidnapped by pirates!"

"Wow, you didn't fall for that for a second," said Emma, helping Hook up as he moaned.

"What is going on?!," asked Beatrice.

"Killian and I are running away together," said Emma. "You were just a distraction."

"What? The distraction that ensures my dad comes after you?! What kind of stupid plan is this?"

"It's not stupid," said Emma. "Killian helped me come up with it."

"Oh, then if it came from the guy hellbent on killing the immortal guy, it must be a good one," Beatrice snapped. "Did your mother drop you on your head, Hook?!"

Hook rolled his eyes.

Emma spoke. "Look, I don't have what you have. Nothing exciting is ever going to happen to me, so Killian and I are going to go sail the realms."

"Oh, yeah, great idea," said Beatrice.

"Look, love," said Hook, "you don't have to come with us."

"That's a good thing because I'm not."

"We need your help," said Emma. "Just sort of distract the search for a while."

"I do not want to distract the search," said Beatrice.

"Well, you're going to," said Hook.

Beatrice waved her hand and revealed a fireball. "Do I look like I have to do anything I don't want to do?"

"When did you learn to do that?," asked Emma.

Beatrice felt the memories of the other world creeping back in. Gold had taken her to his cabin in front of the lake. He said it was the kind of thing you didn't want going wrong with an audience. It had taken her the better part of the morning to get any flames going, it was just before lunch when they formed something golf ball sized. Refocusing after a meal and warming up for a while she got the hang of it and there was only one small fire they had to put out before Gold finally said it was time to go home.
"Does it matter?! I am going back now. Enjoy your pirates life. Yo ho-hum and a bottle of rum!"

"We could hold her for ransom," suggested Hook.

"Yeah, then her dad's really gonna kill you," said Emma.

"He hasn't yet, love."

"Yeah, last time Belle stopped him because it was the middle of Beatrice's birthday party. It's not her birthday now."

Hook looked over at Beatrice. "I thought you were leaving, love."

She pointed over at something she recognized from her storybook at least, dappled by early morning sunlight. "That's Regina's castle."

"Yeah," said Emma.

"Well, first thought, it seems like a mistake for you people to live so close together. Second thought, if she's really cursed me, maybe I can talk to her."

"The Evil Queen isn't much for conversation," said Hook.

She looked back at Emma. "Is Cora around?"

"Your dad killed her," said Emma.

"Good. Then I don't have that psycho around, just the one," said Beatrice. "Excuse me."

"Beatrice, no," said Emma.

"Look, I am going and getting some answers. Don't try to stop me."

"Wouldn't dream of it," said Hook.

Emma shot him a glare. "Killian, we can't just let her go alone."

"And what about you? I believe the Evil Queen once tried to kill you because you're the only thing that could break her Dark Curse."

"Actually, judging by your billion brothers and sisters, you're not the only thing," said Beatrice. "Also, is her father dead?"

"Yeah..." said Emma.

"Does anyone know where his heart went?" Beatrice waved them off. "Never mind. Going."

"Beatrice, wait, I'm coming with you," said Emma.

"Then I suppose I am as well," said Hook.

"Regina is still mad at Rumplestiltskin. You have no idea," said Emma.

"Yeah, what would I know about a world where Regina is mad at my dad?"

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"I've told her once and now I've told you," said Regina, glaring at Merlin. They had been shut in
Emma's office almost an hour now. "How many more times do you want me to say it?"

"You killed the man's father and buried him in the woods. Now my granddaughter lies in a hospital bed. I'm a bit angry about that," said Merlin.

"How was I supposed to know?"

"Well, here's a tip, in the Land Without Magic, when loved ones disappear, people tend to want to know why!," said Merlin.

Emma sighed. "Look, I'm not exactly thrilled here, guys, but I don't think there's anything we can do about it," said Emma. "Unless you two..."

Merlin glared at her. "Well, do you have a shovel?"

"A shovel?"

"Yes, if you dig out his remains, I can make his skeleton move. I usually try to save it for Halloween, but Christmas is coming up, maybe he can dance to the tune of Jingle Bells."

"Sarcasm won't help anything." 

"I find it helps me immensely when I have to not throttle people for stupid suggestions," said Merlin. He turned to Regina. "Or stupid things they did in the past."

"Are you still mad at me about the Curse?"

"Has it really taken you this long to put that one together?"

"This isn't helping," Emma interjected. "Who could have been spying on the town? Has anyone seen any strangers?"

"Beatrice seems to keep inviting people to town," said Regina.

"Oh, yes," said Merlin. "I'm sure the UPS driver has been using the twenty minutes he's in Storybrooke every other week to conduct massive surveillance on the town and construct a headquarters. He must be changing faces all the time as well."

Regina rolled her eyes.

"Merlin's right," said Emma. "The only people to even come to town since the Curse broke are Neal and Tamara."

"Tamara," said Regina.

She looked across at Merlin. The two powerful sorcerers shared a look of understanding.

"Tamara," he repeated.

"Guys," said Emma, "what makes you think Tamara?"

"The process of deduction, Savior," said Merlin.

"We need evidence."

Merlin and Regina didn't answer and began walking out.
"Guys?," asked Emma. "Evidence?"

Then

Gold stood on the front path as Belle chatted with her uncle, Ian. He was a music teacher in this land, but at home he had been the Duke of Padua. Gold had met him exactly once before today, never even having had to argue with him over rent. The movers were bringing the boxes from New York today and Belle was using the good weather to chat with her uncle, catching up on which family member had done what and where they were. It was trying Gold's patience, but he supposed it was better than Moe French on his front lawn. Belle's mother's family had never been a problem and Ian had come to say hello as soon as word spread that Belle was alive and with him.

He watched as Beatrice joined them.

"Is my stuff here?" asked Beatrice.

"Right there," said Belle, pointing at a collection of boxes.

"Hello, Beatrice," said Ian.

"Hi," she said offhandedly.

Gold couldn't help but be a little pleased that he wasn't the only one getting a cold reception. He watched as Beatrice looked over the stack of boxes, then went to look in the back of the truck.

"Is something the matter?," asked Gold.

"Um, where's my bed? And my desk? My DVD cabinet?"

"Beatrice, you know there wasn't a lot of reason to keep the furniture from the apartment," said Belle.

"Except my stuff."

"You see, Susan's daughter just turned ten and she needed a bigger bed, one for a young woman-"

"You gave my stuff away!"

"You don't need it," said Belle.

"I can sleep in my bed," said Beatrice. "It doesn't have freakish claws on the end and my desk, I can think at my desk. And where am I supposed to keep my DVDs?!"

"Beatrice, it was just IKEA-"

"I like IKEA! Nothing is haunted or creepy there and they have frozen yogurt!" She walked over to the boxes and picked one up.

"Beatrice, let the movers handle that," Gold pleaded.

"No, I have to inventory this to make sure Susan's brat daughter didn't need a complete Doctor Who DVD set," she said, marching up.

Gold followed and approached her door. He heard muffled crying.
He knew the look on her face. He had seen enough people reach the end of a deal, finding out what their end of the bargain would be. She had wanted to find her father, expecting a prince and instead she got him. A crippled old man. A villain. She had been ripped from everything she had ever known to live in a creepy house with a strange man.

He knocked on the door.

"Beatrice? May I come in?"

She sighed. "Yes."

Gold entered after giving her another moment. He chose to ignore her puffy eyes and red nose. "Have you found your things?"

"I think so."

"Good. Do you want any help unpacking them?"

"I can get it."

"I gave some thought to what you said outside-"

"Forget it."

"No, no, you were right."

She looked up in shock. "I was?"

"You're a young woman and you have your own tastes. This is your room, you ought to have things you want in it."

Beatrice shook her head. "It's fine."

"No, I insist. At the very least, there's not been a new coat of paint in twenty-eight years. I can take you somewhere, but the options are somewhat limited in Storybrooke."

"Could I just look online?"

"Online. Right." The Curse had not seen fit to impart him with a lot of technological knowledge. "And how do you pay for that?"

"With a credit card?", Beatrice said tentatively.

"And you know how to do that?"

"Yeah..."

"Very well. Just find some things you like and we'll order them."

Now

Beatrice, Emma and Hook arrived at Regina's castle. Beatrice spotted a tunnel.

"You can't go in through there," said Emma.

"And why not?", asked Beatrice. "Should I go in the front door and knock?"
"This tunnel leads to the West Wing of the Queen's Castle," said Hook.

Beatrice shook her head.

"The west wing," said Emma.

"It's forbidden," said Hook.

"Well, pretty much the whole building is forbidden so I don't see what difference which side makes."

Emma took out her sword, then Hook.

"You two are serious," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice, you don't go in the west wing of any building," said Emma.

"Why? Because Josh and Sam are busy writing the President's State of the Union speech?"

"You just don't."

"Then why even build it?," asked Beatrice. "Is this some asinine Enchanted Forest rule?"

"Everyone knows that," said Hook.

Beatrice walked down the path to the door. Waving her hand, she opened the door and walked through it.

It was dark. Really dark which Beatrice wasn't thrilled about. She heard Hook and Emma behind her.

"Why don't you go in the west wing?," she asked softly.

"Dark ghosts lurk in the west wing of every castle in this land," said Hook. "More dangerous than you can imagine."

Beatrice heard screams and crying.

She looked over to see a redhead saying goodbye to a little boy.

"I'm sorry, I have to go."

"Best to keep walking," said Hook.

Beatrice walked forward. She saw the same boy again and couldn't shake the feeling that there was something familiar about him.

"No, Papa, I want to stay with you," the boy said tearfully.

"Why is it the same ghost?," asked Beatrice.

"What do you mean?," asked Emma.

"Every castle in the land is haunted by dark ghosts and it's the same one-"

Out of nowhere a portal appeared, they hurried to escape it as Beatrice was sure she could hear screams. She thought she saw the Blue Fairy, she could swear she heard crying and then a
A shadow with bright blank eyes.

"No way..." said Beatrice.

"What?," asked Emma.

"That shadow. I know that shadow. I used to see it all the time."

"You know that shadow?," she asked.

"Don't be so skeptical," Hook warned. "Come on. There's no time to waste."

Hook tried to urge them ahead.

Beatrice stopped and turned to the shadow.

"Why are you here?," she asked.

The blank bright eyes met hers.

"I'm waiting for you," he said in a deep voice.

He grabbed her arm and Hook grabbed her. She whipped her arm back for a fireball and the shadow was distracted enough to drop her. She ran with Hook and Emma back until they found a door and fell through it, just shutting out the shadow.

"I don't understand," Beatrice said.

"Nor do I, Princess Beatrice."

They looked up to see Regina.

"Hey, Regina," said Beatrice. "How have you been?"

"Rumple."

Gold rolled his eyes as he marched through the forest.

"Rumple, talk to me!"

Gold looked back to see Sideways Belle. She was still following him. Ball gown with sword in hand.

"What is your plan?," she asked.

"My plan? My plan is to retrieve Beatrice and then maybe kill Hook for fun before I leave."

"Leave where?"

"You should stay here," he said as she stared at him.

He turned to walk away and heard Belle's footsteps behind him.

"Why could I never remember you listening to what I said?," he asked turning.
She shook her head. "I don't understand."

"Of course. I remembered you perfectly because you always were perfect."

"Rumple, you're talking about me as if I'm not here. I am and I want to help find our daughter."

He nodded. "Of course you do." There would be no fighting her. If the Belle he created was anything like the real one and she was, she wouldn't be happy unless she was helping him. So he had no choice but to include her in his plans or she would be fighting him.

She squeezed his hand. "We'll find her, Rumple. No one takes our daughter from us."

Her eyes darted and Gold turned to follow them. There was a piece of lavender tulle hanging off a bush.

"Beatrice's dress," said Belle, picking it up. She turned to Gold. "Can you do something with it? Enchant it?"

Gold looked behind her.

"Belle, has Beatrice been acting strangely?"

"Of course she has. Don't you remember?"

"Tell me what I said."

"Rumple, what's going on? Do you think Regina's cursed you as well?"

"Cursed me?"

"With the memories of that other world. The Land Without Magic, that awful place where we weren't together."

"And did I tell Beatrice I thought Regina had cursed her?"

"Yes, yes, you did."

"I know where she went."

Belle turned around. "The Queen's Castle? Why would she do that?"

"Because she has a logical mind and hates to leave a problem unsolved, no matter the cost."

"You think she went to confront Regina?"

"She thinks she knows Regina. She doesn't know this one."

Then

"Um, hi..." said Beatrice.

Gold looked up in surprise. Beatrice stood in the doorway of the cellar. It was the first time she had ventured down this far, their interactions usually remained in the kitchen or dining room. "Hi."

"The spinning thing? You really just sit down here and do that?"
The wheel. That was the reason she was still standing in the doorway. It seemed so strange that his own child had never even seen him spin. Bae had been an infant in a basket next to his wheel while Milah disappeared for hours.

"It's nothing I can't interrupt." He motioned for her to come closer.

She approached carefully. "Where do you buy straw?"

That was her question? "There's a store not far from my shop that had it in the garden section."

She nodded. "What is straw?"

Yet another question that no one had ever asked him. He supposed her life in Manhattan didn't have much need for agricultural knowledge. "It's the leftover stalks after crops are harvested." He saw that she was clutching her iPad to her chest. "Did you find some things?"

"I found some stuff, but I don't know, it's kind of a lot-"

"Well, let me see," said Gold, holding his hand out.

She reluctantly handed him the iPad.

"It's a bed," she said. "Well, duh, it's a bed."

Gold looked at the page she had pulled up. It was a white headboard, an imitation of an antique, but delicate. The pictures on the website portrayed all sweetness and light, fantasies of what a girl's bedroom ought to be, the absolute antithesis of Mr. Gold's dark and forbidding house.

"I see," he said. He looked up. "And the desk?"

"Um," she leaned over to scroll down, "they have one to go with it."

"And those bed linens? Are those what you want?"

"I don't need-"

"You don't have any and these won't go with anything I have."

Beatrice took the iPad back, did something and handed it back. There was now a bed covered with some sort of teal ruffled set. Teal ruffles. What would Mr. Gold say?

"Alright," said Gold. "Desk chair?"

"I can get a regular chair."

"Supposing you can't."

"Well, that one's cute," she said.

"Is that fur?," he asked.

"It's fake," she said defensively.

"Do they have any more to go with this?"

"Any more what?"
"A bedside table, a dresser, shelves for your books and your poor trinkets scattered everywhere." Gold attempted to look through. "Here, this one looks like it could hold everything."

"No, desk, bed, I'm good. Really." She took the iPad back. "I'm sorry."

"But your things-"

She shook her head. "No, sorry. I shouldn't be so... I'm sorry."

"Beatrice-"

"Forget the whole thing."

She left before he could move to follow her.

Belle had fallen asleep in their bed with a book open in her hands, a sight he had seen before in the Enchanted Forest.

"Belle," he said, gently trying to stir her awake.

"I wasn't asleep," she said quickly.

He had also heard that in the Enchanted Forest.

"Did Beatrice mention the furniture offer?"

Belle leaned back into her pillows looking at him. "I thought you were doing that together."

"Yes," he said. He didn't want to disappoint Belle with their latest encounter. "I just lost the website..."

"And you don't want her to know you lost the website." Belle nodded in understanding. "Did you check her Pinterest?"

Gold shook his head. "What's Pinterest?"

Belle reached to her night table for her computer. "It's this website that's just pictures of things people like," she said, opening up the laptop and logging on. "See?"

Gold took the laptop from Belle. It was just picture after picture. "Is this all Beatrice's?"

"No," said Belle, leaning over to help him. "You see, you click on her name and those are all her boards."

Gold scrolled down her page. One for clothes, one for shoes, one for purses, one for nail polish? Others seemed to be dedicated to things she had mentioned in passing, like that doctor show, places she wanted to travel to, books she liked. Gold had found her description of some of them dreadful, what sort of land sent their children off to slaughter each other on a reality show? It was bad enough this land let their children go off to singing auditions when they were clearly tone-deaf.

"Try 'Room Stuff,'" said Belle.

"I might have figured that out," said Gold.

"You might have," Belle teased. "Just click on it."
Gold did. There were all the things she had pointed out and more, even the things he had inquired after that she refused. Things she hadn't even mentioned.

"So she wants all this?"

"No, people just put things on there sometimes. Just get the things you two agreed on."

Belle leaned back, starting the book, but really falling asleep as Gold did more on the computer. He got enthralled by the website the bed came from and didn't see what harm it could do. Maybe he couldn't be what Beatrice wanted, but he could get her the things she wanted. They might even make her smile which had been a rare sight he had only seen when she was alone watching something.

Soon he had racked up a shopping cart with about forty or so things in it, having gotten everything on the board along with things young girls didn't think of like curtains and rugs, all of which were just a click away. He then realized her bathroom was sorely in need of some decor, briefly waking up Belle to find out what Beatrice's favorite color was which he had not known was a complicated question. Somewhere in the explanation he got the hint that purple would be an appropriate choice and found the necessary things. He was pleased with himself and went to the checkout finding the internet made it very easy for him to spend his money as computer illiterate as he was. He was considering finding out if there was another website he could buy a new television from when the phone rang.

It turned out to be American Express Fraud Prevention. He had a few credit cards, hardly used since he always had plenty of cash and this company felt the need to tell him that someone had used his card to buy thousands of dollars worth of furniture on the internet. He informed him that the things were for his daughter, those words infused with a sense of pride and that he expected to be making more purchases for her. He then asked if there was a way to get Beatrice a card and they connected him to someone who could help. They were only too happy to help him get an extra card for his daughter.

His daughter.

He did like the sound of that.

Now

"Well," said Regina glaring at the trio, "I was doing just fine until you three wandered in. And what were you doing in the west wing? I thought perhaps Emma and the pirate were that dumb, but not the daughter of Rumplestiltskin. Haven't you learned anything from your mother's books?"

"Mother?"

They looked back to see a dark-haired girl. She held up a paper.

"I finished my lesson."

"Very good, honey. Go wait in the kitchen and we'll make turnovers together. Mother just has some guests."

"I missed a step," said Beatrice.

"Yeah, so did I," said Emma.

"Cora," said Regina. "This is Princess Emma and I assume one of her many paramours, Captain
Hook. This is Beatrice, the Dark Princess."

Cora curtsied.

"Run along, honey. We'll be there in a moment," said Regina.

Cora ran off. Regina turned back to them.

"You have a kid?," asked Emma.

"Yes," said Regina. She looked back at Beatrice. "I suppose I ought to be grateful to you. If you had never been born, my daughter wouldn't exist."

"Glad to help," said Beatrice.

"I never said I was grateful," said Regina. "What do you want?"

"So... I was just wondering, did you curse me?"

"Did I curse you?," asked Regina.

"Yeah, I'm sort of walking this line between blurred realities."

"So you've gone mad," said Regina. "That's no surprise considering your father and possibly your mother. At least I assume that's the reason for her attachment to the imp."

"Just curious, how did I spoil the Dark Curse?"

Regina looked at Emma and Hook. "Is she serious?"

"Yeah, she's serious," said Emma.

Regina turned back to Beatrice. "Snow White once again could not keep her mouth shut and went to console Rumplestiltskin in his cell. That's when she let slip that she had just seen Belle and she had not been dead for years. That's when they found out Rumplestiltskin had a plan to get out of his cell the whole time. He wanted to be captured. So he came here to rescue your mother and told me he knew I had failed to cast the Curse and why and he wasn't going to tell me because he wouldn't risk his True Love and their beloved Dark Princess."

"Ever figure that out?," asked Beatrice.

"I did actually which is when I discovered Rumplestiltskin had my father's heart. My mother made some off-handed comments about Belle and he found her heart, then killed her."

"So, yeah, you're probably angry," said Beatrice.

"Angry doesn't begin to cover it."

"Sorry, dearie, we don't have time for you to find another adjective."

Beatrice looked up to see Rumplestiltskin and Belle.

Regina turned. "Can't you supervise your child?"

"Beatrice, come on. We're going home."

"What about Emma?," asked Belle.
"If Emma wants to run off with a pirate, who am I to stop her? Sweetheart, come on."

"Rumple!," said Belle.

"Sweetheart, it's me," he said, turning towards her.

Beatrice eyed him. "Yeah..."

"Your father."

"Yeah, I caught on to that."

"Rumple, are you alright?," asked Belle.

"No, it's me," he emphasized.

Beatrice shook her head.

"Mr. Gold."

"Mr. Gold?" Regina laughed. "How long did it take you to come up with that name? A whole second?"

Beatrice eyed him. "What's going on?"

"I came here to get you out."

"Get me out of where? What is this place?"

"This is a netherworld. More specifically, it's my netherworld. I bent it to my will long ago after I lost Bae. Merlin made me come out of it once and swear never to return, but I broke that oath after I thought I lost your mother."

"Rumple," said Belle. "Maybe you should lie down."

"Sweetheart," said Gold. "Please just give us a minute. I have things I have to say."

"Prove it's you," said Beatrice.

"What?"

"Prove it's you and not just some trick by someone."

Gold searched his memory. "Beatrice, if you don't come with me now, you will never get to see the Doctor Who Christmas special and you'll never know how that girl can be in Victorian London and whatever the place with the snow was where she died."

"Okay," said Beatrice. "That was pretty good."

"Who is this Doctor?!," asked Belle.

"Just one flaw in your story," said Beatrice. "If you haven't been here since you thought Mom was dead, I shouldn't be here. There shouldn't be a place for me, but there is. There's memories and people who know me and a room full of stuff."

"Yes," said Gold.
"Yeah, so, you're disproven."

Gold walked closer. "When I thought your mother died, after I had done everything I needed to do to prepare for the Curse I let myself lose my mind. I came here. I imagined that she was still here and I imagined the life I had wanted to give her and someone like you."

Beatrice shook her head. "You didn't know about me."

"Your mother wanted you. She didn't think I knew, she didn't state it, but I could tell in every offhanded mention or lingering look at an infant that she wanted a child. I wasn't certain I could give her one-"

"No. Too much detail," said Beatrice.

"I wanted to make her happy," said Gold. "So when I came back here, I imagined Belle's child, her pregnant, her giving birth, her contentment. When you arrived, the magic of this world put you into the place that was waiting for you."

"Rumple, what are you talking about?," asked Belle. "You're saying I'm just ephemera?"

Gold turned and caressed her cheek. "I'm sorry, sweetheart, but you're just a dream. A beautiful dream. You helped me when I needed it most like you always do, but I have to go. I have to take our daughter home."

"Home to where?"

"To you."

Beatrice felt herself drifting away.

"Beatrice?," asked Emma, snapping her back.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "Dad, did they find Owen?"

"Owen?," asked Gold.

Beatrice wrinkled her face like that was going to make the memory come back. "The guy I threw the fireball at."

"They found him, but his name wasn't Owen."

"And Tamara?"

"What about Tamara?"

"She's working with him." Beatrice felt it all coming back. "Owen dragged me out there, I got away and he tried to shoot me, but I did the fireball thing and actually nailed him. I was trying to get a signal out there on my phone when I ran into Tamara. She injected me with something."

"She knows you saw her?"

"Yeah."

"We have to get back," said Gold, taking her hand. He looked at Belle. "We have to go, sweetheart."

"I understand." She hugged Beatrice.
"You always do," Gold said wistfully.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "Is she going to be alone?"

"No," said Gold. "When we leave, the magic of this world replaces us. I could never leave her alone in here."

"Don't worry about me," said Belle. "Just go."

"Come on."

"Bye, sideways people." She pointed at Emma. "You're going to flip when I tell you about this." Gold took her back through the door to the west wing.

"Remember, whatever you see in here is just echoes. Nothing can hurt you," Gold promised.

"How do we get out?"

"This way."

Beatrice saw the eyes of the shadow again.

"Sweetheart, don't look at that."

"No, really, what is that?," she asked.

"It's just something from my past. You don't need to worry about it."

She looked at him. "Your past?" She spotted the little boy again. "Oh, my God. That's you, isn't it? Who left you? Who were you talking to?"

Beatrice stopped as they arrived at the portal.

"We really go home with that?," she asked. "We don't Inception ourselves to another reality?"

"Just hang on," said Gold. He linked his arm with hers and grabbed her hand. He looked at her. "With me."

They jumped. One final time, Beatrice felt the memories of the netherworld washing over her, her life here flashing before her eyes. She was born, held in Belle's arms, cradled by Rumplestiltskin. She ran through gardens and fields she never knew, played games with kid Emma, ran the halls of the Dark Castle and then...

There was a kiss. She was kissing someone. She was in a gazebo, in the rain, it was almost pitch black and her face was tilted up. He was taller and his cloak was damp and...

She had her eyes closed.

"Why did I have my eyes closed?!," she screamed.

It was at that moment Beatrice realized she had bolted up and was back in the hospital room.

Neal eyed her skeptically. "Because you were unconscious?"

Gold stirred next to her.
"Papa," said Neal, rushing over. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, Bae. Where's Belle?"

"Tamara took her to get some tea."

Gold bolted up. Beatrice went to follow and realized she had a freaking hospital gown on.

"Really?" she asked. "Too much trouble to conjure some actual pajamas?"

Gold waved his hand nonchalantly at her and she found herself in jeans and a sweater. She chased after them.

"What's going on?" asked Neal as he followed Gold.

"You're fiancée is a lying bitch," said Beatrice.

"Whoa!" said Neal. "Where the hell did that come from?!"

"Oh, I don't know, maybe when she left me in the woods to die!"

Tamara looked at Belle as they walked away with the styrofoam cups of tea. "How are you holding up?"

Belle shot her an icy look. "Look, I didn't come here because I wanted a chat or a cup of tea. I came to tell you something."

"To tell me something?"

"This family- the one you say you want to be a part of- accepts each other. I've tried to help, I tried to include you in the Christmas plans and you said so many awful things about us. About Rumple."

"I just said what I thought-"

"No, you were cruel and you enjoyed it. I am done tolerating it in strangers and I most certainly won't tolerate it in my own family-"

Which is when Belle noticed that Tamara had gone flying back into the wall as the whole cafeteria gasped. She looked up.

"Beatrice? Rumple?" She stood and walked towards them, embracing Beatrice. "My baby. Thank the Gods..."

Tamara moaned.

"Shut up," Beatrice snapped.

Belle was surprised as her embrace was met with Beatrice's squeeze that was quickly escalating into a death grip.

"Sweetheart, what's going on?" asked Belle.

That's when Emma, Regina and Merlin entered.

"Oh, good, the gang's back together," said Merlin.
"Is someone going to tell me what the hell's going on?," asked Neal.

"She's on the floor," said Regina. She looked at Emma. "Enough evidence?"

"Now, please!," said Neal.

"Neal, Tamara was the one working with Owen or Greg or whoever he is. She's been sending someone information about everyone in town," said Emma.

"And she is going to be ever so helpful and let us know who that might be," said Merlin.

"Your taste in women continues to disappoint," Regina said to Neal.

Neal looked at Tamara. "Tamara, tell them there's been a mistake-"

"Left for dead in the woods?," asked Beatrice. "How did I get that wrong?"

"You're a good man, Neal, but you have no idea who you're dealing with," said Tamara. "Magic doesn't belong in this world."

"Is Tamara in a cult?," asked Beatrice. "I thought she was just a bitch."

"My children have been hurt," said Gold. He reached a hand out. "And you are going to pay."

Tamara gasped for breath.

Merlin rolled his eyes. "Oh, what would my day be if you didn't try to kill someone, sunshine?"

"We need to find out what she knows, Gold," said Regina.

Gold released his invisible grip. Tamara regained her breath as Emma collected her.

---

**Then**

Gold waited anxiously for the day when Beatrice's things would arrive. He wanted to surprise her and hadn't revealed his plans yet, but had moved her to another room while the painting was done which had irked her but she made no complaints.

It was only when the truck pulled up to the house entirely full of his order that he got a hint of how much he had actually bought. The company had something called "white glove service" and there were four workmen to come deliver and assemble. Then the truck with the flat screen and those delivery men had arrived, causing him to endure a call from Charming about the danger of outsiders. The prince could go to hell. His daughter was getting her things today. He supervised as the room came together, then the men left and he went to work with the bed linens.

"Rumple! We're home!," Belle called.

"I'm up here," he called back, making final placements on the ruffled throw pillows and standing back.

"We went to the school!," said Belle. "Where are you?"

"Beatrice's bedroom."

"What's in there?," asked Belle.
"Clearly nothing of consequence," said Beatrice as Belle opened the door.

The women froze.

"Rumple..." Belle gasped.

"What's going on?," asked Beatrice.

"Your things came today."

"My things?," she echoed, looking around.

"Yes, I made your bed," said Gold. "The delivery man hooked up the television to the cable and your Blu-ray player-"

"My Blu-ray player?"

He ignored her interjection. "I brought in your boxes, but I thought you would know what way you like your things arranged. Your posters are framed now, but I also thought you would know how you wanted them arranged. Just let me know."

"Okay..." said Beatrice. "Thank you. You know, in general, thank you."

She shifted uncomfortably.

"I'm going to start dinner," he announced.

Gold walked in the hallway and began down.

"Rumple?"

He turned just as Belle came up and thrust her lips against his.

"You don't need to spoil her," she said disapprovingly before another kiss.

"Then why does it seem you're rewarding me?," he asked, just before she could regroup again.

"Because you love her," said Belle, giving him a softer kiss this time. She ran her hand through his hair. "And she loves you and she'll tell you someday."

Gold sighed. "I suppose I'll just have to live in hope until then."

---

Now

Gold walked into Beatrice's room and handed her a mug.

"One mocha," he said. "You promise it won't keep you awake?"

"Not a chance," said Beatrice.

He looked to the television. "I've never been happier to see that enchanted blue box."

"It's not a-" She shook her head. "Never mind. Sure it is."

He kissed her cheek. "Good night, sweetheart."
"That stuff in the west wing," said Beatrice. "Was that all real?"

He stopped and sat. "Yes."

"And it was stuff that happened to you?"

"Yes, it was."

"Was the redhead your mom?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"What happened to her?"

"She left when I was small."

"Oh. So your dad raised you?"

"No." She looked at him with that curious look of Belle's and he knew he would have to answer. "My father was a coward who abandoned me. Two spinsters raised me and taught me my trade."

"Spinsters?," she asked. "There are really spinsters? You know, literal spinsters."

Gold smiled. "My Beatrice from the Land Without Magic. There's so much you don't know."

"Well, I figured out where to buy straw," said Beatrice.

"That was hay, sweetheart," said Gold.

"Oh." She considered it. "Does that not work the same?"

"No." He shook his head and gave her another kiss on the cheek. "It's no matter. Now, you really must sleep."

"Love you," she said casually looking back to the television.

Gold froze. She had never said that before. Had she even noticed? Had she meant to say that and now she was playing it off?

"I love you, too, sweetheart," he said, afraid to turn.

"Is something wrong?"

"No," said Gold. "Not at all."
Chapter 39

Chapter Notes

My previous notes are too long not to copy:

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where they break your heart and wonder why you're upset. Anyway, thanks for the reads and reviews, I have gotten back to none of them and I am sorry. This chapter has turned out more fluffy than I originally intended, but there's some plot in there if you look. Also, I do not own a show called Doctor Who which is a show on BBC written by a sadist similar to those behind OUAT. Anyway, a lot of this contains references to a Doctor Who Christmas special called "The Snowmen" which is about well, snowmen and you can watch on Hulu if you want, it's just that Mr. Gold's experience basically reflects what many parents go through when watching their first Doctor Who. Anyway, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Also, if you're reading this from outside the U.S., you may be unaware of something called Reese's Peanut Butter Christmas trees since I think some of you may not understand the magic that is peanut butter. It's okay, I will never understand Vegemite, Marmite, some really bitter Italian soda I can't remember the name of. Anyway, it's peanut butter coated in a thin layer of chocolate in the shape of a Christmas tree, they have four seasonal shapes and they are amazing. Anyway, happy reading!

Gold was having an unusual Christmas in that it was the only time Christmas had actually been celebrated in his house. There was a tree with piles of presents underneath. There was a wreath and even some subdued lights on the outside that Belle hired Leroy to put up, much to the confusion of his neighbors. Belle and Beatrice had woken up late and now Gold made them breakfast.

"Aren't you supposed to run screaming to the tree or something?," asked Gold as he handed Beatrice her pancakes. Chocolate chip as she had informed him on the virtues of the dish.

Beatrice eyed him. "You have noticed I'm sixteen?"

"I had noticed, but I am just going off what I know from television."

Belle smiled. "She used to run screaming. She gave up on that a few years back."

"Then what can I expect from the day?"

"Well, we opened our gifts, then caught a movie and ate Chinese food."

"So long as we are done by nine," said Beatrice.

"What's at nine?"
Beatrice looked up at him as if he were stupid. "The Doctor Who Christmas Special."

"I thought we were all having dinner," said Gold.

"Well, it ought to be over by then," said Belle. "Everyone's supposed to come over around seven."

"You people can do what you want," said Beatrice. "I'm watching the Doctor Who Christmas special."

Following a leisurely breakfast, they made their way to the main event. The spruce was decorated with a mix of antique ornaments and the rather more whimsical collection from Belle and Beatrice's collection containing miniature New York landmarks, Daleks and Disney princesses.

They let Beatrice get in first since the majority of the gifts were hers. Clothes, bags and Reese's Christmas trees which seemed to be her favorite candy ever. Gold waited anxiously as Beatrice opened her gift from Belle, the ancient copy of Much Ado About Nothing. Then Beatrice gave Belle her gift.

"It's not that big," said Beatrice. "I found it on Etsy."

"It doesn't matter how big it is. You know it's the thought that counts." Belle opened and gasped at a brass cuff with books and a quote engraved on it. Belle read it aloud. "She is far too fond of books and it has turned her brain."

"So you bought your mother a label then," Gold teased.

"It's perfect, Beatrice, thank you," said Belle, putting it on. "I think Papa is due a gift."

Beatrice sheepishly handed him a box. He opened it and went past the tissue paper to find a tie. A gold tie in silk.

"You got me a tie," said Gold.

"I know," Beatrice said apologetically. "I was having a hard time and I didn't know what you liked-"

"No, sweetheart, I do like it and you got a pocket square," said Gold. "Not to mention that this is the very first Christmas present anyone has ever given me."

"It doesn't suck then?," asked Beatrice.

"No, of course not," said Gold. He gave her a kiss on the cheek. "Thank you."

"I'll open one of yours," said Beatrice.

"They're just trifles, really..." said Gold.

It was too late. She was opening one. "You got me the TARDIS cookie jar! Thank you! Oh, I have an idea for this." She tore in the box and started loading it with the many Reese's Christmas trees from her stocking.

Storybrooke's ever-growing prison had begun to take over half the municipal building that housed the sheriff's office. Merlin entered the room where Mother Superior sat behind magically erected bars. He held out a plate.
"I brought you dinner."

Mother Superior scowled.

"Fine," said Merlin, placing it on a stool. "Eat it. Don't eat it. What the hell do I care if you go hungry?"

"I still don't understand who you are or why I am in a jail cell. You act like you know me and I have never met you."

"You killed a woman."

"I'm sure I didn't."

"I am sure you did."

"Why would I do that?"

Merlin sat on a chair and pulled it closer to Mother Superior, causing her to move further back on her mattress.

"Once upon a time, there was a boy and a girl who lived in a magical land among the clouds. The boy lived a lonely life as his mother was constantly bringing lovers home- which is an entirely different issue- and he grew close with the girl. One day, when they were all grown up they decided to build a new world. A better one. Only it wasn't better. The boy tried to build a kingdom, but saw it was doomed as soon as it began. Then one day he had a revelation that a princess could one day set everything to right.

"Only the girl didn't think so. She feared the day she would lose her power. She called the princess a monster and spent three hundred years trying to stop her. She connived, she deceived, she imprisoned her mother, she tore children from their families and she murdered."

Mother Superior shook her head. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Merlin sighed. "Of course you don't." He stood up. "Won't you excuse me? I have a Christmas dinner to attend."

---

Nine Years Ago

Belle looked across the table and smiled. Beatrice was hard at work with her crayons. They had come to Starbucks and taken a table to study. The semester had just ended but Belle was hoping to get a bit of a jump-start on her thesis research over the winter break. Beatrice was only too happy to join her mother in a big girl activity and concentrated on her own "studies" which consisted of her storybook, a pad of drawing paper and a huge crayon box.

"Have you thought about your Christmas list yet?," asked Belle.

Beatrice didn't answer. She continued coloring.

"You'll want it ready when we go visit Santa Claus so you can know what to ask him for."

"I don't want anything."

Belle frowned. "That can't be true. Perhaps a house for your dolls? What about a bicycle? We could take it to Central Park."
Beatrice shook her head.

"I know. Why don't we go to FAO Schwarz before we meet Santa and see if anything strikes your fancy?"

Beatrice's gaze turned outside. Belle followed it to see a homeless man holding a cup, begging for money. Belle looked back to Beatrice's pitying expression. She was always like this which Belle sometimes found to manage since the sight seemed to put Beatrice in horrible despair.

Belle got out ten dollars and handed it to Beatrice.

"Go buy a coffee and a sandwich. Take it to him and give him the change. Okay?"

Beatrice brightened up as she went on her mission to the counter. Belle watched from the doorway as Beatrice gave the snack to the man and he seemed to be a mixture of shocked and grateful.

Now

The day went on. Regina arrived at the house with Neal and Henry who helped Henry play with a new remote control airplane Regina had gotten him in the backyard. Merlin was the next to arrive, greeting Beatrice as he followed Belle and Gold to the kitchen.

"How is our beloved Mother Superior?," Gold asked Merlin, handing him a Scotch.

"As helpful as you might expect," said Merlin.

"Could we please discuss something else?," asked Belle. "It's Christmas."

"Yes," said Merlin. "I would note that it's been Christmas for some time now and the Charmings have not graced us with their presence."

"They had some emergency calls," said Belle.

"They always have an emergency," said Gold.

"Too bad," said Beatrice. She went into the cabinets and got out the popcorn and air popper.

"Do you want to spoil your dinner, sweetheart?," asked Gold.


"I wish you would reconsider," said Belle.

"Uh-uh. I've been waiting for the Doctor Who Christmas special since October. David, Mary Margaret and Emma just came up with their emergency like three hours ago. Doctor Who has clearly been on the schedule longer, not to mention it's been on almost fifty years."

"She has a point," said Merlin.

Then

Belle walked into Beatrice's bedroom. The girl was standing at the window looking out as night fell over Manhattan.
"What are you doing?"

"I'm looking for the first star of the night."

Belle looked out. The sky wasn't quite dark enough to counteract the city lights and it was a bit cloudy.

"I'm afraid it may be a while and you need your rest."

Beatrice took Belle by the hand and tucked her into the bed.

"Any progress on your Christmas list?," asked Belle.

Beatrice shook her head.

"But, sweetheart," said Belle, "how will Santa know what to get you for Christmas if you don't tell him what you want?"

"I don't want anything."

"I know that can't be true," said Belle.

Beatrice looked down. "I'm saving my wishes."

"Saving them?," asked Belle. "What are you saving them for?"

"Something big."

"How big?"

Beatrice handed her the storybook. "Read to me."

Belle smiled. "Which story shall it be? Rumplestiltskin and Cinderella? Hansel and Gretel and the Evil Queen? What about when Snow White meets Prince Charming?"

"Beauty and the Beast."

"You're a little obsessed with that one. What about one of the Oz tales? We've never read about the Wicked Witch..."

"No, I want Beauty and the Beast."

"Well, if that's what my public wants..." Belle teased. The book almost fell open to that story. "Once upon a time, there was a land called Avonlea and in it lived a nobleman's daughter called Belle..."

Now

Gold looked back at the living room. The Charmings had arrived at long last with a hundred sundry excuses about what irritating people in the town had kept them away. Something about Goldie Loxley helping herself to someone else's Christmas presents and Mrs. Schuman had gotten the bright idea to get all of her children razor scooters causing untold havoc. They were finally seated and getting into the prime rib roast.

"Is Beatrice not joining us?," asked Mary Margaret.
"Doctor Who is on," said Belle.

"I don't understand," said David.

There was a pile on of words as Merlin, Gold and Regina all tried to get out their own response to that, stopping as they found they were talking over each other.

"Couldn't she just watch it later?," asked Emma.

"That is apparently not a possibility," said Gold.

Mary Margaret could not leave well enough alone, turning to the living room.

"Beatrice?," called Mary Margaret. "Why don't you eat with us?"

"I would have if you people had bothered to show up on time!"

Regina smirked. "She does have a point. It was rather rude of you to keep us all waiting."

Gold got up.

"Rumple?"

"I'll handle this," said Gold.

Gold walked into the living room.


"No, actually, I was wondering if I could join you," said Gold, glancing back as Mary Margaret began recounting her day.

She looked up. "You want to watch Doctor Who?"

He nodded. "If you'll have me."

Beatrice nodded. Gold sat down. Feeling one last moment of doubt, Beatrice turned. "Do you know what this show's about?"

"From what I've seen it appears to be about a sorcerer who uses an enchanted blue box to travel to different lands."

"Not so much." She put her hand up. "Too late. Show's on."

Gold tried to follow. The Christmas special appeared to be about a magical snowman, possibly enchanted by a dark wizard.

"Is the snow enchanted?"

"I don't know."

"Is the snow globe enchanted?"

"Dad, the show just came on. I don't know yet."

"I know. He's captured the soul of someone in that snow globe."
"Dad, I don't know the show just started."

"Are they being eaten by snowmen? That's just ludicrous."

"It's Doctor Who," she said like it explained everything.

The show went on. More killer snowmen appeared and it seemed as if they were linked to the girl character's thoughts.

"I told you, the snow is enchanted," Gold said feeling vindicated.

Beatrice was distracted by something else. "Look! He's wearing Amy's glasses!"

Gold tried to ponder the significance of this. He tried to follow the rest of the show, wondering what spell might have enchanted the ice and were there any practical applications he could think of for enchanted ice? Then a green woman appeared.

"Is she cursed?"

"No, she's just a Silurian."

"Are they all cursed?"

"In that they've been living under the Earth since they thought the moon was going to fall, maybe."

---

**Then**

Beatrice awoke as soon as her night-light went out. She was about to call for her mother when she heard her window rattling.

Then she saw the eyes.

The bright blank eyes and around them she saw the shadow.

Then the window opened and the shadow flew towards her. Beatrice shook, too petrified to scream. The shadow lifted her from her bed, grabbing her by the shoulder harshly and before she knew what had happened she was out of her window and among the skyscrapers, losing sight of her apartment window.

She was being taken away.

---

**Now**

"Snow that learns. I told you it was enchanted," said Gold. He pointed at the villain. "Is he going to cast a curse?"

"There will be no curses," said Beatrice.

That's when a potato man appeared on the screen. "What about him? Is he cursed?"

"No, he's just a Sontaran."

"Well, he's a moron."
Neal came out. "Are you guys really going to watch a TV show instead of having Christmas dinner?"

Beatrice gave him a stern look. "Never call Doctor Who a TV show again."

"Well, sorry if I don't see what the big deal is," said Neal.

"I'm sorry you don't get it," said Beatrice. "I'm so, so sorry."

Neal shook his head and went back in the other room.

"Was that supposed to be funny?," asked Gold.

"It was incredibly funny," said Beatrice. "As usual, I'm the only one who knows that."

Gold turned back to the television. "What do they mean memory worm?"

Now

Beatrice didn't dare move.

The shadow still held her. She was going further and further away from home. A thousand thoughts raced through her brain. Where was she going? What was happening? Why?

Then all of a sudden there was a burst of sparkling light and she was suspended in the air. A terrified glance at the shadow revealed he was encased in the light as well, seemingly paralyzed by it. Slowly the light moved down and Beatrice found herself on a rooftop being taken into strong arms.

"Merlin," she said, remembering a flood of other encounters.

"That's right, sweetheart." She wrapped her arms around his neck and turned his attention to the shadow. "You shadow. I thought I made myself clear to your master."

The shadow struggled against the light that seemed to be imprisoning him.

"What does he think he's going to get?," Merlin demanded.

Beatrice buried her face in Merlin's neck and started sobbing.

"You go back to him and you tell him that the Dark Princess is and shall forever remain under my protection." He nodded towards the sky. "It's the second star to the right and straight on til morning."

The light dragged the shadow away into the night.

Merlin looked at the pitiful sight that was Beatrice crying. "Come on, Beatrice. Time to get you home."

Now

Gold watched in confusion as Beatrice began laughing hysterically.

"See, he's being Sherlock Holmes and Moffat writes Sherlock Holmes. The Doctor is being Sherlock Holmes!"
Gold stared blankly at her.

"It's BBC fangirl Christmas on Christmas!"

"Which one's Sherlock?," asked Gold.

"The one with the cheekbones."

Gold froze. "Since when do you refer to people as 'the one with the cheekbones'?"

"It's Benedict Cumberbatch. That's how everyone refers to him. Shh."

Belle entered as the dead governess entered the children's bedroom.

"I told you her soul was captured in the enchanted ice," said Gold.

"Enchanted ice? You're making stuff up."

"Is this what you two are really going to do?," asked Belle.

"Mom, stuff is happening!," Beatrice said frantically, trying to wave Belle away as the ice governess chased.

"You want out of there, don't you?," asked Gold.

Belle sighed and leaned in. "Regina and Merlin are having a snark contest. David and Mary Margaret are practically throwing Emma at Neal."

"I could get rid of them," said Gold. "For a price."

"Could you just sit down?!," said Beatrice.

Glancing back at the family dinner, Belle had a brief glimmer of guilt and then decided against it as she sat on the couch next to Beatrice and picked up one of the Reese's trees.

---

*Then*

Merlin carried Beatrice back into her room and placed her on the bed. With a wave of his hand, the window slammed back down and locked.

"I've enchanted it now," said Merlin. "That shadow won't be getting in again."

"Why did it want me?," she asked, sobbing as Merlin sat down next to her.

"Let's not talk about that."

"Where was it going?"

"Someplace I am going to do my best to keep you out of." He saw her still trembling and picked her lamb up off the bed to hand it to her. She squeezed the toy.

"What's his name?," asked Merlin.

"Gyro."

"Well, that's on the nose..." said Merlin. "Do you know I gave it to you?"
Beatrice didn't answer.

"I chose the lamb because it reminded me of your papa."

Beatrice looked up at him with big eyes.

"You have his eyes," said Merlin. "He once spun wool and spent a lot of time with sheep."

"Was he a prince?"

"Not at all."

"In Beauty and the Beast, the Beast is a prince."

"Well, Disney took some artistic license with that one..." He paused. "Actually, a lot of artistic license. I think that's a conversation for another time."

"You're going to leave now, aren't you?"

"I am. Now you, go get into bed with your mother and by the time she opens her eyes, you will have forgotten everything."

He gave her one last squeeze and sent her on her way.

Peter Pan. He had considered it a great triumph when he freed Rumplestiltskin from the coward's influence and saw him off to that abysmal realm to be his living tomb. Pan wasn't satisfied with that, though, sending his shadow to steal children.

He was not getting this one.

Now

"I told you. Dead is dead."

"Rumple..." said Belle.

"I'm just saying..."

Belle scowled at him. "She's upset, there's no need to rub it in-"

"Shh! She said the thing!," said Beatrice.

It was at this critical point in the episode Mary Margaret came in. "Guys, I brought dessert if-"

"Shh! Stuff is happening!," Beatrice shouted. "She said the thing!"

"Okay," said Mary Margaret retreating to the kitchen. She walked back into the kitchen. "Guys? I think maybe we should just go home."

The Charmings made their departure with Henry, then Regina.

"See, I thought she was like an ancestor, but she said the thing she said in the future and now she's in the present..."

"I'm sure they'll sort it out," said Merlin. He looked at Gold. "Enjoy Christmas, sunshine?"
"Yes, I did," said Gold.

"I wish you could have spent more time here," said Belle.

Merlin shrugged. "Well, Tamara, Greg and Mother Superior, they require constant attention, you know."

Belle gave him a peck on the cheek. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"Good night. Good night, Beatrice. Good night, sunshine. Merry Christmas."

Belle saw Merlin out and came back. "Maybe now we could watch a movie together."


---

Then

Belle awoke to find Beatrice burrowing in the blankets next to her.

"Beatrice," said Belle, still fumbling for consciousness as Beatrice slammed her body towards hers, more force than Belle thought should have been possible with the seven year old's small body.

"Turn on the light," Beatrice said weakly.

Belle turned on the bedside lamp and turned to see Beatrice. Her face looked tear-stained and she was holding her lamb.

"Sweetheart..." said Belle. "What's wrong?"

"I don't like the dark."

"I know. That's why you have your night-light."

"It went out." Beatrice nuzzled up to her.

"Oh, my poor baby. There's no need to be frightened," said Belle, wrapping her arms around Beatrice. "No need at all."

"I never want to leave you."

"Beatrice, why would you ever leave?"

"I don't want to be alone."

"You never will be," said Belle.

"I don't want to be like the man on the street."

"You mean that homeless man?"

Beatrice nodded. "He's all alone."

"And that's why you worry about homeless people..." said Belle.

"Like Beast."
"You're worried about Beast?"

Beatrice nodded. "He's alone."

"Beatrice, you know I'm not really Beauty and your father's not really Beast, right?"

Beatrice just squeezed her.

"Not everything is a fairy tale," Belle said softly.
"No!," said Gold, tying his tie as he walked from the backroom to the main floor of the shop.

"Rumple, be reasonable..." said Belle.

"Oh, no, I don't think so. Is this the reason for the sudden midday picnic at the shop? To make me more likely to comply with such a request?"

"Actually, I like our midday picnics. I always have," said Belle. "I wanted to ask you when Beatrice wasn't around because I thought you might react badly."

"Oh, you think?"

Belle rolled her eyes. "It is two hours away once a week. She's driven that far before."

"It is outside Storybrooke, past the town line and if something were to happen to her, we can't help her without forgetting who she is."

"Even if that were to happen, Neal or Emma or Merlin or even Regina could go get her."

"Oh, good, let's send Regina," he snapped. "I don't even know why I worried."

"It's a PSAT study course," said Belle.

Gold shook his head. "And why is that significant?"

"So she can do well on the PSAT. So it can help her get into a good college."

"What happened to the SATs?"

"That's next year."

"There's an entrance exam for college before the entrance exam for college?"

"More or less," said Belle.

"So, I should let her go and leave me once a week so that she can leave me permanently?"

"So that's what this is really about," said Belle.

"I am concerned for her safety," said Gold.

"You're concerned that she's going to leave you and never come back," said Belle. "Rumple, Beatrice isn't like that."

The door opened. They looked up to see a man and a woman walking in. Suits, sunglasses, businesslike expressions. Gold and Belle exchanged glances.

"Are you Mr. Gold?" the woman asked, taking off her sunglasses. Her partner followed suit.

"Who's asking?"
They flashed gold badges. The woman spoke, introducing herself first. "Detective Barone, Detective Keller. NYPD."

"And what are two detectives from New York City doing in Maine in the middle of January?," asked Gold.

"We're investigating a missing person, Tamara Milton. Her employer reported her missing."

"We haven't seen her since well before Christmas," said Belle.

"And who are you?"

"Belle Gold."

"Do you know where we could find Neal Cassidy?," asked Keller. "We have questions."

"Is he a suspect?," asked Gold.

"We're just asking questions," said Barone.

"Why don't you leave your number and I'll have him call you?," said Gold.

Keller gave Gold a business card. "We'll be in town a few days."

They left. Belle turned to Gold.

"Call Merlin. The plan needs to go into effect."

Merlin walked into the sheriff's station.

"What's up?," asked Emma.

"You know the visitors we've been expecting?"

"Oh, God," said Emma.

"I've hidden Greg and Tamara for now. Regina is playing host," said Merlin. He looked at Hook. "You. Play nice or I give you to Rumplestiltskin as a late Christmas present."

"What visitors?," asked Hook.

"Detectives." Merlin looked at Gaston as he stared blankly. "Do you think you can not say anything stupid? No, never mind."

Merlin waved his hand.

"What did you do?," asked Emma.

"Rendered him dumb," said Merlin. "Double meaning in that."

"I must say it's quite an improvement," said Hook.

"Well, that's done," said Merlin. "I'm off to get the knights in order."

"What does that mean?," asked Emma.
"You don't want to know," said Merlin.

As they looked up, Regina entered with the detectives.

"Ah, Sheriff Swan, these are Detectives Barone and Keller from New York City."

They exchanged greetings.

Keller eyed Merlin. "And you are?"

"Colin Avalon. Concerned citizen, I was just leaving."

"Yeah, I'll see you later... Colin," said Emma.

Merlin left. Emma turned back to the detectives. "What can I do for you?"

Barone spoke. "We're investigating the disappearance of a missing person, Tamara Milton. We'd appreciate your cooperation, Sheriff."

Emma shrugged. "Whatever I can do to help."

"Do you know Ms. Milton's fiance?"

Emma froze. Hook laughed as Regina shot him a look.

"Sheriff?," asked Keller.

"He's the father of my son."

"Our son," said Regina.

"Oh," said Barone, "you two are-"

"No," said Regina with contempt. "I adopted Henry."

"When did you last see her?," asked Keller.

"Tamara? Well, that must have been around when she left town," said Emma.

"And that was?"

"Neal's sister was in the hospital," said Regina. "We were all there. That's when we learned she was seeing another man. As you can imagine, she didn't stay long after that."

"Uh, yeah," said Emma.

"Neal's sister?," asked Barone.

"Beatrice. Mr. Gold's daughter from his second marriage," said Regina. "She was injured in the woods. She's completely recovered now."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Keller. "Did it seem like there were any problems between Tamara and Neal?"

"Other than the other guy?," asked Emma.

"How did Neal take that?"
"About as well as you would expect."

"Do you know where we could find him? We went by his father's shop."

"I'll tell him you need to speak with him," said Emma.

---

**A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest**

It was the third week of their summer tour of the kingdoms. They had gone from castle to castle and ball to ball. Reinette was glad to be out of Avonlea even if she knew that the intended purpose of their journey was superfluous at this point. They were taking a day to tour the gardens of a fine country house on the way to their next destination.

Belle toured the gardens eagerly with her grandfather and being led by the lord of the manor of himself, a kindly old gentleman obsessed with his flowers. Reinette found herself drawn to a particular group of roses and stared for a while.

"Reinette?," asked Catherine. "You seem distracted."

"Oh, I am sorry, Mama." She looked up. "Where did Papa and Belle go?"

"I sent them on. You've been staring at that same display for forty-five minutes," said Catherine. She motioned for Reinette to join her on a bench. "Out with it. What's wrong?"

"I don't know that I should tell you."

"Is it Maurice again?," asked Catherine, rolling her eyes. "I suppose he still wants you to return home."

"He does," said Reinette. "It's not Maurice, though. I've long since learned to ignore his dictates and commands."

"Then what?"

"It has to do with the reason for our summer sojourn," said Reinette.

"Belle's True Love?," asked Catherine. "Has she met him? I can't imagine she has. The girl puts her thoughts so plainly on her face."

"No, but I have," said Reinette. "Or at least I've seen him."

"What do you mean?"

"An old friend was kind enough to point him out to me."

"Oh and what do you make of him?"

"He is not a prince."

Catherine waved it off. "Oh, well, titles aren't everything."

"No, he has a title."

"Someone among the gentry, then?"

"Not quite."
"Civil servant?"

"He's the Dark One," Reinette said in exasperation. She immediately regretted her slip. She wondered if she could pass it off as some sort of joke. She was certain her mother would not see it as a very funny joke.

She turned to Catherine ready to make something up and instead found her mother sitting rather placidly.

"Ah, so does he have a large house or-"

"What sort of a question is that?!," Reinette shouted. "My daughter is tied to the most feared man in all the realms-"

"The most powerful man in all the realms," Catherine noted, throwing the prophecy back at her.

"How can I possibly be concerned with what a seer woman said when I have my daughter's welfare to think of? How can you just sit there? You're not even the tiniest bit shocked-" Reinette felt as if the breath had been sucked from her lungs. "Did you know?"

"Know what?"

"Did Merlin tell you? Did you know before I did?"

"Reinette, you know I have moments of prescience..."

"Yes, rather curious your moments of prescience as the Ice Princess has no powers of prescience! Did Merlin tell you?"

"Merlin told me nothing of it."

"Then who else knows about this?"

"Someone who ought to know."

Reinette leaned in. "I don't want word of this to spread. The Dark One has many enemies, not to mention the Clerics were they to hear-"

"Yes, I know all about that. The clerics. The fairies. I have been at this a while longer than you."

"And how long a while is that?"

"Longer than you and your brothers have been alive."

"And who told you?"

"As I said, someone who ought to know."

"Was it the Dark One? Does he know already? Is that how you stopped the Ogres in the Far North Kingdom?"

"Yes, instead of making a deal for my first-born child, I bargained him down to my third born granddaughter," Catherine said throwing her hands up. "It was not the Dark One, but as I say someone who ought to know."

"You are infuriating," said Reinette, standing up and straightening her skirt. "Everyone I know is
infuriating."

"If you want my advice-"

"No, I do not. Thank you," said Reinette, walking off.

---

Now

Beatrice entered the shop. Gold looked up.

"Why didn't you answer?," he asked. "There are detectives in town. They may have questions. Why didn't you answer?"

"I had my phone on silent. I was in school, remember? Texting forty times doesn't make me answer you any sooner."

"Oh, is this the level of cooperation I'm to expect if I allow you to take that class in Augusta?"

"I don't know. Are you going to text me forty times?"

"I will text you as much as I like on the phone I pay for."

"I told you. I was in class."

"Is that so?"

Beatrice threw her hands up. "Where else would I go? In case you haven't noticed, I don't exactly have a crazy social life."

"Is that your real motivation behind this request?"

"You don't exactly meet the most sociable people at a PSAT study course on Saturday mornings."

"Is that so?"

"No, you only meet other losers who don't have anything better to do on the weekend," said Beatrice. "So, yeah, I would be hanging around all Saturday morning with a room full of people like me or worse. What do you think we're going to do? Rob a convenience store?"

"I don't appreciate that tone."

"I don't appreciate your tone."

"Watch it," Gold warned.

"I'm going to the library," said Beatrice.

---

Then

Reinette had never wished more that she didn't have such a talkative set of parents than on the carriage ride to the next ball.

"Prince Eric is his name, I think," said the Duke. "He's far more interested in exploration than anything else, I think."
"Really?," asked Belle.

"Yes, he's always planning expeditions. If you don't want to hear about nautical knots, don't strike up a conversation with him."

Belle giggled. "I think I would like exploring."

"I've no doubt you would make an excellent explorer," said the Duke. "Though I think you might be bored. You've already read it all in your books."

"If she even gets the chance to explore," muttered Reinette.

Catherine shot Reinette a glare. "I am certain Belle will have many opportunities."

"Are you now?"

"Yes, I am," said Catherine.

"What are we talking about?," asked Belle.

"Only your prospects," said Reinette.

"I fear I may have missed a step in the conversation as well," said the Duke. "It's taken on a flavor of adversity."

"Shall I tell him, Mama?," asked Reinette.

"Do you suppose you may yet shock him?," asked Catherine.

Reinette narrowed her eyes at her mother. "Does he know as well?"

"Do I know what?," he asked.

"You know," said Catherine.

"I don't know," said Belle.

The Duke banged on the roof of the carriage. "Coachman! We shall stop at the next village!"

---

**Now**

Beatrice stomped into the library past the circulation desk. Belle and Merlin watched as she walked to one of the tables, put her messenger bag down and took out her Macbook.

"Beatrice?," asked Belle. "I thought you were spending the afternoon with Papa."

"That guy is crazy," said Beatrice.

Merlin snorted. "Did you just notice?"

Belle shot Merlin a look as she approached Beatrice. "What happened?"

"I didn't answer his forty text messages because I was in class and he went ballistic and now he thinks- you know, I don't know what he thinks because he is crazy."

"Did you talk about the PSAT course?"
"The cover for my crime spree, you mean?"

Belle looked at Merlin. "Would you handle her?"

Belle walked the couple of blocks to the shop. It was their first fight. She thought it must have meant something that Beatrice was now comfortable enough to fight with him, but she didn't like Rumple behaving in such a way. "Rumple!"

"I'm in the back."

Belle went past the curtain to find him spinning gold. "I thought you weren't supposed to be doing any magic while the detectives are here."

"Your daughter is a madwoman. Disrespectful."

Belle pulled up a chair. "Stop spinning."

Gold stopped. He turned to Belle with his arms crossed.

"I am upset," said Belle. "She came to you-"

"Came to you."

"With a reasonable request and you turned it into something it wasn't. You have missed so much together, I can't believe you want to waste any of the time you have arguing."

"Oh, you mean the two and a half years more I'm getting?"

"Rumple, this is no way to keep her. All you'll do is drive her away."

"I found the list."

"What list?"

"The college list." He pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to Belle.

"And why do you have this? It was in her journal."

"Well, I'm the one expected to pay for this, am I not?"

"Her guidance counselor at her old school asked her to put this together last year. It's not even that serious."

"Stanford!"

"She doesn't have to go to Stanford."

"Yes, there's also UCLA or perhaps the University of California at Berkeley. Or perhaps I'll get lucky and she'll choose NYU. What is that? Eight hours by car?"

"Boston is four hours," said Belle. "She made this last year. She changes her life plans every other week, not to mention they get changed for her. Even if I thought that this list was accurate, Beatrice is not the type to go off to college and never see her family again."

"Right because no eighteen year old girl in her right mind would go off and never see her family again," he said looking pointedly at Belle.
"There were some ogres involved," said Belle. She took his hands in his. "When I was fourteen, my father arranged my betrothal to Gaston."

Gold shook his head. "Nobles..."

"He wouldn't let me accept any invitations or go anywhere. My mother was the only reason that I got to see my first season and that was my only season because she died not long after. My father kept me closed off from the world until I met you."

"So what? I was the better option?"

"I'm saying that locking her up will only drive her away, but if we help her to pursue things she won't shut us out."

"Would you have told your mother you had fallen in love with a monster?"

Belle smiled. "My mother was the first person I wanted to tell and it hurt that I couldn't."

"And what would she have said?"

"My mother wanted me to have True Love."

He sighed. "I suppose that this is the woman who saw something in Merlin..."

Belle shot him a scolding look. He softened.

"Then again, she did give birth to you so how can I argue with her?"

"Much better," said Belle.

---

**Then**

They stopped at the village. The Duke quickly dispatched Belle to a bookshop with a small purse and went back to his wife and daughter.

He sat down across from them at some benches arranged around the fountain in the town square. "Now, that was enough coin to buy us three hours. Catherine, Reinette, what exactly is the problem?"

They scowled at each other.

Catherine looked to her husband. "Alec, do you remember a long time ago in the Far North Kingdom we entertained a visitor before we married?"

"A visitor? Which visitor?"

Catherine rolled her eyes. "The visitor."

"Oh," said Alec. "The visitor."

"And who was this visitor?," Reinette demanded.

"Reinette has just discovered the role that the you know is to play in Belle's life."

"Oh, yes, the you know," said Alec.
"Must you two speak entirely in riddles?!," Reinette asked.

"There are spies everywhere. We dare not speak his name, especially you," said the Duke.

"Of course," said Reinette. "I ought to have known you two would be in on this conspiracy to tie my only child to a monster together."

"You seem to be ignoring one particular point in favor of your anger," said Catherine. "It's not a conspiracy, it's True Love."

"Is that what your visitor said?"

"Yes," said the Duke. "She most certainly did."

"And why do you believe her?," asked Reinette. "Who is she? How can I speak to her?"

The Duke and Catherine exchanged looks.

"Speaking to her at this point in time would present great difficulty," said the Duke. "Some impossibility."

"And why is that?"

"Oh, you know, it's a bit wibbly wobbly timey wimey," he answered.

"What does that even mean?," asked Reinette.

The Duke shook his head at Reinette. "Never mind that, you also seem to be ignoring the prospect of your daughter's happiness."

"I have to protect her."

"Yes, of course, you must, but you must also learn to tell the difference between protecting her and driving her away. The prophecy leads us to a child, your granddaughter. Belle's daughter. If you come out against that child's father, if you call him names like monster, you will create a chasm between you and them that will not soon be mended. Would you have yourself cut off from Belle when she will need her mother's guidance the most? Would you never meet your granddaughter?"

Reinette shook her head. "No, of course not, Papa."

"Then take the future as it comes to you. Don't decide against it because that is a losing proposition."

Reinette nodded. "And what do I do about Maurice?"

"Oh, sod Maurice..." said Catherine.

"Mama..." moaned Reinette.

"I fear Maurice may not see the sense in this course of action," said the Duke. "Best to not advise him of it."

"The clerics? The fairies?"

"She can be protected from them," said Catherine.
"This can all be resolved agreeably if you keep your head," said the Duke. "Don't make an enemy of her. You might win but it will be a bitter victory."

Now

Gold and Belle entered the house. Music permeated every wall.

"What is that?," Gold asked distastefully.

"That is the Original Cast Recording of Wicked," said Belle. Gold looked at her in concern. "It's her angry music."

"Wicked?"

"Yeah, it was this book, then this musical about the Wicked Witch of the West-"

"I've heard enough," said Gold quickly. "I'll go apologize."

"Okay..." said Belle as he began climbing the stairs. "That was easy."

Gold knocked on the door to Beatrice's room and opened the door to find the music assaulting him more as he did.

"Okay, that's enough," he said, going towards the speaker and fumbling for the power button.

"Now I can't listen to music."

"I think we should probably revisit anything involving the Wicked Witch of the West."

"Oh, God, she's real, isn't she?," asked Beatrice.

"Let's not discuss her. I am here to apologize."

"You are?"

"It was unfair of me to cast undeserved aspersions at you when you just want to attend a class. I should be encouraging you."

"Well, I'm sorry. I was sort of..."

"You were sort of like me."

"Oh, God," said Beatrice.

"Yeah, sorry," said Gold.

"It's just... I have missed so much of my children's lives, I am being very protective of what I do have."

"Miserly."

He frowned at her.

"Sorry, it's this PSAT study guide."

"It's accurate. Keep up the good work. This class. When does it begin?"
"Two weeks from Saturday."

"And I take it there's a fee."

"Twelve hundred dollars."

"Really?" He shook his head. "No matter."

"So, who was the Wicked Witch of the West?"

Gold shook his head. "We are really not discussing her."

"Did she sing at least?"

"I'm making dinner," Gold said, turning around.

"So, if you care to find me look to the western sky..." Beatrice sang.

Gold spun back around. "What?"

"It's in the musical. The Wicked Witch sings it. I was just making sure it didn't sound familiar."

He exhaled. "Really, Beatrice, don't."

---

**Then**

Belle came into Reinette's room at the palace. The Under the Sea ball was that night and many people from all the kingdoms had arrived. Prince Eric had nearly drowned that morning and it was also serving as a celebration.

"Oh, Belle, you look lovely," she said.

Belle looked down at the short skirt that puffed around the bottom of the pale yellow gown like a cloud. "I feel embarrassed. I've never had this much of my legs showing."

"Well, it's what they wear in this kingdom."

"Why can't I just wear one of my other gowns?"

"Belle, you don't want to stick out or be mistaken for a matron."

"Right because we couldn't have my True Love think that..."

Reinette scoffed. "I doubt he would care."

"What?"

"You know what?," asked Reinette, shaking it off. "From now on, I don't think you need to look upon these balls as a place to meet your True Love."

"Then why am I going?"

"To have fun. To meet people. To see other lands. To let everyone see how wonderful you are."

"I don't see that I'm all that wonderful," said Belle. "Or if I am at least no one will ever see it."
"I know it to be true and I am certain someday your True Love will."

Belle sat down next to Reinette on the chaise lounge. "Do you suppose if I did meet my True Love Papa would call off my marriage to Gaston?"

"I don't know that he would have a choice."

"Do you think Papa would be angry with me?"

"He might," said Reinette, running her fingers through Belle's hair. "I won't be, though. I want you to have True Love and when you have questions, I want to be there to answer them and help you."

"Oh, not questions..." said Belle. "One talk was enough on that topic."

"Not just that," said Reinette. "There are consequences to the topic of that particular talk. Pregnancy, childbirth, you know I spent two days in labor with you."

"Mama..." moaned Belle.

"Everyone tries to scare you with the labor and that's just the tip of the iceberg really. Yes, pushing another human being out of your body is painful, but it would be such a simple thing if that's all there was to it. There's morning sickness, the weight gain, the swelling. My fingers were the size of sausages."

"Is it time for the ball yet?"

"Suddenly she wants to dance..." Reinette teased. "I am your mother and I must tell you about these things before you find out on your own. As I will be there for you."

The gong went.

"And now you are spared from further discussions," said Reinette. "Go to your ball."

Belle smiled and kissed her mother on the cheek. She left and Catherine entered.

"Will you be joining us?," asked Catherine.

"Momentarily," said Reinette. "I was just thinking about our earlier discussion."

Catherine entered and shut the door. "Were you?"

"I was thinking that Maurice will not take the news well when the..."

"The you know?"

"Yes, when he enters our lives. I was thinking perhaps it might be prudent that I come home for a while. Or I could take up residence in the Dower Summer House, it's not so far from the home of the you know."

Catherine smiled. "Yes, I think that would be a good plan."

Neither woman noticed the blue light not far off.

---

*Now*
"Merlin," said Emma, storming into the library. "We need to talk."

"I know, Savior," said Merlin, putting down a book as he sat behind the circulation desk. "Henry's books are a week overdue. Belle thought I ought to cut him some slack, but spoil them now and who knows what will happen?"

"Where's Mother Superior?"

"I thought it would raise too many questions were two New York City detectives to find a nun in an abandoned corner of the municipal building behind enchanted bars."

"We agreed to hide Greg and Tamara in the mines."

"Then I had a discussion with myself and I agreed that it would be better if Mother Superior were hidden as well."

"Is she alive? She's not there."

"What sort of question is that? If she were dead, I couldn't get what I needed from her."

"Then what are you planning?"

"And if you knew how could you stop me?"

"She was my responsibility."

"And she's my problem. Don't worry. She's safe. I have someone coming to pass judgment on her."

"And who is qualified to pass judgment on the Blue Fairy?"

"That, Savior, is a surprise for another day. Now, do you mind? I need to close the library. Top Gear is coming on."

Emma rolled her eyes as Merlin began shutting off lights.

"We're not done."

"Oh, yes we are. I've chosen my moment. You can't do anything until those detectives have been persuaded that Neal hasn't killed Tamara and left her in a ditch somewhere. Then what can you do to me? Do you think Regina or Gold will lift a finger to help you? They are much more likely to help me hang her. Lose no sleep over it. No harm will come to her. Yet." Before Emma knew it she was out the door. "Good night."
"Do you have any idea how weird we look?," asked Beatrice as she sipped her espresso.

Gold turned and handed Beatrice her eggs and bacon. "You should have seen me before."

"I did see you and yes, that was weird and seriously did you try some moisturizer on that?"

"It didn't occur to me."

"What I meant was the detectives."

"Don't worry yourself, sweetheart. Once they've talked to Neal, they'll be on their way."

Beatrice shook her head. "See, I've watched a lot of Law and Order and let me tell you how this looks. Two detectives come to a small town in Maine to look for a missing woman and talk to her fiancé. They find that the fiancé is the father of the sheriff's son who is also the mayor's son. They also find the fiancé is the son of the man who owns the whole freaking town and he is married to the town librarian, who looks like a model and has to be like what twenty, thirty years younger than him?"

"Thirty years? Really?"

"You're really like three hundred years older and you're complaining to me about thirty?"

"Do I look thirty years older?"

"Vanity issues much?"

"Maybe."

"Moving on, let's not even count the second wife's estranged father and oh, yeah, her biological father who splits his time between the library and the sheriff's station because he has a vendetta against a nun. Let's not even go into his sister who has strange weather phenomena following her everywhere and an arson charge."

"A dropped arson charge and if they approach you, you don't speak to them without me."

Beatrice nodded. "Right, because we have to discuss the crap story we made up and then hope Henry doesn't blow the whole thing."

"What makes you think Henry's the weak link?"

"The kid is not a good liar."

Belle entered. "And I suppose you know the qualities that make a good liar?"

Beatrice motioned at Belle. "And here's someone who might be worse."

"You are a terrible liar," said Gold. "Though Beatrice does make an interesting point."

"I do?"
"You do. The longer we take to deal with those problem, the more likely we are to expose our vulnerabilities so we should deal with this problem..."

"Is this going to be like on The Sopranos when Tony calls a guy in the middle of the night to bring a box of trash bags, a shovel and some bleach?"

Gold looked at Belle. "You let her watch The Sopranos?"

"More to the point, how are you planning to deal with Greg and Tamara?," asked Belle. "Rumple..."

"If Tamara were to magically reappear, that would answer all questions and put an end to any investigation."

"Yeah, but our best case scenario is that she tells them we're all a bunch of fairy tale characters," said Beatrice. "Well, you people are fairy tale characters. At this point, I'm sort of the kid in a Disney straight to video movie."

Gold stood at the entrance to the mine. "Where's Merlin?"

Regina walked towards him. "From what Emma tells me, he's off on his own project with Mother Superior. She implored me to help her stop him and whatever punishment he has planned for her."

They exchanged rueful smirks.

"Shall we, Your Majesty?," Gold asked.

They walked down the tunnel.

"What exactly is your idea, Gold?," said Regina.

"Have you gotten anything out of them?"

"Not really," said Regina. "There seems to be no link to whoever they're working for, this society against magic."

"And have Charming and his bride been offering their help?"

"Yes."

"Then I have an idea."

They arrived at Tamara's cell. Regina waved her hand and the bars lifted.

Tamara seethed. "So he's here now? You think Rumplestiltskin can scare me?"

Gold shrugged. "I don't care about scaring you, dearie."

"Then what are you here for?"

"Well, that depends, dearie, are you going to help me?"

"And why would I help the Dark One?"

"Because if you don't I have to do this."
Tamara watched in confusion then wode-eyed, gawking realization as Gold reached his hand inside her chest and pulled out a glowing, beating heart. Her glowing, beating heart.

"See, this is going to make your cooperation much easier," said Gold. "Don't worry, you won't feel a thing."

Gold turned to Regina. "You remember how to use one of these, don't you, dearie?"

Regina glared.

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**Not Long Ago**

The morning after her family returned from the Enchanted Forest, Belle was still having trouble helping with some of the fallout. That wasn't helped by the bottle of wine she had to help herself through the fallout, but had been helped by the Bloody Mary Rumple made her.

"Rumple..."


"It's not as if either he or Emma knew," said Belle. She turned to see Beatrice stumbling into the kitchen and grabbed her in a huge hug. "There's my girl. How are you feeling?"

Beatrice groaned.

"Oh, poor thing," said Belle.

Beatrice went and took her stool at the counter. "More pancakes, please."

"Coming up," said Gold. "Although if your mother has her way I'll have to make breakfast for the Charmings."

"You're family with them now," said Belle sitting next to Beatrice. "It's not as if we won't have to see each other."

"Yes, they have a problem and they come to me and beg me to solve it, only now they'll throw in my face that their daughter and my son-" He grimaced, unable to finish the sentence.

Beatrice could only concentrate on her own pain. "My legs hurt, my feet hurt, my arms hurt. I hate walking. And zombie fighting."

"Zombie fighting?," Belle asked, turning to Gold for an explanation.

"Cora's minions," said Gold. He looked at Beatrice. "Though you would have done better to not mess about with the sword and skip straight to the freezing people. That reminds me, Belle, about your grandmother..."

"Catherine?"

"You never mentioned she was the Catherine the Ice Princess. Neither did she, actually."

"Yeah, way to bury the lead, Mom," said Beatrice. "Assuming that is the lead."

"To be fair," said Belle, "you never asked if she was the Catherine the Ice Princess."

"No one mentioned it as a possibility," said Gold. "I just thought she was an old woman who
liked to make tea and sarcastic comments. At any rate, Beatrice seems to have inherited her powers."

"Yeah and if somebody could get me an index card on what those are, that would be great," said Beatrice.

Belle smiled at Beatrice. "My grandmother was a princess of the Far North Kingdom. There used to be two. One Ice, one Summer."

"Used to be?," asked Beatrice.

"My grandmother kept the Far North frozen to protect it from ogre invasion."

"God, why can't you people problem solve this ogre thing?"

Gold put a plate down in front of Beatrice. "I am the problem solver which I'm sure our new charming in-laws will remind me of."

Now

"I thought your dad was coming," Emma said to Neal.

"He told me he was handling this," Neal said, looking from his coffee to the detectives. Emma had let them borrow her office and as they spoke behind the glass they could only guess at what deductions they had made.

"They're not going to wait forever," Emma said, nodding as Barone and Keller walked over.

Neal sighed. "Let's get this over with."

"Mr. Cassidy, let's talk alone," said Barone.

"We can talk in front of Emma," said Neal.

"You do realize how strange this town looks, don't you?," asked Keller.

"What do you mean?," asked Neal.

"Well, your son's mother is the sheriff, your son's adopted mother is the mayor, your dad owns the whole town and your stepmom..."

Neal frowned. "What about Belle?"

The doors burst open and Tamara came in.

"Neal, Emma, hi," she said. She motioned at Barone and Keller. "These must be the detectives."

"Ms. Milton," said Barone in astonishment.

"I found out you've been looking for me and I knew I had to come back, to explain what happened and apologize for all the trouble I've caused everyone," said Tamara. "Especially that nice mayor."

Emma tried to hide her surprise. "Yeah, I just remembered I have to make a phone call..."
Beatrice walked into the shop to see Regina and her father.

"So you know those detectives are still here, right?"

"I wouldn't worry about it, sweetheart," said Gold. "How was school otherwise?"

Beatrice then saw Regina was talking to a heart.

She pointed. "Uh, that's a, sorry, is that-"

"Yes, it's a heart. It's Tamara's," said Gold. "Didn't you have a French test?"

Beatrice shook her head. "Why do I live in a world where this is normal?"

"Do you mind?" asked Regina. "I'm trying to listen."

"How can you listen to that?," asked Beatrice.

"I'll let you hold it in a minute, I'm busy," said Regina.

"I don't want to hold it," said Beatrice. "Why would I want to hold it? Shouldn't you have gloves on?"

"Beatrice, it's really quite simple. Tamara wasn't telling us what we needed to know and the most efficient way for those detectives to leave is to have her tell them herself she's fine," said Gold. "When you take a heart it becomes enchanted. We control the heart and we control Tamara," said Gold.

"Well, hasn't your classroom gotten kinder?," said Regina.

Gold motioned to the heart. "Why don't you keep to your task? Beatrice." He ushered her out of the back room.

"What does she mean your classroom? Do I have to rip out someone's heart? I don't want to rip out anybody's heart."

"No, sweetheart, of course you don't. You ought to know how it works, though."

"Great, if I find a heart on the ground, I will pick it up and I don't know..." She paused. "Have you done it to Owen?"

"No, we just needed Tamara."

"Then we don't know why he dated Mom?"

"Don't worry, sweetheart. I'm going to find out."

Regina came out to the front of the shop. "It's done."

"Very nice, dearie. Now we just have to wait for the moral outrage," said Gold. He looked at Regina. "I would recommend leaving out the back."

Regina smirked. "They don't scare me."

"Yes, but do you want another long drawn out argument over why you can't spend time with Henry?" Regina looked at him in surprise. He waved his hand dismissively. "Consider it payment for your help today."
Regina left.

"What moral outrage?," asked Beatrice.

The shop's doorbell rang as David and Mary Margaret entered.

"That was quicker than expected," said Gold. "It must be the internet."

"What did you do to her?," asked Mary Margaret.

"First, Mother Superior, now this?," asked David. "We were supposed to be working together."

"One, Tamara is fine," said Gold. "She's certainly safer now than when she was running about town deceiving my son and leaving my daughter to freeze to death in the woods. I took her heart."

Mary Margaret shook her head. "How-"

"To answer your other accusation, Mother Superior is Merlin's problem now. You ought to thank him. As for working together, when you come to me with a problem and I solve it, is that what you mean by working together?," asked Gold.

"You didn't have to do this," said Mary Margaret.

"Then why don't you tell me your solution, dearie?," said Gold.

"And I suppose this is the example you want to set for your daughter," said Mary Margaret, motioning at Beatrice.

"To be fair, I just got here," said Beatrice.

"Don't presume to tell me about my daughter," said Gold.

"I'm telling Belle," said Mary Margaret.

"I mean the heart was already out," said Beatrice. "I feel like we should put it in a Ziploc or something, though."

"This isn't over, Gold," said David.

"Uh-huh."

Belle walked into the kitchen and put her bag down. Gold worked at the stove.

"Beatrice is doing her homework," said Gold.

Belle took a seat on a bar stool at the counter.

"So, the Charmings spoke with you?"

"Yes, they did."

"And?"

Belle shrugged. "I think they wanted me to be more outraged than I was."

"And how is your level of outrage?"
Belle frowned at him. "The detectives left. I understand why you did what you did." She shrugged. "I'm never going to be as good as they are."

Gold narrowed his eyes. "What do you mean as good as they are?"

"If someone told me to put Beatrice in a portal to another land to save everyone from a curse, I would say they could go to hell."

"That doesn't make you less good. That makes you her mother."

"No, it does and I'm fine with that because I would always rather be her mother," said Belle. "You know Neal's not happy."

Gold chuckled. "I expect not."

Belle paused. "And Beatrice? She didn't..."

Gold shook his head. "I took the heart. Regina was the one to command it. Beatrice didn't even want to look upon it. It takes a particular kind of anger to take a heart and she doesn't have it. She takes after her mother."

Belle nodded. "Now that you have Tamara's heart, what do you plan to do with it?"

"Not that much."

"Perhaps you could use it to get some information out of Owen. Or Greg or whatever he wants to call himself."

Gold leaned in. "What did you have in mind?"

---

**Not Long Ago**

"So, you're really doing this?," asked Belle looking from the cart of books to Beatrice.

"Yeah," said Beatrice, turning back to her iPad.

"Are you sure you don't want any help?"

"Mom..."

"Okay, okay, I didn't say anything..." Belle paused. "You do know though if you need help I'm here."

"Help for what?," asked Henry, coming up to the circulation desk with a book.

"Beatrice is organizing a food drive," Belle said proudly.

"Oh, cool," said Henry.

The door opened and Regina came in.

"Hi, Mom," said Henry, abandoning his checkout and going to Regina for a hug.

"Hi, honey," said Regina. "I was just coming by to peruse..."
Belle tried to hide her frown at Regina's blatant lie. She had been in several times this week in search of her son under the guise of looking for something.

"How is school?," asked Regina. "Do you like your new teacher?"

Before Henry could answer, the door opened and David stuck his head in.

"Come on, kid. We have to go to the stables."

"Oh," said Henry. He looked up at Regina. "I'll see you at Thanksgiving, right?"

"I, uh..." Regina shook her head. "I don't think so, Henry."

"Then who are you going to be with?," asked Henry.

"Don't worry. I make my own fun."

Henry nodded and went with David.

"Well, I'll just peruse then," said Regina.

Belle looked over at Beatrice.

"Oh, come on..." said Beatrice, able to read her every one of her mother's expressions in an instant. "We're already having the Charmings."

"When did you start calling them that?"

She shook her head. "I don't know. Just caught on."

Belle looked back at Regina pretending to thumb through the new arrivals then back at her daughter. "Don't tell your father."

"Wasn't going to..."

Belle walked over.

"Regina," said Belle.

Regina turned back. "Your collection seems to be lacking."

"You know," said Belle purposefully ignoring her, "we're having Thanksgiving dinner at our house. The three of us, Neal, Tamara, Mary Margaret, David, Emma and Henry. You could come over if you like."

"I don't think so."

"Please do," said Belle. "It would make Henry so happy. I know he misses you."

"That hardly seems to matter..."

"Well, it does to me," said Belle.

Regina narrowed her eyes. "Why? Why would you help me? I locked you up, I sent you out of town so your daughter wouldn't break my curse. I would have sent you away when you came back."
"Yes, I remember," said Belle. "You love your son, though and he's Rumple's grandson. That makes you part of our family."

"Because it wasn't weird enough!," Beatrice shouted.

"How can you hear all the way over there?," asked Belle.

"I hear a lot of things I don't want to hear," said Beatrice. "Why do you think I got noise-cancelling headphones?"

"Ew," said Regina.

"Yeah. Exactly," said Beatrice.

Now

Owen looked up in surprise as Tamara entered the cell.

"Tamara."

"Oh, baby," she said smashing a kiss against his lips.

"How did you-"

"Snow White let her guard down. She's not very smart. Or pretty." Tamara took out a ring of keys. "Come on. We've got to get out of here. I have a car waiting."

"We came to this town for a reason. We have to deliver the package."

Tamara shook her head. "How can we do that now?"

"Wait until you see what I found."

Belle drove with Gold and Regina still holding Tamara's heart.

"Regina, do you really think Tamara has nothing better to talk about than Mary Margaret?," asked Belle.

"Sorry I'm not doing it the way you would," said Regina.

Belle looked out. "There's nothing out here. We've passed every last farm in town."

"They're pulling over," said Gold.

Belle stopped. They watched as Greg and Tamara got out of their car and walked to what appeared to be an empty field.

"It's some sort of protection spell," said Regina. "Greg says he has something to render the spell..."

"Regina, what is it?," asked Belle.

"Magic beans," said Regina, already seething. "The Charmings have been growing magic beans."

"The giant must have brought one over. Once again, so glad I could help them keep him at normal size," said Gold. He opened the car door. "I've seen enough."
They walked to the field. Owen looked up as Tamara hung her head.

"What?"

"Don't blame her," said Regina. She waved the heart.

"Tamara?," asked Owen.

"I wasn't able to control myself," she wept.

"Now, now, dearie, we'll have none of that," said Gold. He plucked a magic bean from its stalk. "What did you need this for?"

"I'm not telling."

Gold shrugged. "Suit yourself." He threw the bean down and the ground erupted into a vortex. "You can leave now."

"What?"

"See, I can't keep you two around and people seem to frown on me killing you so you need to leave." He nodded towards the vortex. "On your way then."

"What about my heart?," asked Tamara.

"You'll just have to find out," said Regina.

Belle sighed, she grabbed the heart out of Regina's hand and threw it in the vortex.

"Go get it," said Belle.

Tamara and Owen jumped. The vortex closed, leaving scorched earth in its place.

Regina looked at the bean stalks. "And what do we do about this place? Burn it?"

"Right because we couldn't ever possibly need a magic bean for anything, could we, dearie?," asked Gold.

"I know you don't want to go home," said Regina.

"Indeed not, but there other things to do with magic beans," he said.

"Well, which ones don't involve stealing my son?"

Belle shook her head. "I can't believe they did this without saying anything."

"Believe it," said Regina.

"Everyone step back," said Gold.

They walked back outside the perimeter. Gold waved held out his hand and a wave of magic rendered the field invisible again.

"I'm guessing I can't undo that," said Regina.

"You have a history of bad decision-making," said Gold. He turned to face her. "This is for the best."
"So what do we do about the Charmings?," asked Regina.

_Earlier That Day_

The Storybrooke Library was starting to get a flow of consistent customers. Mrs. Foley came in twice a week, once with her boys, once to lead the book club. Today though she brought a new patron, a squirming little newborn girl.

"What have you decided to call her?," asked Belle.

"Enola."

"Enola," said Belle cuddling the baby. "She still has that newborn smell."

"Do you just have the one?"

Belle nodded. "Trust me, she is plenty. I have no desire to go back to sleepless nights."

Mrs. Foley scoffed. "Try raising boys."

Belle looked at her. "Are you sure we didn't meet back in our land?"

"I think I would remember that."

Belle looked up as David and Mary Margaret stormed into the library.

"Belle, we need to talk," said Mary Margaret.

Belle sighed. "Goodbye, Enola." She handed her off and Mrs. Foley left.

"Belle, he has gone too far this time," said Mary Margaret.

Belle paused briefly, wondering who they meant. Merlin had been missing in action for a few days and she didn't think whatever he eventually did to the Blue Fairy would surprise her. Though Rumple had mentioned the Tamara problem this morning...

"Which one?," Belle finally asked.

"Gold," said David.

"He ripped out Tamara's heart," said Mary Margaret.

Belle considered this. "Okay."

"That's not okay, Belle," said Mary Margaret.

"Did he do something to it?," asked Belle.

"No," said David. "She just sort of turned up and told the detectives she wasn't missing."

"So they'll be leaving?," asked Belle.

"That's not the point," said Mary Margaret. "We can't use dark magic to solve all of our problems."

"Were we just supposed to ask her nicely to tell the detectives she wasn't missing?"
"Beatrice was there," said Mary Margaret.

"Yes," said Belle.

"Aren't you concerned?"

"I'm her mother. I'm always concerned, but I know Rumple is looking after her," said Belle.

"We're family. I just worry," said Mary Margaret.

"I understand," said Belle. "Beatrice is fine, though."

Now

Belle marched into Granny's. Emma was sitting with David and Mary Margaret.

"We need to talk," said Belle. "Outside. Now."

"Belle, what is it?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Outside. Now unless you want everyone in here to know what you've been keeping outside of town."

Emma looked at her parents as Belle marched out the door. "Guys, what is she talking about?"

Mary Margaret and David got up. Emma followed outside to find Gold's car.

"Well, isn't this a surprise? The Charmings aren't as good as they appear to be," said Gold.

"We were going to tell you," said Mary Margaret.

"Oh, when was that going to be?," asked Regina. "Before or after you took my son to the Enchanted Forest?"

Emma shook her head. "What? Regina, are you crazy? I mean, more than usual?"

Gold held up a magic bean. "Then where did we get this?"

"What is that?," asked Emma.

"A magic bean," said Belle.

"We were going to give you a choice if you wanted to come with us," said David.

"You have to understand we can't just let things go back to how they were," said Mary Margaret. "There would have to be conditions."

"Oh, dearie, do you really think you get to dictate terms to me?," asked Gold.

"If I wanted to go back there, do you think I would agree to be your prisoner?," asked Regina.

"Belle..." said Mary Margaret.

"What? Do you suppose I want to go back there? Do you suppose I really enjoyed the way things were?," asked Belle.
"Hold on," said Emma. "You guys were planning to go back to the Enchanted Forest?"

"We want you to come with us," said David.

Regina scoffed. "You mean you weren't going to ditch her like you did the last time?"

"Watch it, Regina," warned Mary Margaret.

"No, Your Highness, you watch it," said Gold. "See, that field is mine now and I don't want to go anywhere. I think you'll find that my son is as opposed to the idea of being separated from his son as I am. So no one is going anywhere."

"You can't do this, Gold," said David.

"Well, unless one of you is willing to sacrifice the heart of the thing you love most, I think I can," said Gold.

"Belle," said Mary Margaret.

"All this time I thought we were supposed to be a family," said Belle. "I suppose that only applies if you need something."

Regina shook her head. "I spent Christmas with you," she said, her voice dripping with contempt.

"Where did you guys go?", asked Beatrice.

She caught their expressions and their lack of an answer as they removed their coats.

"What happened?"

"Let's just say we don't need to worry about inviting the Charmings to anything," said Gold.

"What happened?," Beatrice repeated.

"It's nothing for you to worry about, sweetheart," said Gold.

Beatrice looked up at Belle. "Mom?"

Belle sat down on the sofa next to Beatrice. "Mary Margaret and David want to go back to the Enchanted Forest."

"Oh," said Beatrice. She wrinkled her nose. "Do we have to go back to the Enchanted Forest?"

"We most certainly are not," said Gold.

There was a knock at the door. Gold walked back and opened it to find a woman that was rather stunning in a very familiar way.

"It is cold out there. Thanks for getting the door, handsome," she said striding in on her stiletto boots.

"Just who exactly-"

"Oh, look who it is!," she said as Belle stood. Before Belle knew what had happened the woman was hugging her. She now turned her attention to Beatrice. "And you! You turned out perfect!"
Beatrice was trying to form a retort but the woman was pinching her cheeks. "Mom, help," she said.

"I'm sorry, I don't understand-" said Belle.

"Oh, come on, you remember that, right?," asked the woman. "You were with that one in the jungle, in a state of total ecstasy-"

"Someone please make her stop," said Beatrice.

She pointed at Gold. "I miss the scales, then again, I like weirdos."

"The jungle?," asked Belle.

"Right. You made a wish to me. For a little girl? There she is?"

"Oh, Gods," said Belle.

"Yeah, just the one, sweetie. I'm Venus."

Beatrice leaned over. "Is she for real?"

Belle stared at the woman in shock.

"Did Merlin not mention I was coming?," she asked.

"Why would Merlin mention you?," asked Gold.

"Because I'm his mother," she said pointedly. "I'm here for the whole Blue Fairy thing."

Belle looked to Gold.

"I'm sorry. Did no one listen when I asked if there were any more surprise relatives?," asked Beatrice.
Chapter 42

A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest...

The Duke walked back to where Belle and Catherine sat in the palace suite given to them for their use.

"Where is Reinette?"

"She said she had something she wanted to see in the King's library," said Belle.

"What was in the message?," asked Catherine.

The Duke shook his head. "Terrible, terrible news."

"What is it, Grandfather?," asked Belle.

The Duke sat next to his wife. "Ian sent word that King Leopold has been murdered."

"Gods..." said Catherine.

"Well, what happened?," asked Belle.

"The bite of some sort of viper and as wretched as that is, Snow White is now accused of murdering her father."

"What?!," exclaimed Belle. "It couldn't be. Snow never would."

"The Queen has put a price on her head. She's fled. No one knows where she's gone."

"Do you think we ought to alter our plans?," asked Catherine. "Our path tomorrow takes us through that kingdom."

"It's too late to alter our course," said the Duke.

"How can you two be concerned about getting to the next ball when Snow White is in danger?," asked Belle.

Catherine turned to her. "You haven't met Queen Regina, have you?"

"No..."

"They say she is a powerful sorceress," said Catherine.

"They say she's trained by the-"

Catherine shot her husband a look, cutting him off.

He shrugged. "Well, they say she's trained by someone..."

"Subtle," whispered Catherine. She turned back to Belle. "We can't involve ourselves and more than that if the Queen has any sense she will look to Snow White's friends and certainly someone
she has known since her infancy. If Snow White has any sense, she will lay low and not make contact with anyone she knows. If you try to help her now, you may as well sign her death warrant."

"Belle?," asked the Duke.

She nodded. "I understand, Grandfather."

"You say you understand, but you have that look on your face."

"What look?"

Catherine answered. "The one that says you aren't going to listen to anyone."

---

**Now**

"I finally got Merlin," said Belle, walking into the kitchen. She took a glass of orange juice off the counter. "He's going to meet us."

"Oh, how kind of him now that we've played host to his mother," said Gold.

"She's not very much trouble," said Belle.

"Belle, sweetheart, a goddess has arrived at our home unannounced," said Gold.

"I didn't know she was coming. Neither did Merlin from the sound of it."

"Your family gets more complicated with each passing day," said Gold. "What are we going to find out next?"

"Yes, because your family has been no trouble..." Belle teased.

That seemed to put him off balance. "What do you mean?," asked Gold.

Belle smiled. "The Charmings and Regina, of course."

"Right." He turned back to the stove top. "Though really, I ought to have known."

"Known what?"

"Granddaughter to the goddess of love and beauty. It should have been obvious to anyone with eyes," he said pushing her hair to the side of her face. He leaned forward to kiss her.

"You guys, I haven't even eaten yet," said Beatrice as she walked in and sat at her customary stool.

They broke apart. Gold went back to cooking. Belle turned to Beatrice.

"Do you remember how most of your classmates in Manhattan had parents who were divorced or incredibly unhappy?"

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Really, I don't want to know what you people do."

"How very generous of you," said Gold, handing her a plate of pancakes.

"Yeah, well, I got to looking at my great-grandmother's Wikipedia page," said Beatrice. "I found
some disturbing things on there."

"Hello, everyone," said Venus as she entered wearing a precariously short skirt.

Gold caught Beatrice's glance as she looked from Venus' short skirt to Belle's just slightly longer short skirt. She looked back at him and he rolled his eyes at her. Since he had caught Whale looking at Granny's he had noticed that others looked and thus had begun a campaign to get Beatrice to change short skirts, which had mixed success.

Venus looked over at Beatrice's breakfast. "What are those?"

"Pancakes..."

"Are they good?"

"Yeah..."

"Not just a pretty face, are you? I'll take some of those, handsome," Venus said sitting next to Beatrice.

Gold looked to Belle.

"Right, Grandmother," said Belle choking a little on the word as Gold and Beatrice smirked. "you mentioned the Blue Fairy."

"Yes, little Viv. Merlin sent for someone to pass judgment on her and Zeus decided to send me."

"There's a Zeus, too..." said Beatrice.

"Now, first things first, I need to know who's running the show around here."

"Well, Snow White and the Prince, I suppose," said Belle.

"Or so they think," said Gold.

"I need to meet with them," said Venus.

"I'll call them," said Belle, walking out.

"I'll come with," said Venus, following her back into the living room.

"And now your comment," Gold said once they were safely gone.

"Her skirt is even shorter than Mom's."

"I've told you before I'm not her father and I am definitely not Venus' father. I am your father."

---

Then

The next day the party rode on the path to their next destination.

"The weather's turning," the Duke observed out the window of the carriage. "A storm is coming."

"It was clear a moment ago," said Reinette.

Catherine scooted over to look. "Alec, what would your mother say?"
"What?," he asked.

"It's not a storm. It's a tempest," said Catherine.

"A tempest?," asked Belle.

"A storm born of magic," she explained. Catherine looked pointedly at her husband. "So glad we could make our way through Queen Regina's kingdom."

"Well, it's not so bad..."

As the words came from his mouth, the carriage was pounded by huge pieces of hail.

"Right," he said. "Perhaps we ought to stop at the next lodgings."

"Perhaps," said Catherine.

---

*Now*

They went to the auditorium in city hall where town meetings were held.

"Seriously, is this it?," asked Venus as she strode in. She looked back at Gold, Belle and Beatrice. "Julius Caesar had a much better set up. Those were the days."

"Yeah, just one of the many differences between Storybrooke and Ancient Rome. That and I think there were probably less storybook characters running around there," said Beatrice. "At least I hope so."

The door opened. David, Mary Margaret and Emma came in.

"Who are they?," asked Venus. She looked at Belle. "Real names, not this curse crap."

"This is Snow White and the Prince and their daughter, Emma," said Belle.

"What's happening?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Consider yourself fortunate. You're in the presence of the gods," said Venus. The Charmings stared blankly at the goddess. She looked at Beatrice. "They're in charge, right? Why aren't they saying anything?"

"I guess," Beatrice shrugged. "Like seriously, I don't know who voted for them."

The Charmings stared at her. Gold just smirked from his spot on the bench.

"I'm just saying, nobody voted for you. Regina's somehow mayor but nobody voted for her. Emma's the only one anybody elected," said Beatrice. "Why do I have to be the only one to point this stuff out?"

"Your point is noted," said Venus. "First things first, why don't I have a temple?"

"A temple?," asked Snow White.

"Yeah, columns, statues, an altar? Have you heard of it?"

"We didn't really build the town," Mary Margaret said apologetically.
"Well, could you get on that?"

The door opened. Merlin entered.

"Oh, there's my baby." She held her arms out. "Come to Mama."

Merlin walked over, trying to ignore the Charmings' looks of outright confusion and Gold's smirk.

"Do you suppose for the first time in a few millennia we could try to conduct ourselves with just a little dignity?"

"Have you been eating?," asked Venus, she pinched his arm. "You look too skinny."

He groaned. "Could we just get to the point?"

"Right, well, I'm here for the reason that my son hopefully explained to you. Then again if he didn't, that's just typical. I have been sent on the authority of my realm to pass judgment on Viviane or as you know her the Blue Fairy."

"What realm?," asked David.

"She's a goddess. Take a guess," said Merlin.

"Olympus," said Venus.

"I'm sorry," said Mary Margaret, "and I don't mean any offense at all, but whatever crimes the Blue Fairy committed were in my kingdom and I should be the one to pass judgment over them."

Venus put her hand on her hip and leaned. "Huh."

"I don't understand," said Mary Margaret.

"You see, usually when I show up someplace and say I'm in charge, people do what I want."

"That's not how we do things," said Mary Margaret.

"The way you do things nearly got my granddaughter and great-granddaughter killed," said Venus. "Not to mention the death of Belle's mother so I thought you would gladly welcome my guidance and judgment on this great matter. If you continue to oppose me, I am afraid that I must insist. You will not like when I insist. Am I understood?"

Venus didn't wait for Mary Margaret to answer. She looked at Emma. "You're the sheriff?"

"Yeah?"

"I want to speak with the fairies in turn."

"All of them?," asked Emma.

"What? Did you have plans?"

Emma shrugged. "Guess not."

"I also want to speak to anyone else with a complaint regarding the Blue Fairy."

"We don't really have a file for that."
"Well, I'll start with the people in this room and work through the rest of the town," said Venus. "I'm certain you can turn up something."

"Okay, but how are you going to try her if she can't remember who she is?"

"Don't worry about that." She looked from the Golds to the Charmings. "I'm sensing some tension in the room."

"Some?," Gold scoffed.

"Does somebody want to fill me in?"

"It's not important," said Mary Margaret.

"Did you get the Blue Fairy to cast that protection spell on the field?," asked Belle.

"Belle..."

Belle shook her head. "You did, didn't you? Is that how she got her wand back to curse Beatrice? You needed Rumple to make Tiny human-sized, but you needed her to make certain we never knew about the field of magic beans."

Merlin groaned. "Not bloody magic beans again."

"We have magic beans now?," asked Beatrice.

"No, I have magic beans," said Gold.

"They weren't yours," said David.

"They are now, dearie."

"Her first act probably would have been to throw Beatrice into a portal since that's what she loves to do," said Belle.

"I wouldn't have let that happen," said Mary Margaret.

"Because you're so good at stopping her?," Belle asked. "You know everything she's done and you continue to work with her."

"You're one to talk," said Mary Margaret.

Belle turned and faced Mary Margaret. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Oh, you know what it means."

"Something you want to say, dearie?," asked Gold.

"Yes, please, don't spare our feelings," said Belle.

"So I was right about the tension," said Venus.

Then

There was a coaching inn not far off. The innkeeper and his family fell over themselves to make accommodations ready for the Duke and Duchess of Padua. The quick run from the coach to the
front door of the inn had Belle soaked. As she took her cloak off, she spotted a wanted poster with Snow White's likeness on it.

"Belle?," said the Duke.

"It's so awful," she said.

"It is," he replied. "You should go up. The maids will take care of you. Go warm yourself up."

Belle nodded and went up to the rooms that had been rented. She took the bath that had been drawn, drank her tea and got in her trunk to find a book. She was a few chapters in when she heard the door open.

"I don't need anything else, thank you," she said without looking up from the page.

"Belle?"

She turned around and was staggered to see Snow White standing inside the doorway, drenched and terrified.

Now

"Fun times," said Venus. She looked at Beatrice. "Is that how they always are?"

"Not always," said Beatrice. "Usually it's just like 'Hey, Gold, save us all from this horrible thing' and then Dad's like 'Why would I do that, dearie?' Then Mom's like 'Rumple, you have to help them.' Then he does and it's all 'No, don't do that, Gold!' Then sometimes we just eat dinner."

"Families are complicated," said Venus. She motioned at the bulletin board. "What's this?"

Beatrice looked at the hand-drawn flyers. "Oh, after the Curse broke everyone started looking for people. They put these up. There used to be way more."

Venus motioned at one in colored pencil, done by a child of a little boy. "'Missing: My Stupid Brother,'" she read. "No name."

"Well, everyone got a different name in the Curse, maybe they didn't think there was a point," said Beatrice.

"That would be very smart of him." Venus took the flyer off the board. "Mike Foley. Do you know him?"

"I think he's in Henry's class," said Beatrice. "His mom does the book group at the library."

She paused.

"Did you start a war because someone else said she was prettier?" asked Beatrice.

"That bitch was jealous," said Venus. She then spotted Merlin. "Ah, sweetheart, you can take me to lunch."

"Grand," said Merlin.

Merlin took her to Granny's.
"You didn't ask about your siblings," chided Venus.

"How many are we up to?"

Venus sighed. "I haven't seen you in a very long time. You could play at being nice."

"Why did Zeus send you?"

"Because he did," said Venus. "Is this still about Adonis?"

Merlin shook his head. "I would gladly give my right foot to never hear that man's name again."

"I like Rumplestiltskin. He's very good to them."

Ruby edged up nervously. "Here's your food, your, um-"

Venus smiled. "You can just put it down. Thank you."

Ruby did and backed away.

"Beatrice was worth the wait, wasn't she?" asked Venus.

Merlin ignored her and pretended to be interested in the lasagna.

"You have to produce her tomorrow," said Venus.

"What?"

"Whatever you're doing to her, it's clearly not working," said Venus. "I'll bring her memory back and she'll be prepared for trial."

"Trial? You're actually doing that?"

Venus nodded. "These people deserve to know what sort of fairy has been leading them. Besides, once the full extent of her crimes is unveiled, things will be much easier for your Dark Princess, won't they?"

Merlin didn't answer.

He hated when she was right.

"And who will play prosecutor?"

"That is a conundrum, mainly since your Viviane-"

"She's not my Viviane."

"Mainly since your Viviane has so many victims. Speaking of which, I would love if you could find Pinocchio."

"Do you have any idea what he must look like by now?"

"Yes, that's why I think he would make a great witness."

Then
Snow White shook her head. Belle had given her tea and a blanket to stop her shivering. "I just don't understand why she's doing this. I don't know what I ever did to her."

Belle shrugged. "I don't know."

The door opened. "Belle? We're all waiting."

The Duke stepped in and his face dropped. He quickly shut the door behind him.

"Your Grace," said Snow White.

"Grandfather, I didn't know-" Belle stammered. "She only just arrived."

"Yes, that is a problem," said the Duke. He turned to Snow. "The Queen's Black Knights have just arrived to inspect the inn. I said you were indisposed at the moment, but that will only buy us minutes."

"I should leave," said Snow White.

"The inn is surrounded."

Belle looked at her trunk.

"I see you have an idea, my dear," said the Duke.

---

**Now**

Belle looked up as the door to the library opened. Seeing it was Mary Margaret, she went back to loading the cart of returns.

"Belle, I need to talk to you."

Belle continued. "If you would like to borrow a book, I can help you. Otherwise..."

"I can't let this trial against Mother Superior go forward."

"Then perhaps you ought to just get a magic bean and send her away," said Belle.

"We were going to tell you eventually..."

"When? Were you going to leave a note when you went back to the Enchanted Forest?"

"Do you have any idea what it was like for me there? To have Regina trying to destroy my happiness?"

"Right. What would I ever understand about Regina trying to destroy my happiness?"

"You know what I meant and you know Rumplestiltskin was a menace."

"And your husband is a dolt."

"Belle!," Mary Margaret exclaimed in innocent shock.

"Has no one ever said that before?"

"This trial will be hard on everyone."
"Hard on you, you mean."

"I don't know what you mean-"

"You're not innocent anymore, Snow," said Belle, letting herself slip into the usage of her friend's old name. "You knew what she had done and every time after that you asked for her help, you were complicit in her actions."

"You're mad I didn't take your side."

"No, I'm mad you won't own it. See, that's the thing about Rumple. When he screws up, he at least admits it."

"I had no idea the trade the Blue Fairy had made with Regina. I was trying to save everyone-"

"Fine. The trial is still on."

"Belle..."

Then

They heard a clamor down the hall as Belle draped a blanket over the trunk. She positioned herself on top of her trunk with a book in hand.

"This really is completely uncalled for," said Catherine. "Do you know who you are treating in such a manner?"

"It's alright, my lady, these men are just doing their jobs," said Alec as the Black Knights strode in.

Catherine shot him a look.

"I'm sorry, I was just reading," said Belle.

"Reading?" scoffed the leader. "What were you reading, girl?"

"A Political History of the Maritime Kingdoms," she said displaying the cover.

The Black Knights found this hilarious. Belle steeled herself. Catherine rolled her eyes.

"As you can see, we're not hiding a rogue princess in here," said the Duke. "Just one very bookish girl."

"Yes, I see that..." the leader laughed.

"Permit me to buy you and your men some drinks," said the Duke. "You must be thirsty after such hard travels."

"You're too kind, Your Grace."

The Knights left. Catherine turned to the Duke as Belle jumped off her trunk.

"Why are we buying them drinks?" she asked.

"In a moment, my dear," said Alec, hurrying to help Belle with the lock and the trunk lid. Once it was open, they lifted the gowns and Catherine watched in amazement as they helped Snow White
Now

Emma entered the town meeting room to see Regina. On the other side was Kathryn Nolan.

"Regina, what are you doing here?," asked Emma.

"I was requested," she said.

"Oh, good," said Venus, striding into the room like it was her own runway. "We're all here. I assume you all know each other?"

"Yes," said Regina.

"Now, I need a prosecutor and a defender for this trial," said Venus. "Regina. Kathryn. Congratulations."

"I won't defend that winged freak," said Regina.

"Of course not. That would be the fox guarding the hen house," said Venus. "You're prosecuting."

"How does that make sense?," asked Emma.

"You doubt me," said Venus. "Allow me to share the wisdom of the gods, then. The only lawyers you seem to have in this town are one guy who tried to frame a werewolf, an injury attorney who likes to cry wolf and the other is Rumplestiltskin. Everyone else I tried is afraid of the Blue Fairy or beholden to her. Regina is neither. I know she doesn't have the best reputation, but at the least everyone knows who she is."

"What about me?," asked Kathryn. "I'm not a lawyer. I wanted to go to law school, but the Curse..."

"You know the laws of the gods, don't you? The Blue Fairy was your godmother so you must have some loyalty to her no matter your personal opinions. All you have to do is tell the Blue Fairy's side of the story. Do you think you can do that?"

"Yes," said Kathryn.

"Very good. As soon as I restore her memory, you may begin your pre-trial interviews to determine the scope and breadth of the matter. Emma has been gathering evidence and she will be sharing that with both of you."

Regina stood. "This should be fun."

She and Kathryn bowed slightly. Venus nodded and they left.

Emma turned to Venus. "Are you sure about Regina?"

"Do you dare question the judgment of your goddess?"

Emma paused.

"Maybe..."
Venus eyed her.

She shrugged. "Give me a break. I'm new to this."

"Do you know a boy named Mike Foley?"

"Yeah, he's in my kid's class."

"I wonder if you might arrange for me to speak with him."

"Why?"

"To bestow my blessing. Come now. I believe my son has something for us."

Then

"You're too kind," said Snow White. She shook her head. "When I saw your carriage, I knew you would help me. I still don't understand what I ever did to Regina."

Catherine shook her head. "Undoubtedly she has some deep black hole in her heart she's trying to fill."

"My lady has some experience in these matters," said the Duke.

"We can help Snow, can't we?," asked Belle. "I know you said not to get involved, but we're already involved and we're almost out of the kingdom."

The Duke and Catherine exchanged looks.

Catherine turned to face Snow White. "Your Highness, I have no doubt we can help you. There is one thing I want to make perfectly clear, though. Are you listening?"

"Yes, your ladyship."

"If you leave this kingdom now, make no mistake you are running away. You will not be able to return ever and the best you can hope for is a marriage to a prince in a sympathetic kingdom, which does not seem likely."

"What?," asked Snow.

"You have nothing to offer," said Catherine. "It would be safer for you to leave public life altogether. The Queen has power and money and men..."

"And magic learned from the..." the Duke began. Catherine shot him a glare. He shook his head. "I forget the name."

Catherine turned back to Snow. "So unless you are willing to fight, to raise an army, to defend your throne--"

Snow White shook her head. "I can't do that."

"Why not?," asked Belle.

Snow White laughed nervously. "Have you seen me? Have you seen her?"

"You could try," said Belle. "If something's worth fighting for, you never stop."
"Belle," said the Duke, "I know you dream of heroics, but I am afraid this will not be among them if I have to drag you back to Padua by your ear. This is Snow White's decision and hers alone."

"If you leave now, you're giving up," said Catherine. "And you're abandoning your people."

Now

Merlin sat on the desk in the sheriff's office as Emma led Venus in. Mother Superior sat handcuffed to a desk.

"Sheriff Swan, this madman abducted me. What do you intend to do about it?"

"You're in one piece, are you not?," asked Merlin.

"Swan," said Hook, "you haven't introduced me to your lovely friend."

"Venus," she answered for herself.

"Indeed you are," said Hook.

"Aw, thanks..."

"Are you falling for that?," asked Emma.

"It would be rude to not say anything."

"Could we just not?," asked Merlin.

Venus looked at Merlin. "I'll see you for breakfast."

Merlin cast a look over at Hook. "I will give you to Rumplestiltskin for a chew toy."

He left.

Venus shrugged. "He's sensitive."

"So, how are you going to do this?," asked Emma. "A potion. A spell?"

Venus snapped her fingers.

"Viviane, wake up!"

Mother Superior's head shook, as if casting off a deep fog. She looked up. "Goddess Venus..."

"Yeah," said Venus. "I think it's about time we discussed some things, don't you?"

Then

Belle awoke the next morning to find that her friend had gone. She was sullen as they breakfasted and got in the carriage to their next destination.

"Belle..." said Reinette.

"Why wouldn't you let me help her?," Belle demanded.
"It's not your fight," said the Duke.

"I'm so glad you can tell me how to run my life," said Belle.

"To be fair, it didn't seem as if her highness had her heart in that fight, either," said Catherine. "You were more invested than she. Obviously, you take after our side of the family."

Belle turned to the carriage window and stared out.

"Our next stop is Edelweiss, is it not?," asked Reinette.

"Yes," said the Duke.

"They have rather a fine library. I should like to have a look around it," said Reinette.

"I don't see why not," said the Duke. "Any particular interest in the library?"

Reinette shrugged. "There's only something I wish to look up."
Chapter 43

Chapter Notes

I've only copied my notes because they mention Idina Menzel:

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC that thinks I care about a Wicked Witch not played by Idina Menzel. Tell you what, when she starts singing, we can talk. Okay? Thanks for all the reviews, I think it was like 13 last time I checked for last chapter? I have not gotten back to anyone yet, but I do really appreciate them and will get back to you soon. Probably after I feed my dogs. Thanks again, please let me know what you think and happy reading!

The weeks leading up to the trial had a buzz over Storybrooke. The town gossiped as it did without knowing any of the details, just pieces from those who had been called to testify and had already given their statements. The gulf between the Golds and the Charmings grew larger which made everyone nervous. Emma was still speaking to the Golds due to her own general anger at her parents for deciding to move to the Enchanted Forest and not mention it. The Charmings spoke to Neal, but not with any depth.

Henry still went back and forth, seeking a reconciliation for a problem he didn't know the details behind. As usual since Emma was busy with the trial prep, Neal got Henry from school and this afternoon took him by the pawn shop. Beatrice tried her hand at entertaining by doing her latest: conjuring cookies that always seemed to come out too dry. After he had his fill, Henry reminded his father that they had promised Archie to come visit the puppies. He eagerly invited his aunt and that was how Gold found himself in Doctor Hopper's office with his daughter and grandson cooing over a pen of fifteen Dalmatian puppies.

Gold hadn't actually known Beatrice could coo. The few babies in Storybrooke she usually tried to avoid on her own without the aid of overzealous mothers. Now, though she seemed relaxed as she played games with the pups. Her enthusiasm almost rivaled Henry's but her reserve kept her in check.

"So, what happened?," Neal asked Archie, motioning at Pongo and his "girlfriend" Perdita as they slept beside the pen. Parenthood had apparently exhausted them.

"Well, after the Curse broke Mrs. Gutman and I haven't really been able to keep Pongo and Perdita apart. Then this happened," Archie said helplessly.

"Yeah, but where's the other eighty four?," asked Beatrice. "Seriously, this town should be overrun with Dalmatians."

"Didn't Mrs. Gutman want them?," asked Henry.

"Oh, Perdita is staying with me for a little while, Henry. Mrs. Gutman and I have joint custody," Archie said with a smile.
"Hey," said Beatrice, turning to Gold and holding one of the puppies. He couldn't help but notice she had been holding the same one for a while. A girl with a big spot on her ear as her only marking so far. "If Pongo and Perdita have True Love, does that mean they have magical puppies?"

"They're dogs," said Gold.

"If unicorns are real, why are magical puppies stupid?"

"Don't ask for logic, Bea," Neal warned.

"You seem to be making a friend," said Gold.

"Oh, yeah, I guess," said Beatrice.

Gold wasn't certain about magical, but the puppy did seem to have the ability to make Beatrice smile.

"Dad, can I get one?" asked Henry.

"Nice try, kid," said Neal. "You can ask your mom about that one."

"I need to get ready for my next patient," said Archie. "Uh, Beatrice?"

"Yeah?"

"You still have a puppy."

"Oh, sorry," said Beatrice. She put the puppy back in the pen. "Bye, puppies."

"Do we have a witness list?" Venus asked, strolling in. Regina and Kathryn both held out papers. Venus looked at Regina's. "You have a great many witnesses named."

"I do."

"A great many more than Kathryn has," said Venus looking to the new defense table.

"Well, I do have a lot to prove," said Regina. "Since the Fairy's crimes are so numerous."

"Are you aware of this?" Venus asked Kathryn.

"Regina and I have been sharing information according to your ruling."

"Very good then." She turned to Mother Superior. "And you, Viviane, are you prepared to speak for yourself?"

"Of course."

Emma couldn't help but notice Regina's smirk.

"You seem rather certain of yourself, Your Majesty," said Mother Superior.

"Play nice, Viviane," warned Venus.

"I'm merely looking forward to the proceedings, that's all," said Regina. "I intend to show all the lives you've ruined and cap it off with your centuries long campaign against a young girl whose
greatest crime appears to be burning an old car."

"And being a demon spawn destined for darkness-" said Mother Superior. Kathryn tried to silence her with a look.

"Let's save it for trial," said Venus. "Assuming we have no more pending issues, I will see you all on Monday."

"My client wishes to spend this weekend under house arrest at the convent," Kathryn said reluctantly.

"Viviane, do I look stupid?," asked Venus.

"I have no magic. What harm could I do?"

"You would doubtless ask one of your sisters to use some of her magic as you have before," said Venus. "Back to your cell."

Venus snapped her fingers and Mother Superior vanished.

Regina and Kathryn gathered their things. Emma went to Venus as they left.

"Are you sure about Regina for this? She seems to be having a lot of... well, fun."

"She likes destroying people."

"Yeah, I don't think that's a good thing."

"You know her better than me, but let me ask this, what do you suppose Regina might have been born into a Land Without Magic?"

Emma shrugged. "I don't know. I never thought about it."

"Her mother ruined her, that much is obvious and if Cora had no magic, would she have been able to crush her daughter under her thumb for so long?"

"You can crush someone without magic."

"Yes, but not quite so definitively which is why it should be used carefully."

---

**Back In The Enchanted Forest**

Belle carefully unpacked her mother's trunk to place the things around her room at the Dark Castle. She hung the tapestries first and then went on an inventory of the jewels. She wasn't interested in them for their purpose so much as she wanted to look at them and remember her mother as she wore them.

The books were next and that's when Belle got to looking at the leather bound journal. She had never read it before. Her mother always shut it as she entered the room. Belle had just assumed it was Reinette's own private thoughts, memoirs of a marriage to Maurice, but if these were Reinette's own miseries why were they in such a strange code? Shorthand she had known, but why this foreign shorthand? Belle could recognize the language but not the shorter form of it, nor did she read the language.

She briefly wondered if that was Reinette's plan.
What would her mother want to keep a secret from her?

She flipped through pages until she began to recognize a numbered system of dates.

And places.

She recognized the places from her only summer in society before her mother died, before the ogres came and before she came to the Dark Castle. Had that all really only happened a few years before? She felt like a different person.

She did recognize one name in particular: Edelweiss.

Edelweiss was the name of the village at the base of the long mountain pass to the Dark Castle. She had of course ventured there before, to fetch straw once and after her return she went to market days when the weather was good for fresh air and to amuse herself. Her mother's markings seemed to indicate a visit to the library. She now remembered a brief stop at the coaching inn, never realizing how close she was to her future fate.

---

**Now**

Regina entered Granny's and a hush fell over it.

"Leroy," she said.

He looked up at her. "I'm trying to eat my breakfast."

"Don't let me interrupt," she said, placing a scroll with a seal on the table.

"What's that?"

"That's your summons. I'll be calling you at the trial."

"What? Why me?"

"Well, you discovered the sleeping curse that Belle was put under, not to mention I believe the Blue Fairy had a hand in separating you from someone."

He grimaced.

"See you there," said Regina.

"Regina, what are you doing?," asked Mary Margaret.

"I'm doing my job as charged to me by Venus herself," said Regina.

"You don't have to enjoy it so much," remarked David.

"I love what I do," said Regina. "And you and the winged freak all love acting pious. It will be a relief when we've dispensed with that."

Regina stalked out.

David shook his head. "Don't listen to her."

She shrugged. "How can I not? Emma's still mad at us. Belle won't even speak to me."
"We'll fix it. We'll find a way to get the beans back."

Mary Margaret had to bite back a laugh. "Is that what you think will fix it? We betrayed them, David."

"How many times have they manipulated us?"

"That doesn't make it right and besides that, we weren't a family then," said Mary Margaret. "Actually, since we found out the truth about Henry's father, they haven't done anything..."

"They ripped out Tamara's heart."

"To protect us," said Mary Margaret.

"What good is it if we lose sight of what's right?," asked David.

"I'm not sure what that is anymore," she admitted sadly.

"Is she already gone?," Belle asked in astonishment.

Gold nodded. "She wanted to find a Starbucks before the class began."

"Well, I suppose that just leaves us then," Belle remarked with a mischievous smile.

"I suppose it does."

Belle sat at the counter. "Merlin and Aurora are running the library today. I'm thinking of asking Mrs. Foley to come help out. With the trial starting, I'll be busier."

"Are you really going to watch the entire thing?"

"She killed my mother, Rumple. I want to see someone finally hold her accountable for something since Snow White and the Prince seem so determined not to."

"Did Beatrice ever have pets?"

It was an odd inquiry, but Belle had grown used to such questions and only hoped it didn't signal an impending melancholy. She shrugged. "Some fish, a hamster."

"She never asked for anything else?"

"We always had a tiny apartment. I think she didn't like to get her hopes up."

"Well, you don't now..."

"Rumple, where are you going with this?"

"Did you know Pongo's a father?"

"Archie told me all about it. And Henry. Then Henry again."

"They're seven weeks old. Doctor Hopper informed me that one in particular has already weaned entirely."

"Since when do you and Archie talk about dogs?"
"I like dogs. In fact, I find them much more tolerable than most people. Oddly enough Granny and Miss Lucas seem to try my patience more than most."

"Is there a reason we're-

"This pup is one that Beatrice took a shine to."

"You want to get Beatrice a dog?"

"Yes. I've got several well-reasoned and persuasive arguments..."

"I bet you do."

"Mostly it boils down to that I think it would make her happy."

"Well, who's going to watch it? We can't leave the poor creature caged up all day."

"I've already thought of that. I can keep her at the shop while Beatrice is in school."

"You want to keep a puppy in an antiques shop?"

"Any damage it does I can easily undo, Belle. After all, I've worked with Regina."

Belle smiled. "You're asking me to get a puppy," she said.

"I suppose I am, though I don't see what's so amusing."

She failed to stop a giggle. "Yes, we may get a puppy."

Kathryn walked into the sheriff's office.

"Kathryn," Emma said in surprise. "What's up? Do you need something else for the trial?"

"I need to talk to someone."

"Okay..." Emma said cautiously. "Why don't you sit down? Do you want a drink-

"I can't do this."

"What?," asked Emma, trying to answer the question as she asked it. "Do you mean the trial?"

"Have you seen the depositions?"

Emma looked over at the monstrous stack on her desk. She had been catching up on them when she could. "Yeah..."

"Did you read the one from Theresa Ingersoll?"

"I hadn't gotten there yet." She paused. "She has a stall at the farmer's market, right?"

"She was a medicine woman in our land. She was the one the Blue Fairy called upon to..."

"Oh," said Emma, slightly grateful she hadn't read it.

"They tied her up. They forced Belle to swallow poison. She convulsed, she nearly choked on her own vomit so that the Blue Fairy could kill a baby in the womb."
"Yeah, I guess it's a tough job. Defending Mother Superior I mean."

"Tough? It's impossible." Kathryn shook her head. "If by some chance I win this trial, it won't be because the Blue Fairy was right. It'll be because people hate Regina or Gold."

"I'm sorry you're having a hard time-"

"You need to talk to your parents."

"What?"

"Maybe they can talk to Mother Superior and just get her to accept her punishment."

"Venus made us swear not to tell the details..."

"I need you to try," said Kathryn, tensely collecting her bag. "Because I can't do this. Even if she is my fairy godmother."

Kathryn left leaving Emma speechless.

Beatrice arrived in Augusta early enough to find out that the class was held at a center next to a Starbucks. She parked her car and walked in. The smell of coffee hit her and she breathed it in.

Why couldn't they just conjure a Starbucks in Storybrooke?

She ordered and noticed that there was already a group gathered with the recommended study guide for the course. They looked so... not like they came from a storybook. As they headed out, she realized it was time to head over to the class.

"Your name?"

"Beatrice Fre-Gold," she answered.

The woman nodded. "It says here you still haven't paid."

"Oh, right," said Beatrice. She reached in her messenger bag and got out the small roll of cash that her father had sent her off with.

The woman eyed her as Beatrice handed over the money.

"We take checks..." she said.

"My dad likes cash."

"Well, Blake will be your instructor. It's the second room on the left."

Beatrice went in the room and no one stopped talking or even took notice. She took an empty seat next to a girl in a pink sweater.

"Do you go to Dirigere?," she asked.

"Uh, no," said Beatrice.

"Are you home schooled? I haven't seen you at Cony."

"No, I'm from Storybrooke."
"Storybrooke? Where's that?"

"It's a couple hours away."

"Wow. You're from somewhere even smaller than this place?"

"I guess."

"I'm Kennedy."

"Beatrice."

Then it hit Beatrice.

This was the closest she had ever come to appearing normal. No glasses, no increasingly weird family, no Taylor Billingsley, no Mother Superior. Nobody here even knew who she really was. As far as they knew, she was just a regular girl from Storybrooke who lived with her perfectly normal parents. She could be the most popular girl in Storybrooke for what they knew!

"Oh, cool skin on your iPad," said the boy at the next table. "I like Doctor Who, too."

"Oh, my God, did you just say Doctor Who?," the girl sitting behind him asked. "Do you think they'll bring back all the doctors for the fiftieth? What about Rose?"

"Probably," said Beatrice. "I just wish Donna would get her memory back."

"Oh, yeah, that was so sad," said the girl.

People understood her!

The door opened and a boy strode in. He was a few years older and a little cute which did not go unnoticed by the other girls and from what Beatrice could tell at least one boy.

"I'm Blake. I'm your instructor for the PSAT preparation course so you can pass the PSATs. Then you can take courses for the ACTs and PSATs and not get into the ivy league and wonder what the hell it was all for." He picked up a stack of papers. "Get out your pencils. Time for your first practice exam."

"We just got here," said Beatrice.

"Yeah, so it's assessment time," he said. "I can see you're going to be fun."

"Back at you," said Beatrice.

"Oh, good, we have a smart ass."

Beatrice shook her head. "You have no idea."

---

Then

It was a strange thing.

When she had come once to fetch straw, the villagers looked at her with pity. Obviously the new girl in the Dark Castle and she briefly wondered how many there had been. Then she was gone for a while and back. The pity remained.
Then she came down in a new work dress and a bracelet that Rumplestiltskin had made for her and a purse full of coin. She hadn't given it a lot of thought until the next visit when she wore a new winter cloak that Rumple had given her and a demure pair of gold earrings that he had also made. As she went to the stalls, she noticed eyes drawn to her ears or her wrist.

She almost felt embarrassed, but she didn't want to make anyone uneasy so she had been determined to wear the old dress and no jewelry. That was until Rumplestiltskin had decided the weather was too cold and the path too harsh so he would take her in the enchanted carriage. She had tried to get out without the jewels but his face looked so crestfallen as he asked what had happened to them. She said she had forgotten and excused herself while she went to retrieve them.

Once she arrived in the carriage with no horses, with the Dark One himself as a fellow passenger even if he didn't get out, Belle knew that any suspicions the villagers had were confirmed. Anyone who had contempt was careful to hide it as she went from stall to stall.

She rode the enchanted carriage alone today. It wasn't a market day. It didn't need to be for the library to be open.

She walked inside and found a table. On top of it suddenly sprung the most gangly toddler she had ever seen with a piercing, decisive look in his eye.

"Are you from the Castle?," he asked, he reached over and impertinently fingered her gold bracelet.

"Yes," Belle answered as she didn't feel she had a choice. She smiled. "Did you guess because of the bracelet?"

"Yes."

"Well, you must be a very smart boy then."

"No, my brother's the smart one."

"Surely there can be more than one smart brother," said Belle.

"My brothers said he was a monster."

"What do you think?"

"You're not scared so how could you live in the same house as a monster?"

Belle smiled as she leaned in and whispered conspiratorially. "So he must not really be a monster, but that can be our secret."

"Nephew!," a voice boomed out. "Stop bothering my parishioners!"

The boy scampered away.

"Please excuse him, Mistress," said the man. He waved his hand. "He's... well, sometimes we think he's touched."

"He's very smart," remarked Belle looking for any sign of the boy who seemed to have vanished into the stacks. She looked back at the librarian. "Does he live with you?"

"Thank the Gods, no," he said. "My sister's. She and her husband have a cottage not far, but occasionally they are called upon to lecture at the great universities and I am called upon to look..."
after their boys while they travel. There's three and that one is the most trouble. Never mind that, Mistress, how can I be of assistance?"

"I recently found a journal of my mother's," said Belle. "It seems she made a visit here and I was hoping to find out what she had looked at."

"I'll be happy to help any way I can," he said. "Do you know which volumes?"

Belle took out the journal and opened it to the page about Edelweiss. "I'm afraid I don't know the shorthand."

"Yes, it's a rare dialect from Agrabah. If you wait a moment, Mistress, I can find a volume to translate."

---

**Now**

"Did Archie say she seemed willing?," asked Belle as they approached Mrs. Gutman's house.

"My name gives her pause," said Gold. "I asked if he could arrange a meeting for us."

"Hello, Mr. Gold," he said. "Belle."

"Archie," said Belle.

"Mrs. Gutman is waiting inside."

Gold followed Belle into Mrs. Gutman's house. The Dalmatian pups were playing in a pen while Perdita napped. The woman herself stared sourly at them.

"Mrs. Gutman," said Archie, "I don't think you've met Belle."

"Nice to meet you," said Belle. She looked at the puppies. "They're gorgeous."

"Yes, well, I have a lot of people who are interested," she said, casting a glance at Gold. "I don't give them away to just anyone. Archie said I should talk to you. I like to know people before I give them a dog."

"Of course," said Belle.

"How many live in the home?"

Belle smiled as best she could. "Well, it's the three of us. It's a big house. The backyard is fenced."

"Have you ever had a dog?"

"No-" said Belle.

"Actually, I have," said Gold. The others looked at him in surprise. "I've taken care of sheepdogs."

"Dalmatians need lots of walking..." She was clearly hoping Gold would back down.

"I expect we can manage that," Gold answered.

"Beatrice, their daughter, is very good with the puppies," Archie offered. "She's a very responsible young lady. I'm sure she can help take care of a dog."
"Which one was it?," Belle asked, looking in the pen.

Gold pointed out the puppy himself. She laid apart from the others and gnawed at a rubber bone that was about half her body length. "That one."

"That one?," Mrs. Gutman asked with dread.

She looked aghast as Belle reached down to pick her up.

"Oh, she's adorable," said Belle.

"Are you sure?," asked Mrs. Gutman.

"Yes," said Gold.

"It's just this one has some dominance issues. She's not as social as the others..."

"Then I expect she'll fit in just fine with us," said Gold.

"Oh, look at her, Rumple...," Belle cooed as the puppy sought to examine the new woman holding her.

Mrs. Gutman looked anxious at the sight of Belle falling in love. "Are you sure you wouldn't like another one?"

"What's wrong with this one?," asked Gold, growing irritated.

"I would just hate for you to have to deal with any behavioral problems later on..."

"My daughter liked this one," he said sharply.

"What he means," Belle said, trying to save the situation, "is that we aren't frightened by a challenge."

She still looked wary.

Gold sighed. "What if I promised not to blame any future issues on you? I always keep my promises."

"I suppose that will do..."

"Then it's just the matter of price."

Emma had been in the throes of preparations for Mother Superior's trial for a couple weeks now. She was at Regina and Kathryn's beck and call finding witnesses and taking statements, not to mention her parents. Kathryn's visit hadn't helped matters.

"Emma!," called Mary Margaret.

Emma sighed and turned to her mother catching up with her on the street.

"I had an idea-"

"Is this about the trial?," she asked.

"Maybe we could just find some witnesses who support her-"
"Mary Margaret, don't take this the wrong way, but I don't know who else you're going to find. Maybe you should talk to Belle."

"I told you what she said."

"I can't say I blame her..."

"So you agree with her?," Mary Margaret asked in disbelief.

"What? You think Belle deserved to be locked up and poisoned?"

"No, of course not, but Mother Superior helped us fight Regina, she helped save you from the Curse-"

"In a tree she traded Belle for!"

"It's complicated."

"No, it's really not."

"Emma, you would have been cursed like the rest of us."

"Yeah and instead, I got to be on my own for twenty-eight years so excuse me if I don't see what's so great about her."

"You broke the Curse. You saved us all."

If there was one thing she was starting to hate, it was this line of reasoning. "Which I think was actually Gold's plan so maybe you should be sucking up to him."

Mary Margaret nodded. "We're back to the beans."

"Well, what the hell did you guys think was going to happen? That Regina and Gold were just going to agree to come back as your prisoners? Have you ever met them?"

"You don't know what they were like in the Enchanted Forest. They were dangerous."

That's when Emma spotted a curious sight outside the door to the grocery store.

"Yeah, I would take you seriously but all I can see is Gold holding a puppy."

"What?," asked Mary Margaret.

She looked ahead. Gold was standing outside McDonald's grocer and did appear to have a Dalmatian puppy curled against him.

"Hey, Gold," said Emma. She looked at the pup. "You're going to hurt your reputation standing around with a puppy like that."

"Well, we'll see about that, dearie," he said. "Your Highness."

"Why do you have a dog?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Because I bought her."

"For what?"
"For my daughter," Gold said tersely.

Emma scratched the dog's ear. "Are you surprising her?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact," said Gold.

"Yeah, just don't surprise Henry," Emma warned.

Belle emerged from the store holding a bag.

"Hello, Belle," said Mary Margaret.

"Mary Margaret," she answered coolly. She looked at Gold. "We should get her back in the car. It's too cold out here."

"As you wish," said Gold. "See you Monday, Your Highness."

"Monday?," asked Mary Margaret,

"The trial, of course."

They left. Emma turned to Mary Margaret.

"This whole thing's crazy. Crazier than usual. Can't you talk to Mother Superior? She as much confessed. Convince her to take her sentence. Then maybe you can apologize to Belle and save your friendship."

"Fine," said Mary Margaret. "I will find my own witnesses."

Emma groaned as her mother stalked away.

---

_Then_

The librarian served Belle tea while he sought out the first volume. As she sipped, the curious gatekeeper re-emerged climbing through an empty bottom bookshelf.

"You said he's not a monster," he said as he closed the distance between them.

"He's not."

"Then why keep you a prisoner?"

"I'm not a prisoner."

"Then why do you stay?"

"Why do you suppose your parents stay together?," she teased.

"My brother says social convention."

Belle eyed him. "Do you even know what that means?"

"Sort of."

His uncle reappeared and the boy ran off.
"Here we are, Mistress. Agrabah shorthand."

Belle took the volume and eagerly began studying it against her mother's journal.

---

**Now**

"I'm home," said Beatrice as she came into the pink Victorian. She put her messenger bag on the floor.

"In the den!," Gold called.

"How was it?," asked Belle.

"Well, the instructor's kind of a jerk, but the kids are okay..." she said, walking into the living room. Her parents were curled up on the sofa. Her mom had a book and her dad had a... "Puppy."

"Yes, that would be what she is," said Gold with a smile. "You remember your friend, don't you?"

"Can I hold her?"

"You might as well seeing as she's yours," he teased as he handed the puppy over.

"Really?," she asked, taking the dog in her arms.

"Be careful," Belle warned.

"Belle, her mother carried her around by the neck," said Gold. "I saw her brother drag her by the ear with his teeth."

"What's her name?," asked Beatrice.

"Well, what do you think it should be?," asked Gold.

"Amelia?"

"No," said Belle.

"What?," asked Beatrice.

"My great-grandmother's name was Amelia. I can't name a dog after my great-grandmother."

"Martha?," asked Beatrice. Her mother looked hesitant. "I can do this all day."

"Martha," Belle agreed.

"We put her bed in your room," said Gold. "She sleeps there and you have to help take care of her."

"I can do that," said Beatrice, bordering on something like excited.

"Here," said Gold, getting up from the sofa. "She's due for another meal. I'll show you what she eats."

---

**Then**
Belle spent the next few hours happily translating and decoding her mother's writing. She found call numbers and checked them against the library inventory.

Then it didn't make sense.

"What's wrong?"

Belle looked down to see her gatekeeper underfoot.

"Something just doesn't make sense that's all."

"What?"

He disappeared as Belle went back to his uncle and waited while he spoke with another patron.

"It seems I'm interested in these volumes," said Belle handing over a small piece of paper.

"Local history of the castle?," he asked. "Very good, Mistress."

He went and retrieved them for Belle, then she sat with them finding nothing except in the final chapter: how the Dark One acquired the castle from its last foolish owner and made it his own.

She wondered what her mother could have possibly wanted with that.

---

**Now**

Gold was awoken by a knock on the bedroom door. The clock indicated an inhuman time. He got up quickly to open it and find a heavy-lidded Beatrice holding Martha.

"She won't sleep..." she whined.

Gold looked. The pup seemed perfectly awake.

"Well, you're holding her."

"If I don't hold her, she cries..."

"It's her first night away from her mother and litter-mates. She's bound to cry."

"What do I do..." Beatrice moaned helplessly.

Belle stirred. "What's wrong?"

"Just the puppy." He led Beatrice out. "Come on, sweetheart. Let's see if we can't get her to settle."

---

**Then**

The day had dwindled and Belle made her way back to the enchanted carriage through the village square.

"Not a good time at the library, sweetheart?"

She turned to see Rumplestiltskin hiding in the shadows. He strode towards her.
"Usually a day among books makes you much happier," he said teasingly. "I was hoping to capitalize upon such happiness this evening."

"Let me have my way with the books and then..."

"I have my way with you. Precisely."

"How do you know I'm not having my way with you?"

Belle was then mortified to see the library gatekeeper had been hiding in a shrub and chose that moment to show himself. He stared up at Belle.

"Who's this?" asked Rumplestiltskin. "Ought I be jealous?"

"This is my new friend," said Belle. "He's guardian of this library."

"You're well suited to one another then."

"He looks like a monster," the boy pronounced.

It was rare to see something like surprise in Rumplestiltskin and yet Belle could swear she saw it.

"Then I must be a monster," said Rumplestiltskin.

"She's not scared," he said. "I'm not scared."

"That's because you're both fools," Rumplestiltskin answered.

"Rumple..." Belle chastened.

"Well what else do you call a woman and a boy unafraid of someone who looks like a monster?"

The boy considered this. "Something else."

"Well, when you have a better answer you can come tell me at the Dark Castle if you survive the journey."

Belle was about to reprimand him again but it was then as if Rumplestiltskin froze. The boy ran away as his uncle called after him.

"Rumple, what is it?" asked Belle in concern. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," he said finally.

"What was it?"

"There was just something in that boy's future," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Is he special?" asked Belle, looking in the distance for any sign of her new acquaintance. "He is unreasonably smart for his age."

"Yes, he'll be very smart, very clever. We'll see him again. I just can't work out how."

"Come back to the carriage," Belle implored him. "You're worrying me."
Belle staggered in to see that Beatrice was half asleep and Gold was giving the puppy a china saucer of milk. "The book said not to let her know that crying gets a response."

"Tell her," Beatrice said with her face smashed against the pillow.

Belle sat down on the bed next to Beatrice. She looked at Gold. "These sheepdogs of yours, did you bring them milk on a saucer in the middle of the night?"

"She misses her family."

Belle smiled through her tiredness as she grabbed one of Beatrice's throws to wrap around herself. "Suddenly you're much more sympathetic about that. You never brought me milk in a saucer."

"You didn't ask," said Gold.

"What are you people talking about?," asked Beatrice.

"Your father mocked me once for missing for my family when I first came to his castle."

"I never mocked you, I only said I didn't wish to hear the sobbing. It disturbed my concentration."

Belle looked to the TV. "What are we watching?"

"Apparently, we need to teach Martha about her namesake," said Gold. "So far I've decided it's very foolish to run off with a strange sorcerer when you ought to be in medical school."

"He didn't shut up during the episode with the witches," moaned Beatrice, head still smashed in her pillow.

"Well, let's see, a man who's not a wizard creating spells out of thin air in a Land Without Magic? Did the writer do any actual research or does he just assume I'm as big a moron as he?," asked Gold. He looked down to the pup as she nuzzled at his pajama leg. "Are we finished, dearie?"

"Don't call her dearie," said Belle as Gold picked the puppy up from his feet.

"Oh, so she's included in that?"

"Well, you like her better than the people you call dearie, don't you?," asked Belle.

"Yes," said Gold, "I suppose I do."

"You do realize this dog has us in her thrall, don't you?," asked Belle.

"Yes, I was starting to suspect that."
Beatrice liked clothes. It was an obsession she hadn't come to understand until she had time to observe Gold for a while. Her mother was of course, beautiful, and that meant when she put even the most unlikely outfits together onlookers would marvel and she would get compliments. Beatrice's own fixation was more exacting and always had been since she was a little girl, picking out the correct barrettes to go with an outfit and to Belle's consternation even the correct ponytail holder to go with her pajamas.

When she finally had the chance to observe Gold it made sense. His jewelry, carefully chosen to impress. The suits, the shirts, the ties and pocket square. The cane? He had sleeve garters something Beatrice had never seen aside from the Dapper Dans at Walt Disney World. Freed from the Curse, Belle had brought jewelry back into her wardrobe and it accompanied her usual palette of blues, yellows, golds and sometimes purple or gray.

Her parents had never said it, but Beatrice had gotten the hint that looking like a schlub was not a good thing in Storybrooke. People stared, she didn't want to think they were staring at her clothes. Gold had even given Martha a red leather collar with a gold name tag he had made the day before.

They seemed more dressed up than usual for the first day of Mother Superior's trial. Beatrice walked with her parents to the town square carrying Martha and all eyes were on them. Gold had chosen a black suit with dark gray today. Belle's own dress was more of a slate blue than Beatrice was used to seeing. They walked arm in arm as the townspeople gawked.

Then she saw Merlin. She had basically only seen him in his Enchanted Forest clothes once: leather pants, high boots an embroidered jacket. She was fairly certain his Storybrooke wardrobe came from a Land's End catalog: all chinos, a light brown jacket and woven shirts, completely belying his power. Her dad wanted to impress with his appearance, Merlin couldn't be bothered with perception. Today he had on a gray suit, crisp white shirt and shiny black shoes.

"I see that look," Merlin warned.

"I didn't say anything," said Beatrice.

"You're saying it all with your eyes."
"I think you look handsome," said Belle.

He rolled his eyes. He nodded down at Martha. "Who's this?"

"Martha," said Beatrice.

"Hello, Martha."

"Hey, are magical puppies a thing?," asked Beatrice.

"I don't see why not," said Merlin.

"They are not," said Gold.

The sheriff's patrol car pulled up and Emma walked Mother Superior out. The crowd in front of city hall parted from the sidewalk. Belle turned back to Beatrice.

"You should be off to school," she said.

"What about Martha?"

Gold took the puppy. "I'm going to take Martha to the shop. I'll check on her a few times before you get out of school. I'll meet you back here at three, alright?"

"Alright," said Beatrice.

"We'll eat lunch with her," said Belle. She gave Beatrice a kiss. Gold followed suit and she was off.

"Hey, try to overshadow the other children, alright?", said Merlin. "Shouldn't be hard."

---

**A Long Time Ago On Mount Olympus**

"Merlin?," Venus called in a sing-song voice. "Merlin!"

Merlin sighed as the great doors opened to his room. His mother strode in barefoot as her skirts billowed around her.

"Why are you hiding?," she asked.

"I'm not hiding," said the boy. "I'm reading."

She sat down on the bed next to him. "What are you reading?"

He didn't answer. She peered over his shoulder.

"Magic," she said.

"Yes."

"You know you don't need it."

"That's easy for you to say."

"You should get some air. Why don't you join Adonis on a hunt?"
"I don't want to join Adonis on a hunt."

She took the book from him. "Then why don't you at least go play in the garden? You have been up here all day."

"I like reading."

"Yes and so do I, but you can't hide in your room all the time. That's no way to pass a childhood."

"How would you know?"

"That doesn't change anything. Garden. Now."

Now

The makeshift courtroom brimmed with townspeople, filling all the seats and having a standing row in the back. The defense side was filled with the nuns and even the Knights of the Round Table had dared to show their faces. The prosecution side had Gold, Belle and Merlin. Belle would have guessed that at the slow rate it filled up, most of the others just needed a seat.

Gold walked in and joined them.

"Sorry, Dove had to help me with Martha's playpen."

"Her playpen?" asked Belle.

He shrugged. "It was the only one he could find this morning."

Regina looked back from her table. "You put your dog in a playpen?"

"You concentrate on what you're doing, alright, dearie?" said Gold.

Venus entered, looking more ceremonial in what had to be a goddess gown. She took her seat at the makeshift throne, a chair that was alone in the center of the room even if it was not ornate.

"I'm calling to order this trial of Viviane known to other realms as the Blue Fairy and to this realm as Mother Superior," said Venus. "Regina shall make her case and then Viviane will make hers. You will keep order in this court, but all that happens here shall be known."

The last words seemed to bellow.

Venus motioned. "Regina, please make your opening argument."

"Goddess Venus, people of Storybrooke, I intend to show that you have all been deceived. The Blue Fairy has for centuries told everyone that she acted on the side of good and good alone, yet that's just not the case. While there may have been a few good tokens here and there, a princess who got to a ball, a young boy brought to life, she has always acted with her own agenda and I intend to show you just what that agenda entails. People whose lives have been ruined and families that have been torn apart. Foremost of that agenda is a young girl who has done nothing to the Blue Fairy or to anyone for that matter, but has incurred her wrath since before her birth and the harassment of her family for hundreds of years before. The time has finally come for these crimes to come to light."

Regina took her seat with a look of satisfaction.
"Kathryn," said Venus.

Kathryn looked down at some index cards and back up. She finally stood.

"I have no opening statement," said Kathryn.

There was an audible gasp. Regina's smirk grew larger. Mother Superior looked aghast.

"Really?," asked Venus. "No opening statement?"

"We'll let the facts speak for themselves," said Kathryn.

"Do you think that's a good idea?," asked the goddess.

Kathryn didn't answer.

"Fine," said Venus. "No opening statement, but if you should wish to make the one at the beginning of your case, I'll allow it. Regina, you may call your first witness."

Then

Merlin made his way to the garden. Finding a patch of flowers, he sought to see if anything was in his magic book that he could use.

"You're Venus' son, aren't you?"

"One of the many." He looked up to see a girl around his own age with a sweet smile and her hair in brown ringlets.

"What's your name?," she asked.

"Merlin."

"I'm Viviane," she said, sitting down on the grass with her basket. "I heard you're a halfling like me."

"No."

"No?"

"My father was a demon."

"Really?," she asked. "You must be very powerful."

"No."

She looked up at him. "I'm sure that's not true."

Now

The curiosity was starting to be unbearable.

Every day her parents dressed like they were going to battle and went to city hall. Every day Beatrice followed them, she was sent to school and she handed off the puppy. She came back to the square after school and waited for her father. Before he arrived, she tried to overhear some
details and everyone suddenly clammed up. She tried asking Aurora if she had heard anything, but
unfortunately the one person in Storybrooke who might be likely to talk to her was the one person
who knew even less than her. So every day, Gold arrived, gave Beatrice her puppy and sent her
home.

"Kathryn!," Mary Margaret called.

Beatrice looked to see Mary Margaret and David following Kathryn out of city hall. Beatrice hid
as she reluctantly turned.

"Is that all?," asked Mary Margaret.

"You try defending her, see if you can do better," said Kathryn.

"What about all the good Sister Evangelina did as a fairy?"

"So what? She didn't want to be a fairy. She never even got to see her family again. I don't have a
way to spin that."

"It's not spinning," Mary Margaret said. "It's telling the whole truth."

"I am doing what I can, but I don't have a lot to work with. Do you know what happens
tomorrow? Regina starts the Beatrice portion of her case."

"The Beatrice portion?," asked David.

"Everything she has ever done to stop Beatrice and she's starting with-

Beatrice realized she wasn't very clever at hiding because Kathryn had spotted her. Mary Margaret
and David turned.

"Well, trust me, there's no way to spin it," Kathryn said with disgust as she walked away.

That was the day Beatrice broke. Gold made dinner as usual a pot roast with potatoes and carrots.
They talked and Martha lurked under the table to beg. Gold would attempt to break her of it, then
secretly give her a carrot. Beatrice bided her time answering idle questions about school and chose
a quiet moment to act.

"What have I been missing?," asked Beatrice.

Her parents looked up.

"The trial?," asked Beatrice. "No one talks to me, I'm like the only one in town without a clue."

"Which is how we want it," said Belle.

"Your mother's right," said Gold. "You needn't worry yourself."

"Could you give me the PG version?"

"Beatrice, this really isn't your concern," said Gold. "It's just a parade of all the lives ruined by the
fairy's callousness so far. The dwarf and his love, those who became fairies who didn't want to,
those cast aside when they disobeyed her."

"Anyone else she tried to kill?," asked Beatrice.
She got her answer from her parents’ silence.

"Wow, I feel so much better," said Beatrice.

"We are trying to protect you," said Belle.

"And how long do you think you can do that?"

Belle looked at her. "Let us try a while longer."

---

**Then**

"Merlin!"

He looked up to see his mother. He and Viviane had been meeting in the garden a few weeks now. His mother had not made her way down until now, he presumed she was too busy with Adonis.

"Goddess Venus," said Viviane, bowing her head.

"You're new here, aren't you?"

"Yes, my father was kind enough to bring me to Olympus after my mother died."

"Then you ought to go back to him," said Venus.

"Bye, Merlin," said Viviane getting up and running off,

Merlin waved hopelessly. He looked up at his mother's hard look.

"I don't want you to see that girl again."

"Why not?!"

"Because I can see straight through to her soul and it is a shady, shady place," said Venus.

"It's just Viviane!"

"Merlin, my son, I have no doubt you have many extraordinary talents and will be a great, great man, but you cannot yet divine souls. That one is shady. She will do awful things and you are to never see her again. Understood?"

Merlin sighed. "Yes, Mother."

---

**Now**

Beatrice stood outside the town square and checked the time on her iPhone. Her dad had said he would meet her here with Martha, but he was nowhere to be seen.

Hearing the door to city hall open, she turned expecting to see Gold. They froze as they looked at her and hurried off.

Beatrice went inside. There were more people milling about outside the makeshift courtroom. As the door opened, she slid inside, standing in the back row.
"Ms. Ingersoll," said Regina. "When you arrived at Sir Maurice's castle, what did you find?"

The old woman seemed hesitant to speak.

"I was taken to the dungeon."

"Was there anyone in Sir Maurice's dungeon?"

"Yes, Mistress Belle."

"Was the Blue Fairy there?"

"Yes."

"Did she give any instructions?," Regina asked turning an icy glare towards the fairy.

"Yes."

"Well, what were they, Ms. Ingersoll?"

"The Blue Fairy explained that Belle had been taken by a demon and within her lived his spawn."

"What did Belle say?"

"She said nothing."

"Why is that?"

"The Blue Fairy said she had taken her voice, for fear of summoning the demon."

"What did the Blue Fairy ask you to do?"

"To rid her of the child."

"Did Belle make any protest?"

"She couldn't speak," the old woman retorted.

"Then I'll rephrase. Did she try to stop you in any way?"

"Yes."

"What then?"

"She struck me. My nose bled."

"Does that seem like something someone anxious to be rid of a demon spawn would do?," asked Regina.

"Objection," Kathryn said halfheartedly. "Speculation."

"I didn't ask her Belle's motives, I merely asked if it seemed like a logical conclusion that any passerby would make."

"You'll answer, but we'll stick to facts from now on," said Venus.

"No," the old woman answered.
"What happened next?"

"The clerics tied her down. They held her mouth open as I poured the potion down her throat."

"Did the potion have the desired effect?"

"No."

"Did you try again?"

"Yes."

"How many times?"

"I don't recall."

"Does five seem right?," asked Regina.

The old woman waited to answer.

"It seems like the number of times I tried before she lost consciousness."

There was a murmur over the courtroom.

"You tried more after she was unconscious?"

"Yes, the demon spawn wouldn't die."

"You mean the baby," said Regina. "What happened next?"

"She convulsed. She had to be released from her bindings or she would have choked on her own vomit."

"What was next?"

Beatrice turned and walked out into the hall.

The rain started and she realized what she had done. She desperately tried to gain control over it, to do what her dad had shown her, to draw it back with a happy memory, but it kept going back to imagining her mom tied up in a dungeon because she was pregnant with her.

"Beatrice?"

She heard Mary Margaret's voice. The woman wiped her nose with a handkerchief. She shook her head.

"Beatrice, you shouldn't have heard that..."

She snorted. "Why not?," she asked bitterly.

Thunder rolled outside.

"Beatrice, I am so-" Mary Margaret began, edging closer.

"I need a minute! I am trying to get control over the weather! Icy roads suck, I get that!," she snapped.
The door opened again and Gold emerged. He walked over to Beatrice.

"Oh, sweetheart, I wish you hadn't heard that..."

She shook her head. "I can't get control." She tossed her messenger bag aside and sank to the floor as if everything just weighed too much.

Gold knelt down. "Breathe. Let it out, take only the good things back in."

She shook her head. "I can't."

"You're thinking too much."

"Mr. Gold?"

They looked up to see Dove with Martha tucked under his overcoat.

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Dove," said Gold, taking the puppy with a smile. He handed her to Beatrice. The dog nuzzled in concern, but Beatrice clutched her closely and the rain dissipated. Gold helped Beatrice up and Dove handed her the bag. "I'm going to go have a word with your mother and then come home with you. Dove will take you to your car."

Then

Merlin wasn't sure who he ought to blame. His mother, her lover, Viviane or himself.

He was hunting.

He didn't want to hunt. He couldn't see the point. Where was the prowess in killing some defenseless animal or some dangerous animal?

His mother was off seeing to her duties and he had been left in her lover's charge. He felt that really it was Adonis who ought to have been left in his charge. Yet he had not failed in his instructions to keep Merlin apart from Viviane.

Merlin heard hooves and low snorting in the distance as Adonis readied his bow, drawing an arrow from his quiver.

"Don't make a sound," he instructed.

Merlin rolled his eyes. The trouble was that as he had been told to not make a sound, all he wanted to do was make a sound.

So he did, his mocking roar reverberating and causing the birds to fly from the trees.

Yet the boar did not run. It turned to face Adonis and Merlin.

It was not afraid.

His mother's other instruction had been to be wary of a beast who showed no fear.

The boar ran towards Adonis and gouged through him, blood spilling out onto the ground. Merlin stood uncertain of what to do, what he could do as his mother's lover groaned. He was not a god, yet his own studies of magic did not include defying death. The god of the Underworld would always get his due.
His mother appeared, tears in her eyes. She practically fell to Adonis' side and his blood soaked her white dress and the ground.

Still crying, she took nectar and sprinkled it over the blood. Red flowers with a black center bloomed as Adonis' body vanished.

**Now**

Emma felt like this was one of the strangest duties she had ever been called upon to perform as the sheriff of Storybrooke and that was saying something since they once had to chase down a giant.

The Foleys had been puzzled by Venus' request, but seeing as she was Venus, they really weren't in a position to argue. She collected him from his house and brought him to Granny's.

"Hello, Mike," said Venus. "Why don't you sit?"

He took a seat across from her in the booth.

"Do you know who I am?"

"Of course," he said almost dismissively.

"Are you hungry? I'm buying," said Venus. She looked up at Emma. "You can wait over there, Sheriff."

Emma went to the counter and kept looking back.

"I saw your picture," said Venus, taking out the poster from the town square.

Mike eyed it. "I didn't make that."

"It has your name. Is that your signature?"

"Yes."

"Then how is it that you didn't draw it?" She paused. "Do you have a brother?"

"Yes. That's not him, though. He's older than me."

Venus looked. It was a younger boy.

"You're not missing a brother? You weren't separated by the Curse?"

"No."

"What was your name back in the Enchanted Forest?"

"Michael."

"If you tell me this was a joke, that's okay," said Venus. "I'll forgive you. I just need to know the truth."

Merlin entered the diner and Venus looked up at him. He walked over.

"This is my son, Merlin," said Venus. "Merlin, this is my new friend, Michael."
Merlin looked down. Venus saw a spark of recognition.

"Michael, why don't you go with Emma and order us some pie?," said Venus.

Mike got up and hurried towards the counter. Merlin sat and fingered the poster Mike drew.

"I take it you know him."

"Do you?"

"I'm the goddess of love. Don't you think I can spot these things?"

"I don't know where he went."

Venus nodded. "I told you a dark streak ran through that one."

"Are you going to add this to her list of crimes?," he asked.

"No," said Venus. "True Love usually sorts itself out."

"And the family?"

"As I said, True Love usually sorts itself out. When she finds him, you can break the curse they're under."

"You're just going to hope things work out?"

"You have spent centuries writing Beatrice's story. Now she needs to write her own."

It had not been a smooth morning for Beatrice. For one thing, her dad was the one to wake her up which never happened. She never woke up late and she rushed to get ready, throwing her makeup in her bag to do later and her father sending her off with a breakfast she could eat as she drove.

That did not stop her from the Starbucks stop, though. She had eight minutes to spare when she parked her car and ran to the class with the cup carefully balanced.

"Oh, good, didn't want to miss our resident smart ass," said Blake.

"I'm sorry, I was running late," said Beatrice, putting her back down and getting out the study guide.

"Not too late for Starbucks," he remarked.

She sat.

"You're late," he snapped.

"If I get three of those, do I get a detention?," she asked. "Oh, wait, I don't because this isn't a real school."

"Why don't you tell me the right way to solve this problem?"

Beatrice glanced up at the test question posed on the overhead projector. "If the radius of a circle is increased by by 20%, then the area is increased by..."

"It's B."
"And how did you reach that conclusion?"

"Because 44% is the answer."

"Yes, but you won't have time to work out every problem on the test. You need a strategy which is why you're not in real school."

Kennedy gave her a sympathetic look.

"So, math strategies..."

Mary Margaret entered the library. Belle didn't glare, she just went back to the computer.

Summoning her courage, Mary Margaret stepped up to the desk.

"You were right," said Mary Margaret. "I haven't been owning up to the choices I made. I thought that saving Emma justified everything and maybe it did, but it doesn't excuse it. It doesn't excuse her being alone for most of her life and it doesn't excuse what happened to you. I should have asked where the tree came from, I should have been more critical after what I knew the Blue Fairy had done. Maybe things would have been different for all of us."

"I didn't tell you everything," said Belle.

"No, because you were always the brave one."

Belle looked up.

"My mother always told me to keep to the good and I believed her. I like being seen as good."

Belle snorted. "Yeah, you really do."

Mary Margaret nodded her head fervently, her eyes grew teary. "I know and sometimes the good thing may not have been the right thing because I should have been your friend."

"You didn't know about the tree."

"I should have done more and I'm sorry about the beans, I-"

Before either of them quite realized it, Belle was hugging Mary Margaret.

"I don't deserve your forgiveness-" said Mary Margaret.

"Maybe not, but we've been friends too long. Besides, we've had worse fights before."

Mary Margaret nearly choked on a laugh. "Over dolls."

"You pulled my hair out," said Belle.

"You elbowed me in the chin," Mary Margaret said plaintively.

They broke apart.

"And what about the trial?," asked Belle.

"David and I are just going to let it happen from now on," said Mary Margaret. "We won't help either way."
"Does anyone know what to do?," Blake asked.

The class was silent. He turned to Beatrice. She snapped back from the distraction of thinking about the trial. Try as she did, she just couldn't get what had happened to her mother out of her head. How much more was there that they weren't telling her?

"No answers from our resident smart ass?," he asked.

"Well, I think your pedagogical methods leave something to be desired."

"Oh, look who's been using her vocabulary flash cards."

"You've been going on for two hours, how do you expect them to remember anything?"

"There's no breaks at the PSAT."

Beatrice looked around. "Who wants a break?"

There was no answer.

Beatrice sighed. "Guys, if you all get up now, he can't stop you." She motioned her hand and they did. "Thank you. Let's all be back in ten minutes or whenever we get through the Starbucks line."

The other students shrugged at each other and dispersed. Blake glared at Beatrice.

"I suppose you think you're cute. Does that work in that no-name town you're from?"

Beatrice picked up her messenger bag. "You have no idea what works for me there."

"Well, let's see, you're a pretty girl who thinks she's smart and you think all your nerd hobbies make you special. Your family must be rich because you have a car that's almost brand new and who else sends a sixteen year old with twelve hundred dollars in cash? You think you can get anything you want because your daddy will get it for you."

Beatrice gritted her teeth. "You really don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, somebody has daddy issues..."

"Well, let's see about you, dearie," said Beatrice, not even noticing the endearment as it flew from her mouth, "you're twenty. You had an almost perfect score on the SAT, but you're not in the Ivy league. Instead, you're at a state school, not even that great of a state school, and you have to lord over a bunch of high school kids to feel superior because you are pissed off that you're still here."

"I'm still here because I don't have anyone to pay my way and I got my score from studying, not because my parents paid anyone to teach me."

"I bet a trained monkey could do it."

"Well, it could probably get a better score than you did this morning."

"Yeah, because it wouldn't understand what you're saying."

Then he kissed her.
Beatrice stepped back and shoved him.

"What was that?!," she shouted.

"Don't act like you didn't enjoy it."

"I didn't!"

"You like me. I can tell."

Beatrice screwed her face up. "No, you're gross and a jerk." She gathered her things.

"What? Are you going to run home and tell Daddy?"

"You would not like it if I did," she said, walking out.

Then

Merlin stayed in his room. Venus stayed in her room.

"I haven't seen you in the garden."

He looked up to see Viviane.

She smiled sweetly. "I thought I would come up here." She held out a plate of figs and honey in offering.

Merlin took one.

"What are you reading?," she asked.

"It's a book about magic," he said.

"Magic?," she asked with her eyes lighting up.

Now

Merlin walked down the street and saw Beatrice's car parked at the end of the street. More than that, Beatrice was in it, looking a million miles away. He walked down, waved his hand to unlock the door and sat in the passenger seat.

"What are you doing?," he asked. "Your parents will want you home. They hardly know what to do with themselves when you're gone."

Beatrice shook her head. "I seriously doubt that."

"Well, they can entertain themselves for a little while, but not forever." He eyed her. "What's wrong?"

She let out a sob.

"Beatrice, what is it?"

"Dad's netherworld, was there anything real in it?"
"You were real. He was real."

"Anything else?"

"Granted, your magic probably gave it a thread of truth, but if you're worried about something from there happening, it probably never will-"

She snorted through a stuffed nose. "That figures."

"What does?"

"I had a boyfriend."

Merlin tried to hide all curiosity. "Did you now?"

"I didn't see him. I met his brother, but I had this memory of kissing him and it... it... I don't... I know what I am. I know I'm not some girly girl. I don't feel things like other people do but the memory of that felt... It felt like something."

"And why bring this up now?"

"That jerk instructor I told you about?"

"Yes?"

"He kissed me."

"He did what?!," Merlin exclaimed.

"Are you going to freak out about this?"

"I'm your grandfather, of course I am! What did you do?"

"I shoved him..."

"So, it was not welcome?"

"No, and it just felt..." She stopped and looked at him. "It felt like nothing. Just mechanics, just trying not to bang into his teeth."

"You're the product of True Love, Beatrice. You can't be moved by mere displays of physicality."

"Yeah, but I'm never going to meet my True Love."

"What makes you say that?"

"Suppose my Sideways Boyfriend was it, well, he's probably in elementary school right now."

"You could still meet him."

"Great and when he's ready to get married, I can be a pathetic cougar."

"Your father had to wait hundreds of years to meet your mother. Don't start whingeing about the extra ten that you just imagined. For all you know, your True Love could be anywhere..."

"Or nowhere. Or maybe he doesn't exist. Maybe I just imagined some imaginary boyfriend."
"You need to go home," said Merlin. "And you need to tell your parents what happened."

Beatrice groaned. "No... That will just make it worse."

"Oh, no, you need your parents help with this."

"He'll flip out."

"Obviously, but you need your mother and trust me, he will know everything she knows so you had better just tell them both and be grateful that he can't leave town at the moment to kill the boy."

Beatrice walked in the house. Neal was there. Martha jumped from her perch sitting with him and bounded to Beatrice. She gratefully picked up the dog.

"Were we having dinner?," she asked.

"Not quite. Henry bailed on me for a birthday party and I remembered you guys had a giant TV so I thought we could watch the Knicks."

Beatrice wrinkled her nose. "Who are they playing?"

"The Spurs. They're going to get their ass handed to them."

He looked up at her. "What's wrong?"

Gold and Belle entered.

"There you are," said Belle, greeting her with a kiss. "Papa was starting to worry."

"Beatrice?," asked Gold.

"Anyway..." said Beatrice. She summoned her courage, deciding quick was the best strategy. "Anyway, you know the jerk instructor? He like kissed me and I totally wasn't into it and I left so I don't know what's going to happen with your course fee and I sort of walked out and I thought he was a jerk anyway so there's really no need to freak out or anything, but Merlin said I had to tell you anyway and I am going to go to my room now, okay?"

She started making a break for it with the puppy, but Gold had her by the arm. He let go as she relaxed from her bolting position.

"He did what?," he said in his most serious tone.

"Kissed me. He's a jerk. I'm fine."

"Did he do anything else?," asked Gold.

"I dealt with it."

"Unless he's lying in a bloody broken heap on a cold slab of pavement, you have not dealt with it," said Gold.

"Rumple..." said Belle.

"Look, this hasn't worked out great for me either. It's not exactly been my week so if I could just go to my room, that would be great," said Beatrice.

Beatrice went up the stairs.
"I will kill him," Gold seethed.

"You can't leave town," Neal reminded him.

"Rumple, give her a minute. It was her first kiss." Belle grimaced. "Stolen from her."

Neal groaned. "Fine. I'll go kick the guy's ass."

Beatrice laid on her bed, holding a rope toy for the puppy. Belle entered wordlessly and laid down next to her.

"I am sorry your first kiss was stolen," said Belle.

"It's not a big deal."

"It is a big deal," said Belle.

"Like you even remember yours."

Belle laughed. "I do."

"Please..."

Belle turned and propped herself on her elbow. "There was this man and I thought I might be in love with him and that he might love me. So, on some bad advice I kissed him and he threw me in a dungeon."

Beatrice slowly turned to face her mother.

"He brought me tea," she offered.

"That's it," Beatrice said critically. "That's your first kiss?"

"I'm sorry it's not more impressive," Belle said with a smile.

"Uh, yeah! So am I! I knew he was hopeless- hello, wife who ran off with a pirate and woman who likes to rip hearts out- but I was holding out some hope for you. You are like the worst fangirl ever!"

"How am I a fangirl?," asked Belle.

"Oh, no one understands him, he's so dark and mysterious and ancient and his skin sparkles..." she said mockingly. "Oh, my God, put vampire in place of Dark One and you're a Twihard... No, wait, Stephanie Meyer ripped you off. Am I the vampire baby?"

"Beatrice, we had a pact to never discuss those books and please don't compare me to that girl who only seems to define herself through her relationship before we even get into the technical problems with the writing."

"Sorry," said Beatrice.

Belle brought her other hand to Beatrice's hair and ran her fingers through it.

"Love is hope, you know," said Belle.

"And I am hopeless."
Belle smiled. "You're the product of True Love, how could you ever be hopeless?"
And now we enter another passage where I ask you to bear in mind that I never thought they would do Frozen on the show. I mean, why? Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Emma and Neal waited outside the learning center in Augusta for Blake to come out. He was probably inside losing his job after Gold and Belle's call, but that did not seem to be enough for Neal.

Emma looked over at Neal. "Do we really have to do this?"

"Hey, I didn't make you come along."

"Oh, yeah," said Emma, popping another chip in her mouth, "I'm going to let you drive two hours to beat a guy up on your own."

"This scumbag kissed my baby sister," said Neal. "I have to do something. It's in the big brother rule book."

Emma leaned back against her seat. "The rule book?"

"Yeah, I know, I haven't been able to be her brother, but now that I am, I'm gonna do what I have to do."

Emma snorted. "You sound like Gold."

"Be glad it's me and not him. This little jerk should be thanking me." He looked out the window at someone leaving. "That's him."

Neal got out of the car. Emma grimaced, putting down her chip bag and followed him.

"Hey! Are you Blake?!"

"Neal..." groaned Emma.

Blake eyed him. "Yeah, who the hell are you?"

"Who am I? I'm Beatrice Gold's brother."

Blake smirked. "And what did the little princess say I did?"

Before Emma could make a retort, Neal had punched Blake in the nose.

"Ow!," said Neal, rubbing his hand. "That really hurts."
"That all you got?," asked Blake.

"You, shut up!," shouted Emma. She turned to Neal. "Come on, you punched him, let's go."

"Yeah, listen to your woman," said Blake.

"Okay, never mind," said Emma, walking over to Blake. She grabbed him by the shoulders and knee'd him in the groin. He fell to the ground writhing in pain. Emma walked back to Neal. "Okay, let's go home."

"The groin, Emma?," asked Neal.

"Shut up and get in the car," said Emma.

"Okay, but when we tell this story to my dad, I knocked him to the ground and there was a lot of blood."

"Yeah, sure, whatever makes you both happy," said Emma, getting behind the wheel of the bug. She looked back at Blake. "Is he crying?"

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**A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest**

Belle glanced across the carriage at Rumplestiltskin.

"She's not whatever you're thinking," Belle promised. "There's no need to be nervous."

"I'm not nervous."

"You seem nervous," said Belle.

"I'm not nervous."

The carriage stopped. Rumplestiltskin helped Belle out and she went to the door.

"Aren't you coming?," asked Belle, looking back at him.

"No, no, I don't want to intrude."

"You're not intruding, Rumple," said Belle. "Don't be ridiculous."

"I'll just stay out here."

"Come inside."

"Belle, your grandmother couldn't possibly want to have tea with me."

He began walking off.

"You're just delaying the inevitable," Belle taunted.

She knocked and went inside. She hadn't seen Catherine since she left to find the yaoguai and had sent a message via bird to say where she was and she was alright. They exchanged letters back and forth. Then Catherine had invited her and Rumplestiltskin to tea at the cottage. Then it was just a matter of getting him down here. She hadn't realized she was going to have to fight to get him in the door. Her grandmother said nothing specifically and they began talking.
"Will you return to Padua this winter?," asked Belle.

Catherine nodded. "I may. I can see my other grandchildren and I'll be there for the winter solstice seeing as how you have no need of my house."

Belle squirmed as Catherine's gaze turned again to the window. Rumplestiltskin paced outside.

"What does he think is going to happen?"

Belle shrugged. "He wanted to accompany me."

"He doesn't have to wait outside," said Catherine. "And does he suppose he's fooling anyone with that hood? You arrived in a magical carriage, it might as well been made of a pumpkin."

"He didn't want to intrude."

"Does he think I'll be afraid of him?"

"I-"

Belle didn't get to finish her sentence because Catherine was out of her chair and to the doorway to the garden.

"Oh, Dark One," she called.

Rumplestiltskin stopped and turned. Belle stood helplessly behind her grandmother.

"Yes?," he asked in confusion.

"Is there some part of your curse that keeps you from going indoors?"

"No."

"Do you drink tea?"

"Yes," he answered again befuddled.

"Do you suppose it's polite to ensconce someone's granddaughter in your castle and then not so much as come into her house when you've been given an invitation?"

"I suppose not."

"Then come have some tea."

Belle tried to hide her smirk as her grandmother commanded the Dark One inside and onto one of the settees, then began pouring him tea.

"Belle," Catherine said, nodding at the petits four stand.

"Would you like a cake, Rumple?," asked Belle.

Rumplestiltskin looked askance at the selection of tiny frosted confections.

"I like the pink ones," Belle offered, putting one on a plate for him.

"I understand you are from the Frontlands," said Catherine.
Rumplestiltskin sat even more confused. "Yes. I left long ago, though."

"It's a harsh land. What did you do there?"

"I was a spinner."

"Were you now? I've always admired anyone with that much patience."

"I was poor, I didn't have a choice," said Rumplestiltskin, attempting to bite back.

"Everyone has a choice. Even if I were poor, I doubt I would make much of a spinner. I would probably end up a highway-woman like Belle's friend."

"Snow White," said Belle, casting an exasperated glance at Rumplestiltskin. "You know she has no options."

"Yes, that stepmother of hers, she is quite something. I think she supposes she can make the people love her by keeping them under her boot."

Rumplestiltskin frowned. "That's really quite insightful."

"I had a sister like her," said Catherine.

"I never met your sister," said Belle.

"Yes, Belle. There's a reason for that."

Rumplestiltskin was distracted by an oil painting, the Dowager Duchess in her younger days, probably not much older than Belle, joined by a young man.

"That's their wedding portrait," Belle said, eyes sparkling.

Catherine shook her head. "Belle, men don't care about such things."

"Except Grandfather," said Belle. She looked up at Catherine suddenly. "Do you still have my books?"

"No, I sold them to some passing trolls with a fancy for literature," said Catherine. "Of course I do. They're in your room."

Belle got up and hurried off.

Catherine sighed. "Ever since she laid eyes on the written word, she has thought of little else. Until you. Now she speaks slightly less of books."

Rumplestiltskin took his tea.

"What do you think of the pink ones?" she asked.

Rumplestiltskin sighed. "I am aware of what I am. You don't have to be polite to me."

Catherine put her tea down. "Would that be very smart? To insult you? You could turn me into a worm and feed me to the birds."

"I could," he said seriously.

"Yet I think you won't. You love Belle. She loves you. Turn her beloved grandmother into a
worm and I think that might cause some friction. Now, Maurice's mother, I don't know that anyone would mind."

"Why would you have me in your house?"

"I heard you were clever, Rumplestiltskin," said Catherine. "I thought it would be obvious."

Now

It was another break between sessions at the trial. One of the Knights of the Round Table had been called and Belle's uncle, Ian, had come to join her in watching the deliberations. Regina had him backed into a corner, explaining how the Blue Fairy had used them and gave orders.

"I don't know if I ought to be horrified so many were in on the conspiracy," Belle confided in her uncle.

Ian shrugged. "Ms. Mills says she's almost finished with her preliminary arguments, then it goes to Merlin and his involvement with our family."

"Then it becomes all about me and Rumple and Beatrice," Belle said with dread.

"Oh, gods. Is he testifying?"

Belle shook her head. "Regina's not stupid."

He nodded. "What about Beatrice herself?"

She shrugged. "Gods, I hope not. She doesn't need that. Rumple would have a fit."

"That reminds me. I have something to give her."

Belle raised a brow. "A gift? You didn't have to."

He smiled. "I most certainly did. I'm doing this on old instructions."

"What?"

"My mother. She bequeathed something to your daughter. I obviously forgot about it until the Curse broke, but I managed to find it in my attic."

This was getting more curious. "Grandmother bequeathed something to Beatrice?"

"She said specifically it was for your daughter."

Belle shook her head. "How could she know that I would have a daughter?"

"Well, you know my mother and her moments of prescience."

Belle was about to remark upon that when Regina walked up to them. "Mr. Wren."

"Ms. Mills."

"I thought I made myself perfectly clear. I need to examine that journal."

"What journal?" asked Belle.
"Your grandmother's. It apparently contains quite a story about an attempted coup by the Last Summer Princess at the behest of the Blue Fairy herself."

"What? Why has no one ever told me this?," asked Belle.

"I'll have it when I'm called to testify," said Ian.

"I need to see it now. Does it even exist?," asked Regina.

"Of course it exists," he answered. "I'm just not permitted to show it to you yet."

"Not permitted?," Regina scoffed. "By whom?"

"You will get it soon," Ian promised.

"I had better," Regina snarled back.

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**A Long Time Ago In The Far North Kingdom- The Day Catherine's Execution Was Scheduled**

Alec held Catherine's hand as they hurried through the dungeon.

He stopped.

"Wait, was it this way?," he asked. He looked down. "I could swear I've seen that rat before."

"You mean you don't know your way out?"

"Well, shouldn't you?"

"This is the Summer Palace. I'm the Ice Princess. Why would I know my way around the dungeons of the Summer Palace?" She grimaced and picked up her skirt. "This dress is getting ruined."

"Well, what did you wear white for?"

"I'm the ice princess! What color should I wear?!"

"Why don't you use some of your magic?"

"You mean like a compass?"

"A compass won't do us any good. We don't even have a map."

She scowled.

"Do whatever you did last time to send me home. You sent me to Padua, certainly you can get us outside the palace walls."

"Remember the squid ink?"

"Yes?"

"It hasn't worn off yet so I leave it to you to get us out of here. If you want to be my knight in shining armor, now is your chance."
Alec grinned. "You realize a duke ranks higher than a knight?"

"Not if he can't get me out of a dungeon."

"Well, I think I see some light this way," said Alec.

That's when the door opened.

"Oh, that was a door," said Alec. "I thought it was an architectural feature."

Catherine rolled her eyes. "You are utterly useless."

Prince Xavier entered followed by a cadre of guards.

"Your Highness, Your Grace," he said. "It appears you have escaped from your cells."

"I suppose it does," said Alec.

"We shall have to resolve that."

"Gods, I hate him..." Alec muttered to Catherine as the guards came forth for them.

Now

Beatrice sat at George's Taverna with her parents. The other diners had been somewhat taken aback by the sight of a Dalmatian pup at Mr. Gold's feet, but no one had questioned it.

"No, Martha," Gold said sternly "Puppies don't eat stuffed grape leaves. Lay down."

"How are you feeling?," asked Belle.

"I'm fine," said Beatrice.

"I think we would be better off erasing the whole nasty incident from our memories," said Gold.

"Really?," asked Beatrice. "What happened to bloody and broken?"

"The problem has been dealt with," said Gold. "You needn't worry yourself with it."

"Rumple..." said Belle.

"I only sent Neal to have a word with the young man," said Gold.

"Oh, God," said Beatrice, hiding her face. "Why would you do that?"

"Beatrice, I have reconciled myself to the fact that you will have any number of worthless young men throwing themselves at your feet. I truly have. I will do my best to rid you of the nuisance, but a young man forcing his attentions on you is completely unacceptable and I will not stand for it," said Gold. "He won't do it again."

Beatrice looked at Belle. "Can't you do anything with this?"

"Do you think I can do anything with your father and your older brother when someone's tried to take advantage of you?," asked Belle. "We only want what's best."
Then

Ailie walked into the tower prison.

"Well, the frog has magic, does he?," she said looking at Alec. "Another born of True Love. How lovely."

"I'm never going to live that frog thing down," said Alec.

"No," Catherine answered shaking her head.

"You will have time to live it down at least," said Xavier. He turned an eye to Catherine. "You, Ice Princess, will not have that luxury."

"Yes, I know, execution's coming up," said Catherine. "I'm terribly sorry but I fear I won't be able to attend."

"Nonsense, sister, I wouldn't let you miss it," said Ailie. "Everyone's waiting in an hour's time."

"An hour?!," demanded Alec. "Why?"

Catherine looked to Alec. "I suspect that is when the ink provided by the Blue Fairy will stop working. Then I would have my powers back and I would end each and every one of them. If you kill me, the Ogres will come over that glacier."

"I'm counting on it," said Ailie. She smiled at Prince Xavier.

"Gods," said Alec. "That's what you two want, isn't it?"

"Xavier will help us, of course," said Ailie. "His kingdom has many fine armaments."

"You're selling out your people for a crown," said Catherine. "You are undoing everything since the Queen."

"I have been in your shadow long enough," said Ailie.

"Ailie, think of what you're doing," said Catherine as she and Xavier left. "No, please, really think!"

The guard slammed the door in her face.

"Catherine, I am so sorry," said Alec.

"That's it," said Catherine. "I failed. The story of the first Ice Princess is one of true sisterly love and I, the last, have allowed the reign to finish in such an ironic way."

"You have not failed yet," said Alec, taking a seat next to her. "Nor can you be held accountable for the vicious whims of others."

"Pretty sure I can."

"Why does she dislike you so? I've never seen a child born of True Love like her."

"She's not born of True Love. The Ice Princess needs two daughters, someone to be the Ice Princess and someone to be the Summer Princess. My father died before my mother could have a second and her advisors told her she had to remarry. My stepfather never forgot it. He wasn't angry about it, just sad. Ailie's always been angry. You know siblings."
"You forget I have none."

"Oh, that's right, isn't it?", asked Catherine. "You told me so much in your last visit that I sometimes have difficulty sorting it all out."

"I think I would like a big family. What about you? How many children do you suppose?"

"Well, seeing as I'm dying in an hour, I'll say five."

"Five," Alec said with approval. "I may hold you to that."

Now

Beatrice followed her mother up to Ian's door. He lived in a small house across town and Belle had made Gold drive them over on the way home from the restaurant.

"Do we have to?"

"He said he has something for you from my grandmother," said Belle.

"Your grandmother?," asked Beatrice fearing some moldy knickknacks.

"Uncle?" Belle knocked at the door. "Uncle?"

"Maybe he's not home," said Beatrice.

"He said he would be," Belle said, knocking again.

Gold now got out of the car and joined them with Martha. "What seems to be the problem-"

He seemed to answer his own question at it ended abruptly.

"Rumple?," asked Belle.

He handed the dog off to Beatrice and waved his hand to open the front door. They went inside to see Ian lying on the floor. Belle rushed over to try and rouse him.

"Beatrice, call an ambulance," Belle instructed.

"No, this is magic," said Gold. He waved his hand and Ian groaned as Belle helped him sit up.

"Uncle, are you hurt?," asked Belle. "What happened?"

"Difficult to tell really," said Ian.

"The pain will pass," said Gold.

Suddenly, a white leather book with a silver lock and trim dropped next to them making a slight thud on the wood floor. Martha gave a soft bark. Gold picked up the book.

"It's a protection spell," he remarked.

Ian nodded.

"A very good one," said Ian. "Don't try to open it yourself. It may not be able to do you permanent damage, but you won't like the results."
Gold handed the book back. "Is it sealed with blood magic?"

"Yes, actually."

"Is this the journal Regina was asking about?," asked Belle.

"Yes, please don't try to read it yet," said Ian.

"You mean I could if I wanted?"

"It's tied to your family," said Gold.

Ian nodded. "It's not meant to be read yet."

"Who attacked you? Is this what they were after?," asked Belle.

"No, it was a group of fairies, they were after something else," said Ian.

"I'm going to help you up," said Belle.

Belle hurried to the kitchen and made a pot of tea while Gold placed wards on the house.

"How long have you had the puppy?," Ian asked.

"A couple weeks," said Beatrice.

"We had lots of dogs. My mother said it was because my father had so much in common with an overeager puppy. What is she called?"

"Martha." He looked at her inquisitively. "It's a Doctor Who thing. I wanted to name her Amelia, but-"

"But Amelia was my father's mother's name." He reached into a drawer on the end table and pulled out a box. "This is yours."

"Late Martin Luther King Day present?," asked Beatrice.

"It's from my mother for you."

Beatrice opened the lid on the box. Inside was another smaller box intricately carved and over it was a note. Beatrice pulled out the note, the writing looked more like calligraphy than anyone's own hand but it unmistakeably said "Beatrice."

"Did you take a calligraphy class?"

"No, my mother wrote the card."

Beatrice eyed him. "She died before the Curse was cast."

"Yes."

"So she didn't know my name so how could she write my name on a card?"

"I don't know. I expect you'll find that out."

Belle entered with a tea service. Beatrice put the box in her coat pocket. She began fixing her uncle a cup of tea.
"If it wasn't the journal, what is it you think that they wanted?," asked Belle.

"Oh, who can tell really?," said Ian.

Then

"That does not look good," said Alec, staring at the crowd below waiting to see the execution.

"Not really, no."

He looked over at her. "How are you coming with the-"

Catherine seemed to wave her hands with a flourish.

"What are you doing?," he asked.

"Trying to summon magic."

"And you have to do the hand motions?"

"Obviously."

"How is that obvious?"

"Don't start with me, Alec. You're the one who gets let go after this."

"What? Do you think I'm excited by the prospect of being released after your death? What have I to look forward to without you?"

Catherine snorted. "Breathing?"

"What does it matter if I breathe if you do not?"

"Alec, I won't have you spending the rest of your days mourning after an incompetent ice princess you barely knew-."

"I won't have you speak of yourself so."

"How can I not? I mean, look at me. Look at where I am." She eyed the sun shining warmly on the glaciers in the distance. "When Xavier lets you go, you should ride home quickly. The Ogres won't be long."

"I won't go anywhere without you."

"Nonsense. My corpse will only weigh down your horse, not to mention the stares you'll get."

"I won't have it."

"I don't exactly see another solution."

"This doesn't end like this."

"Oh, I believe it does," said Catherine. She smiled ruefully. "All that True Love, come to nothing, eh? I wonder what Merlin's plan was in bringing us together. In fact, I would love to ask him right now."
"No," said Alec. "This is not the end."

The door opened. Alec grabbed Catherine and kissed her.

"This is not the end."

"We have orders for you, Your Grace," said the guard.

"Oh, really, what might they be?"

The guard clubbed him on the head and he fell unconscious to the ground.

"Come along, Your Highness," the guard sneered. "Your destiny awaits."

Now

It was the customary meeting on the town square before the trial. Belle was speaking to Mary Margaret again. Ian spoke with Merlin. Gold and Beatrice stayed in their quiet corner with Martha.

"Sweetheart, you ought to be off," Gold said.

"Oh, crap," said Beatrice.

"What's the matter?"

"I left my physics lab report back home."

"That's not like you," he said, tucking Martha under his arm.

"I know," she groaned.

"I know you're having a difficult time with the fairy's trial and what that cretin did-"

"Oh, Dad, could we not?"

"Sweetheart, I do wish you wouldn't try to put me off-"

"I am fine, Dad," said Beatrice. "I have to get home if I don't want to be late."

Beatrice turned around and hurried towards her car.

Beatrice walked in her room and quickly found the report, stuffing it in her bag.

Her eyes then drifted to the box that Ian had given her. She opened it and pulled out an intricately carved ring box that was painted a deep sparkly blue.

That was weird. She had a nail polish in her bag that exact same color.

The only question was why had her great-grandmother left her a blue box?

Then she wasn't there anymore.

Ian entered city hall. Regina waited expectantly as he handed her the book.
"My mother's journal."

"Thank you. It would have been good to have it sooner..." she said, opening it. She stopped at the first page and froze. "Do you think this is funny?"

"What is it?"

"Is this your idea of a joke?," Regina asked, raising her voice.

"I've never read it. I was only told of the contents."

"Belle!," Regina called, shouting across the hall.

Belle turned from her talk with Merlin and Gold. Regina marched over.

"What is this?," she demanded, brandishing the open pages of the book.

Belle took it. "I don't understand..."

Gold looked over her shoulder. "I'm calling her."

"What does it say?," asked Ian.

"Mom, don't freak out," Merlin read. "Love, Beatrice."

"It's her handwriting," said Belle. She turned the page. "Sorry. Dad, don't freak out either."

"I only unlocked it before I came here," said Ian. "The key was enchanted. It hasn't been opened since my mother's death."

Belle started flipping pages. "This is impossible."

Gold came back. "She hasn't answered."


"It's back at the shop," said Gold.

"We need to look at it," said Merlin.

"Why?," asked Belle.

"To see if anything's been written in it, sunshine."

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**Back In The Far North Kingdom**

It was as if a crack of thunder bolted through the gallows. Catherine looked next to her seeing her executioner had fallen to the ground and suddenly there was a dark-haired girl in strange clothes and a blue coat with a red bag trying to help herself up.

Beatrice eyed Catherine. "Okay... what's going on? Is this another netherworld? I am about done with that."

"This is the Far North Kingdom."

"Oh," said Beatrice. "People keep telling me I'm heiress to that."
Catherine eyed her. "Who are you?"

"Beatrice." She paused. "Who are you?"

"Catherine the Ice Princess."

That's when both women noticed that they had on the same necklace.

Not similar. The same.

"Oh," said Beatrice. "That's how you knew my name..."

"I would love to continue this chat, but I'm in the middle of being executed." Catherine motioned towards the audience and the execution set up.

"Oh." Beatrice looked at the anxious crowd. "Oh yeah."

"Yeah," said Catherine.

"Just one thing..."

"And that is?"

"I can't really let that happen..." She turned as Xavier and his men approached, raising a hand to throw a fireball. She helped Catherine up. "Now, do you have an escape plan? I haven't learned to teleport or disappear into smoke yet."

"Not really," said Catherine.

"Well, basically, run," said Beatrice, not having a better plan to fall back on.

Now

Gold released the red book from its hiding place. He took out the book and opened the cover. Before he could flip through the pages himself, they did on their own, but no text was visible just a blurry haze of golden writing.

"What does that mean?," asked Belle.

"It means the book doesn't want us to know anything we shouldn't," said Merlin. "Yet."

"So where is she?"

Gold took out Catherine's journal. As he placed it next to Beatrice's book, the red book covered the white one in the golden haze.

"Oh, very clever," said Merlin. "The magic of her book has taken in Catherine's."

"What is really happening?," Gold demanded.

"What do you think, sunshine?"

"This," said Gold, motioning over the books, "isn't possible."

"I think you'll find it is."
Belle shook her head. "What are you two fighting about? Where is Beatrice?"

"With your grandmother," said Merlin.

"Sorcerers have tried time travel spells since the ancients. No one has succeeded, it's not possible and certainly not for Beatrice."

"Jealous?"

Gold glared. "Where is she?"

"Are you accusing me of something, sunshine?"

"Why not?"

"Rumple, Merlin wouldn't hurt Beatrice," said Belle.

"Oh, I wouldn't be so sure," said Gold.

"I protected her when you rendered yourself unequal to the task," said Merlin. "So forgive me if I don't listen to you accuse me."

Merlin began to walk out.

"Merlin, wait! Please?," called Belle.

"I'm away for a walk."

He left. Gold fumed. Hearing the puppy cry, Belle retrieved her from the playpen in the backroom. She came out to where Gold stared at the books.

"I won't have you two fighting, not while we don't know what's happening with Beatrice," said Belle.

Gold seethed. Belle readjusted the puppy in her arms.

"This time travel spell. Is it really that impossible?," she asked.

"Well, it's not the sort of thing she could have managed on her own. Most of them have ingredients she doesn't know how to get a hold of."

"Beatrice can't read Elvin yet," Belle reminded him. "Whatever it was, she didn't get it out of a spell book."

Gold stared back at the books on the counter.

"All the sorcerers who tried, were they dark sorcerers?," asked Belle.

"I suppose," said Gold.

"Well, there," said Belle. "Beatrice isn't a dark sorceress."

---

*Then*

Beatrice and Catherine ran.
"Whoa, whoa, whoa!," said Beatrice. "What are you doing? I thought our general plan leaned towards running away from the gallows and castle?"

Catherine stopped. "I have to save Alec. He's Prince Xavier's prisoner until I'm executed."

"And who is..." Beatrice paused. "Um, would he be your true love?"

"Yes."

"Well, crap, I guess we have to get Alec then."

"Which was my plan," said Catherine motioning back towards the tower.

"Beyond that, do you have a plan?"

"I thought you had magic."

"I thought you had magic!," Beatrice parroted back.

"Yes, with ice!"

"That's it? That's all you do? You just ice stuff?"

"Just?"

"I mean, I can ice stuff," said Beatrice, holding her hand out as one of the guards came running up and transforming him into an ice sculpture.

"I thought you were the fireball," said Catherine.

"I just learned that and I can slam people back sometimes and I do this thing with the weather sometimes..."

"What do you do with the weather?"

"I don't really control it yet," said Beatrice. "I can can conjure some cookies if we get hungry."

"Then I suppose we'll just have to improvise," said Catherine, heading to the tower.

Beatrice followed Catherine up the stairs to the tower. Two guards ran at them brandishing swords, Catherine stopped one with a giant icicle that landed in front of him.

"Mind getting the other one?," asked Catherine. "I'm coming back from some time off, not really up to standards."

"Oh, sure," said Beatrice, thrusting her palm forward and smacking the guard back into the wall.

"Lovely," said Catherine. "Have you got anything for the door?"

"I could try that huge key the unconscious guard has," said Beatrice.

She hurried over and snagged the key. With the door unlocked, Catherine hurried in to Alec's side.

"And he's unconscious..." said Beatrice.

"Alec, Alec, wake up," Catherine implored.
Alec stirred. "Catherine..." he said with a goofy smile.

"You need to get up, Alec. We haven't much time."

"Am I dead?"

"No."

"Are you dead?"

"No."

He turned to see Beatrice. "Who's she?"

"I'm not certain, but so far she seems helpful." Catherine tried to help him to his feet and he staggered, nearly knocking her down.

"Can you please get it together?," asked Beatrice.

---

**Now**

Belle sat on the sofa with Martha and stared at the books. She had figured out that she could move them from the shop if she closed the covers and now they sat on the oak coffee table next to her fifth cup of tea. She didn't have the stomach to eat.

"What's this?," asked Gold.

She looked up. She hadn't even heard him come down from the upstairs. He was holding a sparkly blue box with intricate carving.

"I have no idea," said Belle. "Were you searching Beatrice's room?"

"Yes. I found this object on her bed next to this card."

He passed the card to Belle.

"That's my grandmother's hand."

"And Beatrice's name."

She shook her head. "This doesn't make sense. My grandmother didn't even have her powers my whole life and longer, let alone a time travel spell."

"Well, she got there somehow, if that's where she even is," said Gold.

The books suddenly snapped open and flipped open a few pages. There were now a few visible sentences.

"It says that Beatrice stopped my grandmother's execution."

"And how did she do that?"

---

**Then**

"So, a gallows view," said Beatrice looking out the window of the tower. She heard the rattle of
the guards' armor outside the door. "Does anyone have an escape plan?"

Catherine eased Alec to stand on his own. She hurried to the window.

She let out a breath and closed her eyes. She waved her hand with a flourish. Beatrice watched as a staircase of ice appeared leading out the window and to the ground.

"Will that do for an escape plan?," Catherine asked Beatrice pointedly.

"Yeah, that could work."

Catherine helped Alec down the ice staircase. Beatrice followed.

"Hurry up!," shouted Catherine.

"Just a little slippery!," Beatrice shouted back. "How are you doing this in heels?!

They arrived at the bottom and the stables.

"Horsey!," Alec said, stumbling towards the steed. "Catherine, this is Mandrake. Mandrake, this is Catherine and what's your name again?"

"Beatrice."

"Beatrice, right."

Catherine grabbed another horse. "Get a horse," she ordered Beatrice.

"Yeah, I don't really ride horses."

"Get on mine," said Alec. "Come on. Mandrake is very obliging."

"How hard did they hit your head?," asked Beatrice.

There were screams in the distance. Even Beatrice recognized what they were.

"Is that Ogres?," she asked.

"The pass," said Catherine, easily mounting her horse on her own. "It must have begun to melt."

Alec looked to Beatrice. "I'll help you up. We must make haste."

Before she realized it she was on the horse being steered by the man with the head injury.

And, oh, yeah, he was her great-grandfather.

---

**Much Later In The Enchanted Forest**

The Dowager Duchess descended the stairs in the middle of the night in search of a good book. At least one better than the one she had been reading.

She went into her sitting room and spotted a familiar figure sitting in the chair.

"Oh," said Catherine. "Rumplestiltskin, haven't you heard of knocking? You might have frightened me to death, were I frightened of you. Don't you know? I'm a very old lady. I could die of fright any moment."
He sat in the chair, not moving his head as Catherine came around.

She stared at him. There was something amiss in his features. He wouldn't look up at her.

"She's gone."

"What do you mean?" Catherine took the chair across from him.

"Belle is gone..."

"She went to Maurice's."

"She's dead."

Catherine sat, taken aback. "No..."

"The clerics... just to cleanse her of my influence..."

"No, I don't believe that."

"Sir Maurice told me."

"I don't believe him."

"She is gone," he said, the last word thundering.

Catherine waited a long while before she spoke again. "Rumplestiltskin, I don't believe that."

He didn't answer right away.

"I have her mother's things. I don't know if you..." He shook his head. "I have no need of them."

"No," said Catherine. "You ought to keep them. Especially Reinette's pendant if nothing else."

"Why would you want me to keep your daughter's things?"

Catherine looked away. "Rumplestiltskin, are you absolutely certain that-"

She looked back to see that Rumplestiltskin had vanished.

"Men," she said to herself with a grimace.
A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest

The Duke of Padua was lost.

Definitely lost.

The battle won, he had gotten word that Catherine was about to deliver their fifth child.

It had to be a daughter.

It just had to.

So he had begun riding and not long after he found himself caught in the heavy fog of the mountain pass he had taken to expedite his return. He could barely see in front of him and now he had arrived at a great castle.

He tied Mandrake II to a post and he went to knock at the door, but instead it just opened.

"Hello?" he asked, stepping inside a great hall. "Hello?"

"What brings you here, dearie?"

In front of Alec appeared a man unlike any he had ever seen. He had strange skin that sparkled three colors at once and almost claws. He eyed Alec.

"Yes, terribly sorry to impose, but I seem to have lost my way," said Alec. "I was wondering if you might direct me back down the mountains."

The man eyed him. "You stopped here for directions?"

"I suppose I did."

"This is the Dark Castle, dearie, I don't give tourist information."

"Oh." said Alec. "That would make you the..."

"The Dark One, yes." He waved his hand and the doors slammed shut behind him. "Give me one
reason I shouldn't let you rot in my dungeon."

"I can think of a very good one," said Alec.

"Oh?"

"Not one that I can share," said Alec.

"Dungeon it is, dearie."

"Please, no, I have to get home."

"Tell you what, I'll make you a deal, dearie. If you can guess my name, you may leave."

"Rumplestiltskin."

"How did you know that?," he sneered.

"A very reliable source."

"That wasn't a guess."

"Well, I didn't have to-"

Before Alec realized it, he was in a dungeon.

"Catherine is not going to be happy with me at all," Alec muttered to himself.

______________________________

Earlier...

They rode up towards the glaciers. Catherine rode ahead of Alec and Beatrice. She got off the horse and walked towards them.

"Catherine!," Alec called, helping Beatrice off of Mandrake's back. "Be careful!"

"What's she doing?," asked Beatrice.

"She's rebuilding the glaciers."

"Wait until Al Gore hears..." said Beatrice.

"Who?"

"Never mind."

Catherine turned back down to face Beatrice. "You!"

"Me?"

"You said you were heiress to the Far North Kingdom, didn't you?," she asked coming closer.

"How can she be heiress to the Far North Kingdom?," asked Alec.

"Is that true?," Catherine demanded. She pointed. "Who gave you the pendant?"

"My mother," Beatrice answered.
"And she got it from her mother who got it from?"

"Well, I'm guessing you."

Catherine froze.

Alec was taken aback. "What are you saying? That you're our great granddaughter?"

"The point is, you possess the powers of the Ice Princess?"

Beatrice shook her head. "Nobody wants to ask me how I managed to travel back in time?"

"I assumed magic," said Alec.

"Do you possess the powers of the Ice Princess?," Catherine demanded.

"Yeah, I guess," said Beatrice.

"Then come," said Catherine. "I cannot hope to halt the ogre advance on my own. Perhaps the two of us together can accomplish it."

Beatrice hurried to follow Catherine up.

"There is just the one problem with that," said Beatrice. "I haven't really done anything with you know more than a glass of water or a person. I don't know about whole glaciers."

"You've not been instructed in the powers of the Ice Princess yet you possess them?," asked Catherine.

"Yeah, my current instructor's specialty is sort of wide-ranging magic..." Catherine eyed her suspiciously. "He's good, though."

"Has he taught you to use emotion in your magic?"

"Yes."

"The key to the power of the Ice Princess lies in release. Most of the times, you hold your emotion as a weight, holding back your abilities and then you let it go."

"Let it go?," asked Beatrice.

Catherine raised her arms and seemed to wave her hands with a flourish. Clouds of snow appeared and began to gather, rebuilding the pass.

"Right," said Beatrice. "Letting it go..."

She raised her hands, then dropped them again.

"Yeah, see, the problem is that I am not that good at letting go. I can't let go. I suck at letting go. Taylor Billingsley told me in Kindergarten that my father didn't love me and I am still upset about it. I'm still afraid of the dark."

Alec was behind her now.

"And what good has being afraid done you?," asked Alec.

"Not a lot, really."
"And this Taylor Billingsley, do you suppose he's thought about what he said since that day?"

"Taylor's a she, but probably not..."

"And I take it your father loves you?"

"Yes," said Beatrice.

"Then why hold on to it?"

Beatrice thought a moment.

"Because I don't know who I am without it."

Alec smiled. "Then why don't you find out?"

Beatrice took a breath as Alec turned her back to face the glacier pass where Catherine's magic was already taking hold.

"Letting go..."

"You know you can't just say you're letting go," said Catherine.

"I know," said Beatrice. "Do I have to do the hand gestures?"

"Yes!"

"What is with magical people and hand gestures?"

Beatrice paused and tried to not think of all the terrible things that usually clouded her thoughts.

Catherine seemed to pick up on that. "That's just holding back, not thinking is burying it deeper so it can never leave, you just let it go."

And she did. The magic joined Catherine's as snow clouds began to swirl in the open sky.

---

Now

"So," said Venus, staring at the books as they sat on the table in the courtroom, "we have to delay the trial because Beatrice is in the Enchanted Forest?"

"Yes," said Regina.

"And also back in time?," asked Venus.

"Yes," Regina repeated, casting a sideways glare at Gold and Belle.

"Don't look at me, dearie," said Gold. "It's not as if I sent her."

Regina crossed her arms. "Are you certain about that, Gold? It seems to me that if anyone around here was going to attempt a time travel spell, it would be you."

"They don't work," said Gold. He looked at Merlin.

"Oh, let's not revisit that, sunshine," said Merlin.
"Kathryn, do you mind a delay?," asked Venus. "It would give you more time to prepare your case."

"No, I suppose these things can't be helped," said Kathryn, looking lost.

"What about her?," asked Regina looking at Belle.

"Me?," asked Belle.

"Yes, you," said Regina. "The daughter of Merlin. You stripped the Blue Fairy of her powers. Perhaps you have some ability we don't yet know."

"Even if I understood what my powers were, I would never put Beatrice in danger."

"How was this accomplished?," asked Venus.

Gold pulled out the box. "With this."

Venus took the box. She peered through the carvings. "There's something in here." She shook it. "Yeah, definitely something."

Belle took it. She peered in. "It's a thread."

Merlin took his turn. "That's not just any thread. It's the thread of life."

"What?," asked Regina.

"How did Beatrice get that?," asked Gold.

"Well, it didn't come from Amazon," said Merlin. "Also not from me since I know that's what you were thinking."

Belle took the box from Merlin. "We need to go back to the shop and check your books," she said to Gold.

---

Then

"Is that enough?," asked Beatrice, asked looking at the frozen landscape that had appeared before them.

Catherine nodded. "It ought to hold off the ogres. We just need someplace to stay."

Beatrice watched as a family of polar bears walked in front of them, nodding at Catherine.

"Um..."

"What?," asked Catherine, seeming unfazed.

"Does that happen normally?"

"Of course it does."

"Should we offer them a Coke?"

Beatrice didn't get an answer. She looked back and saw Catherine building an ice palace out of the air.
"Now, you need some rest," said Catherine. "It's always tiring the first time."

"I'm not-"

Beatrice's protest lasted until she planted her face in a pile of snow.

Beatrice woke up to see a snowman in her face.

"Hey, how's it going?," he asked.

Beatrice screamed. Alec rushed into the room brandishing his sword, Catherine joined him with her hands outstretched.

"Maybe we got off on the wrong foot..." said the snowman.

"Why did you scream?," asked Catherine.

"There's a talking snowman in my room!"

"Hi, I'm Olaf and I like warm hugs," he said.

"What the hell is going on?!," demanded Beatrice.

Olaf turned back to Alec and Catherine. "She seems stressed."

"Did no one else see the Doctor Who Christmas special?!"

"The what?," asked Alec.

"Olaf, this is Beatrice," said Catherine. "She's our great-granddaughter."

"And what is he supposed to be?"

"He was a friend to the first Ice Princess and has stayed in our family's service ever since," Catherine explained.

"What happens in summer?"

"Oh, I love summer," said Olaf.

Beatrice looked up at Catherine.

"We give him his own cloud. He's fine," said Catherine. "That reminds me, Olaf, were you alright when I was imprisoned?"

"Eh, a little dripping, I can't complain."

"Well, now that Beatrice is here we can work on the next problem," said Catherine.

"Which is what?," asked Beatrice.

Catherine and Alec exchanged glances, then looked back at each other.

"You're not adopted or anything, are you?," asked Alec.

"No..."
"Your mother? Or grandmother?," Catherine asked.

"No..."

Catherine sat. "The Blue Fairy has cast another curse on me."

"Yeah, she likes doing that," said Beatrice.

"This curse says that my powers will be taken from me if..."

"If what?," asked Beatrice.

"You're a young maiden," said Catherine. "Certainly your mother has told you what would be expected of you when you marry."

"Oh, my God..." said Beatrice. She covered her face. "This cannot be happening."

"Essentially, were I to lay with Alec, I would lose my powers..."

"What is wrong with you?!" She motioned at the snowman. "Do you at least want to send Olaf out of the room?!"

"I'm sorry you're repulsed," said Catherine.

"I am!"

"I thought you would know of these things by now, you're already sixteen."

"There is a difference between knowing things and putting people's names with them. Like my mom says she and Dad are having date night, but I know what that means and I'm pretty sure she knows I know what that means, but we don't discuss it. Though what really offends me is when she says that she's going to help him with inventory. How stupid does she think I am? Hardly anyone goes in there, certainly not enough to justify how much inventory is being done."

There was a long silence as Catherine and Alec stared at her.

"What were we talking about?," asked Olaf.

Catherine motioned at the snowman. "That's why we don't have to send him out of the room."

"What is the point then?," asked Beatrice.

"No, seriously, guys, what were we talking about?," asked Olaf.

"As I see it," said Alec, "we need some way to protect this kingdom from the Ogres without Catherine's powers."

Beatrice paused. She did actually have an answer for that and he was actually available.

"Okay, well, I only know one way to get rid of ogres."

"One way is better than what we have at the moment," said Catherine.

"Anybody know how to call the Dark One?"

"The Dark One? Are you mad?," asked Catherine.
"Yeah, I think I'd like to keep my first born child."

"Maybe we could bargain him down," said Beatrice.

"That could work," said Olaf. "I'm sure he's really very nice when you get to know him."

"Hey, let's listen to the snowman," said Beatrice.

"The Dark One is merciless," said Catherine.

"Well, if you break a deal," said Beatrice. "Besides, it's not like the Blue Fairy is going to help you out of this."

Catherine sighed. "And what do you propose we bargain the Dark One down to?"

"What about firstborn daughter of your firstborn daughter?," asked Beatrice.

"Why would I promise that?"

"Why would the Dark One accept that?," asked Alec.

"Why would you give over your own mother?," asked Catherine. "Why would he-"

Beatrice looked away.

Catherine nodded. "The powers you used when you arrived. They're best used by dark sorcerers."

Beatrice buried her face in her hands.

"I am not a dark sorceress or a witch or the demon spawn of Rumplestiltskin or..." She shook her head. "What does it matter? If I can't convince you, I don't have a chance."

"What are you saying?," Alec asked, looking to Catherine.

Catherine looked at Alec. "Who else would so readily believe that she could trust the Dark One except his own child?"

"In my defense, it took me a while to get there," said Beatrice. "I guess I'll be going. I have to figure out how to build a blue box that travels through time without going to Gallifrey or nineteen sixties London, so I might as well get started."

"You're not going anywhere," said Alec.

"You know Merlin?," asked Olaf.

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah. I suppose you think he's nice, too?"

"You know, he always came off a little cranky to me, like he's hungry," said Olaf. "That means she's a product of True Love, right?"

Alec looked at Beatrice. "We'll try."

"We'll what?," exclaimed Catherine.

"If Beatrice is the product of True Love and is also the Dark One's daughter, that means the Dark One can love and no one who loves can be all bad. They say he has the power of foresight. Perhaps he'll be able to see our granddaughter's true worth to him and a deal can be struck."
"You're selling him our granddaughter?"

"Well, if he won't deal with us, we won't even have one," said Alec. "Beatrice, you shall send a bird."

"Right..." said Beatrice. "Does anyone want to talk me through sending a bird?"

"How does a sixteen year old sorceress not know how to send a bird?," asked Catherine. "Did Rumplestiltskin not cover that?"

Now

Belle sorted through the books frantically. Martha was at her feet, keeping just a footstep behind her heels.

"Belle, what are you hoping to accomplish?," asked Gold.

"Well, getting our daughter back for starters," said Belle. "If one of these spells uses the thread of life as an ingredient, we can find it and replicate it."

"The thread of life is in Olympus, not to mention whatever else is in this box," said Gold, staring at the object on the counter. He held it up against the light. "Doesn't Beatrice have a nail polish this color?"

"I don't care, we'll find a way to get there and get it," said Belle. "You can do that."

"Belle, I have read them all and I have never read a time travel spell with such an ingredient. Simply obtaining it is beyond the ability of every sorcerer or wizard or witch I have ever encountered."

Belle stopped. "Are you including yourself in that?"

"Yes."

Belle shook her head. "You have done what was supposed to be impossible before. You can do it again."

"Belle, she is..." He had to take a breath. "I don't know how this has been done and if Beatrice has managed it, she is a greater sorcerer than I am. Much greater."

"I know you only want the best for her."

"Of course I do," said Gold. "Belle, if she's done this, I've got nothing I can teach her."

"You can't think that, Rumple. You don't need power to be her father."

Then

Beatrice stared at the snow bird. "Wow, total refusal, total outright refusal?"

The bird seemed to communicate its confirmation.

"Okay, well, you fly on back there and tell him that he is going to feel really stupid one day. Really, really stupid."
The snow bird hid a grumble and took off.

"Perhaps it was too simple a solution to be the correct one," said Alec.

Beatrice sat down.

"If you..." Beatrice shook her head. "Okay, you lose your magic, but what would happen if you lost your magic before that?"

"What do you mean?," asked Catherine.

"What if you could just save it someplace and leave it running? Keep the ice going without actually being here."

Alec looked to Catherine. "Ailie did seem to believe she could have your powers."

"Yes, I could abdicate, but who would I abdicate to? Certainly not Ailie."

"Well, I'm here," said Beatrice.

"Yes, but you have to go home, your poor mother's probably worried sick about you," said Catherine.

"Wow, you are actually trying to guilt me before my mom's even been born," said Beatrice.

"Your poor father then," said Catherine. Beatrice looked at her in surprise. "What? Even the Dark One must worry."

"You could cast a spell," said Beatrice. "Like a fifty year snow storm with good visibility."

"Why fifty years?," asked Alec.

Beatrice tried to think, searching for a way that she could get through this without mentioning the Curse. "Well, I don't have dates, but I'm guessing I would be born and..."

"You could take over the duties of the Ice Princess," said Catherine.

"Then again, you will have already been performing the duties of the Ice Princess for some fifty years," said Alec.

"It's wibbly wobbly timey wimey," said Beatrice.

"But what about my people? Who's going to rule?," asked Catherine.

"I know it may seem rude to point out, but they did just try to behead you," said Alec.

"God, has no one in the Enchanted Forest heard of an election?," asked Beatrice.

"A what?," asked Catherine.

"Oh, God, you haven't, have you?," asked Beatrice. "No wonder Mary Margaret and David are in charge. Don't get me wrong. They're nice people and all, but they do some really dumb things. There is no way on Earth they could actually win an office they ran for. What would his qualification be? 'I kissed a corpse?'"

"You're really going to have to explain what an election is," said Catherine.
"The basic idea is that instead of putting whoever was born in charge, everyone in the kingdom or whatever gets together and votes on who's in charge," said Beatrice.

"Well, who do they vote for?"

"Whoever they want." She sighed as Alec and Catherine stared blankly at her. "There would be candidates, people could put themselves forward and explain why they would be the best President or Prime Minister or whatever you want to call it."

"So, does the President have absolute rule?," asked Alec.

"No, that would suck, you people don't have a clue," said Beatrice. "Do you guys have a dry erase board or something? I can do a diagram."

---

**Now**

Gold and Belle sat in unhappy silence at the dinner table. It was already too big when it was just the three of them. Without Beatrice, it seemed massive. They both took turns staring at her empty seat alternating with staring at the books on the table.

Belle put down her fork. "I can't finish this."

"I could make something else," Gold offered, eager for something to do.

"No, Rumple, it's delicious, but I can't eat."

Gold put his fork down.

"No," said Belle, "you finish if you're hungry."

"I'm not."

"Is this what it was like when Bae disappeared?"

Gold looked up at her.

"When you two went through Jefferson's hat, I knew she would be alright because she was with you, so I missed you both terribly, but I didn't worry. This is different, though. I don't know if she's still with my grandparents or if she's on her own..."

"I went mad when Bae was lost," said Gold. "I don't know that I've ever been the same."

Belle took his hand in hers.

"You said Beatrice wasn't a dark sorceress," said Gold.

"She's not," said Belle.

"You're letting me teach her," said Gold. "I let her see a heart I ripped out. Didn't that give you pause?"

Belle shook her head. "Of course not, Rumple. I trust you. Besides, she grew inside me. I held her when she came to the world. She nursed at my breast. I know her heart and no matter what, it is good."

"I'm afraid I'll ruin her," said Gold.
"No," said Belle, taking his face in her hands, "I know you, Rumple. You're a better man and a better father than that."

She kissed him lightly and broke off as Martha pawed her.

"Let's take her for a walk," Belle said with a brave smile.

"Then what?," he asked dryly.

"We'll wait some more," said Belle.

---

Then

After getting a thorough diagram, Catherine led Beatrice and Alec to the uppermost turret of the ice palace. Olaf bobbed on ahead towards the ice pedestal.

"If I cast the spell from here, the power of this room ought to be enough," said Catherine. "Then I can transfer my powers to you."

"And then all I have to do is travel through time," said Beatrice. "Which means I have to solve time travel which really shouldn't be a problem. Oh, wait it is."

"I am certain that you are meant to get home," said Alec.

"I'm starting to see where my mom's optimism comes from," said Beatrice. "The way I see it, every good partnership needs an optimist and a pessimist," said Alec. "Opposites attract."

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah, I love my mom, but I'm pretty sure I'm never going to fall for someone as optimistic as her. Actually, pretty sure that if she wasn't my mom, I would be asking what was wrong with her."

"Hey, look guys, I found a box!"

Olaf held up an intricately carved wooden box. Beatrice rushed over.

"What is it?," asked Catherine.

"This is my box. It's not painted blue, but..." She reached into her bag and pulled out the sparkly TARDIS blue nail polish she had bought.

"Why does it have to be painted blue?," asked Alec. Beatrice smiled. "Because if I made a time machine, I would be sure it was blue."

"I don't understand," said Catherine.

Beatrice turned back to her great grandparents and Olaf. "I don't need to figure out how to make a time machine right now because I already did."

"You haven't yet, though," said Alec.

"Someday in the future I do and I bring it back here so Olaf finds it and I can go home. Future me has already figured it out!"
They stared at her again.

"Is this one of those wibbly wobbly timey wimey things again?," asked Alec.

"Yes! That is exactly what this is!"

"How will you know how to use its magic?," asked Catherine.

"First things first," said Beatrice, twisting the cap off the nail polish.

Beatrice held up the dried product and looked to Catherine.

"Okay," said Beatrice.

"Hold up your hands," said Catherine.

Beatrice did.

"Princess Beatrice, do you solemnly vow to govern the peoples of the Far North Kingdom according to their laws and customs?"

"Sure, unless they're stupid."

"Beatrice!," Catherine chided.

"What? I keep meeting people from the Enchanted Forest with skewed concepts of justice, no offense."

"Fine, pass," said Catherine. "Will you to your power cause law and justice to be executed in mercy in all your judgments?"

"Yeah, that one sounds okay."

"Do you solemnly promise to only use the powers of the Ice Princess for good and on occasion for an ice skating rink in summer?"

"What?," asked Beatrice.

"Beatrice..." Catherine insisted.

"I solemnly promise."

Catherine nodded and a white light emanated from Catherine's hands and went to hers.

"My hands are cold," said Beatrice.

"That happens," said Catherine.

Beatrice picked up the blue box again. "Now, what do I do with this?"

"May I?," asked Catherine.

Beatrice nodded and passed it to Catherine.

Catherine looked. "In my experience, most magical objects require that you feel your way through them."
Beatrice took the box back. "I should go."

"I know you can't tell us any more of the future, so in case I don't get the chance later," said Alec, "I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting you."

"Me, too," said Beatrice. "Two more things, when I go, this box will be left behind and I need you to save it for me. Belle's daughter. That's who I am."

"Belle," said Catherine. "I hope she's pretty with that name. What's the second thing?"

"Would you mind keeping a diary or something so I can know how things went? You know, in case we don't get the chance later."

"Actually," said Catherine, bringing a white leather book with silver trim from under her cloak, "now that you mention it, I do happen to have one."

"That's it," said Beatrice. "Could I borrow it a second?"

Catherine nodded and handed it to Beatrice. She pulled out a Sharpie and wrote on the first page inside.

Catherine took it back and scowled. "Mom, don't freak out. Love, Beatrice. And what of your poor father?"

Catherine passed the book back. Beatrice took the book back. "Sorry, Dad, don't freak out, either. Happy?"

"Well, we'll just see what your father says," said Catherine.

"Any idea how that box works?," asked Alec.

Beatrice stared. "Well, maybe I just-"

Beatrice vanished. The box fell to the ground and Alec bent down to pick it up.

"I suppose she sorted it," said Alec.

"Right," said Catherine. "Well, Alec, Olaf, let's go bring democracy to the Far North Kingdom. Whatever that is."

---

**Later...**

Gold sighed as Martha pawed at Beatrice's bedroom door.

"I am sorrier than you are about it, girl," said Gold, "but Beatrice is not in here."

He opened the door for the pup's benefit and she stared back at him inquisitively.

Gold shut the door. As he tried to steer Martha away, she pawed at the door again and he heard a clap of thunder. He opened the door to see Beatrice writhing on the floor.

"Beatrice?" he said, rushing over. "Oh, gods. Are you alright?"

"My butt hurts," she said, sitting up.

"Oh, sweetheart," said Gold, taking her in his arms as the puppy tried to come between them.
"I sent a bird to the Dark Castle and everything. I offered you mom and me, it was a fair deal!"

Gold cracked a smile. "You were going to give me something I already had?"

"Well, you didn't have it yet."

"You two would have made an excellent deal," said Gold, kissing her forehead. "Did you tell your great-grandfather my name?"

"I guess so."

He kissed her again and squeezed her closer.

"Rumple?," asked Belle, coming up the stairs. "I thought I heard something clatter."

"Mom!," called Beatrice.

The only sound was Belle's heels frantic against the wood floor and she hurried to the room.

"Beatrice," she cried, crashing to the floor with them. "Don't ever frighten me like that again! Your note was not very funny!"

"It was still better than the one I got," said Gold.

"Sorry," said Beatrice. "I'll leave a better note next time I have to travel through time."

"I will be holding on to that box of yours," said Gold. "You are going nowhere."

Beatrice looked to Belle.

"Papa and I are in complete agreement on this," said Belle.

Earlier...

Alec waited. Rumplestiltskin finally entered the dungeon.

"Who told you my name?"

"Someone who knew."

"It's a secret."

"That's a bit sad," said Alec.

Rumplestiltskin frowned. "What is?"

"To have no one know your name, let alone speak it," said Alec. "How long must one live before that happens?"

"Who told you my name?"

"As I say, someone who knew."

"A sorcerer?"

"A great sorceress," said Alec. "The bringer of many blessings to me, the first one being my
Alec motioned at his pouch. Rumplestiltskin nodded. Alec stood and pulled out a locket. From it came several drawings nestled inside.

"I have a wife and four sons," said Alec. "My wife is about to have our fifth child and I was riding home to be with her when I got lost coming back from the battlefield."

Alec noticed a flinch in the Dark One, as if something he had said changed something.

"I as much as promised this great sorceress I would not reveal her name and you see I'm indebted to her."

"What's this last picture?" asked Rumplestiltskin.

Alec glanced. "Oh, that's Olaf. He likes warm hugs. He drew that, you know."

"He's a snowman."

"Yeah, he is," Alec said with a nod.

"I don't know who you are," said Rumplestiltskin. "I have the power to see the future, yet I can't see yours or that of this sorceress you mentioned."

"Really?"

"Sometimes one does not have proper perspectives on these things."

"Too close?" asked Alec.

Rumplestiltskin eyed him.

"Or indeed too far away?" he tried to backtrack.

"You fulfilled your end of our deal," said Rumplestiltskin, shoving the locket back in his hand. "You may leave. You'll find your horse has been fed and watered. You may just make it home if you hurry, dearie."

"Thank you, Rumplestiltskin," said Alec.

"If you ever require anything, I should like to meet this sorceress of yours some time and would be most willing to make a deal..."

Alec stopped and turned back.

"I think perhaps you shall, Rumplestiltskin and I think perhaps she shall bestow a blessing on you."

He hurried off and Rumplestiltskin watched him ride away from the turret of his workshop.

What a strange nobleman.

Indeed, what an even stranger sorceress.

---

*Much Later*...
Gold finished securing Beatrice's box and was about to go to bed when the door rang.

He opened the door. Merlin held out a bottle of scotch.

"Is this meant to be a peace offering?," asked Gold.

Merlin followed him in. "It's a gift of congratulations."

Gold got out two lead crystal tumblers. Merlin poured and handed him his glass back. Merlin raised his.

"To Rumplestiltskin, the father, protector and first teacher of the greatest sorceress known to any realm."

"To Beatrice," said Gold, swallowing the alcohol quickly.

"Is that any way to enjoy hundred year old Scotch?," asked Merlin.

"However she does it, I'm not the one who figured it out."

"Yes, but you're her father so you have a part in all of her accomplishments, as does Belle."

Gold poured another glass. "All magic comes with a price."

"Indeed it does."

"This feat- which she has not even done yet- is to make her the target of the jealousies of lesser practitioners of magic."

"She already was."

Gold lowered the glass back to the drinks cart. "What do you mean she already was?"

"The Dark Princess gets born, you don't think people know about it? Luckily Regina never had a clue, but she could always be obtuse on matters that didn't deal directly with her. I suppose you missed it-"

"Who noticed?"

"Who didn't? Don't you see? That's why your name was first in the book all those years ago when you were just a babe. You became the most powerful wizard in all the realms and you can protect her. Excepting the Curse of course, but I managed."

"Who?"

"Your father."

Gold shook his head. "You don't know-"

"Rumplestiltskin, I know exactly who your father is, where he is and I've spoken to him more recently than you at which time we discussed this particular topic."

"And that's why she can't be traced through blood magic."

"It took some work on my part."

"What does he want her for?"
"His realm is dying. No one was meant to stay there for this bloody long, he's killing it. New magic might save it."

"Beatrice's magic."

"Yes."

"Would he come after her?"

"He's not afraid of you, sunshine, then again he's never held you in great regard, has he?"

Gold looked away.

"Perhaps now would be a good time to consider letting your family know who they're dealing with."

"I won't let him take her," he growled.

"Expect the best, but prepare for the worst, sunshine," said Merlin. He put his glass down and stood. "I'll see you in the morning."

Gold sat alone, his worst fears consuming him as he thought of his father.
Merlin entered the pawn shop and pulled out a notebook. Gold rolled his eyes. Since he had known the man, Merlin had always chosen his own topic of conversation and expected everyone to join him there. This was going to be one of those times.

"I have made a list of things I think we ought to teach Beatrice," said Merlin. "Keeping in mind that Neverland's magic is so much more powerful. She'll have to be disciplined."

"Beatrice isn't going to Neverland," said Gold.

"I'm not sending her, but I want us to prepare for the scenario that she might end up there. She'll need to protect herself against Pan until we can help her. This is strategy, Rumplestiltskin."

"She's not going anywhere."

"So, you have told her nothing, I take it."

"She doesn't need to know."

"Sunshine, if you don't tell them, I will."

"That would be a mistake."

Beatrice was surprised to see Merlin as she headed towards her car down the street.

"Really?"

"Come on. Lesson time. Let's get a cupcake," he said motioning at Drury's shop.

"You're not watching the trial?"

He scoffed. "The never-ending trial? I saw most of it the first time, though you saw a bit yourself. Congratulations, by the way."

"Thanks," she said with a grimace.

They got cupcakes and went to sit at one of the tables that usually went unused in February.

"Now, what do you know about other realms?"

"Other realms? Land Without Color, there's no color."

"They aren't very creative there."

"Um, Oz?"

"Most obnoxious bunch of witches I have ever met..."

"Wonderland."
"One bad long trip."

"Neverland."

"Ah, Neverland, what do you know of Neverland?"

"It's like Lord of the Flies?"

"Hmm," said Merlin, "not an unfair comparison, though there's no boy with glasses to be the Christ figure."

"I saw Hook," said Beatrice. "Hey, has anybody shown that to the actual Hook? That whole Dustin Hoffman thing might disturb him."

"What about the book? Surely, your mother had you read it."

"The guy's a jerk," said Beatrice.

"Oh?," asked Merlin.

"He's selfish, he doesn't care about anyone else, there's one where he actually switches sides against the Lost Boys. He kills them when they get too old or something, he doesn't care if he's about to die..."

"Now, let's stop there," said Merlin. "I am going to tell you the real story of Peter Pan."

"Oh, God, is it worse?"

Merlin nodded. "Once upon a time, Peter Pan was an ordinary man."

"An adult?"

"He was selfish, he fathered a child with a woman, never loved her and the child... I'm not certain. I think he thought he did. He drove the woman away with his cruelty, leaving the child alone with him."

"Then what?"

"The child was given a magic bean and what do we know about magic beans?"

"They ruin lives," Beatrice said, rolling her eyes.

"Very good. Pan traveled with the child to Neverland and once there discovered he had no magic."

"Why not?"

"Because he was a father. As long as his child remained, he could never have the power he sought because a child can't have a child. Teen Mom not withstanding."

Beatrice shook her head. "What did he do with the kid then?"

"Sent away. Taken in by a kind couple." He shook it off. "The thing to remember about Neverland is that it is lousy with magic. Anything you want to exist, will exist. The problem is Pan."

Beatrice frowned. "If we're planning a vacation there, I can think of some other places. Aruba."
Disney World. Hey, Disney Cruise. Let's do that."

"Did Merlin teach you anything fun today?" Belle asked Beatrice.

Gold's head snapped to Beatrice across the dinner table. "You had a lesson with Merlin?"

"More talking than anything else," said Beatrice.

"About what?" asked Gold.

"We talked about other realms and then we ended up discussing Teen Mom."

Belle shook her head. "You should have never shown him that."

"What other realms?" asked Gold.

"Neverland mostly," said Beatrice. She looked at Belle. "Hey, it turns out Peter Pan is a jerk."

"Really?" asked Belle.

"Excuse me," said Gold, getting up from the table.

"What's wrong, Rumple?" asked Belle.

He didn't answer, just walked out.

Gold was tired. He hadn't gotten a decent's night's sleep since Merlin's visit with the Scotch. Belle had taken notice, indeed everyone had and now the elder sorcerer was taking it upon himself to share his secrets.

Belle slept soundly next to him and he turned over again.

Then the puppy bounded into the room and onto the bed.

"Martha, what are you doing in here?" he asked. "How did you get out of Beatrice's room?"

He didn't have the will to fight the dog so he chose to close his eyes, wondering if a fully grown Dalmatian would one day sleep between he and Belle. Then he heard more footsteps and felt more bouncing on the mattress as something else crawled between he and Belle.

He decided he would have to open his eyes.

That's when he saw a little girl, helping herself under the covers.

"I had a bad dream," she said.

Gold jumped out of bed, causing his bad leg to scream in pain.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

Gold turned on the lamp. "Belle. Belle, wake up!"

Belle stirred. "Rumple, what's-"

She sat up enough to realize what the source of Gold's unease was, looking at the little person in
the middle of the bed.

"I had a bad dream," she said plaintively.

"Right," said Belle, "of course you did. I'm so sorry."

"There was a big shadow."

"It's not real, sweetheart," said Belle.

Gold frowned. "Shouldn't I call someone?"

"About the shadow?", the girl asked.

"Papa's just being silly," said Belle.

"What?!," said Gold.

"Rumple..." Belle urged.

Gold stopped and looked. The girl did have Beatrice's brown hair and eyes, not to mention the adorable chubby cheeks that were in all the photos he had seen of her as a child. Except the lack of glasses, they were a match.

Not to mention, she did seem to be wearing the Doctor Who t-shirt Beatrice had gone to bed in, which was still far too big for her.

"Oh, gods..." said Gold.

"What's wrong, Daddy?"

"Beatrice," asked Belle, "what do you remember?"

"About my dream?"

"No, what about before you went to bed?"

Beatrice shrugged.

"How old are you?", asked Gold.

"Six and a quarter."

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**A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest**

Winter.

Nearly the end of winter, but the trip to the Island Kingdom had given her a respite from the cold. Not quite a respite since the place was so hot and sticky, but definitely a break. She found that since she and Rumple returned to the Dark Castle, it seemed colder than ever. Not that he noticed. So Belle wrapped herself around him to sleep, relishing the feel of his rough skin against hers and covered herself in every available fur and blanket.

"This is stifling," Rumplestiltskin muttered with his eyes closed.

"I'm still cold," she whispered back.
"Shall I warm you up again?"

Belle giggled. "Not like that," she whispered, resting her cheek against his.

He held her tighter and she wondered how it was he always had such a firm grip.

The she thought she saw movement outside the window of her room, but that was impossible as they were at the Dark Castle and it sat high above anything. Then she kept seeing light shift again.

Then no it was definitely something with blank bright eyes.

And it was trying to break into the room my smashing against the window.

"Rumple..." she urged, trying to jostle him. "Rumple, wake up!"

"Eager are we?"

She slapped him on the arm which got him to open his eyes. He recognized the sound at the window and got out of the bed.

Whatever creature it was seemed to vanish.

Rumplestiltskin turned to Belle. "Sweetheart, did you see anything?"

Belle shook her head. "No. Just a shadow."

Now

The next morning Gold made Beatrice pancakes because he didn't know what else to do. Belle had tried to find Beatrice clothes, but the only thing she had come up with was a Princess Belle dress in a box of toys that were now scattered across the kitchen. It seemed every toy she owned had a name and Gold had forgotten all of them. She now sat at the counter in the dress eating happily as Belle ran out to try to get the children's shop to open early for her.

"Oh, good," said Gold as Merlin walked in the kitchen.

"Belle called me." He turned to Beatrice. "Good morning, sweetheart. Can I get a kiss?"

Gold rolled his eyes as Beatrice gave Merlin a peck on the cheek. "You are taking advantage."

"Of course I am. They're only small and cute once. Sometimes twice," said Merlin.

"I'm not small, I'm a big girl," said Beatrice.

"Of course you are, sweetheart," said Merlin. "Did anything interesting happen to you last night?"

"I had a bad dream."

"Anything else?"

"No." She looked up at Gold. "Can I have more pancakes?"

Gold heard the door open. He rolled his eyes as Neal and Emma entered.

"Whoa," said Emma.
"Wow," said Neal. "This is really happening, huh?"

"Hi, Neal! Hi, Emma!," said Beatrice. "Do you want pancakes?"

"Sure, Bea, I'll have pancakes," said Neal, taking the stool next to her.

"She remembers us," said Emma.

"Indeed," said Merlin. "A curious spell. It's as if she's been dropped in here thinking she always was here."

Emma looked at Gold. "What's with the Princess Belle dress?"

"Do not start with me, dearie," said Gold.

Gold heard the door open again. Belle entered with three shopping bags.

"What did you buy?," asked Gold.

"She doesn't have anything," Belle reminded him.

"We're not keeping her this size," said Gold.

"Why can't I wear my princess dress?," asked Beatrice.

"What if I want to wear mine?," asked Belle.

"We could wear them together," said Beatrice.

"Did the level of weird just go up in here?," asked Emma.

Beatrice turned. "Emma, you could wear a Snow White dress."

Neal laughed.

Emma shook her head. "Yeah, kid, not gonna happen."

"You can keep the dress on while I wash your new clothes," said Belle.

"Belle..." Gold grumbled.

"She has sensitive skin," said Belle, stalking off to the laundry room.

"How are we coming on those pancakes?," asked Neal.

Emma looked at Merlin. "Anyone I should question?"

Merlin nodded. "Check the fairies."

"I will," insisted Gold.

"No, you have to watch your daughter," said Merlin.

Beatrice smiled broadly.

---

Gold walked down from the parking space to the shop. Beatrice seemed determined to walk behind him and consequently Martha kept getting between his legs.
"Beatrice," said Gold. "Please don't walk like that."

"Good morning, Mr. Gold," Archie said brightly.

With that greeting, Gold felt Beatrice clamp down on his legs with no regard to which was the bad leg.

"Who's that with you?," asked Archie.

"That's Beatrice," said Gold, eager to unlock the door to the shop. "Don't ask."

"Right," said Archie. "Good morning, Beatrice."

Beatrice didn't say anything and instead hid her face.

"Excuse us," said Gold, opening the shop door. Beatrice didn't say anything and darted inside with Martha.

"Alright, Beatrice, you and Martha play and I will be looking in my books."

"Okay."

Beatrice amused herself with the sundry dolls and books for the morning as Gold searched through magical volumes. Belle entered.

"Mommy!"

"Hi, baby!," said Belle, happily accepting Beatrice's hug around her waist. "Are you having fun with Papa?"

"Yes," said Beatrice. "He doesn't have any toys, though."

Belle handed her the tote bag. "I brought you some more books and I bought you some paper and crayons."

"Thank you," she said running off to the backroom.

Belle smiled and walked to Gold. "Have you found something?"

"No."

"Well, Merlin's working on it. Why don't we go to Granny's?"

"Something's wrong with her," said Gold.

"What do you mean?"

"She practically tripped me coming in here. She wouldn't look at Doctor Hopper. Every time someone comes in the shop, she hides."

"Rumple, that's Beatrice."

Gold shook his head. "I don't think so."

"I'm her mother. I don't think she spoke to anyone but me in complete sentences until she was nine."
"When I met her, she was not afraid of anyone," Gold insisted. "She saw me bind and gag Regina and still gave me attitude."

"She had to find her courage and her voice," said Belle. She glanced back at the backroom and walked over to Gold behind the counter.

"I know this is different, but whatever the reason, you are being given a gift. You never knew her as a little girl. Now you can."

Belle turned to the backroom. "Beatrice! Come on! We're going to Granny's."

At lunch, Mary Margaret and David appeared. Mary Margaret immediately seemed taken with the opportunity of a small Beatrice. Something about how she and Belle plotted as children that their daughters would play together so they went off. Later in the afternoon, satisfied he had found a solution, Gold walked to the park with the spell book in hand. They could get this nonsense sorted finally.

He arrived to find Mary Margaret was animatedly teaching Beatrice to shoot a bow. Belle, Henry and Martha stood nearby while they had David fetching arrows from the targets. Mary Margaret used her hands to support Beatrice's grip on the bow and pull the string.

"Belle..." said Gold.

"Shh," Belle hissed.

"That's okay, Beatrice," said Mary Margaret, showing that twenty-eight years as a teacher were not totally miscast. "You're going to have distractions. You just have to ignore them and concentrate on what you're doing. Take a breath."

Gold rolled his eyes. Belle could not be serious. He wouldn't have let Beatrice take archery lessons were she her age.

Mary Margaret helped Beatrice properly release the string and the arrow flew, landing just on the target.

"Good job!," Mary Margaret exclaimed. "You did it!"

"Well done, Beatrice," said Belle leaning down to kiss her on the cheek.

"Daddy, look! I'm Merida!," Beatrice exclaimed.

"Or Katniss," Henry offered.

"Yes, very nice," said Gold. He held out the spell book.

"What's that?," asked Belle.

"I think I've found the correct spell," said Gold.

"What spell?," asked Beatrice.

"Rumple, maybe we should do this at home..."

"No, I think we ought to let Beatrice get back to herself as soon as possible." He opened the page as Beatrice stared up at him. He waved his hand and...
Nothing happened.

"What happened?," asked Henry. "Wasn't she supposed to change back?"

Gold grumbled. "Fairy magic."

This was not happening. He had set about trying to make dinner and to his dismay, Beatrice had gotten back in her freshly laundered Belle dress and put in a long neglected DVD of Beauty and the Beast.

Of which she apparently knew every song and line. Belle had joined her on the sofa and seemed content to cuddle with her.

"Daddy! It's your song!," Beatrice shouted. "You're missing it!"

Gold ignored her, but then discovered what she meant.

"Tale as old as time! True as it can be! Barely even friends! Then somebody bends unexpectedly!"

Gold groaned. Beatrice did not have the best singing voice to start with, but it seemed her six-year-old self wanted to compensate for that with volume.

Then he heard Belle joined. "Bittersweet and strange, finding you can change, learning you were wrong..."

Belle popped her head in the kitchen. "Rumple, why don't you watch with us?"

"I'm busy."

"Dinner can wait."

He didn't answer.

"Why is it she barely speaks a word outside the house, but can't be stopped inside?," asked Gold.

Belle frowned at him. "Because she feels safe with us." She motioned at the door. "I have to go back. You're about to be lost without me."

Minutes later, Gold was busy putting plates on the table when he felt Beatrice grabbing his legs from behind him.

"Daddy, did Gaston try to kill you?," she asked sadly.

"Well, to be honest, he didn't get past the door before I turned him into a rose."

"Good," said Beatrice. "I hate him."

"Beatrice..." Belle said disapprovingly as she put her in her seat at the table.

"I do. He's mean. And stupid. And not handsome."

"Well," said Belle, "he's not as handsome as Papa certainly, but you shouldn't hate anyone."

That night, Gold awoke to the distinct sound of something crashing.
He hurried out of bed and saw that Beatrice's door was ajar and her bed empty. He flew downstairs to find the source of the noise was in the study.

He entered to find Beatrice standing next to an armoire where he kept some of his less potent formulas and spells. It had the sort of protection spell even a six-year-old sorceress could break and now the contents of the bottom shelf were broken and magic spilled everywhere. Beatrice looked up at him terrified.

He didn't see that, though.

"Beatrice, what did you do?"

"I..."

"Why would you break into something with a protection spell on it? Did you ever stop and think there was a reason?"

Belle entered. "What's going on?"

Gold waved his hand in dismay at the mess of broken bottles and magic boxes. "Look what she did."

At which point Beatrice let out the biggest, most pitiful sob that had ever been sobbed. Belle's face sank as she crossed over the destruction. Gold threw his hands up in dismay.

Belle scooped Beatrice up.

"Oh, sweetheart, it's okay," Belle said, kissing Beatrice's cheek.

"It was dark... I saw a monster..." Beatrice said through sniffles. "I needed magic..."

"It's okay..."

"It's not okay!," Gold protested.

"Let's get you back to bed," said Belle.

Walking past him, Belle shot him a look. Defeated, he began sifting through the magical remnants. More time must have passed than he thought because Belle had returned, was standing over him with crossed arms and he was forced to consider the possibility she was displeased with him.

"What in the hell is wrong with you?!," she shouted.

"More than you know, dearie."

Belle shook her head in disgust. "Don't quip at me. You do not yell at her!"

"Do you see her path of destruction?"

"I'm sorry, I didn't realize that the damage was so great that the powerful Rumplestiltskin couldn't undo it. What is that? A locator spell? It's not as if you have a whole drawer of them at the shop!"

"I suppose you just let her behave like this."

"She's six! Six-year-olds break things!"

"She broke into it."
"Because she was scared and she needed magic. I wonder where she could have gotten that idea!" She forced herself to take a breath. "Her complete paralyzing fear of the dark has actually gotten better over the years so maybe you could act like a caring father instead of an overgrown child who’s mad his toys were broken!"

"Do you have any idea what she could have done?"

Belle appraised the remnants and pointed at the various shards. "I broke three of those, two of those and one of those and nothing ever happened."

She stomped out leaving him to clean up the mess.

---

**The Day The Curse Was Cast**

There were murmurs in the Queen's Castle, saying that their mistress was about to unleash something dark.

Not that anyone had told Belle directly. She was locked up here with no books, nothing to do except mark the days on her wall and eavesdrop. Whatever Regina was planning, it was terrible. She was going to take them away somewhere, a land where only she would get her happy ending.

Belle was starting to wonder if she would ever get a happy ending. If Rumplestiltskin was a prisoner, did that mean he had never heard what happened to her? Did he even realize she was alive? Would Lancelot have told him what happened?

If he knew, he would have come.

Belle also had to wonder at the idiocy of Regina's men. If their mistress was so determined that only she would be happy, why did they continue to help her? It wasn't as if she cared about them.

She wondered at what sort of a land would be worse than the cell she was currently in.

She was lucky that Regina hadn't come to visit since shortly after her capture. The Queen had quickly lost her amusement at her because Belle was quick to remind her that she was inviting the Dark One's wrath, digging herself in deeper every day Belle was a prisoner. Belle didn't think Regina liked to be questioned. She was starting to form a nice round bump now. Tiny. Barely raising up from an otherwise flat tummy, but almost enough to be seen through her rags. Outside the cell, someone might have assumed she was just getting fat, but the meager rations the guards gave her would rule that out as a possibility. She had a feeling the Huntsman knew, but kept his mouth shut. Belle was terrified of whatever Regina might plan for her child.


She was strong. Belle knew that. She had to be to survive the medicine woman. She would have to be if they were ever going to leave this tower and if they were going to survive whatever Dark Curse Regina had planned.

Belle saw green smoke on the horizon. She made her way to the window as best she could with her foot chained to the bed. This smoke was no ordinary smoke, it billowed everywhere, eclipsed everything.

It was magic.

It was the Queen's Curse. It had to be.
As Belle wondered if she would ever see Rumple again in this new land, a shadow appeared flying through the window and coming towards her.

Belle gasped as it grabbed her wrist and she found her feet were no longer at the floor. Her shackle meant she was still attached to the wall and this angered the shadow, seeming to want to pull her apart to get her from the wall.

The green smoke continued to grow closer.

Belle had a few seconds to make a decision. She was used to being impulsive on her own, but she had to think of someone else now.

The shadow was clearly planning on taking her somewhere. Another realm? It might have seemed to a passerby that anywhere was better than where she was now and at one time she might have agreed, but the shadow's rough treatment and blank eyes made Belle wonder if that was the case.

The Curse cloud was also planning on taking her somewhere along with the rest of the realm. Along with Rumple if he was out there somewhere. As powerful as the Queen's Curse looked to be, Belle knew from her books that curses were always broken. Then maybe she could find Rumple and they could be a family.

Curses always broke.

Decided against an unknown present in favor of future happiness, Belle fought her way back from the shadow and grabbed on to the bed, which was also bolted to the floor.

The shadow seemed to catch on to her plan and pulled harder.

The Curse cloud came closer.

Belle screwed her eyes shut to ignore everything except holding on.

She would do this. Her baby needed her to do this. She could do this it wouldn't have to be long.

Soon a white light appeared in front of Belle's eyes and she looked to see the shadow seemingly slumped against the wall as the cloud was a few feet from the tower. The shadow seemed to come to and appraised the distance of the cloud and Belle.

Then it flew away.

Belle suddenly felt exhausted as the green smoke covered everything and it filled her lungs.

---

Now

Gold spent the night feeling rotten.

He had lost his patience. He had never lost his patience with Bae and he knew better than anyone that he was not the same man that had raised Bae. Besides that, Bae had an entirely different childhood as the impoverished son of a spinner. If he had time to play, if they had anything too valuable to break, Bae never would have done that because carelessness was the luxury of a comfortable child.

He sought some way to make amends and his mind went to his wheel and what sorts of things he might have gotten for Beatrice if they were still in their old land. He could almost picture that, Belle's swollen belly under a book as she read by the fire, he at the wheel.
A blanket, he would have made her a blanket first. From the finest, softest wool in the land and gold thread. His knitting was not as good as his spinning or weaving, but it was superior to a lot of people's. So he acquired some wool which was tricky in Storybrooke in the middle of the night, but not impossible and spun it into something soft. He had one visit from Belle after the knitting began sped up by magic, but she left him to it.

Someone else didn't.

"He knits now."

Gold looked up to see Merlin.

"What are you doing, sunshine?"

"I'm knitting," said Gold. "I don't suppose you've found the cause of Beatrice's transformation."

"Tired of the sleepless nights already?"

Gold scoffed and continued looping through loop. "Brave words coming from someone who left his child in the care of Sir Maurice."

"I don't know if you ought to be the one lecturing on fatherhood, sunshine. Belle told me what happened. Do you realize the amount of trouble Beatrice might have caused in the old land, teeming with magic?"

"Do you want to perhaps get back to doing something useful?," asked Gold. "Like undoing this curse?"

"Or knitting?," asked Merlin.

Gold knocked at the door. Beatrice glanced up, then looked back down. Her dolls and lamb were arranged in a semicircle around her.

"I came to apologize."

He walked over and lowered himself to the floor in great pain.

"Papa never should have yelled at you," he said. "I was wrong and I yelled at you and for that, I am truly sorry."

He let her digest that and put the blanket on the floor in front of her.

"I was scared."

"I believe you and I understand it was frightening so I made this for you."

Beatrice eyed it. "It's a blanket."

"Yes, made of the softest wool and do you see what that is?"

Beatrice looked closer. "Gold?"

"Yes, I wove gold thread in it which means when you have this, my magic will protect you from anything that would dare threaten you."

Beatrice picked it up to examine it closer, feeling it with her fingers.
The blanket seemed to make Beatrice happier, but Gold wondered if he had done the right thing as it immediately became her constant companion, going to the shop, Granny's and everywhere in between. Now she was using it as a cape as David supervised her and Henry playing with wooden swords. The invitation had come as a surprise to Gold, but it seemed Henry's amusement at an aunt that was now five years younger than him rather than five years older had no end. Gold sat at the bench with Martha.

"You can't get me, Beatrice!," Henry taunted.

"Henry, go easy on her, she's smaller than you."

Beatrice shot a glare at David and the prince held his hands up in surrender. This was enough for Henry to get an edge in and slap Beatrice's shoulder with the side of the sword.

"Ow!," she screamed and Gold found himself getting off the park bench.

"I won!," said Henry.

"You did not win! You just got me in the arm!"

David shrugged. "She has a point, Henry."

"Beatrice, are you alright?," asked Gold.

"Again!," Beatrice insisted with a look of fresh determination.

"Maybe we've had enough-" Gold began to say.

He was ignored though as Beatrice and Henry were back to thrashing swords at each other.

"Oh, come on, Beatrice," said Henry. "I'm always going to win, I-"

Beatrice waved her free hand and Henry was knocked backwards to the ground and skidded a few feet back.

"Beatrice!," Gold shouted sternly. He looked to his grandson. "Henry, are you alright?"

Henry sat up, looking none the worse except for the mixture of dirt and snow on him. "Yeah."

That was when David burst out laughing. Gold eyed him harshly.

"You, Henry," said David, "forgot the most important rule of sword fighting: never underestimate your opponent. When you duel with a powerful sorceress, don't be surprised when she uses sorcery." He gave the sorceress in question a courtly bow. "You have won, my lady Beatrice."

Beatrice curtsied in response as Henry stood and brushed the dirt off himself.

Emma came walking up.

"Mom!," said Henry. "How much did you see?"

"You mean did I see you get your butt kicked by a six-year-old girl? Yeah, I saw that."
David led the kids off. Emma turned to Gold.

"I talked to Sister Astrid. The fairies really don't seem to know anything."

"As they would," said Gold. "No matter. I'm sure this will be resolved one way or another."

"Really?," asked Emma. "That's awfully laid back for you."

"I really ought to be getting back to Beatrice."

It had happened.

Gold was sitting on a chair in the shop, next to a small table, an antique play table he had forgotten all about but Beatrice had made her own in a few days. Beatrice sat opposite, Martha eyed the sight curiously and the dolls were arranged between them. There was a tea set, one of the cheaper ones in the shop.

If there was a place where past Dark Ones gathered together, they were doubtless laughing their arses off.

"And what do you think, Your Highness?," Beatrice asked, turning to one of the dolls.

Gold sipped his pretend tea.

"What do you think, Daddy?," asked Beatrice.

Gold had lost track of the topic seeing as how he and Beatrice were actually the only participants who could talk.

"Yes, most fascinating," said Gold.

Beatrice nodded and turned to the red-haired doll. "Miss Merriman, you finished your tea again! You must be very thirsty."

Beatrice picked up the doll's cup and dropped it, knocking it on the edge of the table.

She froze and looked up at Gold.

"I'm sorry..."

Gold didn't want to unleash the stream of tears that had followed the last breakage of something. Gold quickly made his way to pick it up off the floor.

"It's just a cup," said Gold picking up the now chipped cup. If he let the women in his life carry one like this, he wondered if he could expect a whole cabinet of chipped china. He looked up at Beatrice. She still didn't look convinced.

"Come here," he said, taking her by the hand to another cabinet. He waved his hand and it opened. He pulled out the little white tea-cup with the blue painting. "Do you know what this is?"

"The chipped cup," she said.

"That's right." He recalled only having shown it to Beatrice once at Belle's behest in the immediate aftermath of the Curse breaking. He hadn't even let her hold it. He held it out to her. "Here."
Beatrice shook her head. "I'll break it."

"No, you won't and even if you do, it will be alright."

Beatrice timidly took the cup.

"Your mother chipped that cup when she first came to my castle," said Gold. "She was afraid I'd be angry with her and every day after I only drank from this cup."

"Why?"

"Because it was hers."

"I don't understand," said Beatrice.

"No, you wouldn't," said Gold. He shook his head. She would never understand what it was like to be that lonely, that said, waiting for that flicker of light. He would make certain she didn't.

"Rumple!," called Belle.

"Where are you, sunshine?"

Gold took the cup back and put it away as Belle, Merlin and Venus arrived in the backroom.

"I wasn't expecting you," said Gold.

"Good news, we found out who did this," said Merlin. "Bad news, not a fairy so we won't have the pleasure of plucking off anyone's wings, though you may still want to." He cast a glance at Venus.

"It was a gift," said Venus.

"Your gift?" Gold asked in confusion.

"Look, I know better than most how screwed up you can be if you grow up without a parent," said Venus. "Though it was as much a gift for you as her."

Gold glanced over at Beatrice who seemed confused by the whole conversation.

"When will she...?" Belle couldn't seem to finish the question.

"In the morning," said Venus.

"We ought to leave you to it," said Merlin. He looked at Gold. "We still have that pending matter to discuss tomorrow, sunshine."

Merlin and Venus left. Belle knelt down in front of Beatrice.

"You have my chipped cup," said Belle.

"I broke Miss Merriman's cup."

"Well, I'm sure it was an accident," said Belle.

"It was."

"Well, why don't we gather up your dolls and books and go home?," asked Belle.
"Okay."

**Manhattan, Sixteen Years Ago**

The shadow dropped Pan inside the small apartment. The woman, Belle, was asleep in her bed. Pan sprinkled a sleeping potion at her and made his way to the crib.

The child. Beatrice if the Darling boys were to be believed. She stirred and her lack of vision became readily apparent. She fussed, but she never focused on him.

Power. Oh, yes, the child's magic could even be felt here in the Land Without Magic. Pan considered that this infant might be the only useful thing his boy had ever done for him.

The infant grew red-faced and sobbed as her mother didn't wake to her cries.

"So like your father..." Pan sneered.

Merlin grabbed Pan by the back of his neck. The man-child froze.

"I would remind you," Merlin said in a low voice, "that you have no powers in the Land Without Magic, but I do. Not that I need them to snap you in two."

"I have my shadow."

Pan watched in amazement as Merlin's own shadow flew in the window and handed him a box.

Merlin held out the box. "No, you don't."

Pan's gaze turned back to the sleeping infant. "Isn't this cozy?"

"Oh, yes, very cozy," said Merlin.

"Our granddaughter."

"You are not her grandfather," said Merlin. "You are merely the man who sired her father, then cast him aside because you were too cowardly to grow up."

"What about you? The man who sired her mother and cast her aside to protect your greatest vision?" Pan cast a look back at Merlin. "The Dark Princess."

"The fact that you think that shows just how twisted you are. What's it like in your head? How do you ever find anything getting so turned around?"

"I need new magic."

Merlin leaned in. "You need to do us all a favor- but especially your son- and die already. This child is not the answer to your problems and if you come near her again, I will end you. I don't care if I have to kill all your psychotic lost boys or destroy your whole realm and the ones adjoining. This child, yes, this Dark Princess will always be defended."

Pan smirked. "Is that all?"

"You know," Merlin considered, "the day you abandoned your son, that was the best thing that could have happened to him."

Pan was surprised as Merlin threw him out the open window and panicked. He caught the
sorcerer's expression as his shadow caught him.

"Don't play my game, boy," Merlin snarled.

---

**Now**

The Golds went home. They ate dinner and let Beatrice eat too much dessert, then played Monopoly.

Gold let her win. Well, the entire principle of the game had broken out when Beatrice asked if he was actually going to make her pay rent like everyone else. Well, of course not. Then Belle had come up with an argument of her own, that since she had sworn herself to the Dark One forever, she really wasn't supposed to enter into other contracts so really Gold ought to be paying her rest as well.

He was doomed.

Belle read three stories as Gold watched until Beatrice was finally passed out enough to be left alone in bed.

Gold hadn't been able to sleep, not while he knew the spell was ending. His little girl would be gone, the one who played tea party and made him drawings.

He was happy to have her back. It was ridiculous. They were the same person. Both beautiful and smart. One was just a little braver than the other and spoke her mind more often than not. Still, she was the one that boys and all too often some ill-thinking man stared at. He was going to have to gouge out the eyes of every lecher in Storybrooke at this rate.

Early in the morning, there was a knock at the door.

He took his cane and went to the door. Beatrice was of course there, the top of her head just under his chin and back in her pajamas. He couldn't help but notice she had the white and gold blanket wrapped around her shoulders.

"Was I just six for a while?" she asked.

"Yes, your great-grandmother's notion."

"Oh. Okay." She paused. "Yeah, my room is trashed."

"Your room was always trashed," Gold mocked.

Martha barked from the bedroom.

"Girl..." Beatrice groaned.

Something in Gold made him want to follow, seeing as how the puppy had managed to summon a fearsome bark for whatever had perturbed her. As he considered it, he heard Beatrice scream and hurried down the hall, limping without his cane.

There was a pounding against her window. Beatrice had managed to grab her puppy and was backing towards the door.

Gold saw what she saw.
A shadow.

Pan's shadow.

The shadow thrashed against the magical wards he had placed on the house. He shoved Beatrice behind him.

"Don't you dare..." he growled.

"Rumple! Beatrice!," Belle called frantically as she hurried down the hall.

The shadow finally burst through the wards and into the room. It waved off the fireball Gold lobbed at it, knocking him to the side.

Belle threw her arms around Beatrice as the shadow came towards them. Then the same pulse of magic that had rendered Mother Superior powerless came out from Belle, knocking the shadow back. The shadow spun around swiftly and back through the window.

"What just happened?," Beatrice asked.

"Rumple," said Belle, scrambling to his side on the floor. "Are you alright?"

"Fine, sweetheart. Are you two alright?"

"I think so. I just..."

"Used your magic again?," Beatrice supplied.

"Rumple," Belle said breathlessly, "what was that?"
Chapter Notes

I'm copying these notes because I believe I wrote them the week of the Rumbelle wedding.

Author's Notes: I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where I was convinced they were going to screw over a certain couple and then OH MY GOD! What is this feeling? It's like the opposite of angst... Is this happiness? Anyway, thank you so much for the reads and reviews, I really appreciate it. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

(Also, the Spurs were heading towards the championship which is what most of my other Author's Notes from the time were about because I hadn't updated as frequently... It was a good time.)

A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest

Belle carried a basket as she walked behind her mother past the village.

"Where are we going?"

"It's a secret."

Belle rolled her eyes. Her mother was full of secrets lately, ever since they had set off on their summer sojourn. After enjoying the whole season, they had spent some time in Padua until it was finally time to return to Avonlea where Reinette's demands on her daughter's time had become even stranger.

Reinette caught Belle's frustration. "You are to be a great lady. You need to be able to help your people in all perils."

"And what peril am I learning today?," asked Belle.

They arrived at a small cottage. Belle heard screams of anguish from inside.

"The greatest peril a woman must bear all on her own," said Reinette. "The most important form of magic in the world."

"What?," Belle asked, her eyes huge.

Reinette looked back at her. "Childbirth."

Now

Beatrice sat on the sofa with her blanket and the dog.
"Could I get my slippers out of my room?"

"No!," Gold shouted back at her.

"Rumple, you have to talk to us," said Belle.

He walked past them.

Beatrice looked up at Belle and pulled out her iPhone. "I'm just going to google shadow and fairy tale."

"Rumple!," called Belle.

Beatrice looked on her phone. "Oh, that's not good..." She leaned forward. "Dad, you aren't really your own shadow, are you?"

"What?," said Belle. She inched closer. "Let me see that."

They were interrupted by a knock at the door.

Gold walked in. "Don't answer it."

"Rumple, we are going to have to open the door eventually," said Belle.

"Yes, let's just open the door for the shadow trying to steal away our daughter."

"There's a shadow trying to steal me away?"

The knock resumed. "Belle? Are you there?," asked Mary Margaret from the other side of the front door.

"Go away, dearie! We're busy!," said Gold.

"It's an emergency!"

"Yes, it always is with you!"

There was a pause.

"Belle?," called Mary Margaret.

Belle scowled at him and went to the door.

Mary Margaret and David followed her in.

"Gold, we need your help," said David.

"I'm busy," said Gold.

"Something's wrong. There was this shadow, it's been spotted around town. It took two boys-" said Mary Margaret.

Belle glared at Gold.

"Emma seemed to think Neal knew what it was, we all agreed to meet over here," said Mary Margaret.
"Who was taken?," asked Belle.

"Mr. Drury's youngest son and Mike Foley."

"Gods..." Belle turned to Gold. "Rumple, if you know something, you have to tell us all."

"I disagree. All I have to do is look after her and that's what I intend to do."

"Save it, sunshine."

Beatrice looked up to see Merlin.

"Seriously, someday I want to know how to do that."

Merlin ignored Beatrice and looked to Gold. "Time is up."

David turned to Merlin. "Do you know what this shadow is?"

"I do." Merlin looked at Gold again. "You've got about thirty seconds before I tell them."

"Rumple, just tell us," said Belle. "Please."

"We're waiting, sunshine."

"Merlin, please, just give him a minute."

Beatrice looked to her father, then back at Merlin. "Peter Pan has a shadow."

"Indeed he does," said Merlin.

"Is that why you told me about Neverland?," asked Beatrice.

"Did you know this was coming?," asked David.

"I thought Pan might be coming, yes," said Merlin. "I also thought he would be coming for Beatrice. Taking the other boys, I'm sure it's all part of the game for him."

"Children are disappearing, this is not a game," said Mary Margaret.

Neal and Emma came in.

"Hey," said Emma. "You will not believe what Neal just told me."

"That Peter Pan's Shadow is behind this?," asked Beatrice.

"Okay, I guess you will believe it," said Emma.

"How did you guys know?," asked Neal.

Beatrice looked to her father. "How did you know?"

"Rumple, what aren't you saying?," asked Belle.

"Were you a lost boy or-" Beatrice paused. "It was you."

Gold wouldn't make eye contact with her.

"What was him?," asked Neal.
"The child that Pan threw away to have power. That was you."

Gold looked to Merlin. "There. Are you pleased with yourself?"

"Peter Pan's your grandfather?," asked Emma.

"My grandfathers are Peter Pan and Merlin..." said Beatrice.

Gold walked out. Belle hurried to follow him.

"Oh, and the guy who tried to kill me," said Beatrice. "And I've gotten one Christmas present between the three of them."

Neal turned to Merlin. "Why wouldn't he tell us that?"

"Does no one listen to me about the surprise relatives?," asked Beatrice.

Then

Belle followed her mother inside the cottage.

"Lady Reinette," said the woman.

"Mistress Leigh," said Reinette, putting her basket down. "Have you ever met Belle?"

"No," she smiled. "Hello, Lady Belle."

"Hello."

"Belle, take off your cloak and put your basket down. We need to get to work."

"I..."

Leigh laughed. "She looks like she's wandered into a den of snakes."

"Belle has never seen a child being born," said Reinette. "I thought it was time."

Leigh smiled. "Are you getting married, milady? I didn't know there was a date for the wedding with Sir Gaston."

"There isn't," said Reinette. "Hopefully we can secure alternate arrangements."

"There's nothing to be frightened of, milady," said Leigh. "Just the pain and blood and other mess."

"Shouldn't we call a midwife?," asked Belle.

Reinette turned. "Mistress Leigh is a midwife. Actually, she's the only one in the village who is any good."

"Your mother flatters me. She means I'm the only one in the village that isn't ruled by the Clerics."

"Why do the Clerics have any rule over midwifery?," asked Belle. "Surely that's a woman's domain."

Reinette smiled.
"Clever and beautiful," remarked Leigh. "You'll go far in the world."

"I would commend Mistress Leigh to you when you need her, Belle," said Reinette. "Where is your husband?"

"Another tour on patrol watching the Ogre frontier."

"So silly to tear a man from his family when the Ogres haven't been here in years..." said Reinette.

"If only someone had influence with the ruler of Avonlea..." said Leigh.

"Speak so to me again and I shall you leave you to your own devices..." teased Reinette.

"I suspect I could manage without getting your soft noble hands dirty," the woman teased back.

"Belle, won't you make us some tea?," asked Reinette.

"Tea?"

"I trust you have been learning something in the kitchen," said Reinette.

Belle nodded and went to the kitchen.

Now

Belle was the only one brave enough to follow Gold into the cellar. He sat at his wheel, not touching anything. Belle smiled and took his hand as she knelt down in front of him.

"Why didn't you say anything?," Belle asked softly. She squeezed his hand. "You can tell us anything."

Gold scoffed.

"Bae and Beatrice love you and so do I," said Belle. "We just can't understand why you wouldn't tell us."

"If your father abandoned you, would you brag about it?"

"How old were you?"

"Six."

"It wasn't your fault."

"Yes, but it is my fault that I am as bad a father as he was."

"But you're not. No one could love his children more."

"Why do you continue to believe that?"

"Because I can see the good in you and now you can beat him."

Beatrice dressed in the downstairs bathroom with no windows and then Gold used magic to take them to the pawn shop. The others were coming by car.
Beatrice looked at Gold. "Why didn't you say anything?"

Gold continued to fidget with the box of potions. "You didn't need to know."

"Like I didn't need to know about Bae?"

"Beatrice, I would do anything for you..."

"I know."

Gold sighed. "These past few days with you have been wonderful, but they have also been a reminder of just how much I lost. I never held you as an infant, I didn't watch your first steps..."

"You didn't know," said Beatrice.

"I should have been paying more attention."

The door opened. Gold held his hand out and conjured a fireball as Regina entered, holding Henry by the hand. She rolled her eyes at him as he closed his hand, extinguishing it.

"As if you would dare."

"Oh, I would."

"Great use of our time, guys," said Beatrice.

"Emma said we would meet here. Your son has a way to capture the shadow?"

"He seems to believe so, though he needed a coconut."

"Really?," asked Beatrice. "This is our plan?"

The door opened again. Belle entered with Martha and reunited the puppy with her girl. David and Mary Margaret followed.

"It's getting worse out there," said Mary Margaret. "That shadow has taken five more."

"Five more?," asked Regina. "How can he be getting back to Neverland so fast?"

Gold shook his head. "It must be some other magic. He's hiding them somehow."

"Once we catch him, can you undo it?," asked Henry.

Gold nodded. "Perhaps."

Then Emma and Neal entered with Hook.

"What is this?," asked Gold.

"The only other guy in Storybrooke who has fought Pan," said Neal.

"He's been trying to kill me."

"Which he can't," said Neal.

"Alas, a solution has yet to present itself," said Hook.

"What about my family?," asked Gold.
"Taking the girl's heart was Cora's plan, not mine," he said, glancing at Beatrice. "Besides, I've been very appreciative of Belle's book cart."

Gold looked to Belle. "Your what?"

"I take books to the jail. That was my first job in New York, I was the prison librarian at Riker's Island." She said this as if she couldn't believe he hadn't realized it.

Gold was aghast, not just imagining her in the Storybrooke jail, but now among all the truly despicable scum this world had to offer. "Why would you do that?!"

"Well, I can't just leave them in there without books!," Belle protested.

"Yes!," said Gold. "Yes, you can!"

"Mother Superior doesn't read and Gaston only likes stories with pictures so it's mostly Hook," said Belle.

"Hey, it kept Hook from talking to me for a while," said Emma. "Then he mostly started speaking in sonnets..."

"Why is this my life?," asked Beatrice.

---

**Then**

Leigh happily sipped the brew that Belle made in between contractions.

"A princess who can make a very good cup of tea," said Leigh. "Is there much call for those?"

Belle shrugged. "I don't think there's call for princesses to do much of anything."

"Belle has been taking lessons with Mrs. Potts," said Reinette.

"Oh," said Leigh. "I know the lady well. Seven children. It's a wonder that your mother keeps such an unreliable cook."

"Have you not tried the grey stuff? It's delicious," said Reinette. She looked back at Belle. "I shall have her teach you that next."


"Well, when you're recovered, I thought you could be of assistance," said Reinette.

"Midwifery?," asked Belle. "Mama..."

"I also do some nursing. That can be a useful skill even for a princess," said Leigh. "Anything people don't want to take to the Clerics or Gods forbid that awful medicine woman."

"What medicine woman?," asked Belle. "Is she a witch?"

"Not quite a witch so much as a master of poisons," said Leigh. She stopped and exhaled deeply.

"Another one?," asked Reinette. "They are getting closer together."
After the adults talked and they were joined by Sister Astrid, it was time to go hunt the Shadow which had taken more children even as they planned.

"We'll put a protection spell around the shop," said Gold.

"Four protection spells," said Merlin. "Light and dark magic. It will give even Pan's Shadow a great deal of difficulty."

"What about you guys?," asked Henry.

"We're going to go catch the shadow," said Neal.

"You'll be safe here," Gold promised.

"Let's head out," said David.

They left and Henry joined them to see them out the door. Belle stopped and looked at Beatrice. "Sweetheart?"

"I'm okay."

Belle turned to leave.

"Mommy?"

Belle turned back. Beatrice burst into tears and Belle hurried to embrace her.

"I don't want to go to Neverland. I really don't want to go to Neverland-"

"You're not going. I'm going to make sure of that."

"I can't go. What does he even want me for? What if I'm supposed to die? I don't want to die."

"You're not going to die." Belle put on a brave smile. "You're the Dark Princess. You can do anything."

Beatrice shook her head fervently. "I don't want to be the Dark Princess, I don't want to have magic. I just want to sit in my room and watch TV and go on tumblr and talk about TV and drink Starbucks and eat Reese's."

Belle shook her head. "You don't need to be afraid."

"Dad is afraid of him," Beatrice said trembling.

"Your papa is afraid of a memory from his childhood. You don't have to be. You don't have to be afraid of anything. You're the strongest person I know."

"How can you say that? I mean, look at me."

Belle didn't have to put on a smile. "You survived a witch before you were born. You were scared to ask for a straw at restaurants, but you were brave enough to feed a hungry man. You were scared of the dark, but you never stopped going in it. You fought a dragon with little more than the belief you could."

"You defied me." They looked up to see Gold had joined them. "You thought I was a monster
who stole children and you couldn't see and you didn't know where you were going and you still tried to fight me. Not many others have attempted as much with many more advantages."

Beatrice paused.

"I thought you bargained for them..."

"Don't worry," said Gold. He kissed the top of her head. "You are not going anywhere."

Belle smiled again, then gave Beatrice another squeeze.

---

_Then_

Belle sat outside the cottage on a log. It had been awful and terrible and there was pain and blood and more and then... it was wonderful. Leigh held her new son and wept tears of joy.

Then the placenta came out.

At which point, Belle decided she had to get out of the cottage.

Reinette came out.

"I needed fresh air," said Belle.

"It is overwhelming the first time," said Reinette. She sat down on the log next to Belle. "So much emotion. So many revelations."

"Why would anyone do that?," asked Belle.

Reinette laughed.

"Gods, Mrs. Potts has seven. Who would be stupid enough to do that more than once?"

"You'll understand someday."

Belle shook her head.

"Being a mother isn't so much about giving up yourself which some women mistake it for. It's giving of yourself because someone else needs it more. Your body, your love, your courage. I can recommend no one better to motherhood than you, Belle."

Belle thought on that a moment. "That's quite a compliment knowing the critic."

Reinette smiled, she felt her eyes watering. "I am glad you think so."

"How could I not? You do so much for me."

"I do nothing less than I ought to and nothing less than you will do for your own daughter some day."

Belle shifted uncomfortably.

"Would you rather I just let you go into these things blindly? Gods, the marital bed and childbirth would be terribly frightening if you didn't know what was coming."

"They both also seem terribly unpleasant," added Belle.
Reinette smiled. "Besides the obvious, they both have in common that afterwards, you forget the pain. It never matters again. You get to meet this new person, you know nothing about her, but you're instantly bewitched and you are lucky enough to get to see who she turns into. What could be better?"

---

*Now*

"What do we do?" asked Emma. "Are we just waiting for it?"

"I don't see a lot of options."

They continued to watch the skies. David listened to the dwarves' updates on the police radio.

"Leroy says they spotted it-"

Then a shadow flew directly over them.

And another.

"What's going on?" asked Belle.

"It's a trick," Gold sneered.

"What do we do?" asked Belle.

"We'll split up," said Mary Margaret.

"We've only got one coconut," said Emma.

"It seems like we could have gotten more than one of those," said Venus.

"They're not all Pan's Shadow," said Merlin. "We'll be able to contain the ones that aren't. Her Highness' plan is a good one."

David nodded. "Let's move out."

Beatrice looked up from her iPad as the ground shook. Henry looked at her with wide eyes.

"What was that?"

It shook again. The lights in the shop flickered.

It shook again. Martha whined.

It shook again.

Four shakes.

Four protection spells.

"Oh, God," said Beatrice.

She heard the cases in the front room of the shop rattle.

"Do you think that's..." Henry asked.
"Yeah," said Beatrice, hearing her veins start to throb in her head, "I think that's it."

Henry got up and tiptoed towards the curtain.

"Henry, don't-"

"I just want to look-"

She rolled her eyes. "Why do you have to be half Charming? Could you draw on the other side of your family?!

Henry didn't seem to be offended or even listen because the Shadow grabbed him.

"Henry!," Beatrice shrieked.

She looked out in the shop. Henry was fighting the Shadow, but it stared straight at Beatrice.

It was giving her a choice.

She ducked back in the backroom and got her bag, frantically glancing for anything that might be useful to toss in. Beatrice kissed Martha and put her in the playpen. She walked back in the floor of the shop where the Shadow held still, its fingertips now just on Henry.

Beatrice looked at the Shadow.

"I'm going to make a deal with you," she said, her voice shaking. "I'm what you really want so I'll go with you."

The Shadow eyed her.

"Leave Henry and my family and everyone else alone."

"Beatrice, don't!," Henry protested. "Pan wants you for something, that can't be good!"

"It's better than the alternative," said Beatrice.

The Shadow pushed Henry aside and held its hand out. Beatrice took her phone out.

"Just one thing, okay? I get to do this one thing."

Beatrice typed into her iPhone and hit send. She put it back in her bag.

"Okay," she said and held her hand out.

"No!," Henry shouted.

Leaving her nephew's cries behind, Beatrice became slowly aware of Storybrooke becoming smaller in the distance.

"Did you find it?," asked Emma, as she and Neal ran up to Belle and Gold.

"No-" said Belle. She was interrupted by her phone beeping.

Gold held out a shimmering square. "Not Pan's shadow. Someone else's."

Belle got her phone out. Gold's went off.
"Guys, what is it?" asked Neal.

Belle didn't answer. She went running back towards the shop.

"Papa?" asked Neal.

The Shadow was a blip in the distance.

"Oh, God," said Emma.

As they ran towards the shop, they saw the other groups headed from other directions. The extra shadows came to the ground and the people of Storybrooke watches in amazement as they saw the missing boys suddenly reappear in their place.

"How the hell..." Emma didn't even finish the sentence.

Time stopped for Belle.

Sound stopped. She didn't hear Leroy shouting her name.

Nothing mattered.

When she was finally in sight of her target, she ran for the doors, not caring that there were four separate protection spells on it, she thrashed against the magic, not hearing her own cries.

"No, no, no..."

David was the one to pull her back and Mary Margaret was the one to hold her as Regina released her spell. Sister Astrid waved her wand. Merlin released his. Then Gold.

She broke free of Mary Margaret and rushed in.

"Hello!," called Henry.

"Henry!"

"We're coming, hang on!," said Neal.

The protection spell to the shop was released. Henry stood holding the puppy.

"Henry, where's Beatrice?," asked Emma.

"The Shadow was here. He..."

"It's okay, Henry," said Regina. "You're safe now."

Henry looked up at Belle and Gold. "She made a deal. She said she would go with him if he left me alone. She saved me."

Hearing the words felt like lead on her chest. Belle was overcome with everything all at once, remembering how it felt to feel the little person kicking inside of her and nursing her and now that baby was gone. She could vaguely feel Mary Margaret's arms wrapped around her as the others talked.

"We have to go get her," said Belle. "We have to go get her."

"Of course we're getting her," said Mary Margaret.
"You're going?," Regina scoffed.

"I am," said Mary Margaret. She looked to David. He put his hand on her shoulder.

"I'm coming, too," said Neal.

"What?," Gold exclaimed. "Bae, no-"

"I'm not staying here while my baby sister is trapped with the worst guy I've ever met," said Neal. He looked to Henry and knelt down. "Buddy, I don't want to leave you, but-"

Henry beat him to it. "I understand. Beatrice needs your help and I've got my moms."

Neal gave the boy a kiss and stood back up, looking to Hook. "And you're going to help."

"I doubt that, mate."

Neal narrowed the distance between them. "You owe me. We need the Jolly Roger so she can go with or without you."

Hook grimaced at the option laid before him.

"Suppose he changes his mind," sneered Gold.

"He won't," said Merlin. "I'll make certain of that."

"You'll be joining us as well. How delightful," said Hook.

"I'm certain you're all very well-intentioned," said Gold. He looked to Hook. "Except you, of course, but I'm the one who has to do this. Alone."

Belle hadn't exactly been in a haze, but the events had felt like she was a third party watching. She snapped back, looking at Gold.

"I'm her mother."

Gold looked as if he didn't understand where this was headed.

"I am her mother," Belle said again. "I am her mother and I am going to go find her. You of all people ought to understand that."

"You have no idea how dangerous Pan is-"

"I am not scared of Pan-"

"Your courage as always is commendable, Belle-"

"I am getting my daughter back. You can come or not." Belle looked to the group. "Is three hours from now enough time?"

"Why not now?," asked David.

"To get supplies, weapons?," asked Belle. "We can hardly rescue Beatrice with just the clothes on our backs, can we? Three hours. The Jolly Roger."

Mary Margaret nodded. Belle walked to Emma.
"I know this is inconvenient-"

"No-"

"But could you and Henry look after Martha while we're gone?"

Emma looked on in stunned silence. "Yeah, of course."

"I'll take good care of her, Belle," Henry said solemnly. "I won't let anything happen to her."

"Thank you."

The others left. Belle turned to Gold. "Get what you need."

Gold watched helplessly as Belle opened a case of weaponry and started making selections.

Emma watched as her parents prepared for the trip and left instructions for the town. They got arrows and swords and Granny was even sending them off to the Jolly Roger with bags of food.

"Why aren't you going?," asked Henry.

"What?," asked Emma.

"You want to go," said Henry.

Emma shrugged. "Somebody has to stay with you, kid."

"I can stay with my mom. So can Martha."

Emma wasn't sure about that, though the puppy did certainly fit into Regina's color scheme. "I'm not leaving you, Henry."

"It's not leaving me if you're coming back," said Henry. "You're just... going away for a while."

"Decided to join us, sunshine?," Merlin called cheerfully from the deck of the Jolly Roger.

Gold glared. Belle looked to Hook.

"Where can I put these?," she asked, holding the satchels.

"Oh, good, luggage. I can assure you a change of wardrobe will have no effect on Pan."

"Books," said Belle.

"Even better," Hook muttered.

She scowled. "You liked Jane Austen. Don't deny it."

"Be nice, Killian," said Neal. "Here, Belle, I'll show you."

Neal and Belle disappeared below deck. Merlin approached Gold.

"I'm pleased you didn't go off on your own to do something stupid, sunshine."

Gold handed him a large velvet pouch.
Merlin eyed him. "Is this what I think it is?"

"I don't know what you think, dearie."

Merlin shook his head. "You don't have to do this, sunshine."

"I believe I do."

"Do you trust yourself so little? Do you think you would ever endanger the product of your True Love?"

"I wouldn't risk it to appease my own vanity."

"You're a better father than him. Did you know that your name appeared first in her book? You were the first link to what she would be. It has been your destiny to be her father since you were a baby in a basket. Your connection is stronger than you think."

"Just keep it," said Gold.

Merlin put the pouch in his jacket pocket. "I will return this when you ask for it and we will speak nothing of this to Belle."

Belle and Neal came back from below deck. Gold looked to Hook.

"Are you going to try to kill me again?," asked Gold.

Neal cut them off. "Nobody's going to kill anybody. We're doing one thing: getting my sister back."

"Yes," added Merlin. "And if anyone forgets that, I'll be happy to remind you. Shall we depart?"

"Wait!"

They all looked to see Emma running up the docks.

"Emma," Mary Margaret gasped in amazement.

"Whoa, Emma, you don't have to do this," said Neal. "What about Henry?"

"I left him in the apartment with some Hot Pockets." Emma glared at Neal. "He's with Regina and they're watching your dog, by the way."

They looked to see Henry and Regina coming up the docks with Martha.

"You are leaving someone to run the town, right?," asked Venus.

"Henry wanted to wish you luck," Regina said tightly. "And so do I."

"Come here, buddy," said Neal, giving his son a hug.

"Emma," said Belle.

Emma edged closer to Belle.

"I... really appreciate this, but I don't expect you to do this, to leave your son. He's your priority. I understand."
"Beatrice saved my son and when I needed to slay a dragon, she was the one who came with me and unlike me, she knew exactly what she was signing up for, so, yeah, I'm coming."

Belle threw her arms around Emma. The blonde stiffened, not knowing what to do with the gesture. Mary Margaret and David finished saying their goodbyes to Henry and Belle finally released Emma to give her own.

"Take care of my grandson," Gold instructed.

"Not a problem," said Regina.

"And if anything happens to that dog, I will kill you."

Regina eyed Gold as if he were crazy for not the first time. Henry came away from Belle, having missed his grandfather's instruction.

"We'll take good care of Martha, Grandpa."

"I am sure you will."

Henry impulsively gave Gold a hug and said another goodbye to Emma.

"You guys will get her back. I know you will," said Henry.

"We should let them get to it then," said Regina. "Come on, Henry. Bring Martha."

Regina, Henry and Martha left the Jolly Roger. Belle turned forward as the ship set sail. She felt Gold walk up behind her and took his hand.

"I'm going to get her back, Rumple."

"Yes, you will."

"Belle, come here," said Mary Margaret.

Belle walked to the aft of the ship. Smiling, Mary Margaret and David pointed at the dock.

Everyone was there. Henry and Regina, of course. Ruby and Granny. The dwarves. Sister Astrid and the friendlier of the nuns. Archie. Marco. Some others Belle didn't even know. They were all waving.

"I don't understand," said Belle. "What are they doing?"

"They probably wanted to commemorate seeing us leave," said Gold.

"No," said Mary Margaret. "They're seeing you off, wishing you good luck."

Belle shook her head. "And why would they want to do that?"

Mary Margaret smiled. "Because she may be the Dark Princess, but now she's a hero."

Belle thought back to that storm-ridden night that finally calmed down to an eerily calm dawn. The one where she had held a squirming pink blanket full of new life whose eyes couldn't even look back at her.

"I don't know anything about you, little one," said Belle. "Honestly, I don't even know who your father is. I don't know anything about you except that you're mine and that you are going to be
The shadow practically dropped Beatrice onto the beachhead.

Beatrice spat sand out of her mouth and stood.

"Kidnapping me, could at least not try to kill me."

"Well, lass, we meet at last."

Beatrice steadied herself before looking up. He was blond, the main quality in his face seemed to be eyebrows. A cadre of boys gathered behind him with torches.

"Welcome to Neverland."

"Thanks. Not staying."

"Oh, I think you are, lass."

Beatrice shook her head. "No..."

He arched a brow at her. "Do you think your father can save you? You're not the first child here to think that."

"Look, I know you've got this whole Lord of the Flies vibe going, maybe you can talk these guys into anything, but I know who you are."

"Do you?"

"Oh, yeah, read the book, but you won't be able to ever convince me that no one is coming for me. At the least, I've got Rumplestiltskin. I've got Merlin. I've got Venus. I've got my brother who as I understand it already got out once. Do you know what else I've got? I've got my mother."

"Oh, you mean, the librarian?"

The Lost Boys laughed.

"You're not here to read," Pan sneered. "You're here to play."

"That's a problem," said Beatrice.

"Oh?"

"I'm not playing."

Beatrice threw down one of the spells she had grabbed off her father's table and disappeared into a puff of garnet smoke.
Gold awoke next to Belle. She was contentedly asleep.

He heard crying.

As he stepped out of the master bedroom in the pink house, he found himself in the hallway of the Dark Castle. Following the sound he walked into a nursery.

Baby Beatrice sat in the middle of an elaborate crib and wailed.

He smiled. "Shh, Beatrice, it’s alright. Papa's here."

Suddenly, the infant was covered in darkness before he could walk over. When he got to the crib, he found himself joined by the Dark One, scales and all.

"What did you do?," Gold demanded.

"Oh, I'm not the problem, dearie. I'm the solution. That is, if you ever want to see your Dark Princess again."

He tried to reach for the baby, but the shadow over her somehow grew denser and Beatrice's cries grew louder.

"Please. Do something."

Gold looked to his left and saw himself. The spinner, holding his walking stick with his mangled leg.

"He can't help you, dearie," said the Dark One. "He's all requests and begging, isn't he? He can make her pancakes, but he can't protect her any more than he could Bae."

"She needs me," the spinner insisted.

"You can't offer her anything, dearie," said the Dark One. He looked to Gold. "You know who can save her."

"Rumple," Belle said gently.

He snapped awake, remembering that he had sat down just after they arrived in Neverland.

He had fallen asleep on the deck of the Jolly Roger. The pirate was staring at him.
"I'm sorry," he said.

Belle shook her head. "You've barely slept lately. It's alright. Do you want to go below deck?"

"No," he said.

"Granny sent along food," said Belle. "Do you want some while it's still decent?"

"No, I'll be fine." He got up. "Excuse me."

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*The Beatrice French Guide to Getting Kidnapped.*

*The Beatrice Gold Guide to Getting Kidnapped.*

*The Beatrice Gold Guide to Getting Kidnapped By Your Grandfather.*

*The Beatrice Gold Guide to Getting Kidnapped By Your Grandfather Who Also Happens to Be Peter Pan.*

*The Beatrice Gold Guide to Getting Kidnapped By Your Grandfather Who Also Happens to Be Peter Pan and Your Father Happens to Be Rumplestiltskin and Your Mom Happens to Be Belle From Beauty and the Beast.*

*Rumplestiltskin Is Also The Beast. Also, Maurice from Beauty and the Beast? Jerk.*

*It's A Trap: The Truth Disney Doesn't Want You to Know About Neverland*

Beatrice frowned at the River Song journal. She had never bothered to write anything in it except a Think Geek confirmation code once since Emma gave it to her for her birthday, but she was in Neverland with not a lot to do and she didn't want to burn through her iPhone battery all at once.

She had decided titles were hard.

*Congratulations. You have been taken to Neverland by the autonomous shadow of your estranged grandfather, Peter Pan, who as it turns out is a crappy father.*

She decided to concentrate on what she had done right so far. Her mother was an optimist, perhaps it was time to draw on some of that Disney Princess sparkly, musical optimism. She had saved Henry. She had evaded Pan for time being. Her only survival skills came from *The Hunger Games*, though she supposed she could adapt that fireball thing. So, she had found a tree.

Then she had to figure out how to climb a tree. How did cats do it?

So, she went and sat in the tree and started writing in her journal and tried not to think about how there was absolutely no sign of the sun coming up so the whole time she was here it might be... dark.

*The Dark Princess' Guide to Neverland*

*The Gold Guide to Neverland.* That even sounded like a real travel guide.

What else had she done right?

Well, she wasn't the pregnant girl on *Lost*. That was a plus when getting trapped on an island, right?
Beatrice thought maybe she should try writing some Doctor Who fanfiction instead. She had always thought Eleven and Martha would have gotten along well. He was kooky, she was sensible.

It could work.

"You're wearing that," said Belle.

Gold turned. Belle had joined him below deck. "You couldn't expect me to traipse through the jungle in my suit, could you?"

"I don't think that's why you changed, though."

"Indeed not." He motioned at the leather and dragon hide he had conjured. "I thought you were fond of this look."

"I was fond of anything on the man I love," said Belle. She shook her head. "You don't need to do this."

"I do. You need the Dark One."

"I need Beatrice's father."

"Who is the Dark One, in case you've forgotten."

Belle shook her head. "You're her father no matter what you call yourself."

The ship rocked.

"What was that?," asked Belle.

They made their way back above deck. The ship rocked side to side as the passengers held on to the ropes.

"Mermaids," said Neal.

"Good thing you had time to change your clothes," said Hook.

Belle stumbled as Gold grabbed her. He hurried over and launched a fireball from his hand at the mermaids.

"Trying to do something here!," Venus snapped, holding on to the side of the ship. "Ursula! Ursula, I demand your presence!"

"Ursula is a myth-" Mary Margaret protested.

"Shut up if you want her to help," said Venus. "Ursula!"

A golden creature with a form that was half-octopus, half-woman emerged from the sea.

"What?!," she snapped, sounding annoyed.

"What?!," said Venus. "Take a look around!"

"What are you doing in these waters?"
"I am here for my great-granddaughter," said Venus. "These people are under my protection so kindly call off the killer mermaids!"

"A Daughter of Venus?," Ursula sneered.

"From the book," added Merlin.

This seemed to have an immediate effect on Ursula. "The girl from the book?"

"Yes and I know you would hate to make such an enemy," said Venus.

The sea goddess disappeared along with the hostile mermaids.

"Was that it?," asked Emma.

"Thank you would suffice," said Venus.

Belle approached. "That sea goddess... She just backed off because you said it was about Beatrice?"

"And you're welcome," said Venus.

"Even gods have to be careful, darling," said Merlin.

"What now?," asked David.

"Now we use our time wisely," said Merlin. He waved his hand over the deck, a table materialized and on top of it was a map of Neverland.

"Where did you get that?," asked Gold.

"Belle brought it," said Merlin.

"It was with the mess that was in the library when I first looked inside. I had thought about having it framed for the children's room..."

"Which would actually be pretty creepy," said Emma.

"This is actually pretty accurate," said Neal.

"How long since you left?," asked Merlin.

"Maybe twenty years..." he shrugged. "You think Pan will have changed things?"

"Oh, but he's a boy and boys never change," said Merlin. "Twenty years in a land where time has stopped? I'd say we're in good shape."

"Except that we are dealing with Pan," Hook added from behind the wheel of the ship.

"Always nice to have contributions from the peanut gallery..." said Merlin.

Belle turned. "You've fought him," she said. "What would you do?"

Hook looked stunned. "You're asking me?"

"Yes, you're asking him?," Gold added.
"I'll listen to what anyone has to say if it will get my daughter back," said Belle. She motioned at the table and the map.

Hook approached. "Take the Jolly Roger up the river and attack Pan's camp from there."

"Assuming that's where he's keeping her," said David.

"That's not bad, pirate," said Merlin. He looked up at Hook. "Though, you do know, if you are trying to trick us, you will die."

Hook shrugged. "I would be disappointed with anything less."

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**Before**

Gold led Belle from the entrance to the inn around to the diner.

Was she real? Truly, he wanted to reach out and touch her the moment he saw her at the inn, but was grateful for whatever self-control kept him from grabbing her.

Scent. He couldn't be imagining that. Roses?

She looked back at him strangely.

He had been sniffing. Instead of being the man who grabbed the woman he just met, he was the one who sniffed her like a bloodhound.

"My apologies," he said. "I think I recognized your perfume from someone I used to know."

Belle smiled sweetly. "No perfume. Just soap. Well, rose scented."

"Ah, yes." He glanced at her hands. No wedding band, no rings of any kind. Was there a husband? Was there a father to go with this mysterious daughter? Someone from this land? Gods only knew what memories Regina had given her, at least she didn't have some horrifying personality to go with them.

Belle looked through the window of the diner.

"Here we are," said Gold, opening the door.

"And there she is," said Belle.

Gold looked to where Belle had motioned. Mr. Booth was sitting with Henry and a girl turned around to look at him as everyone else in the diner turned away as usual. Strange that she had immediately gravitated towards those two. She turned back as he and Belle made their way over.

"Beatrice..." said Belle. "August, what are you doing here?"

"I write here."

He looked nervous. As well he should have. "You know Mr. Booth?," Gold asked politely.

He was going to turn him back to wood.

"Oh, yes, we're old friends," said Belle.

"How nice," Gold remarked. Yes, definitely a return to puppet form was definitely in the
immediate future. He decided to turn to the girl. "And this must be your girl."

"Yeah, here she is. The elusive Beatrice," Belle said.

He noticed the girl's eyes were on him as his were on her. She was fortunate to take after her mother. Dark brown hair, glasses...

The eyes behind the glasses were brown.

Unless he was very much mistaken, they were his.

His.

How could that be? He hadn't seen her since she left for Maurice's. Some curse? Some spell? How was he going to keep from beating that oaf half to death again?

Her wrists were covered in bandages. Beatrice tugged the sleeves down at his first glance.

"Well, Miss French, now that you're reunited with your daughter, I suppose I should be leaving you," he said. Not that he wanted to, but he was fairly certain that even a cursed Belle would question why a strange old man was so curious about her and her daughter.

"Thank you for your help," said Belle.

"Not at all. If you need anything while you're here, you can find me at my shop." He turned to August now, making the look in his eyes only for him. "Mr. Booth knows where it is. I believe I'll be seeing him there later."

"Right," said August, seeming to dread the prospect as much as Gold wanted him to.

He nodded and gave the girl one last look. She was still eyeing him.

He left Granny's.

Gods, she had to be his. He didn't think he could bear it if she wasn't.

Now

The Martha Jones Eleventh Doctor fanfiction suffered some setbacks.

Like was she supposed to just hang around with River there? She had already listened about Rose for a season, that didn't seem fair. Then of course where was Mickey? How had those two even gotten married?

So, she had decided to go another route. There was a girl in a town in Maine which just happened to be full of fairy tale characters, most of whom despised her so when the TARDIS landed in her backyard she ran away with the Doctor.

Tenth Doctor.

No Eleven.

Ten.

Yeah, Tenth. It's right after The Runaway Bride. So, they go off and...
And then the girl's father casts a curse that threatens to destroy the entire universe in order to find her.

This so wasn't working.

Beatrice heard Lost Boys in the distance. She put her things back in her messenger bag just in case she had to move.

Then she screeched as she noticed her creepy grandfather hovering in front of her.

"Nobody likes a spoil sport, Beatrice."

"Nobody likes a flying creep."

"If you won't play, how can we ever get to know each other?"

"I don't want to get to know you. What do you even want with me?"

"Neverland is dying, Beatrice."

"Dying?"

"This island. Can't you feel it?"

Beatrice looked around. "No."

"It needs new magic. Your magic."

"Sorry, no."

"No?" Pan seemed surprised.

"This place sucks. I say let it burn."

"You can have anything you want here. No grown-ups, no rules, no one telling you what to do."

"I happen to like my parents and a lot better than you."

Pan scoffed. He landed on a branch on the opposite tree. "Your father?"

"Guy who's going to mop the floor with you?"

"How can you have such faith in a man who abandoned both his children?"

"He never abandoned me. He didn't know."

"He didn't care. Don't you understand? Baelfire is his real child. The one he loves. You're just the bastard conceived while he rutted around with the maid."

Beatrice paused. "You need something from me."

"I just said that."

"Not just that, you need me to do it because if you didn't, you would have done it already. That's why you're trying this whole your parents don't love you routine and maybe that works on the rest of these people, but I'm not stupid."
Pan scowled. "It's time to play."

"Not playing."

The branch broke from under Beatrice. Other branches broke her fall and she grabbed onto one, but soon she was hanging just above the Lost Boys and kicked one in the face as he tried to grab her.

"See, Beatrice, I make the game rules in Neverland," said Pan.

"Yeah, I get it. You're Seneca Crane. Go eat some nightberries."

"What?," asked Pan.

"I am so sick of no one getting my references..." said Beatrice, kicking another Lost Boy.

"Pan gets what he wants," said one of the taller boys, with a dirty face and dark blond hair. He yanked Beatrice down and to the ground.

"Very good, Felix," said Pan.

Beatrice elbowed him as he fought her.

"No point in fighting us, girl," he said in a monotone voice.

Beatrice turned and raised a free hand, launching Felix backwards into a tree trunk. The other boys headed towards her and she launched enough fireballs to clear some room while she ran.

At which time, she found herself on the edge of a cliff overlooking the ocean.

"Awesome..." she muttered.

Then she heard the rattle and whooping of the Lost Boys in the jungle. She glanced behind her to see their torches were definitely coming towards her. This left Beatrice with two not great options.

So she jumped.

If she lived, her mother was going to kill her for this.

It was really hard to swim after jumping off a cliff. Beatrice hit the water hard and all at once it threatened to consume her.

Beatrice looked up as she appeared to be saved by a mermaid.

Coughing as she came ashore, the mermaid sided up to her, all smiles.

"Thank you," said Beatrice.

The mermaid just nodded.

"No, really, thank you."

She grinned sheepishly.

"Oh, God," said Beatrice. She took off her messenger bag and spread out the contents to dry them on the sand. The mermaid handled some of the objects curiously.
"My iPhone, not my iPhone!" She held up the object to the befuddled mermaid. "Seriously, how many of these am I going to lose to magic? My whole plan was to lock myself in a cave or treehouse and watch Doctor Who until my parents come!"

The mermaid continued to look confused. Beatrice buried the iPhone in the sand.

"I know it looks weird and I think you're supposed to use rice and I'll probably get sand in the dock connector, but what have I got to lose at this point?"

Beatrice realized the mermaid had said absolutely nothing to her.

And that her hair was red.

"This might seem weird, but is your name Ariel?"

The mermaid's jaw dropped and she looked at Beatrice in a state of wonderment.

"I had a feeling," said Beatrice. "Did you happen to give your voice to a sea witch?"

Ariel did some hand gestures that indicated it was more complicated than that.

"Okay, so, I don't have a specific spell for this, but I am pretty magical and I have seen your movie about a hundred times so..." Beatrice closed her eyes and tried to imagine putting Ariel's voice back which was hopefully a thing. She fell back to the film for magic words, settling on movie Ariel's solo as she gave her voice to Ursula.

"Thank you, thank you," a bright bubbly voice stopped her. "I don't know what to say."

"Well, you saved my life, so..."

"What's your name?"

"Beatrice."

"Beatrice." She smiled. "Sorry to point this out, but you don't see a lot of girls in Neverland. Well, ones with legs."

"I'm trying not to stay."

"How did you get here?"

"I was trying to be the hero." She looked at Ariel. "What about you? How did you get here?"

Ariel shrugged. "The mermaids in the Enchanted Forest out-swam the Curse and came here."

"Really? Nowhere else you could go?"

"It didn't used to be so bad."

"Yeah, this constant nighttime thing sucks. What is that about?"

"Well, there are rumors that Pan's power isn't what it once was and he's dying. Were you playing with the Lost Boys?"

Beatrice snorted. "More like they are trying to capture me for reasons I have yet to figure out."

"Oh. Well, what are you going to do?"
"Well, I could always go live under the sea since everything’s better down where it's wetter."

Ariel wrinkled her nose at Beatrice. "What?"

"Do you know a hot crustacean band?"

Beatrice shook her head. "Never mind. Who took your voice?"

"The Evil Queen."

Beatrice nodded. "Yeah, that figures."

"You know her?"

"She's my half-brother's son's adopted mother. Also, my dad used to date her mom. Obviously, we're very close."

"Oh," said Ariel.

"That was a joke."

---

**Before**

Gold had passed almost the whole evening with Belle on the porch of the inn. Save for one interruption by Granny reminding Gold that she had just paid the rent, it had been the nicest evening that he had ever spent in Storybrooke. Sitting next to Belle, listening to her accent. She could have told him any tripe in that voice of hers and he would have begged for more, that she was intelligent had always been a bonus and to hear about Beatrice was perfection. Belle spoke proudly of all her accomplishments, then drifted back into melancholy when she lamented the girl's state.

As he got in his pajamas back at his great, empty, pink house he wondered how he could tell Belle the truth when she thought it was all some great delusion. To confirm such a thing would probably send her screaming back to New York and he couldn't have that. Beatrice knew the truth. He supposed August had given her the broad strokes, but that powder and that trick with her grandmother’s pendant indicated she knew she had some sort of magic. Being cut off from the Dark One's powers, Gold couldn't sense it on his own, but the evidence was there.

True Love, carried over from their old land.

As he finally got in his bed, the phone rang. That alarmed him. People were afraid to call him in the day, no one dared to call him at this hour, almost midnight? He picked up the phone off the bedside table.

"Hello?"

"Mr. Gold?"

"Be- Miss French."

"I am so sorry to disturb you, I hope you weren't sleeping."

"No, no," said Gold. "Not at all."

"I just, uh, sort of need a lawyer."
"Has Mayor Mills done something?" She was quickly moving back up to the top of his list of people to kill. The rankings kept changing between her, Moe French and August. Mother Superior was on it as a maybe since he didn't know the specifics yet, but if he found her in a dark alley before he knew for certain he was willing to take the chance.

"No, it's Beatrice. She, uh, burned the sheriff's car."

Well.

That was unexpected.

"Just give me a few minutes to dress, Miss French," said Gold. "I will meet you outside the sheriff's station."

"Really?"

"I'll be right there."

He met Belle outside, then went in. Sheriff Swan had been quick to back down so he left with Belle and Beatrice, offering to walk them back to the inn.

"What were you thinking?!," said Belle.

"She was leaving town!," said Beatrice.

"How does that justify burning her car? It's not any of your business!"

"Yes, it is, because if she leaves town, we're all screwed. Everyone, but especially me not that anyone gives a-" Beatrice glanced up at Gold. "Forget I-"

"Your mother filled me in," said Gold.

"Great," muttered Beatrice. "She is being a crappy savior right now, somebody had to do something and we just established that I am expendable."

"You're not expendable," Gold said before he thought.

She was looking at him again.

"How much trouble is she in?," asked Belle.

"I'll talk to the District Attorney first thing," said Gold.

"Will the Mayor know?" Belle sounded anxious.

"Oh, she'll know," said Gold. "Not that there's a great deal she can do. There are limits to even her power. I can exert my influence. I'll come find you after I've spoken to the D.A."

They had arrived at the inn.

Belle sighed in exasperation and put on another one of her smiles. "Thank you again, Mr. Gold. I don't know what I would have done without your help."

"You are welcome any time," said Gold. He looked back at Beatrice who stood with her arms crossed. "What made you set the fire?"

"I just said-"
"That was your motive, but you could have done anything. What made you set the fire in particular?"

"It's hard to leave town without a car, I don't know anything about cars so... arson was the answer."

They said good night. Gold began back to his car.

Arson was the answer.

Gods, he had that coming.

Now

Beatrice awoke. Ariel sprang from the water as the sound of a conch shell filled the air.

"What's that?" asked Beatrice.

"A ship," said Ariel. "A ship just appeared in Neverland. That was Pan's lookout."

"A ship?" asked Beatrice. "Is that normal?"

"No ships have come to Neverland for a very long time."

Beatrice stood on the shore, trying to get a better vantage point. All she could see was a speck on the ocean.

"I think I might know who that is..." said Beatrice.

Ariel looked back. "Do you think it's your family?"

"Who else would it be? I mean, Captain Hook, but I know that guy and he's not coming..."

From nearby, Beatrice heard the unmistakable sound of Lost Boys.

"That's not good..." said Ariel.

"No, I think they figured out the beach," said Beatrice, collecting her things. "I'm going to have to move."

"What about your family?"

"Well, I can't swim to them."

"But how will they know where to find you?"

Beatrice looked to the ship as she put her messenger bag over her shoulder.

"You go."

"What?"

"You go tell them I'm here and I'm going to hide myself away and wait for them. Belle and Rumplestiltskin."

"Rumplestiltskin?" Ariel asked in alarm.
"God, you live underwater and you've heard of him?"

"Beatrice, you seem nice, but the last time I met with a dark magician, it didn't go well."

"Do you want legs? Do you want to find Eric?"

"More than anything."

"I'm about ninety percent sure he can do that."

"Ninety?!"

"Look, just go or don't. I don't have time to make you do anything. If you do go, Doctor Donna TARDIS."

"What?," Ariel asked as Beatrice ran away.

"Hey," said Mary Margaret.

"Hey," Belle replied.

Mary Margaret sat down next to her. "How are you doing?"

"Awful."

Mary Margaret smiled bravely. "We'll find her."

Belle looked across at Gold. "There's something Rumple's not telling me."

"Maybe he just wants to protect you."

"That's what I'm afraid of." She looked back at her phone.

"Why do you keep doing that?," asked Mary Margaret.

Belle handed it to her.

"I love you, Mommy," Mary Margaret read.

"Henry said she texted something before she went with the Shadow. That was it," said Belle. "She was afraid to come here, afraid of what Pan might do and that was the last thing she wrote me."

"It won't be the last thing," Mary Margaret promised as she hugged her friend.

"What's that?," asked Emma.

They turned. Belle ran to the side of the ship seeing a redhead bob up in the distance and coming closer.

"It's another one," Hook sneered.

Gold and Merlin both raised their hands. David manned the cannon.

"Could we just stop it with the fireballs for a minute?," asked Venus.
"She's calling someone," said David.

Ariel finally made her way up to the side of the ship. "Belle and Rumplestiltskin?"

"Yes?," asked Belle.

Ariel smiled. "You're Beatrice's mom."

Gold approached. "Where is she?"

"And you're Rumplestiltskin..." Ariel said nervously. "You're more... handsome than they said."

Gold rolled his eyes as Emma coughed. Mary Margaret made her way over.

"Ariel?"

"Snow White!," Ariel exclaimed. "What are you doing here?!"

"I'm sorry, I can't do this," said Merlin.

He waved his hand and Ariel appeared on the deck.

"Sorry, darling," said Merlin. "I get seasick."

"You get seasick?" asked Hook.

"I hate that rat bastard Pan..." muttered Merlin.

"There are a lot of you..." said Ariel.

"Right," said Mary Margaret. "This is my husband, David and our daughter, Emma..." Ariel smiled politely as the introductions continued. "This is Rumplestiltskin's son, Neal who is also our grandson's father and Belle's father, Merlin and her grandmother, Venus and Hook who is..."

"A cowardly pirate," said Gold.

Emma shook her head at Ariel. "Yeah, don't bother trying to follow it. My kid made a chart but he keeps having to redo it because he keeps running out of room on the paper."

"Ariel," said Belle, "do you know where Beatrice is?"

"Not exactly. She was on the beach, but the Lost Boys found her and she had to make a run for it."

"Beatrice alone against an army of Lost Boys?," asked David. "I don't like those odds."

"As always your contributions are invaluable..." said Merlin.

"So you know nothing," said Gold. "More than that, how do I even know you've actually seen Beatrice?"

"Ariel wouldn't lie," said Mary Margaret.

"Because no one's ever deceived you, dearie..."

Ariel struggled. "Doctor... She said something about a doctor?"
Belle looked at Gold plaintively.

"Yeah, that sounds like Bea," said Neal.

"Did she say what her plan is?," asked Belle.

"Just that she was going to hide."

"This changes nothing," said Hook.

"The whole plan is based on her being held by Pan," said Mary Margaret. "She's not with Pan. If we can just find her, we can leave."

"Do you think Pan will make it that simple?," asked Hook.

"He's going to have to," said Merlin.

"Where's that map?," asked Belle.

Neal got it from the table and brought it to Belle who held it in front of Ariel.

"We were there at Mermaid Cove," said Ariel.

Mary Margaret and David stared at the map now.

"She would go through there," said Mary Margaret.

David looked at Neal. "Is there anything around there that might interest her?"

"What? Like a Starbucks?," asked Emma.

"It's jungle," said Neal.

"We are wasting time," said Gold.

"Watch it, sunshine," cautioned Merlin.

"She is alone. She has absolutely no survival skills-"

"Well, neither did I when I started," said Mary Margaret.

"I am sure you all have good intentions-"

"Dark One," said Merlin.

Gold looked over to see Merlin holding something inside his jacket. No one else could see.

He was using it.

"You will not do anything stupid like running off on your own," Merlin said casually, then let go of the dagger.

"Merlin's right," said Belle, coming to squeeze his hand. "We're going to find her together."

Beatrice's trek back into the jungle didn't last too long. All too soon she was surrounded by Lost Boys and Pan's insufferable smirk.
"There's no running, Beatrice," said Pan. "Nowhere to hide. Nowhere to go. Time to come and play."

"I'm not playing," she said.

"Going to toss down another of daddy's potions?"

"No."

She broke free of Felix's grasp and ran. Once she had enough distance, she stopped and stamped her foot covering the jungle floor in a sheet of ice. The Lost Boys slipped and fell, groaning.

"Is that what you want to play?," asked Pan. "Ice skating?"

"I'm not playing," Beatrice growled. She rolled her hands, conjuring a snowball, tossing it in the air. The Lost Boys watched as snow blanketed the jungle. Felix launched back towards her and a wall of jagged icicles stopped him.

Beatrice looked at Pan. He didn't seem to be enjoying this so she decided to go for broke. An icy pedestal rose beneath her and soon came to form the center of an ice palace.

"And thank you, Great Grandma for your very helpful journal."

"It's not enough, Beatrice!," Pan taunted from outside.

"Great Grandma wasn't done yet," Beatrice huffed. She walked on the balcony. Pan was smirking and hovering.

Beatrice waved her hand. Pan's smirk finally disappeared as an ice monster emerged from the frozen ground. The Lost Boys went screaming. Pan stared as icy spikes grew from the creature.

"His name is Marshmallow," said Beatrice. "He wants to play."

"Go away," roared the monster as he swatted Pan onto the ground.

Beatrice shut the ice doors and walked back inside. She took out her journal.

*Travel Tip: Bring your own ice monster.*

---

**Before**

The purple smoke cleared. Gold felt the magic in the air as if it were fizzing after all this time without it.

"Okay, where did the freaky smoke go?"

He looked down to Beatrice. She was keeping her distance from him, still holding on to the edge of the well.

"Magic."

"Yeah, but where did it go? It's not like just going to float down the eastern seaboard, is it?"

"It's magic."

She threw her hands up. "That is not an answer!"
He held his hand out.

"What is that?," she asked.

"I'm holding my hand out."

"Okay..."

"So I can walk you back down to the car and we can go to your mother."

Beatrice grimaced and took his hand. He began leading her carefully back down the path they had come up.

"Okay, so that dropping the potion-"

"True Love."

She paused. "What?"

"The potion was True Love. I bottled it using hair from Snow White and Prince Charming."

"So that's a thing..." Beatrice remarked. "Yeah, but what did you need the magic smoke cloud for?"

"This is a Land Without Magic. I just brought it."

"Um, if there was no magic here, what have I been doing? Also, Maleficent?"

"It's magic."

"Yes, but you just said there was no magic up until like five minutes ago! Your explanation seems to be there isn't magic except when there is which sucks as an explanation!"

Gold sighed and helped her back in the Cadillac. He came around and got in the driver's seat.

"You don't believe I'm your father, do you?," asked Gold.

"Is that a thing in the Enchanted Forest? Somebody says something, someone immediately believes it?"

"That was a recurring theme."

"Well, I'm not from the Enchanted Forest."

"Then how did you use magic?"

He glanced over. Despite being unable to see him, she was scowling at him.

"Really? That's how you want to do this? Fine. I'm giving you one in two odds."

"One in two? Really?" That didn't seem so bad.

"I mean, either you are or you aren't, so one in two."

It wasn't so great either. He turned his attention back to the road.

"What did you mean 'This must be how Luke Skywalker felt?," he asked.
Now

"Sorry, but Beatrice seemed to think you could help me."

Gold turned to the mermaid. She flipped her fin as she sat on her perch on a crate. "And why would she say that?"

"She said if I brought you the message, you could help me get legs and find my prince."

"In case you can't tell, I'm in the middle of something, dearie."

"I saved her life."

"Aren't you the Queen's little project?"

"I guess-"

"How is it you have a voice?"

"Beatrice restored it."

"Then I'd say she paid for her life."

"I brought her message."

"Which was worthless."

Emma walked over and pulled on her leather jacket. "Did anyone notice it got really cold around here?"

"I'm afraid we have bit of a problem coming ashore," said Hook.

The ship lurched suddenly. It had stopped short of the shore, running into a blanket of ice.

Belle came up from below deck. "What's going on?"

"Beatrice has done something. The question is why," said Gold.

Belle looked out to the expanse of ice.

"She can do all this?"

"She's talented," Gold said in what he thought was the biggest understatement he had ever made about Beatrice.

"Wait," said Emma, "Beatrice has magical ice powers now?"

"Yes," said Merlin.

"She's right, you guys lay too much on her," said Emma.

"She ought to be easier to follow," said Venus.

"Yeah, we'll just follow the huge trail of ice," said Mary Margaret, eyes still in astonishment.

David and Neal dropped a ladder and experimentally poked the ice.
"Rumplestiltskin," said Ariel.

Gold sighed. He waved his hand, giving her legs.

"Thank-"

"Don't thank me yet," said Gold. "These are on a condition. You get to watch the pirate. That's my price."

"And Eric?"

"You get your prince when I get my princess," said Gold. "Otherwise, it's back to the sea for you, dearie."

"Rumple," said Belle.

"I'm not doing anyone any favors until Beatrice is safely in your arms," said Gold.

He walked away.

"It's alright," Ariel said cheerfully. "I'll find Eric. All I have to do is guard a dangerous pirate and help rescue your daughter from an evil somewhat omnipotent manchild."

"Did you want clothes?," asked Belle.

"Oh," said Ariel. "Is that why I'm cold?"
Emma grimaced. It was cold. She was cold. She was so cold that she wished she could still feel cold as they trekked from the Jolly Roger and deeper into Neverland.

"Emma, are you alright?" asked Mary Margaret.

"I'm going to do it."

"Are you sure?" asked David.

"I was sure when my butt froze." She hurried up the line. "Gold!"

Gold turned. "Did you want something, dearie?"

"You know what I want."

"Do I? Because I recall earlier when you said, 'No, Gold, I don't need any more favors from you.'"

Emma rolled her eyes.

"Well?" asked Gold.

"I need a coat."

"And what can I expect in return?" asked Gold.

Emma's jaw dropped. "Are you kidding me? You didn't make anyone else do this!"

"They all took it when I offered."

Emma looked around. Everyone else, including her own parents, was outfitted in extremely warm looking parkas. Gold's whole dragon hide look was augmented by some black and grey fur. Belle seemed to have gotten the best one fur-lined leather to go with the leather outfit with inexplicable
short shorts that seemed to come from nowhere. Emma hadn't wanted to take anything...

And she also liked how her red leather looked.

"Papa..." groaned Neal.

"So, dearie, what can I expect in return?"

"How about I'm the mother of your grandson and I broke the Curse?"

"Which reunited you with your family."

"Gold!," shouted Emma. "I'm helping rescue your daughter!"

"Which is why I offered everyone else coats."

"And because Belle made you," added Venus.

"Rumple..." said Belle.

Gold wasn't tired of the game yet. "No, no, dearie, you were warm enough in your jacket..."

Emma felt a coat land on her shoulders. She looked over to see Merlin.

"Thanks," said Emma.

Gold glared at Merlin and walked away.

"Don't mind him," said Merlin. "These little games keep his mind from his existential crises which is something I do believe I would like to avoid this trip."

Emma looked at Merlin. "What does Peter Pan want with Beatrice?"

"This land is his tomb and he just doesn't know when to lie down and die already. He was a miserable sod before and the years have only made him more of one."

"Do you have a plan?"

"I'm hopeful that a solution will present itself." He looked to Emma to find her expression of disbelief. "I am open to suggestions, Savior."

"I just thought between you and Gold there would be a plan," said Emma.

"Merlin..." a drawling voice taunted.

They froze. Merlin turned slowly to Felix.


"Pan welcomes you to Neverland."

"I'm sure he does," said Gold.

"That is unless you're here for the girl," said Felix.

"Well, it's not because of your exciting nightlife," said Merlin.

"Yeah, the place seems to have cooled off," said Neal.
"Yes, it is a bit brisk out," said Merlin.

"If you wish to take the girl, you and Pan will be enemies," said Felix.

"Then nothing has changed," said Gold.

"Pan thought you might say that."

They suddenly found themselves surrounded by Lost Boys. They drew swords. Mary Margaret got out her bow.

The Lost Boys fell in, attacking from all sides. David fought against one with swords, as Hook went up against Felix.

One of them lunged for Ariel and soon found that the mermaid's weapon of choice was in fact a fork. As he howled in pain, Emma turned to share his surprise.

"Seriously?!!"

"Emma, look out!," shouted Neal, pushing her out of the way of an arrow.

Mary Margaret returned fire.

"That's dreamshade, love," Hook explained. "Don't want to be stuck with that, though..."

Emma rolled her eyes at Hook. Gold and Merlin pushed back the remaining Lost Boys with waves of magic. As they scattered to the winds, Gold waved his hand smacking the slowest escapee against a tree. The tree's vines wrapped around the boy as Gold approached him.

"Now, dearie, I'm going to ask you some questions and you are going to answer me and if I don't like the answer, well... that would be bad for you."

"Oh, here we go," said Hook.

"Rumple-"

"Papa, please," said Neal.

"What has Pan done with Beatrice?," asked Gold.

The boy seemed relieved to answer that. "Pan doesn't have her!"

Gold twisted his hand causing the boy to gasp for breath.

"You can't do this, Gold," said David.

Gold seemed to ignore the pleading. "Remember how I mentioned if I didn't like your answer, dearie?"

"It's true!," the boy gasped. "Pan doesn't have her! She froze the island and built an ice palace!"

"An ice palace?," asked Belle.

The boy nodded at Belle. "She's locked in there! Pan can't get past her magic!"

Gold twisted his hand again.
"Pan can't get past her magic?," asked Merlin.

The boy shook his head.

"Rumple, please," said Belle.

Merlin waved his hand and the boy disappeared. Gold turned at him in anger.

"What do you think you're doing?"

Merlin shrugged. "You were done with the boy."

"No, I wasn't."

"He was telling the truth, Rumple," said Belle.

"I sincerely doubt it," Gold sneered.

Merlin motioned. "Look around you, sunshine, do you think if Pan could stop Beatrice's magic we would be standing at the bloody North Pole?"

"Pan is far too powerful-"

"You keep on saying that, sunshine, yet I don't see how that's so."

"If you dare to interfere with my getting my daughter-"

"Stop it!," shouted Belle. "You both want the same thing, there's no need to argue about it."

"And what do you suggest?," Gold asked.

Belle looked at Merlin. "This ice palace. Does it seem plausible?"

"Ice Princess, Ice Palace, why not?," asked Merlin.

"Except this is not the Far North Kingdom, is it?," asked Gold.

"No! It's Neverland, a place that runs on belief. For a thing to exist, you must only wish it so. Do you doubt she can manage that?"

Belle looked at Gold. "I think he's right." She bent down and picked her satchel up off the ground. "We go find the ice palace."

"If there even is one..." said Gold.

"Oh, you mean like that one?," asked Hook.

They looked to see Hook holding a telescope with his good hand.

"Oh, what a nice whatsit," said Ariel.

Belle walked over and took the telescope from Hook. Looking through, she saw the turrets of the promised ice palace.

"This way," said Belle, marching off.

Merlin shrugged at Gold, then followed.
Emma turned to Neal. "Is Belle in charge now?"

"I guess."

"What is she wearing?" Emma hissed. "Who wears tights and leather shorts?"

"What makes you think I know?"

---

**Sixteen Years Ago**

Belle steadied herself.

It was her final evaluation by Doctor DeAngelis. If everything went well, she would be released from the hospital in the morning.

She wouldn't be released to much. Her lawyer, Kenya, was going to help her find a small apartment until the lawsuit with Storybrooke was settled. August, her only friend, had promised to help as well. She just had to get out of the hospital.

"Miss French."

She looked up to see a young man with glasses.

"John Darling, Social Services."

"Social Services?"

"Yes, I'm here to discuss the options available to you regarding your child."

He held out several brochures about adoption, warm pictures of perfect families on them.

Belle didn't want to touch them.

She shook her head. "I'm sorry you're wasting your time. I'm keeping my baby."

"Are you sure?" asked John. "Let me put it to you this way, perhaps it's the correct decision for you, but what about the child? You have no family, no means of supporting yourself, no education to speak of."

"I'll get them," said Belle. She protectively covered her belly with her arms.

"Miss French, the state can remove a child from the care of an unfit mother."

Belle shook her head. "I am not unfit."

"Miss French, you're a patient at a mental ward who doesn't even remember who the father of her child is."

"Belle," called the nurse, "don't be late for your appointment. Doctor DeAngelis is waiting."

Belle brushed past the man and headed down the hall.

"I made tea," said Doctor DeAngelis. "And I brought something special in celebration of our last session. Ricotta pie."

Belle watched as Doctor DeAngelis cut the pie.
"My grandmother's recipe. She was from the old country."

"The old country?," asked Belle.

"Palermo in Sicily. She got sent to America when she was fifteen with five bucks. She worked in my grandfather's bakery, raised five kids and made Sunday dinner every week including the day before she died." The doctor handed her a plate.

"She sounds remarkable," said Belle.

"Most people who have been inpatients for a long time are fearful about returning to the real world. There are a number of factors, just the process of being institutionalized among them, but in your case, Belle, I don't think you should worry. If my nana could do it, so can you."

Belle smiled. "It is a delicious pie."

"You are worried, though."

Belle hesitated.

"It's okay, Belle. I'm not going to lock you up for being worried mostly because it's a waste of our time."

"My memory."

The doctor nodded.

"You keep saying it will come back and I just don't know. I haven't remembered much of anything. Just my father and those nuns..."

"There's nothing wrong with you organically. Whatever happened to you is in that head of yours. We could try hypnosis again..."

Belle scoffed. "For all the good it did me. My head is so full of stories all I spoke of were fairy tales."

Doctor DeAngelis shrugged. "They were deeply embedded in your subconscious. I did like the one about the beast. It reminded me of that great G.K. Chesterton quote."

"The what?"

"He was an English writer among other things. He wrote that the great lesson of Beauty and the Beast was 'that a thing must be loved before it is lovable.'"

Belle smiled. "I like that."

The doctor frowned. "Are you sure there was nothing more to that story?"

"What? I'm really Belle?"

"Not exactly, but there must be a reason your subconscious coded in that particular language." She shrugged. "That's not important, though. Your future with your child is."

Now
Belle rolled over. She had a decent rest. It was no fault of Rumple's. The tent he had conjured would have been fit for the Sultan of Agrabah, but her thoughts stuck on Beatrice. They had spent the day before hiking to a vantage point, only to discover the existence of the ice palace and that it was still a good hike away.

Waking up, Belle found a doll made of straw with a little blue and white jacket. She also found she was alone.

Belle took the doll and ventured outside. Gold was at the campfire and appeared to be boiling a kettle.

"Hey," said Belle.

He glanced up. "Hey. I was just making tea."

Belle sat next to him on the log in front of the campfire.

"I'll wake the others in a moment," said Gold.

"Let them rest a little longer."

"They're not here to rest," said Gold.

"Rumple, they-"

"Where did you get that?," asked Gold, pointing at the doll.

"I found it in the tent-"

Gold was on his feet. "Come on out, dearie."

"Rumple, who are you talking to?," asked Belle.

"That would be me, lass."

Belle looked up to see a boy that had appeared out of nowhere.

"Well, you've done well for yourself, haven't you?," said Pan looking at Gold.

"Where's Beatrice?," demanded Belle.

"Oh, your daughter. She's safe in her ice palace for now, she doesn't like to play much. I'll soon cure her of that."

Belle stepped forward. She felt Gold holding her back.

"If you hurt her, I will-"

"What? Throw a book at me?" He arched an eyebrow at Belle. "Face it. There's nothing you can do to help her."

"We'll see about that, dearie."

"I've come here to make an offer. Leave this island now and you and your friends can live. You'll still have your precious Baelfire and Belle seems fertile enough. You could start over with a new child. Perhaps you could actually get it right for once."
Gold had to hold Belle tighter.

"You are disgusting," Belle sneered. "That's all you are, a disgusting little boy."

Pan looked at Gold. "Maybe you want to have her reconsider."

"I'm not making any deals, dearie."

Pan laughed. "You know you can't stop me. You don't have the guts to do what needs to be done. You never have."

Pan vanished. Gold released Belle.

"What did he mean?," asked Belle.

Gold shrugged.

Beatrice wondered why enchanted ice palaces couldn't come with enchanted televisions with enchanted Apple TVs. Also, enchanted satellite dishes just in case she was in Neverland too long and missed the new Doctor Who episodes at the end of March.

What if time ran differently in this universe and she had already missed it?

Her parents really needed to hurry up.

Just as she was about to start writing down theories for the new companion mystery, Beatrice heard someone screaming. She cautiously went to one of the icy windows and looked down onto the frozen tundra.

There was a little boy in pajamas. She hadn't seen them with the rest of the Lost Boys, she supposed maybe he was too young to go around trying to capture her.

Though they did seem amused enough trying to hunt him down. Of course they were. She was in freaking Lord of the Flies.

Beatrice groaned and materialized an ice staircase.

She was going to regret this.

Once she got down, she waved her hand to send the staircase crashing to the ground and headed in the direction of the hunt.

Beatrice spotted the boy and then the hunters.

"Come to play?," asked Felix.

She really didn't like Felix. She kind of wished she had a better handle on that whole weather thing. Some lightning bolts were definitely in order for that guy.

Beatrice stopped and turned. "You know what, dearie? I'll make an exception for you."

As Felix lunged forward, she waved her hand and encased him in a block of ice. A couple more Lost Boys caught up with him and stared in amazement at their comrade.

"Yeah, you want some more of that?," said Beatrice, thinking this bravado thing was so not her.
It didn't seem to matter to the Lost Boys as they ran off. Beatrice looked to the jungle in pursuit of the little boy.

She was pretty sure her dad would be the one to kill her this time. She could picture it now.

"And why did you go in the jungle after you conjured a perfectly secure ice palace?"

"Well, there was this little kid in the jungle..."

She could picture the unimpressed glare now.

---

**Before**

Belle's mind wandered in the days since she saw Regina at the deposition. The settlement check had been cut and suddenly she had all the money she could ever know what to do with at her disposal.

The problem was that she didn't know what to do with her life. She had her little apartment in Boston, but she wasn't attached to it. It wasn't home.

August had brought her to New York. He said there was something she had to see.

"Watch out," cautioned August, grabbing her wrist as she started in the street. She stepped back just as a taxi went around.

Belle shook her head. "It feels like I should be better at that." She often forgot little things, like green meant go, red meant stop.

"You'll get the hang of it," August promised.

August took her further down the street where Belle found great imposing steps. She looked up to see a huge building, like a palace with three great archways and lion statues flanking either side. Everything Belle had seen since she arrived in New York had been a source of astonishment, thought it shouldn't have been. The mass of people, the great huge buildings. This, though, this was special.

"What is this place?" she asked, looking at August.

"This is the main branch of the New York Public Library."

"A library?" asked Belle, gaping in amazement at the great edifice. "You mean everything in there is books?"

August smiled. "Should we find out?"

Decidedly pregnant, August somehow still managed to beat August up the steps and through the doors. The interior was just as magnificent with great reading rooms. There were chandeliers and murals on the ceilings. Each room seemed to be a new world of books on a particular topic. There was a universe in there.

"How do I get to stay here?"

---

**Now**
After another long day's trek through the jungle, they arrived at the ice palace.

"No doors," said Neal.

"Nor any stairs," Hook remarked. "Your sister's architectural design does leave something to be desired."

"It's the best way to keep someone out," mused Mary Margaret.

"Maybe we can throw a rope up..." said David.

"You can throw that far?," asked Hook.

Venus sighed. "You all say that like one of these two isn't going to magic us a way up there."

Merlin and Gold exchanged glances.

"I've got this one," said Merlin. He waved his hand and a rope ladder appeared.

Belle stepped up. "I'll go first."

"It could be a trap," cautioned Gold.

"Or it could be our daughter, alone and terrified," said Belle. "Come up after me."

Beatrice heard a rustling in the brush.

"Hello?"

She saw a small figure move.

"Um, hi? It's me, not the psychos from the Lost Boys."

Beatrice stepped forward hearing something buzz and seeing a tiny green light underfoot. She bent down to find a toy replica of the Eleventh Doctor's Sonic Screwdriver. She held it up.

"What do you think of bow ties?," she asked. "I think they're cool."

The boy looked out from behind a tree trunk.

"You're going to want this back," said Beatrice.

He carefully stepped forward. Beatrice handed him the toy.

"My name's Beatrice," she said.

"Adi."

"How long have you been here?," asked Beatrice, thinking it couldn't be that long, unlike this hundreds of years crap Neal had talked about.

Adi shrugged.

"Did you see the Christmas special? With the snowmen?"

He frowned. "I saw the one with the trees."
"Okay," said Beatrice. "That is going to make my magical powers much less scary."

Adi looked at her skeptically.

"Look, either you can deal with the Lost Boys or me, a Whovian with magical powers."

"Are you a witch?"

"I don't have a hat. That's something, right?"

Belle got to the top and managed to help herself onto the balcony.

"Beatrice!," she called. "Beatrice!"

She opened the ice doors as Gold came up over the balcony. She rushed inside to find an empty ice palace and a red leather messenger bag.

"She was here," said Belle. She picked up the bag and held it close. "She was here. Why would she leave?"

"I'll find her," promised Gold.

The rest of the crew slowly made their way up.

"She's not here," said Ariel.

"Yes, we had noticed that," said Hook.

"Just because you're a pirate that's no reason to be rude," said Ariel.

"Actually, I think you'll find it is."

"Where's my dad?," asked Neal.

Belle looked behind her. "I could have sworn..."

Merlin sighed. "If you will all excuse me..."

"No!," Belle protested. She stepped closer. "Something is going on. Something Rumple's not telling me. I want to know what now."

Merlin grimaced and held his arm out. "Take my arm. We'll be back momentarily."

They disappeared.

"And are we supposed to just sit here?," asked Neal.

"Do we have a choice?," asked Emma.

"I think I've got a way to stop Pan."

Hook scoffed. "Do you now?"

"Yeah, you can come. Want to go fishing?"

"Fishing?," asked Hook.
Neal went down the ladder, then Hook, then Ariel after him.

"Right, guess I'm going," said Emma.

"Be careful, Emma," said David.

"Yeah, I know, he's a pirate."

"We'll stay here with Venus and wait for the others to get back and hold the palace," said Mary Margaret.

Emma shook her head as she got back on the rope ladder. "I can't believe you guys say that like it's a normal sentence."

_Before_

Belle felt pretty pleased with herself. She had managed the transition to New York and had just been to her first class to get her GED.

She was on track. She could do this.

"Ms. French."

Belle looked up. It was Mr. Darling.

She pulled the stack of books she had with her against her chest. "What are you doing here?"

He shrugged. "I was just wondering if you had given my proposition any more thought."

"No," said Belle. "It was an awful proposition. I'm keeping my baby and that's final."

"What is it you think you can offer your child?"

"I love her," said Belle. "I have money now and I just started a class to get a high school equivalency diploma. From there, I'm going to start college and become a librarian."

"And do you think that's enough? Doesn't your child deserve more?"

Belle frowned and opened the door to her apartment. "Please don't come here again."

She slammed the door shut in his face.

_Now_

Emma looked at the frozen beachhead.

"What are we doing out here?"

"We're going fishing," said Neal.

"Fishing?," asked Ariel.

"Is that a problem for you, love?," asked Hook.

Neal started looking for something. "You guys try to find something to make a spear out of."
"A spear?," asked Hook.

"What are we fishing for?," asked Emma.

"You'll see."

"Right," said Emma, looking for spear pieces. "You know when you do the cryptic thing you sound like your dad."

"I do not sound like my father."

"Yeah, you do."

Hook shrugged. "You do, mate."

"What do you mean cryptic?," Neal asked defensively.

"Having a meaning that is mysterious or obscure," supplied Ariel.

The other three looked at her in astonishment.

"What? You don't have dictionaries on land?"

Emma shook her head. "What makes a spear?"

"This does," said Ariel, bending down to brush some snow off an arrowhead. "The spear's the pointy one, right?"

"Right," said Neal, collecting a conch shell.

"Will this do?," asked Hook, breaking a thin branch off a tree.

"Yeah," said Neal, getting some twine to tie the arrowhead onto the stick.

"What? You're all outdoors-y now?," asked Emma.

"I was in Neverland for a very long time. I know all the tricks," said Neal, casting a glare at Hook.

"Like what?," asked Emma.

Neal passed the spear to Hook. "Like this."

He blew into a conch shell. Suddenly a huge black squid sprang up from the water, breaking some of the ice. Hook threw the spear and it landed in the creature as it beached itself.

Emma looked at Neal with wide eyes. Ariel gasped.

"What did you do that for?!," shouted Ariel.

"I needed squid ink," said Neal. "To save my sister? Remember?"

"Why didn't you just ask?!," said Ariel.

"You can ask?"

"Yes!"
Merlin transported them away and Belle followed him deeper into the jungle floor. Belle looked to Merlin.

"What is this about?"

Merlin silently pulled the velvet pouch from his jacket and revealed the dagger.

Belle shook her head. "Why do you have Rumple's dagger?"

"Because he gave it to me. Because he didn't want to do anything stupid, yet he's managed to get around that like so many other things..." Merlin passed the dagger to Belle.

"What am I supposed to do with this?," asked Belle.

"I would suggest starting by summoning him back. Dark One, I summon thee usually does it."

Belle sighed. "Dark One, I summon thee."

Gold appeared. Glancing from the dagger to Belle, he turned to give Merlin a deadly glare.

"I tried, but you were an idiot," said Merlin.

"Why would you give Merlin your dagger?"

"I have a nasty habit for survival, Belle. The only thing that will defeat Pan is my death. I made a mistake once, choosing power over my child. I won't do the same again."

Belle shook her head. "You're not going to die."

"It's the price for Beatrice's return."

"There has to be another way."

"Belle, there is no other way."

"You don't know that," said Belle. "How could you have possibly found every option?"

"That's just it. There are none," Gold said in exasperation.

"And you don't know that!," said Belle. "And you're not dying!"

She held the dagger out to him.

"Keep it," said Gold.

"I don't want it," said Belle.

Gold walked away from them. Belle looked at Merlin.

"He is a stubborn one."

Belle put the dagger in her satchel. "We'll go back to the palace and we'll meet with the others and make a new plan."

"Belle, they don't have the stomach for what needs to be done."

"Well, let's find out what needs to be done first," Belle snapped.
She turned back to stalk off. Gold looked at Merlin.

"This is what happens when you're stupid," said Merlin.

Beatrice looked around.

"You're lost," said Adi.

"Look, I didn't make this stupid island."

"Oh, Beatrice, I had hoped you would enjoy your time here more."

Beatrice groaned as Pan appeared.

"It's him," Adi said, grabbing her hand.

"I saw what you did to Felix."

"Has he melted yet?" asked Beatrice.

"I thought it best to let him thaw over. You've made a friend."

"Yeah, well, I'm not as into abandoning small children as you are."

"What does that mean?" asked Adi.

"Did the Dark One tell you that?"

"You mean, did my father tell me about his deadbeat dad? Yeah."

"Are you certain Merlin didn't tell you? No great father there, either."

"Yeah, but if we're grading on a curve, he's still way ahead of you and he gave me a birthday present and a Christmas present. Right now you're competing with Moe French for crappiest grandpa."

Beatrice got a flash of something. It was as if Pan were replaced with a man.

"What was that?" asked Adi.

"That was nothing," Pan said a little too vehemently.

"Didn't seem like nothing," said Beatrice.

"The time for games has stopped and you are going to give me what I need."

"So not..." said Beatrice, stepping between Adi and Pan.

"Hey!"

Pan turned. Neal was standing with a bow and arrow. He shot it and the arrow flew at Pan. He caught it.

"Baelfire, you really ought to know better," said Pan.

"Yeah, didn't coat the tip."
A magical field appeared around Pan and he was immobilized.

"What was that?," asked Beatrice.

Emma hurried up. "Yeah, we'll talk about that later. Come on."

"This isn't over, Beatrice," said Pan.

Neal grabbed Beatrice. She found that Ariel and Hook were not far behind.

"What are you doing here?," asked Beatrice. "Also, Ariel, you have legs?"

"What is going on?," asked Adi.

"I'll explain later," said Beatrice.

They arrived back at the base of the ice palace.

"We've got a ladder over here," said Neal.

"Uh, yeah," said Beatrice. She waved her hand and a staircase appeared.

Emma turned to Beatrice. "Really?"

"Yeah, really," said Beatrice, ascending the steps.

They went in the doors to the ice palace.

"Beatrice!," exclaimed Mary Margaret. The woman rushed over and gave her a hug.

Venus was next. "Welcome back, sweetie."

"Are you alright?," asked David.

"Yeah. Neal's plan worked," said Emma.

"Where are my parents?," asked Beatrice.

"They went somewhere with Merlin," said Mary Margaret. "I'm sure they'll be back soon."

"Merlin?," asked Adi. He looked up at Beatrice. "You said you would explain later. It's later."

"Right," said Beatrice. "Guys, this is Adi. So, Snow White, Prince Charming, Ariel, Captain Hook, my great-grandmother, Venus, my brother Neal and Emma."

Adi stared blankly.

"Just pretend it's a Doctor Who episode," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice!," Belle called.

"And here comes Belle from Beauty and the Beast, kid," said Emma.

"Mom!" Beatrice shouted back, heading for the stairs.

She stopped in her tracks and stared at what her mother had on.
"Really?"

"What?," asked Belle.

"That's what you're wearing?"

Belle looked down at her boots and leather shorts. "What?"

"Really?!"

Then Gold came up.

"Seriously, did you join KISS while I was gone?" She looked back at Belle. "And you're the groupie!"

Gold just shook his head at her. Belle grabbed her daughter.

"We're all here, we can leave," said David.

"We're just leaving?," asked Beatrice.

"Did you want to stay?," Emma asked incredulously.

"Beatrice, we came to get you and we're taking you home," said Belle.

"Pan isn't going to give up," said Beatrice.

"You needn't worry about that," said Gold.

"What? I'm just going to stay in a windowless room for the rest of my life?" Beatrice looked at Merlin.

"Well, you must admit, you wouldn't get bored," said Merlin.

"He needs me for something, what is it?"

"He's dying," said Merlin. "His magic is finite, it's reaching its end."

"What does that mean?," asked Neal.

"It means he is not as powerful as he once was."

"Oh, so my ice monster wasn't as great as I thought?," asked Beatrice.

"No, this place runs on belief."

Beatrice paused. "Does Pan have to believe he's a boy in order to use his magic?"

"What do you mean?"

"He was different for a second and I think I know why. If he has to believe he's a boy and Dad's here, Pan gets weaker every second."

Venus stepped up. "She has a point."

Merlin rolled his eyes. "And you're an expert on magical islands, now?"

"I'm an expert on love. Children are by instinct, selfish. They grow into love, some sooner than
others. A parent is meant to be capable of the best kind of love-
"If you're trying to make him a better person, you're wasting your time," said Gold.

"No, I want to remind him how far short he falls of the standard," said Venus. "He is a father, he is a grandfather, make that impossible for him to ignore..."

"And that might be enough," said Merlin.

"See? You should have asked me sooner," said Venus.

Merlin rolled his eyes.

"Pan is too powerful," said Hook.

"Look at the state of this place," said Merlin. "Baelfire thwarted him with squid ink. He's not near as powerful as he thinks he is."

Mary Margaret stepped up to Merlin. "Do you think you can stop him?"

"We're leaving," said Belle.

"Belle," said Mary Margaret, "I know why we came here but you saw what Pan and his shadow did to Storybrooke, what they could still do. Storybrooke's not safe and neither is Beatrice. If we can stop him here, we owe it to everyone."

"Pan and his shadow are two separate entities," cautioned Gold.

"I can catch it," said Neal. "That's how I got out before."

"Belle," said Merlin. "We can do this."

_Before_

Belle awoke as Beatrice cried. She walked to the bassinet and picked her up to cradle her.

"Beatrice, sweetheart, it's alright, you're alright..."

She cried again and there was a knock at the door. Belle hoped it wasn't one of the neighbors coming to tell her she had a baby who cried too much. One had told her as much in the elevator and it was all Belle could do to not slug the woman. Beatrice was just sensitive for some reason, not so much in the day, but at night she could become inconsolable.

Carrying Beatrice, she flicked on the lamp. The baby seemed to calm down as she made her way to the door and looked through the peephole.

It was Mr. Darling.

Balancing the baby, Belle opened the door with the security chain on.

"Mr. Darling, what are you doing here?"

"I was in the neighborhood, Ms. French. I was wondering if you had given any more thought to what I said."

Belle looked down at Beatrice.
"I don't need to give it any more thought."

"Ms. French, if I could just have another word-"

"It's the middle of the night!"

"Please."

Belle nodded and shut the door. She gave Beatrice a kiss on the forehead and put her back in the bassinet.

Belle went to the kitchen and picked the frying pan off the stove.

Mr. Darling fell to the floor as Belle smacked him with the frying pan. He tried to shake it off, looking up at Belle in amazement.

"If you come near me or her again, I am going to call the police," said Belle.

She slammed the door back shut and did up all the locks.

"So," said Merlin, "where's your brother?"

John looked up. "Are you Merlin?"

"Indeed I am."

"Pan didn't say you would be here."

"I am always here," said Merlin.

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**Now**

"I'm not tired," Beatrice complained.

"Somehow I doubt that," Gold said, leading her by the hand to one of the rooms of the ice palace.

"Seriously, what is with the outfit?," asked Beatrice. "I mean, I get that you can't go walking through the jungle in a suit, but did you have to raid Gene Simmons' closet? Do you own jeans? Why not get some face paint?"

"I'm afraid not." He opened a door. "This ought to do."

He waved his hand and a bed appeared. He motioned as Beatrice rolled her eyes to climb on top.

"Are you just going to let everyone else sleep on the floor?"

"It's your ice palace, it's not my fault it's unfurnished, though I may make an exception for Bae."

Beatrice laid down and Gold pulled the covers over her.

"You're going to stay here, aren't you?"

"To watch over you." He waved his hand and a table appeared with a candle.

"Thanks."
"Close your eyes," Gold said softly.

Beatrice did and Gold watched over her, losing track of the time.

The door opened. Gold looked back to see Belle's smile. She walked over and climbed on the bed with Beatrice between her and Gold.

"When Regina had me in her tower, I wondered if I would ever leave, if I would ever see you again and if Beatrice would ever meet you..."

"Belle..." Gold winced.

"She needs you, Rumple," said Belle. "You love her. You could never hurt her. She believes in you. I believe in you."

"Are they asleep?," asked Venus, staring out at Neverland.

"You know how mortals like their rest," said Merlin. He hunted through the foodstuffs for a satisfactory snack and found a pear. "What have you got planned for him?"

Venus looked from the balcony back to Merlin.

"I'm going to do the worst thing you can do to someone," said Venus.

Merlin looked at her questioningly.

"I'm going to make him grow up."

She stopped and turned from her son to the window.

"What can you tell me about Rumplestiltskin's mother?," she asked.
Chapter 51

A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest

"Rumplestiltskin!" Gormlaith went down the stalls. "Rumplestiltskin, where are you?"

The biggest market in the Frontlands was crowded today. Gormlaith had come late to try to get a bargain on things that the vendors didn't want to bother taking back home with them. Usually they took pity on her since they all knew who Malcolm was. Today was harder than usual. Malcolm was gone on a binge and she had even less coin than usual. The fishmonger's wife had taken pity on her and given her some pieces she could make a decent stew with that she had just planned on giving to her dogs. She needed vegetables. Some cream for a chowder would have been nice, but there was no way she had near enough for that. She had been looking at some potatoes when she realized her boy was no longer with her.

"Rumplestiltskin!"

She heard snickers behind her. Gormlaith turned to face their source, some matrons cackling behind their stalls.

"Is there a problem, dearie?" asked Gormlaith.

"No problem at all," said the one with the most facial sores which made them all burst into laughter again.

Gormlaith turned to see a man with Rumple.

"Rumple, where did you go?," asked Gormlaith. "Bad things happen when little boys run off from their parents."

She looked up at the man.

"Merlin. It's you."

The wizard shrugged. "I thought I should check in."

"Check in?"

Merlin gave the boy a gold coin. "Rumplestiltskin, why don't you go buy some cakes? Your mother and I have business to discuss."

"That coin is more money than we have for a week."

"Then he ought to be able to buy a lot."

Rumple looked up at his mother.

"Fine, but come straight back."

He scampered away to the baker's stall.

"What business do we have to discuss?"
"I did some research on you."

"Did you, dearie?"

"Yes, and I have but one question."

"Oh?"

Merlin shrugged. "What the hell are you doing here?"

Gormlaith looked down. "I fell in love."

"I've seen your love. I'm not impressed."

"Who the hell do you think you are? Investigating me, coming here, kidnapping my son-"

"If I wanted to kidnap your son, he'd be long gone."

"Then what do you want?"

The wizard smiled. "To discuss the boy's future."

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*Now*

Music.

Pan heard music.


He hadn't heard music like that in hundreds of years.

He came out of the tent to find Venus standing by the fire.

"The Lost Boys are out. I don't think we've met properly," said Venus. "I'm Belle's grandmother."

"Then I suppose you're to thank for whelping Merlin."

Venus smiled as she warmed her hands by the fire. "Lilies do you smell them?"

"What are you doing?," he snapped. "If this is some kind of trick-"

"I don't do tricks, Malcolm. I do love. You met a girl once in the springtime and you ran away with her. Though the way I hear it she had been running a long time."

"If you think you can get at me through sentiment, you're wrong."

"Then make the music stop."

Pan tried and failed. Neverland's magic refused to bend to his will.

Venus smiled.

"I don't do tricks. This is as real as you make it and you make things very real. The way it works is, the worse you are, the worse it is."
Pan suddenly felt a thousand pinpricks throughout his body. He screamed.

"There, it's working already."

Pan glared at the goddess.

"I'll be back later," she said walking off.

Beatrice was bored.

"Try reading," Belle instructed as she always did when someone said they were bored. "You wanted to read that anyway."

"Yeah, because Benedict Cumberbatch is in the TV version. I didn't know it was one of these English books where nothing happens."

Adi didn't look up from drawing on the blank papers Belle had given him. "You talk about TV a lot."

Beatrice looked at Gold. "You couldn't bring my iPad? And a charger?"

"And electricity?," asked Belle.

Beatrice looked at Gold pitifully.

"Where's your phone?," he relented.

Beatrice pulled the slightly sandy iPhone out of her messenger bag.

"What did you do to this?," Gold asked.

"I dropped it in the ocean, then I tried to dry it in sand." She shook her head. "AppleCare is not going to cover this."

Gold looked at it.

"Am I really just going to sit here until it's time to leave?," asked Beatrice.

"You're safe from Pan here," said Gold. "We would have already left were it up to me."

"We have to try, Rumple," said Belle. "We owe it to everyone in Storybrooke."

"Exactly what do we owe everyone in Storybrooke?," asked Gold.

"What's Storybrooke?," asked Adi.

"It's where we live back in the Land Without Magic," Belle explained cheerfully.

Adi looked at Beatrice.

"The real world," said Beatrice.

"Where are you from, Adi?," asked Belle.

"London," said Adi.

"Seriously, is London like a portal to another world? Neal ended up there, you've got Alice in
"Seriously, is London like a portal to another world? Neal ended up there, you've got Alice in Wonderland," said Beatrice. She looked at Gold. "Are you sure the Doctor isn't real?"

"I know of no wizard who travels through time in an enchanted blue box," said Gold.

"It's not a box, it's a time machine," said Adi.

Beatrice shook her head. "He doesn't care."

Gold handed her the iPhone. "Try that."

Beatrice held down the power button. To her amazement, the white apple appeared on the screen. "Oh my God, it actually works! How did you do that?"

"Magic."

"Still not an answer..." said Beatrice as she leaned against him. "Now, please tell me I put some Doctor Who on here..."

---

Then

Merlin sat down with Gormlaith at one of the small tables set up for people to discuss trade extensively or take a small meal from one of the vendors.

"He's shy," said Gormlaith, looking at Rumple. He was looking skeptically at a group of children as they played.

"He's considering his options."

"What do you want with him?," Gormlaith asked sharply.

"I'm a charitable sort of chap," said Merlin.

Gormlaith shook her head. "I know who you are and I know you don't just decide to be charitable."

"And how do you know that?," asked Merlin, leaning forward to match her gaze. "What land could someone get such knowledge in?"

She was silent.

"And why would someone ever leave such a land? Especially when she was well..."

Her eyes shot back up at him.

"You know," answered Merlin.

"So you know who I am."

"Indeed I do."

"And what do you want with my son?"

"I want to train the boy."

"As a wizard?"
"Well, certainly not as a sous chef."

"No."

"No?"

"Magic is a terrible thing."

"Do you have any idea how rich that sounds coming from you?"

"It tore my family apart. I won't let it happen again."

"Because your family is so good right now, especially that common law husband of yours. He's such an excellent father and provider. Now, what say you tell me why you're really still here?"

Gormlaith paused.

"When I was twelve, a seer in my land told my fortune. She said I would give birth to the most powerful wizard in all the realms, but he would be a dark wizard. I was arranged to be married to another wizard-"

Merlin chuckled as Gormlaith glared. "You mortals. You're so funny when you try to outrun fate. Ever heard of someone called Oedipus?"

"Who?"

Merlin pulled the red leather book from his jacket.

"The Dark Princess?," asked Gormlaith.

"This is her story," said Merlin.

Gormlaith flipped through the pages. "It's blank."

"Not quite," said Merlin. He opened the book to the front pages revealing the start of a family tree. "On her mother's side, she will be the product of fourteen generations of True Love. I spent some time after I first met you seeking out the first among those."

"And her father's side?"

Merlin pointed. Gormlaith's eyes widened as she read the name Rumplestiltskin.

"You see, I believe your boy will become a great sorcerer. I believe he will sire a great sorceress. Your granddaughter will be powerful and benevolent. She will heal those ails which you fear."

"No," said Gormlaith, shutting the book and pushing it back at Merlin. "Magic. Prophecy. I don't want any part of it."

Merlin shook his head in amusement. "It doesn't matter if you want a part of it. This is what will happen. The question is how. I wish to make the boy my apprentice."

"I won't condemn him to a life of Dark Magic."

"I'm more often referred to as a benevolent mage."

"Then why does it say 'Dark Princess?'"
"I haven't quite sorted that yet."

"Oh, good."

"What most people don't realize is that when they try to run away from their fate, they are actually running towards it. When you ran from home, when you chose the unremarkable Malcolm, you sealed your fate. Now there is nothing left but to deal with it."

"There must be another way."

"There is no other way. I can help you, I can help him. I can take you away from the drunken louse you've chained yourself to."

"You want me to leave Malcolm?"

"I don't see it as a great loss."

"I love him."

"So you have something in common with him."

"I need time to think."

"Well, I have plenty of that. So does Rumplestiltskin it seems."

"I want one promise," said Gormlaith.

"How quick she is to use the tricks of the people she abandoned," Merlin said dryly.

"You must promise me you won't teach my son magic without my permission or I won't even consider your offer."

"I promise," said Merlin. "Don't take too long to consider. I have the feeling something dark awaits Malcolm. It won't wait forever."

**Now**

It was a long walk where they needed to go.

"Dark Hollow?," asked Ariel. "That doesn't sound like a very happy place."

"Indeed not," said Hook, slashing through the last of the vines and nightshade with his sword.

"It's the place where the shadow's victims go," said Neal.

Emma shook her head. "This was not in the movie."

"These movies," asked Hook. "What am I like in them? Dashing, handsome, I take it?"

Neal burst out laughing.

"What?"

"Well, you're alright if you like perms and wax mustaches," said Emma.

"Beatrice said I'm in a movie," said Ariel. "What am I like in mine?"
Emma looked the mermaid up and down. "Yeah, actually that's pretty much it. Disney got most of it right for a change. Go figure."

"Disney. What's that?" asked Ariel.

"Oh," said Emma. "That's the company that makes the movies, but they're hardly ever like what actually happened."

"Hey, you don't know what happened after the end of Snow White," said Neal. "Maybe they meant to make a sequel."

"Yeah, how about you tell me about your dad's movie?"

"Rumplestiltskin doesn't have his own movie."

"Uh, Beauty and the Beast? None of your dad's china talks. Trust me."

Neal looked back at her. "Did you check?"

"Yeah," Emma said sheepishly.

Neal laughed. Hook joined in.

Ariel glared at them. "I don't see why you have to make fun of her. China could talk. Which one is china again?"

"Oh, come on! Henry made me! He was almost too scared to eat at that house!"

"Henry was scared?," asked Neal.

"Fine," Emma grunted as she pulled out her sword. "I was worried that my bowl would suddenly ask me how I liked the soup course and do a dance routine! That's what normal people think. Now, let's go catch your evil grandpa's shadow."

---

Then

Gormlaith led Rumple home, the talk with Merlin weighing heavily in her thoughts.

Once he was asleep, she opened a lidded basket. She looked in a velvet pouch to see the magic bean was still there, grateful that Malcolm had not somehow found it and sold it for more drink.

The next object was a small crystal ball.

Taking a breath, she closed her eyes. The ball lit in brilliant purples.

"Yes, it's me. I don't have much time, I need to see him."

The color drained from the ball and came back.

"Expect me at the Falls then."

---

Now

"How is he?"
Venus looked up at Merlin. She had been sitting a distance away from Pan, collecting her thoughts before she went back.

"Well, he's dying so not great. Thank you for keeping the others away. Mortals hate slow, painful deaths."

Merlin nodded. "I'm off to Skull Island."

"Sightseeing?"

"Pan's magic is measured there. I want to see how much is left and if I can get rid of it."

"Have fun."

"I always do."

Venus looked at Merlin before he could leave. "Do you hate me?"

"What have I done to make you think I hate you?"

"I know I wasn't the mother you would have wished for. You're not my only child to think so."

"I am too old to hang on to grudges from my youth and still be able to function, but you were right about Viviane. I'll give you that."

"Is that all?"

"You were kind when you were present."

Venus scoffed. "Not exactly a great review." She smiled. "Belle's a really great mother. You ought to be proud."

"I am though I don't think I deserve to be. Her mother did all the work."

Venus turned to say something else and Merlin was gone. She got up and walked back to Pan's campfire.

"How's the music?"

"What music?," he asked.

"Nice try, but I know you can hear it. I can see how much pain you're in." She knelt down to where he lay writhing on the ground. "See, that's what it's like to feel compassion or empathy for other beings."

"That's your weakness," Pan sneered.

"And what's yours?," Venus asked, standing back up. In her hand, a white lily appeared. "You gave one of these to Gormlaith."

"I never asked for her," said Pan. "She was always a weight holding me back! I wanted my life for my own."

"No man lives alone," said Venus. She put the lily down in front of him. "Dying alone, though, that's a different story."

"Do you really think you can stop me? Peter Pan never fails."
"Peter Pan doesn't exist. He's a story and all stories end."

Then

Gormlaith didn't sleep that night. Malcolm stumbled into the cottage as usual and they had little conversation. She waited until dawn finally broke over the Frontlands and her son awoke.

"Good morning, Rumple," Gormlaith said with a plastered on smile. "Come on. Let's talk outside."

Still bleary eyed, the boy followed her outside, past a still snoring and soused Malcolm.

She turned and knelt down to face him.

"What do you say to an adventure?"

"An adventure?"

Gormlaith nodded. "I want to take you somewhere. A different realm."

"Why?"

She shook her head. "Never mind why. I have to go ahead, to get permission. They don't like interference from other realms there so I have to ask someone if it's alright to bring you. I'm sure he'll say yes, but I have to go on ahead and come back."

Rumple looked at her in confusion.

"I'm sorry, I have to go," she said tearfully. "But I'm coming back."

She handed him the small crystal ball.

"If you need anything, hold this and think of me."

Now

Gold stood on the balcony surveying Neverland. Bae, Emma, the pirate and the mermaid had not yet returned from Dark Hollow. David and Mary Margaret had gone out under the pretense of collecting supplies, not that he cared that much. Merlin and Venus were off doing whatever it was they were doing.

"He said he had done it before," said Beatrice.

Gold turned. "Sweetheart. You shouldn't be out here."

Beatrice walked closer to him. Gold put his arm around her.

"You worry a lot."

"I'm your father."

"You said your mom left you."

Gold stiffened. "I did."
"And your dad, who is a psycho, sent you away. Bae's mom left you. Bae..."

"That was my fault," said Gold. "Besides, there's no need for you to worry about such things."

"Mom and I aren't really people who leave."

"Oh, sweetheart." Gold kissed the top of her head. "Someday you'll be grown. You'll have a life of your own. You won't need your papa."

"Yeah, because nothing ever happens to me where I need a powerful sorcerer."

"It won't matter. You'll be the sorceress then."

"Maybe I just like you."

Gold smiled. "I love you."

Beatrice sighed. "Fine. Love you too."

"Well, I'll take it," said Gold.

"How's the music?"

Pan seethed at Venus. The goddess leaned back casually against a tree trunk.

"Stop this."

"No." She leaned forward. "You took a Daughter of Venus with the intent of harming her. This is what happens to people who try to harm Daughters of Venus."

Pan writhed. "We can work this out."

"I don't want to work it out. I can think of nothing I desire more than this."

"This is the love goddess' answer?"

"What can I say? Love is a bitch sometimes."

"I did love her."

"No, you didn't," said Venus, shaking her head. "If you did love them, this fate would reveal itself differently. You would revert to your mortal form, but you would live and you would feel no pain. Your guilt would be pain enough. Since you don't love them and you don't even feel bad, this is what's happening. You can't run away from fate."

"Why can't I be rid of him?"

"Because you are never done with family."

Venus watched as a man appeared in Pan's place.

"It won't be long now," she promised.

Pan smirked. "No, the game's not over yet."

Venus stood, backing away from Pan. Suddenly he burst into a ball of fire and the ground began
"We're just getting started," Pan's voice echoed through the dark of night.

**Then**

Merlin went to the cottage first. No one was home.

So he went to the pub where he found Malcolm and Rumplestiltskin sitting in the corner while his father drank.

As he approached, he noticed the boy was crying silently.

"Rumplestiltskin," he said kneeling down. "Where's your mother?"

"She went away."

"And she didn't take you?"

"She said I couldn't come yet."

Merlin grimaced. Gormlaith was trying to run away from her fate again.

"Did she happen to leave a crystal ball?"

He nodded. "Papa sold it."

"Of course he did," said Merlin, standing up straight. He walked over to Malcolm.

"Sorry, sir, I'll get you in the next game."

"I'm not interested in having you cheat me," said Merlin.

"What?," asked Malcolm's customer.

Merlin picked the coins up off the table and handed them to him. "Go."

The customer left.

"Who the hell do you reckon you are?!," said Malcolm.

"Where's Gormlaith?"

"Gone. Abandoned me."

"Where's the crystal ball you sold?"

"How in hell do I know what's happened to a thing after I've sold it? I got a crown for that, you know."

"A crown?," asked Merlin. "You're an idiot. You could have gotten twenty bars of gold for that."

"What? Who are you? What did you want with Gormlaith? Were you-"

"I wanted to discuss your son's future. An apprenticeship."

"Really? How much?"
"I won't give you a penny. You disgust me. I am going to do something else to you."

Now

Beatrice hesitated as the ground shook. She looked up at her parents.

"I know I'm the Ice Princess and everything but I don't think this building is up to code for earthquakes," said Beatrice.

"What's happening?," asked Adi.

Belle smiled at him. "There's no need to be frightened. We'll look after you. Right, Rumple?"

Merlin appeared. "Bad news. Skull Island just blew up."

"How is that bad news?," asked Belle. "I thought you were going to destroy it."

"It's complicated."

Mary Margaret and David entered.

"Have Emma and the others come back yet?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Not yet," said Belle.

"We should go find them," said David. "It's not safe out there."

Merlin frowned at the prince. "Do you think out loud?"

"We're back!," Emma announced.

Mary Margaret threw her arms around her which made Emma squirm awkwardly.

"We might have returned sooner if these two hadn't gotten into a fin measuring contest," Ariel said glaring at Hook and Neal.

"What?," asked David.

"Never mind," said Emma.

"Did you get Pan's shadow?," asked Gold.

Neal held up a coconut. "Right here."

"So, the all powerful autonomous shadow is being held inside a coconut," said Beatrice. "I know I feel safe."

She stepped behind Gold.

Venus entered.

"What happened?," demanded Merlin.

"Pan's gone insane," said Venus.

"What? Like more insane?," asked Emma.
"Well, like he's tied to the island, used the last embers of his magic to give himself incorporeal form and he is probably going to destroy Neverland and us with him," said Venus. "We need to go."

The ground shook again.

"What the hell did you do?," asked Gold.

"I made him remember. I thought it would mean his destruction, but I hadn't considered how tied he was to the island."

"What about Pan's Shadow?," asked Neal. "We have it, we could release it."

"And it still wants Beatrice," said Merlin.

"Then there's nothing we can do. We have to leave," said Mary Margaret.

"Any idea how long we have?," asked David.

"Hours, I would think," said Merlin.

"We have to get back to the Jolly Roger," said Hook.

"What about the Lost Boys?," asked Neal.

"You mean the psycho freaks?," asked Beatrice.

"We can't just let them die."

"Yeah, we can," said Hook.

"Because that's what you would do," Neal shot back.

"Bae-" said Gold.

"I'm not going to leave them to get killed. We can take them back to Storybrooke."

"Quickly. We don't have much time," Merlin reminded him.

"Bae, no-" Gold repeated.

"I'll go with you," said Emma.

"I'll go as well," said Hook.

"I don't think so, you're driving the boat," said Merlin.

"We'll go with you," said David.

The others began to get their things together.

"Will we have enough time to get to the ship?," asked Belle.

"We know where we're going now," said Merlin. "I'll magic a shortcut. It should help the others."

"Well, it's too bad nobody has a way to magically transport us to where we need to go," said Beatrice, glancing between her father and grandfather.
"If Neverland is crumbling, its magic is unpredictable," said Gold. "We don't want to rely entirely on it."

"Beatrice, Adi, hurry," said Belle, grabbing her satchel.

Beatrice put her messenger bag over her head as Gold took her hand.

"You'll be fine, sweetheart. Nothing's going to hurt you."
A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest

Edelweiss was no great attraction on tourist routes for two very good reasons.

One, it was a bit off the beaten path. Usually it only saw hunting parties if any visitors.

Second, it was the village closest to the Dark Castle and thus the Dark One's de facto hometown. Everyone in the Enchanted Forest gave the Dark One a wide berth.

After a simple breakfast at the inn, Reinette made her way to her main object in extending their party's stay in Edelweiss.

The library.

The castles all throughout the kingdom all had some source on the Dark One. She supposed if he was to be her future son-in-law, she ought to know as much as possible about him. Still, there was so little information to go on. Some called him imp, monster, one source suggested he was part chimera. Surely the library in the Dark One's hometown would have something a bit more reliable.

Reinette entered the library. There was a table at the entrance to the cavernous space.

"I'll be with you in just a moment," a woman's voice called out.

"Take your time, madame," said Reinette. "I am in no rush."

The woman entered with a polite smile. She was tall with dark hair. "It's no problem. I was finished anyway. How may I help you?"

"You're the librarian?"

"My brother is, but he's ill. I am helping here, but I assure you that I am well-acquainted with libraries. My name is Violet."

Reinette was astonished. "The scholar?"

Violet shook her head. "What a sad reflection that I'm the only Violet who might be a scholar."

"I suppose it is," said Reinette. "I'm so sorry. I am genuinely gobsmacked. I've read about you."

"I'm flattered. And you are?"

"So sorry, I am Lady Reinette of-"

"Of Avonlea."

"How did you-"

Violet pointed at her ring finger. "You have the seal of that land on your ring."
Reinette smiled. "Indeed I do."

"And how may I help you, Lady Reinette?"

"This might strike you as a peculiar request, but I am looking for some information about... the Dark One."

Violet didn't miss a beat. "What sort of information?"

"Anything, really."

"Well, come behind the counter. We have some tracts and some unpublished essays," said Violet as Reinette followed her. "There's also a history of the Dark Castle which you may know is the Dark One's residence."

"Yes, I was aware," said Reinette. "Why are they unpublished?"

"Well," said Violet, thumbing through a shelf, "the Dark One is not a topic most see as suitable for publication. In some places, the clerics control all knowledge. Some writers come here to get pieces of the Dark One's story and they send my brother copies of their work when they finish or give up."

"Do the clerics control this place?"

Violet smiled. "Well, one benefit of having the Dark One as our principal citizen, only two very old clerics here. Hardly enough to run an inquisition. They perform the usual sort of weddings and naming and stay out of the way the rest of the time."

"Are there any other benefits to having the Dark One as your principle citizen in Edelweiss?," Reinette asked.

"From what I understand, the previous occupant of the Dark Castle was a rather corrupt noble. That was centuries ago, but the village has not been subject to the whims of one since. He buys goods from the village, always pays in gold, though usually the transaction is done through magic. We hardly see him. I've only laid eyes on him once myself."

"And what did you make of him?"

Violet pulled some folios off a shelf. "I was but a girl. Young King George's army was on a recruitment tour looking for the older boys of the village."

"And?"

Violet hesitated. "Their recruitment tour ended here."

"What? He...?"

"Killed them."

Reinette gasped.

"One of the stories in these folios tells a story of how he became the Dark One. It says the army of the Frontlands meant to conscript his son, who was just fourteen, to fight in the Ogre Wars."

"Is it true?"

"It would explain why he cared so much when he doesn't usually bother with Edelweiss," said
Violet. "And the source is a fairy. I usually don't take much stock in their accounts, but why would they make up a story that paints their enemy in such a flattering light?"

"Yes, why?"

"After King George's men were dispatched, the Lord Mayor found a bag of gold in his house and a note telling him to use the funds to construct a grammar school."

"From the Dark One?"

"There was no name, but who else?"

Reinette heard an infant's cry. "I am so sorry," said Violet, handing her the folios.

"You keep your child with you?"

"My third born. It's a temporary arrangement while my brother recovers, but he is a highly reactive sort of child."

"You have three children and still you maintain your scholarship?"

"It sounds much more impressive than it is. Please excuse me."

Now

They trekked back through the jungle at a much brisker pace than they had arrived at it with Merlin's help. He led the way for the others as Hook carried Adi.

"There she is! The Jolly Roger!," Hook proclaimed for Adi as they arrived at the beach where they anchored the ship. "The best ship in all the realms."

"A real pirate ship," Adi said gleefully.

"Indeed it is," Hook said.

"Do you know Johnny Depp?," Adi asked in all seriousness.

Beatrice snickered.

"And who is Johnny Depp?," Hook asked defensively.

Beatrice shook her head. "Yeah, I'll get you the DVDs when we get back."

"Well, at least someone's enjoying himself," said Gold.

Belle playfully swatted him.

"Beatrice, I don't want you above deck," said Gold.

"What?"

"Your father's right. There's no telling what Pan's abilities are at the moment," said Merlin.

"Incorporeal usually doesn't hinder people," admitted Venus.

Adi groaned as Belle took him away from the deck of a real pirate ship. Ariel approached Gold.

"I wanted to talk about our deal," said Ariel.

"Yes, dearie, don't you suppose it ought to wait until we all return alive to Storybrooke?"

"You got your daughter back. I want to make sure I get to find Eric."

"When my daughter is safely in Storybrooke, we can discuss your prince," said Gold.

He walked away from the mermaid, looking towards the beach for any sign of the others' arrival.

"Rumplestiltskin is not the one to look for sympathy from," warned Hook.

The island shook.

"That didn't seem good," said Mary Margaret.

"No," said Emma.

"We may not have a lot of time," said David.

Emma looked at Neal. He was helping the a couple of the Lost Boys they had already found. They had found around ten and been able to direct some of the more capable ones to the beach where the Jolly Roger was anchored.

"Neal," said Emma.

He didn't even look up at her. "Yeah, I know, but we have to try."

"I want to help them, too, Neal," said Emma. "But we've got our own kid back in Storybrooke. We need to think about Henry and get back to the Jolly Roger."

"You sound like my father."

"As frightening as it seems, sometimes your dad is right," said Emma. "Usually when it comes to his kids."

"You wouldn't say that if you grew up with him."

"Whoa, I'm sorry, is that what coming along has been about?," asked Emma.

Neal started walking. "Don't try to shrink me. It was about getting my sister back."

"Whatever, you might be interested in proving how much better than your dad you are, I'm interested in going back to the ship!"

"Emma..." Mary Margaret said softly.

"What? And Hook?," asked Neal.

"Oh, my God, I'm not doing this now," said Emma.

"Hook?," asked David. "What happened at Dark Hollow?"
"David, we'll discuss this later," said Mary Margaret. She looked at Neal. "Neal, Emma's right. It's time to go home."

"Bae?"

They turned to see a blonde woman in green.

"Tink?," asked Neal.

"Tink?," said Emma. "As in Tinker Bell?"

"Bae, what are you doing back here?," asked Tinker Bell.

"I was rescuing my sister."

"Your sister?"

Emma motioned around them. "The one with the magical icing abilities."

"It doesn't matter, she's safe now," said Neal. "We need to leave the island, though."

The ground shook.

"No objection to that," said Tink. "Do you have a way out of Neverland?"

"We have a ship," said Mary Margaret. "It's going to take us to our home. Storybrooke. You can come along."

"I don't really see that I have a lot of choice," said Tink.

"Neal," said Emma, motioning in the direction of the beach.

"I just need more time-"

Emma pulled out her sword. "Neal, I swear to God, if you do not start walking to the beach now, I will knock you out and drag your ass there!"

The Lost Boys, Tink and her parents all looked taken aback at Emma.

"Come on, guys," said Neal, leading the Lost Boys.

"You're a feisty one," Tink said to Emma.

"Yeah, come along and I'll tell you how he framed me for stealing a bunch of watches," said Emma, following Neal and her parents.

---

**Then**

"Mama," asked Belle. "What are we doing?"

"This way," said Reinette.

Belle gasped when she saw where her mother was going. She was heading downstairs.

"But, Mama, that's the way to the servants' rooms," said Belle.
"Indeed it is. Come along."

Belle followed Reinette and saw the shocked expressions on the servants' faces as their mistress walked among them. They finally stopped at the kitchen.

Mrs. Potts was a kindly woman with a cook's figure. "My lady, how may I be of service? I hope the breakfast was satisfactory?"

"Indeed it was, Mrs. Potts. I wonder if I might have your help with something."

"Whatever you desire, my lady."

"It has recently come to my attention that Lady Belle cannot so much as brew a pot of tea."

The room stood in silent astonishment, including Belle.

"No," Mrs. Potts said slowly, "I suppose not."

"Well, I'm not looking to raise some helpless princess," said Reinette. "I would be most grateful if you would tutor Belle in this area."

"Mama-" said Belle.

Reinette shot her a look. Belle backed down.

"Lady Belle will come here every morning after breakfast and you may teach her what you wish. A few useful dishes is all I'm looking for and of course, a pot of tea."

"Yes, your ladyship," said Mrs. Potts.

"Belle, you may begin with that pot of tea now is that meets with Mrs. Potts' approval."

"Yes, your ladyship." She motioned for Belle to come forward. "Come along, milady. None of the pots bite."

Now

"Adi's asleep in the other bunk," said Belle. She sat down next to Beatrice. "Your brother is back with some others."

"We're going to get Adi home, right?," asked Beatrice. "He's been gone like a little over a year, I think. His parents are probably still looking for him."

"I'm certain they are. Of course we'll get him home," said Belle.

"I could always take him..." said Beatrice.

"You're not getting a trip to London in the middle of the school year," said Belle.

"That hadn't crossed my mind."

"No, of course not," teased Belle. She pulled Beatrice close against her. "You've never tried to get a trip to London."

"If I really wanted one, I would have said that you were a cursed fairy tale character that came from Storybrooke which was a suburb of London."
Belle smiled. "You know, I never thanked you."

Beatrice frowned and turned to look at her mother. "For what?"

"For believing in the truth and making me come to Storybrooke. You brought me back to Papa and reunited our family."

"You don't have to thank me. It was just-"

"It was just you being your brilliant self."

---

Then

Reinette hated these sort of dinners. No guests, only her and Belle and Maurice's gabbing to fill the air.

Unfortunately, it was how most of their dinners went.

"Mama, did you like the souffle?" asked Belle.

"Yes, very good."

Belle looked at Maurice. "Papa?"

"What?"

"Did you like the souffle?"

"There was no meat in it," he grunted.

"It was a cheese souffle."

"I suppose then it was serviceable."

Belle looked back down at her plate in disappointment. "I made it."

This caught Maurice's attention. "You did what? You cooked?!"

"Mrs. Potts has been teaching me."

"That woman," said Maurice. He looked up at the footman. "You bring her to me at once!"

"You'll do no such thing," Reinette countermanded.

"I suppose you're to tell me how to do things in my own castle then!"

"I run the household and I asked Mrs. Potts to teach Belle."

Maurice's face drained of color. "Why would you do that?"

Reinette stayed silent.

"I don't mind it, Papa," said Belle. "I thought I would, but it's been fun to learn something useful."

"Useful?," asked Maurice. "Your use is to be a good wife and bear sons for your husband, not carry on like a peasant girl. If your mother knew her place, she would teach you as much."
"If you knew your place, you would shut up," said Reinette.

Maurice stood. "I've suddenly lost my appetite. Belle, I forbid you to return to the kitchens."

"Is that wise, sir?," asked Reinette. "Sir Gaston is not a terribly clever sort of man. He may yet lose what little fortune he has. Surely you don't wish your daughter to starve."

Maurice shook his head. "Why do you vex me, woman?"

Maurice stomped out.

"Belle," said Reinette, "I am so sorry."

Belle put her face in her hands, trying to hold back her tears.

"Why must you argue?," she asked. "I know you don't love him, but-"

"Because we have spent too many years together," said Reinette. "Marriage is a long business and you need to like the company of whoever you do it with."

"Why have me cook? Why let the midwife tutor me?"

Reinette couldn't speak the answer. The library revealed at least that the Dark One kept no servants and if Belle ended up there, Reinette didn't want her to be just another helpless princess.

"I think you need more skills than just wearing a dress and looking pretty. You already do that very well on your own."

"What does it matter? I'm just going to be married to Gaston and have a lifetime of unhappiness to look forward to!"

Belle got up and stormed out of the room.

Reinette sighed. "That is not to be your fate, my child," she said to the empty room.

"And what of the fate you have in store for her?"

Reinette turned to see a blue dot that blossomed into a full grown woman.

"The Blue Fairy," said Reinette. "We meet at last."

She smiled. "Indeed we do, Lady Reinette."

Now

Beatrice gripped the sides of the bunk as the ship hit rocked violently.

"It's just rough seas," said Belle.

Beatrice rolled her eyes at her mother.

"Alright," said Belle. "I'll go check."

Belle got up and walked towards the deck.

"Mom!"
Belle turned back to look. Beatrice was pulled to her feet, writhing as some flamed magic covered her. Magic whipped around her, appearing to leave her and going back to form Pan's body.

"Peter Pan never fails," the smug disembodied teenager's voice proclaimed.

"No," said Belle. "You can't have her."

"How are you intending to stop me, lass?"

Belle threw herself between Beatrice and Pan. The same white light as before overtook Pan, freeing Beatrice but his magic still clawed at Belle.

---

Then

"How may I help you?", asked Reinette, putting up her napkin and turning to face the fairy.

"Merlin has deceived you," said the Blue Fairy.

"Merlin has done many things, but deceiving me was never one of them."

"This Dark Princess, she-"

"Do you mean she is a threat to your power and thus you have been doing everything in your power to stop her existence?," asked Reinette. "As in cursing my mother, torturing my grandmother and so on?"

"Merlin's told you wicked lies."

"If you've come to persuade me to change my allegiances, I'm afraid you've wasted your trip," said Reinette. "I made my decisions rather long ago."

"Belle can be perfectly happy with Sir Gaston. He's an honorable knight."

"And shallow. And a moron. No, my daughter will have her True Love."

"The Dark One. You would condemn her to chained to a monster?"

"Oh, but I've been reading," said Reinette. "He's not truly a monster, is he? The stories say that he lost his son."

"To his own evil."

"Because a fairy gave the child a magic bean to another land. You wouldn't know who that was, would you?"

Blue seemed startled that Reinette knew her part in that particular drama.

"It was a gift."

Reinette nodded. "I have no great investment in Merlin's Vision as you would conceive it. My investment is in my daughter and her future happiness. I will choose that above all else."

Reinette suddenly began to cough. She picked up her wine glass to alleviate it, but found her drink had turned bitter.
"You've done something to this," she said, looking at the fairy.

Blue remained silent.

"What is this?"

"Dark fairy dust. If you wish to ally yourself with the Dark One, you ought to know what dark magic tastes like. Worry not. You won't remember shortly after I leave this room."

"No," said Reinette. "Please. My daughter needs me."

The Blue Fairy left through the window.

Reinette was alone with the knowledge that she was very soon going to die.

She had spent the better part of her life concerned with her daughter's future. The labor was bittersweet as she realized that she was never going to see any of it. To never see her child, to never see her find True Love, to never see her escape the clutches of Maurice and all the men determined to keep her down while they thought they were doing her a favor.

Reinette had to see Belle.

---

**Now**

Beatrice came back to herself, distraught to see her mother as she writhed against Pan's magic.

"Mommy?," she said tearfully. She turned back to the steps above deck. "Dad! Merlin! Literally anyone magical!"

Beatrice turned back to the struggle between her mother and Pan. Seconds felt like hours and she felt like she had to try something.

Beatrice threw her arms around Belle, putting herself back into the magical fray.

Another white light burst forth as Gold and Merlin finally descended the steps. Pan's form was cast out of it as Belle and Beatrice fell to the ground.

Merlin gave Gold a glance and that was all the younger wizard needed to know what the elder was thinking.

With a wave of their hand, they cast the remains of Pan's form into a magical bubble that grew smaller and smaller until it formed a solid sphere that dropped to the wooden planks of the room.

"Belle?," Gold asked scrambling to her side.

Merlin knelt down to pick up the sphere and walked over. Neal came down followed by Emma and Tinker Bell.

"What the hell happened?," asked Neal.

"I'll be fine," Belle said, clambering towards Beatrice, laying next to her. "Beatrice, baby?"

Beatrice's eyes fluttered open as Gold and Belle sighed in relief.

"Okay, seriously, what the hell is the white light thing?," asked Beatrice.
Belle had tears in her eyes. "Don't frighten us like that!"

"Well, don't frighten me like that!" She looked around. "Where's Pan?"

Merlin held up the sphere stone. "Right here."

"You trapped him in that?," asked Emma.

"He is that," said Merlin. "Baelfire, Beatrice, say goodbye to your grandfather. The family reunion is officially over."

"Do you promise?," asked Beatrice.

Merlin walked above deck. Gold followed him, followed by Belle, Neal and Emma. Beatrice found herself face to face with Tink.

"Sorry, have we met?"

"No, I'm Tinker Bell."

"Right," said Beatrice. "Neverland. Wearing green. Of course you are. Did Regina do something to you?"

Tink looked at her in astonishment. "How did you know?"

They followed the others back up to the deck.

"So, that kills him?," asked Emma staring at Merlin and the stone.

"Yes and so help me if anyone starts to give me a speech about why we shouldn't kill Peter Pan once and for all," Merlin said, turning to glare at David and Mary Margaret.

"I didn't even say anything," said Mary Margaret.

"You really wanted to," said Merlin. He held the stone over the side of the ship. "Any last words? No?"

Merlin dropped the stone.

"What about Pan's Shadow?," asked Ariel.

"Couldn't we just wrap some duct tape around the coconut?," asked Beatrice.

Everyone turned and looked at her.

"Why would that work?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Why does holding the shadow in a coconut work?"

"See?," said Merlin. "That's thinking."

---

Then

Reinette didn't knock at the door which threw Belle off at first. Feeling a defiant mood, she was about to scream about her privacy, but something was not right with her mother.
"I don't remember why I came here," Reinette stated.

That frightened Belle.

"Mama?"

Reinette sat on the bed. Belle put her book down.

"I suddenly feel very compelled to tell you that you are the most important person in my life," said Reinette. "Everything I have done has been for your benefit."

Belle rolled her eyes. "I know, Mama."

"I don't think you do, though." Reinette swooned, collapsing.

"Mama?," Belle exclaimed, scrambling to her feet. "Mama!"

"Send for the physician and Leigh," said Reinette. Then she added, "And my parents."

"Your parents?"

"Please, Belle."

"Yes, of course, Mama," said Belle. "Anything you ask. We'll get you better."

---

Belle realized something as she stood next to her daughter on the desk of the Jolly Roger.

"You're taller than me," she said to Beatrice. "You got taller than me. How did I not notice that?"

"It was probably the four inch heels you always wear," said Beatrice.

Belle looked at Gold. "Did you notice she got taller than me?"

"Are you sure you don't want to rest?," asked Gold.

Belle tightened her grip around Beatrice as they stood on the deck of the Jolly Roger. "I'm fine, Rumple. Besides, I will rest much better in Storybrooke."

Gold nodded, pulling the magic bean from inside his jacket. He looked back at Hook. "Are you ready, pirate?"

"I'm always ready, beast."

"Yeah, that's not getting old at all," Beatrice muttered to her mother.

Belle smiled and kissed her daughter on the cheek.

"Everyone grab hold of something," David instructed.

"Oh, good," said Emma. "This was so fun the first time."

Gold did a cursory glance around the deck to see that the passengers were actually holding on to something. He tossed the magic bean into the sea in front of them and the portal came open. He quickly grabbed the ropes next to Beatrice and Belle.
Beatrice stared at the vortex as it grew and widened. It was even bigger than the one that had sprung from Jefferson's hat and seemed to be swallowing the ocean.

"And we're definitely sure that goes home?," she asked.

"Where else?," asked Belle.

"Sometime you have got to tell me how that blind faith thing works," said Beatrice as the ship sailed out of eternal night and towards daylight.
Beatrice woke up.

She was cold.

"Maine, why do you do this to me?," she grumbled.

She opened her eyes to see Martha.

Who was much bigger.

"Um..."

Beatrice sat up and looked outside.

It was snowing.

She frantically got her iPhone and looked at it.

It was February.

Of the next year.

That would be why her Dalmatian was bigger.

"Dad!"

She rushed down the hall, knocked on the door and rushed in. Her parents were still asleep.

"Dad, Dad, wake up."

Gold stirred, then Belle.

"Beatrice, what's wrong?," asked Belle.

"It's February. Next year. This year. I don't know."

"What?," asked Gold.

She handed him the iPhone, then went to the window, pulling open the curtains.

"February next year?," asked Belle. She got a look at Martha as she jumped on the bed. "Oh, Gods."

"Yes, we are definitely missing a few things," said Gold.

"Should we call Mary Margaret and David?," asked Belle.

"No, I'm sure their highnesses will come calling as soon as they awaken and realize our predicament."
"What's happening?" asked Beatrice.

"If I had to guess, I would say that someone has cursed us with a memory potion," said Gold.

"Like the Dark Curse?" asked Belle.

"We're still all here. We all remember who we truly are."

"Oh, my God," said Beatrice.

"What, sweetheart?" asked Gold.

"The Doctor Who fiftieth! I've forgotten everything!" She inhaled sharply. "The Christmas special! The Doctor regenerated and I don't know anything about it!"

Beatrice rushed off.

Belle and Gold looked at each other.

"I should call Bae."

"I'll call Merlin."

October 22, 2013

"Happy Birthday!"

Beatrice opened her eyes to see her parents and her dog standing over her.

"So, this is a yearly thing, huh?"

"Sit up," Gold ordered and put the breakfast tray over her lap.

"Seventeen!" said Belle, getting wistful. "I can hardly believe it."

"Well, sixteen was last year..."

Gold shot her a look and pulled Martha off the bed.

Belle was undeterred. "Next year you'll be eighteen and the year after that you'll be off to college!"

Gold shot Belle a glare.

Belle rolled her eyes. "Rumple, she already knows about college."

"Yes, I'm not sure I would have let that get out."

Beatrice looked up from her pancakes. "Any big plans for the day?"

"We're meeting up with the family at Granny's later," said Belle.

Beatrice groaned.

"It's much smaller than last year," said Belle. "Mary Margaret and David have sworn up and down."
"And if it's not, I'll wave my hand and all the unwanted guests will vanish," said Gold.

"Oh, that'll be fun."

"Did you invite Mahnaz?," asked Belle.

Beatrice frowned. "Did I invite my one friend in the real world to come to my birthday party attended by a cast of fairy tale characters?"

"She spent the night without incident," said Belle.

"I think she's suspicious about the spinning wheel," said Beatrice. "Besides, her dad is almost as strict as him. He's not going to let her drive here on a school night."

"I am not strict," said Gold.

"Really?"

"There's a difference between locking you in a tower and not wanting you to waste your time on those who are beneath you."

"Let's not discuss that again," said Belle, looking between both of them. "I am going to put a call in to Drury's to make sure your cake is ready."

Now

Beatrice opened the door still in her pajamas holding a bowl of popcorn. Merlin eyed her.

"Can't talk. Doctor Who."

Merlin followed her into the living room.

"This new curse doesn't concern you?"

"The new curse will still be here after I finish watching the new series of Doctor Who, both specials, the new series of Sherlock and another series of Downton Abbey. Unless it's like a really short term curse, but that doesn't seem likely."

Belle entered. "Oh, Merlin, you're alright, thank the Gods," she said embracing him.

"Perfectly fine. And you all?"

Gold came downstairs. "Bae has not answered."

"What?," asked Belle.

Gold grabbed his coat off the rack. "I'll go to his apartment."

"I'll come, too," said Belle.

"No, you stay here with her until we know what we're dealing with," said Gold.

"In the event of a new curse, I need to be babysat?," asked Beatrice.

"I tend to agree with sunshine. For all you know, the new curse is about Beatrice," said Merlin. "Oh, not to mention, I don't quite know what we did with Viviane yet."
"Right, that's fun," said Beatrice. She motioned back at the TV. "I'm just going to keep watching Doctor Who then."

"Mary Margaret and Emma are going to have a town meeting," said Belle. "At noon."

Beatrice checked her phone. "That's only two episodes."

"And what about her charming husband?," asked Gold.

"He has gone with the dwarves to check the town line," said Belle.

Gold scoffed. "Better him than me."

---

Then

Aurora had arrived to ostensibly spend some time with Beatrice. She was now experimenting with every one of Beatrice's nail polishes while they watched Doctor Who.

"May I bring a date to your party?," she asked suddenly.

Beatrice frowned at Aurora. "You want to bring a date to my birthday party?"

"Why not?"

"Look, Aurora, I don't mean anything by this, but you have been going out with a different guy every night for months. It's not a big town, you've already run through all the single men once and you're coming back around."

"Nothing improper has happened."

Beatrice shook her head. "Yeah, whatever, can't you just take a night off?"

"Do you know how old I am?"

"Oh, God..."

"I am twenty. If you're an unmarried princess at twenty, everyone will wonder why."

"Except you're not in the Enchanted Forest," said Beatrice.

Aurora scoffed. "It doesn't matter. I am not going to be an old maid."

"Ariel's not even bringing Eric which is honestly probably better for Eric's safety since the last time he saw my mom was when all he could talk about was meeting her at some ball."

"Your father only threatened him verbally," said Aurora.

"I know. He's really lightening up," Beatrice admitted.

"Perhaps I could find you a date."

"No thanks."

"I know! You could invite Jamie!"

Beatrice shook her head. "No way. I am not inviting the only boy I know with so much as a
passing interest in me to come to Storybrooke for my joint birthday party with the Savior."

"Well, you have to tell him sometime."

"My parents would freak."

Aurora looked pensive.

"What?," asked Beatrice, convinced that some piece of princess knowledge was about to come out whether she wanted it to or not.

"It is your seventeenth birthday and you haven't met your True Love yet."

"Oh, God," said Beatrice, getting up.

"Where are you going?"

"To get more espresso. I need it if you're going to talk like this."

Now

Beatrice opened the door to find Aurora.

"I've been looking everywhere for you."

"Really?," asked Beatrice.

"I thought you would be with the others, trying to figure out what's going on."

"I'm on house arrest," said Beatrice, letting Aurora in.

Martha bounded up to Aurora and the princess gave the Dalmatian her usual enthusiastic greeting.

"I've only done two Doctor Whos, but I'm thinking of starting Sherlock. Want to watch? The second episode has a wedding. I know how you love that."

Beatrice sat to realize Aurora hadn't joined her on the sofa. She stood stiffly.

"Something unusual happened to me this morning."

"You woke up and couldn't remember the past year?," Beatrice offered, petting Martha on the head.

"Something else."

"Aurora, other than waking up missing memories in a town of fairy tale characters, I can't think of anything else unusual so you are going to have to fill in the blanks."

"I woke up with someone."

"Okay, good for you. Let's start the show."

"I woke up with Mulan," she said abruptly.

Beatrice froze. "Okay, like she's your roommate?"
"We were naked."

"Are you sure you don't want to watch TV?"

"Beatrice, this is important! I don't know what happened or what to do."

"Look, Aurora, we have two options. We can come up with a theory for the past year that explains how Mulan got here from the Enchanted Forest and how you ended up sleeping with the woman who last I heard, you accused of stealing your True Love from you. Or we can watch Sherlock."

Aurora thought on it. "You said there was a wedding?"

"Beatrice!," Belle called from upstairs. "You need to get dressed for the town meeting!"

Aurora looked at Beatrice in shock. "You never said your mother was home! What if she tells someone?!"

"You mean like everyone? Because that's probably totally happening."

---

**Then**

Beatrice entered Granny's with her parents following her. The dwarves had arrived. Ruby, Granny and David chatted happily. Henry was talking to Ariel and Archie. Mary Margaret was the first over.

"Happy birthday, Beatrice," said Mary Margaret, giving her a hug. The princess was sporting a small baby bump now, evidence of her second child on the way. She started motioning around. "People are still arriving, but presents are over there. Food is on the counter."

Mary Margaret led Belle away. Beatrice turned to Gold.

"Why is it we have all of our social gatherings here and the actual food never comes from here?"

Beatrice noticed her father was distracted. She followed his line of sight to where Emma talked with Neal.

Gold shook his head. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart. What were you saying?"

"You're still trying to make that happen?"

Gold looked at her seriously. "You know my only desire is my children's happiness. Miss Swan inherited stubbornness from both her parents. I simply wish your brother was having better luck."

Beatrice leaned in. "You do remember the part where he let her take the fall for a robbery, right? Then she like went to jail..."

Gold shrugged. "All relationships have their difficulties."

"And if some guy set me up for a robbery?"

"I see your point. Though I am pleased to see you haven't given up on love entirely."

"Nope. That's still happening."

At that moment, Tinker Bell approached. "Hey, Beatrice. Happy birthday."
"Oh, good," said Gold. "Perhaps a fairy can actually be useful for once."

Tink rolled her eyes.

"No, hear me out, I think you'll be interested. Certainly if you're convinced Regina has a True Love somewhere out there that she rejected and Regina is well... evil is in her name, isn't it? If she has a True Love somewhere, certainly my daughter- who has never slaughtered a village or cast a Dark Curse- has hope."

Tink turned to Beatrice. "You don't think you have a True Love? That's so sad. Of course you have hope."

Beatrice threw her head back in frustration. "You all seem to think the universe is fair and it's not. The universe doesn't care."

Beatrice walked away, brushing past her mother. Belle walked over to Gold.

"Rumple, did you start with her again?"

"What is it I am supposed to do when she is so devoid of hope?"

"Contradicting her just upsets her and it is her birthday."

"How long has this been going on?," asked Tinker Bell.

"It all began at that ridiculous camp," said Gold.

"We sent her to a science program in Boston for a few weeks, just to get her out of Storybrooke and because she loves physics. It was really good for her. She made some good friends, including a very sweet girl."

"How was it good for her?," asked Gold.

"What went wrong?," asked Tink.

"She fell for a boy and it turned out that he had a girlfriend back home."

"Oh," said Tink.

"Luckily, she had made friends with another boy and they met up at a convention in Boston." She turned to Gold. "Where Rumple decided he didn't approve."

"You went past the town line?," asked Tink.

"I didn't approve because there is no way he's her True Love and therefore he is not worth her time."

"When she told us she didn't expect to find a True Love," said Belle.

"Well," said Tink, "I've been appointed her fairy godmother. Now it's my job to change that."

Belle grinned and looked over at Gold. He didn't seem quite as persuaded.

Beatrice walked up to Emma.

"Your parents are talking pretty seriously to Tink," said Emma.
"Yeah, I'm sure that she and Astrid will find a way to fairy godmother me between the two of them." She held up a small gift bag.

Emma acknowledged the bag with an eyebrow raise and took a gift bag off the table of her own. They exchanged them silently.

"A Wilson's leather gift card? Thanks."

"A Tenth Doctor travel tumbler! Awesome!"

"I feel bad, how much is on here?"

"Oh, don't worry, my dad bought it. He's still trying to suck up to you."

"Right. Great."

"Tink has an idea," said Belle.

Beatrice looked up at her mother and the fairy.

"Make a wish on your birthday candle to find your True Love," said Tink.

Beatrice paused. "You people are serious. What is that going to do? Unless you've replaced the candle with some sort of magic candle in which case, why haven't we been using it?"

"Regular candle with the wish of the Dark Princess," said Tink.

"What could it hurt?," asked Belle.

"Right because no one has ever had anything go wrong using magic. Especially not anyone in this room," she said motioning at Archie and Marco.

"I think you're afraid," said Belle.

Beatrice scoffed. "I'm afraid? Of what? Other than the dark."

"You're afraid that you will find True Love," said Tink.

"It's not happening," said Beatrice.

"Then what's the harm?," asked Belle.

"Fine," said Beatrice. "I will use up my birthday wish on this. Nothing will happen. When I die a non-literal spinster, you will see I was right."

"Everyone it's time for cake!," called Mary Margaret.

They got into position. There were two cakes. Emma's was pink- Beatrice could only assume Mary Margaret or David had chosen the color- and decorated in icing buttercups. Luckily for Beatrice, Mr. Drury had really gotten into reality baking shows and was happy to attempt a TARDIS cake. He still wasn't taking Beatrice's suggestions for new cupcake flavors.

Emma blew out hers.

"Make a wish," Belle whispered.

Beatrice held her hair back and leaned down to blow out the candles. The small crowd at
Granny's applauded.
"Sorry to intrude."

At which point, Beatrice looked up to see the most beautiful boy, well man, but youngish, she had ever laid eyes on.

And he had an English accent.

Beatrice turned to Gold. "What the hell kind of candle was that?," she hissed.

Gold frowned.
"I wanted to get a room at the inn, but there was no one there."

"You're visiting?," asked Henry.

"I am."

"Um, I can check you in," said Ruby, eagerly stepping forward.

"That would be very kind."

He glanced back at Beatrice, then she realized he was looking at her mother. Great.

"Just back here," said Ruby.

"Thank you," he said. "Oh, happy birthday."

Beatrice waited an awkwardly long time before saying thank you.

So awkward he was gone.

Beatrice turned to where her mother handed her a piece of cake.

"That was unrelated," said Beatrice.

Belle shook her head and handed Gold a piece. "I never said it was. Tink?"

The fairy nodded. "Of course not."

Gold stared at them quizzically then took a place at a table.

"Because handsome young men with the exact accent that you adore wander into Storybrooke all the time," she added.

Belle giggled. She passed out slices of cake then went with Beatrice to sit with Gold and Merlin.

"Ruby," said Belle. "Who was the guest?"

All ears turned to the lupine girl now.

"His name is Joseph. He says he's a nature photographer looking for autumn foliage."

Emma frowned. "He came to the middle of nowhere in Maine for that?"

"We've had a few tourists wander around," offered David.
"He's cute," said Ruby.

"What do you mean by that?," asked Beatrice.

Ruby shrugged. "I don't know. Just that he's cute."

Now

Beatrice walked with Belle towards City Hall.

"Town meeting, this should be fun," said Beatrice.

"Belle!"

Beatrice and Belle looked down the sidewalk to see a very pregnant Mary Margaret.

"Oh my God," said Beatrice.

"It's not outside the realm of possibility," said Belle.

"She looks so..."

The word Beatrice was thinking of was huge. She last remembered a tiny Mary Margaret and now she was...

Huge.

"Don't say it," Belle warned. "Don't say anything."

"I'm so glad you're here," said Mary Margaret. "There are so many new people."

"New people?," asked Belle.

She nodded. "More people from the Enchanted Forest that didn't come here with the last Curse. They remember who they are and have no idea how anything works."

"That must be so unsettling," said Belle. "Maybe I could organize something at the library to help out? A sort of orientation."

"That's a great idea," said Mary Margaret.

"So..." said Belle, looking at her friend's stomach.

"Yeah," said Mary Margaret following Belle's gaze down.

"That must have been quite a surprise," said Belle.

"Yeah."

"What does Emma think?," asked Belle.

"She hasn't said much. Actually, she has a boyfriend. Another surprise."

"What?," asked Beatrice.

Belle looked at her daughter again. "None of these things are impossible."
"I'm just saying Neal, Hook, I think Jefferson has a thing for her..."

"Really? Jefferson?," asked Mary Margaret. She shook her head. "We can worry about that later. I have got to start this meeting. Everyone is in a panic."

**Then**

The party was winding down. Some of the guests had offered to take Emma for drinks at the Rabbit Hole and they had departed. Mary Margaret and David had taken home Henry. Now Belle and Aurora picked up the last bits of the party as Beatrice collected her presents and wrapped up the rest of her cake.

Knocking Aurora's present to the floor, she bent down to pick it up and stood up straight to face him.

Him.

"Hello," he said with a slight smile.

"Hi."

"I was just looking for something to eat."

"Oh, well, Ruby went to the Rabbit Hole and I think Granny is probably sleeping."

"Anywhere you recommend?"

"Well, Mushu's is open until ten. It's down the street. Then George's Taverna, a couple of blocks over."

"I don't think I'm that hungry."

"Do you want some cake?" Beatrice picked up the last already sliced piece.

"Thank you," he said, taking the plate and fork. "So, seventeen..."

"How did you know that?"

"It was on the cake, wasn't it?"

"No."

"By your appearance, I narrowed it some. Hard to tell with your mother who appears to have been very young when she had you, but also aging quite well. Your father is much older than your mother so he was no help," Joseph added, taking a bite. "Then I wondered where was the car?"

"The car?," asked Beatrice.

"Sweetheart," Gold piped up from behind her. "We ought to be getting home. You have school in the morning."

"Right," said Beatrice.

He held his hand out to the newcomer. "I'm Mr. Gold."

"Joseph Gillette."
"Will you be staying in Storybrooke long?"

"I suppose I'll see what the leaves do."

Now Belle was on the case. "I'm Belle," she said offering her hand.

"Hello, Belle."

"Ruby told us you're here for the foliage," said Belle.

"Yes, the Acer saccharum are supposed to be excellent," said Joseph.

"I'm the librarian. If you need anything while you're here, the library is just next door."

"Thank you. I might take you up on that." He put the plate down. "Thank you for the cake, Beatrice."

"I didn't-"

He smiled back at Beatrice.

"Nature photographer..." Gold said with a grimace.

"I think he's nice," said Belle.

"You thought Tamara was nice," said Gold.

"I thought you were nice," Belle teased back.

"And that just proves my point."

---

Now

Following Mary Margaret into City Hall, Belle and Beatrice came upon Gold and Merlin quietly discussing the various ramifications of whatever Curse they were under.

"I'm telling you it makes more sense, sunshine," said Merlin. "One curse brings them over and wipes our memories."

"Yes, but why would you need to do both?," asked Gold.

"Uh," Beatrice began awkwardly, "for what it's worth, I don't think the same Curse brought them over and wiped our memories."

"What makes you think that, sweetheart?," asked Gold.

"Someone sort of told me that they woke up next to someone who wasn't here at the time we stopped remembering," said Beatrice.

Merlin shrugged. "A curse could do that. A curse could do anything."

"The circumstantial evidence around this suggests that they would have had to do something last night..." Beatrice said mortified.

"Well, I'd like to know who for my own amusement," said Merlin.
"I would like to know who so I can discuss with them that such topics are unsuitable for you," said Gold. "Was it Miss Swan?"

"What? No!"

"Rumple, if it was said to her in confidence, that's an end to it," said Belle. "Though, yes, Mary Margaret said Emma has a boyfriend."

This did not deter Gold. "Miss Lucas?"

"Why would Ruby come running to me about her sex life?," Beatrice shrieked.

Gold flinched.

"You do realize she knows sex exists, don't you, sunshine?," asked Merlin.

"What about Bae?," asked Belle, changing the subject.

Gold shook his head.

"What about one of your locator spells or the blood magic thing?," asked Beatrice.

"No such luck. Either they don't work under the new Curse or someone is intentionally keeping my son from me," Gold seethed.

"I have heard others are missing as well," said Merlin.

Belle rubbed Gold's arm. "You'll find him."

The sorcerers continued talking and Beatrice hung at her mother's side around the room.

"Mulan!," said Belle.

This was not happening. This was not happening. Her mother was actually calling Mulan over.

Mulan turned. She had her Storybrooke clothes on, military jacket, sweater, jeans and boots.

"Belle," said Mulan. She looked at Beatrice. "It's you. You were in the Enchanted Forest with the Dark One."

Belle smiled. "This is my daughter, Beatrice."

"Well, I suppose it's good to meet you formally, though I never expected to be here at all."

Belle nodded. "You'll get the hang of it. Do you need help with anything in the meantime?"

"I'll adjust," said Mulan. "So you and the Dark One..."

Belle nodded.

"I know," said Beatrice. "Lots of surprise pairings today."

Mulan blushed and excused herself, being sure to pick a seat as far from Aurora as possible.

"Everyone if we could all take a seat and get started," said Mary Margaret.

Beatrice followed her mother to a seat by her father and grandfather.
Mary Margaret and Emma took the space in front of the dais as everyone shuffled into their seats.

"So," said Emma, "does anyone remember anything after we got back from Neverland?"

The room was silent.

Then the rabble began.

"What happened to our memories?"

"Does the Enchanted Forest still exist?"

"Who cursed us?"

"We all know who did this!," said Leroy turning. "The same person who cast the last Dark Curse!"

The attention of the whole room turned towards Regina hanging alone in the back, save for one college-looking boy in the corner who Beatrice thought was pretty cute. She had never seen him before. Was he from the Enchanted Forest? He did seem pretty bewildered by the whole setup.

"Why would I do this?," asked Regina. The Evil Queen's snapping plucked Beatrice from her wondering about the new college boy. "What would be the point of wiping away a year of your miserable lives? And why would I bring over more of you?"

"Well, what about Gold?," asked Leroy.

Belle began first. "Rumple didn't-"

Gold placed his hand on Belle's wrist. "I can easily remove myself from the running. If I had cast a curse, I would know where my son was. Also, you would all be far less tiresome."

Emma nodded. "Fair enough-"

"There's someone else that powerful," Ashley chimed in. "And we have no idea what she's capable of."

"Ashley," hissed Mary Margaret.

"You are treading on thin ice, dearie," Gold sneered.

Merlin leaned forward to look sideways. "I would add something but I don't speak stupid."

"Oh, she meant me," said Beatrice.

There were some murmurs among the crowd.

Beatrice stood. "I can exclude myself."

"Beatrice, you don't have to-" said Mary Margaret.

"No, no, I can do this." She turned to the rest of the room. "First off, the hearts of everything I love most are fine. Dog's good, too. Second, if I was going to curse the town we would have a Starbucks. Maybe two. A frozen yogurt place. A cupcake place. I'm not talking Drury's cupcakes, I mean Sprinkles with fun flavors. Third, Comic Con would be held here. Fourth, David Tennant would be filming the American version of Broadchurch down the street and he would get to keep his Scottish accent."
Mulan leaned forward to Belle. "What is she talking about?"

"Okay, Beatrice, I think you've said enough," said Emma.

"She didn't say she wouldn't," said Ashley.

Emma groaned.

Beatrice shook her head. "I've got two seasons of Downton Abbey to watch, Ashley. I don't have time for your crap."

Beatrice felt Belle's hand pulling her back down to her seat as yet another town meeting closed without anyone getting closer to the truth.

Afterwards, Belle began to seek out the newcomers to Storybrooke and inviting them to the library for an orientation to modern life that she had just come up with. Gold and Merlin reconvened to discuss how to find Neal. Beatrice stood in front of City Hall and tried to go back through her text messages, but they seemed to be gone as well and she had apparently changed her iCloud password.

"I think I need to speak with you."

Beatrice looked up. It was college boy.

He had an English accent. Just when she had thought he couldn't be more attractive...

Beatrice tried to collect herself. "Did you need some help? Because my mom is having an orientation at the library tomorrow. She's filled up the morning session."

"I went to bed in my flat last night. I woke up in a town in Maine where people say they're fairy tale characters. I even met Mulan."

"Okay, since you just said fairy tale characters, are you incredibly sure you're not from the Enchanted Forest?"

He didn't seem amused by that. "Right. What is the game?"

"The game?"

"Why is everyone pretending to be a fairy tale character?"

"It's not really pretending."

"Role playing. Acting. Whatever you want to call it. Is it for a television show or do you all just enjoy it as some kind of ritual?"

Beatrice looked around. "There is never anyone around to do the explanation speech when you want them. Seriously, where is Henry?"

"So, you're content to tell me that you and every one else in the town is a fairy tale character?"

"Well, I don't think everyone is main cast, there are a lot of role players."

"Prove it."
"Sorry?"

"There's nothing that points to you all being fairy tale characters, no evidence. Just your own delusions."

"Delusions?" She motioned towards Gold in the distance. "My dad is Rumplestiltskin."

"Well, short of him spinning straw into gold-" college boy said, his voice dripping with cynicism.

"You want proof?"

Beatrice stepped back. She stamped her foot on the ground and the courtyard was covered in ice. He stood dumbfounded.

"What was that?," he asked when he finally spoke.

"Proof."

"Beatrice, someone could slip!," Belle called.

"Sorry," said Beatrice, waving her hand to vanquish the ice. She looked back at college boy. "So, you're not from here and you're not from the Enchanted Forest..."

"Decidedly not."

"You're not from the Land Without Color, are you? Frankenstein's from there."

"Frankenstein?"

"Yeah, he's real, too." She paused. "So how did you get here?"

"How would I know? I'm just as clueless as the rest of you."

"Beatrice."

She looked up. Gold and Merlin had managed to close the distance away they had been standing once they realized Beatrice was talking to someone.

"Who's your friend?," asked Merlin.

"Joseph Gillette," he offered along with his hand.

"Merlin."

"I haven't seen you before," said Gold.

"Yeah, he's not from here and not from the Enchanted Forest, so-"

"Then how did you get here, dearie?," Gold sneered.

"I don't know. I'm just as affected as the rest of you."

"Do you suppose you can sort that out without my daughter's help?," asked Gold.

"Dad!," said Beatrice.

Regina approached. "Gold, we have a problem."
"I'm a bit busy at the moment, dearie," said Gold.

"Trust me. You'll want to make time for this," said Regina.

"What seems to be the problem, Your Majesty?"

"I just visited my vault."

Gold rolled his eyes. "What's missing?"

"That's just it. Nothing is missing. Someone else is there."

"Who?," asked Merlin.

"My mother," said Regina. "She's dead."

"How did Cora get here?," asked Gold.

"I thought you used the Sword of Damocles," said Merlin.

"We did," said Gold. He glanced at Beatrice.

"I don't know, there weren't operating instructions on it," said Beatrice.

"Could Cora have cast your curse?," asked Merlin.

"In order for it to work, you need to sacrifice the thing you love most," said Gold. "Cora ripped her own heart out. She can't love anything or anyone."

"Terribly sorry. She ripped her own heart out?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah, she was kind of crazy," said Beatrice.

This earned a glare from Regina.

"What? Are you going to stand here and act like she wasn't?"

"Who is he?"

"Just for fun, let's make certain she's dead," said Merlin. "If we have to, we'll kill her again. And again. Until it sticks."

Beatrice and Joseph went to follow. Gold turned and pointed at Beatrice.

"You are going home with your mother until this is resolved."

"What? The Curse? The last one took like twenty-eight years."

"Let's hope this one moves quicker." He looked at Joseph. "You. I don't care."

"Mind if I come along then?"

Gold eyed him.

"I'm good with a corpse."

"Oh, sunshine, let him come. You only get one chance to see the dead Queen of Hearts," said
Merlin. He turned to Regina. "Though I suppose it's more in your case, isn't it?"

Beatrice watched them leave and Belle walked up to her.

"So, who's your new friend?," she asked.

"No idea."
Chapter 54

Last Fall

Storybrooke was quiet in the time since Beatrice and Emma’s birthday by necessity. The visitor to town disappeared every day and did not show any sign that he was tired of taking pictures of foliage, even as it began to fall off the trees. Halloween had been a source of contention with various witches barred from fully celebrating and the few scattered incidents of magic were kept quiet. Storybrooke went about its business.

As did Belle. She was in the library poring over the possible choices for the December book group and Merlin quietly sorted the returns.

Merlin looked at Belle.

"What?," she asked with a smile.

"I was just wondering when we were going to discuss Beatrice's stalking."

Belle smiled. "She wasn't stalking. She just didn't know how to talk to him."

Merlin eyed her.

Belle nodded. "Yes, that is the definition of stalking."

"Good to see she has inherited her father's social awkwardness."

"At the party, Tinker Bell had the idea that Beatrice ought to use her birthday wish so that her True Love would come to her. Then he showed up."

"You think it worked?"

"Maybe. The Blue Fairy never told you what she did with him or even what land she sent him to."

"You're a terrible liar."

Belle giggled. "I believe in Beatrice's magic. I don't think there's anything she can't do."

"Then she'll have to speak with him, won't she?"

"She might."

Beatrice was not stalking.

She was just having pie.

Two or three times a day in a place that happened to be where someone else was eating or walking through back to his room.

She wasn't a stalker. She was a compulsive over-eater.
Ruby was flirting with him again. She couldn't blame her. The eyes, the adorable dark hair...

The eyelashes.

But then again she could.

Beatrice snapped back, trying not to get into Regina George territory.

Or worse yet Regina Mills territory.

Her phone buzzed. It was Jamie texting.

"Is that Mr. Bannister?," asked Gold.

Beatrice looked up. Gold sat down in the booth across from her.

"He wanted to know if I can come see a movie or something this weekend."

"No, you cannot."

"What? It's Hunger Games."

"The one where the children fight on television?"

"Yes!"

"People wanted to see a sequel?"

Beatrice did find it slightly bizarre that her father came from a world where there was literal heart ripping out, but The Hunger Games seemed to disturb him.

"Dad..."

"If you would like to see the film with Miss Wahidi, that would be acceptable."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. Mahnaz's dad was the only one whose own level of caution matched her own father's. "Jamie asked me."

"I am unmoved."

"Do you have a better idea?"

"Excuse me?"

"Do you have a better idea than resigning myself to a life without True Love? Lots of people seem to live just fine, in fact, most of the planet. I could just go out with someone because we have things in common not because fate and pixie dust has decreed that I am destined to be with him."

Gold stared at her.

He finally spoke. "You deserve so much more than what the people of this realm settle for."

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**Today**

"So you're not from the Enchanted Forest?," asked Merlin as they walked through Storybrooke Cemetery.
"No," Joseph answered.

"Then what the hell are you doing here?," asked Regina as they approached the vault. "More importantly, why are we tolerating you?"

"Why indeed?," Joseph shot back.

Regina opened the door to the vault and the others walked inside.

"When did you give up on the cane?," Regina asked Gold.

"I didn't know you cared, dearie."

"I'm just wondering what you're going to beat people with."

"I'll manage."

Regina waved her hand and opened the door to the vault. She motioned at the casket.

"There she is. See for yourself."

Merlin lifted the lid. "Indeed it is. Death hardly seems to have altered her. Devoid of feeling as ever."

Joseph stood next to the wizard. Merlin watched as he went over the body, lifting her hands to examine her fingers.

"Do you mind?," asked Regina. "That's my mother."

"No, I don't mind," said Joseph, undeterred. "She's missing a lock of hair."

"What?," asked Regina.

Joseph pointed. "See there, she's had her hair restyled to have her fringe conceal it, but right there."

Merlin looked at Gold. "A lock of hair from the darkest of souls. I think Cora fits that description."

"Sorry?," asked Joseph.

"Once upon a time, a sorcerer created a Dark Curse," said Merlin. He then turned to Regina. "He then manipulated an Evil Queen into casting it."

"Where's the heart?," asked Gold.

"I don't know," said Regina.

"You don't know."

"It's not here," Regina said through gritted teeth.

"Well, have you checked your little collection?," asked Merlin.

"Collection?," asked Joseph.

Merlin nodded over at the cabinet of glowing squares. "Go on. Have a look." He continued speaking as the newcomer began his explorations. "This is a moot point anyway. Regina did not
"Thank you," said Regina.

"No one who knows Cora that well could possibly love her enough to make her worth sacrificing."

Regina scowled and approached Merlin. "That is my mother you are talking about. Show some respect."

"Respect?," Merlin asked with a grin. "Show respect for that social-climbing manipulator who was just a middling witch at best?"

"Middling?!," demanded Regina.

Joseph walked over and pulled open a drawer. The sorcerers were surprised when he simply plucked the heart from the drawer and held it with no trace of revulsion.

"This looks like a heart."

"It is a heart. Be careful with that!," said Regina, her attention diverted. She walked over and took it out of his hand.

Joseph simply turned and opened another glowing drawer. Then another. And another.

"Stop that!," said Regina.

"What do you keep them for?"

"When a sorcerer takes a heart, it becomes enchanted," said Merlin. "You can use it to control the victim or crush his heart when the mood strikes your fancy."

"You don't seem to have a filing system," said Joseph.

"No."

"Then how do you tell who they belong to?"

Merlin smiled, looking at Regina. "How do you tell who they belong to, Your Majesty?"

"I don't know," said Regina.

"You have a curio cabinet full of hearts that you intend to use to control people and you have no idea who they belong to?," asked Joseph.

"Put my hearts back," said Regina.

"I don't think they're technically yours," said Joseph. "No telling who they belong to really."

"Any contributions, sunshine?," asked Merlin.

"When I hear something worth responding to, I will," said Gold.

"This Dark Curse. Did it take away our recollections of the past year?," asked Joseph.

Gold looked at him in annoyance. "No. Any memory potion could do that."
"Then what does it do?"

"It was meant to bring the inhabitants of the Enchanted Forest to this land."

"Who else could have cast it?"

Regina scoffed. "No one."

"This curse it has ingredients, doesn't it? Like any good crime, you just need someone willing to put the pieces together. Like a heart. The heart of something precious..." Joseph smiled. "All we need to do is figure out who's capable of that."

He smiled as he walked out.

"Who the hell is he?," asked Regina.

"No idea," said Merlin. "I think I like him, though."

What are we doing?," asked Beatrice as they walked into Granny's.

"We're meeting a friend of mine," said Belle.

"Belle, I don't think I have time today," said Mary Margaret. "I have a whole curse to deal with."

Belle looked at Mary Margaret. "I don't think you have time to wait."

They entered Granny's. A petite woman with shoulder length brown hair stood.

"Mary Margaret, this is Leigh," said Belle. "I'm so sorry. I never bothered asking what you go by here."

The woman smiled. "Leigh when I can get away with it. Regina gave me the name of Clementine. I wonder what I did to her sometimes." She shook hands with Mary Margaret. "So nice to meet you."

"I'm sorry," said Mary Margaret. "You've caught me in the middle of a busy day."

Leigh nodded in understanding. "I know the feeling. I awoke to a list of patients that I don't remember meeting before today." Leigh looked at Beatrice. "We meet at last."

"At last?"

"I was supposed to deliver you," said Leigh. "It would have been quite a feather in my cap I imagine, delivering the Dark Princess."

Belle caught Beatrice's quizzical glance. "I wrote her from the Dark Castle before I was imprisoned. Leigh was the best midwife in Avonlea and I would guess Storybrooke."

They finally sat at the booth.

"I was surprised not to have a file for you," said Leigh, pulling out some empty forms.

"Why?," asked Mary Margaret.

Beatrice caught on. "Because you're friends with Mom and Mom would have recommended her."
Leigh nodded. "No matter. We'll soldier on as we must."

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**Last Fall**

"Beatrice," said Belle.

Beatrice looked up from her iPad. She had been at Granny's for an hour now, hoping for a chance meeting but not with Belle. "Mom."

Belle sat. "What are you doing here?"

She tried to think of something other than stalking the new guy.

"I was just hungry..."

"How's the pie?," asked Belle. She took Beatrice's fork and had a bite. "It's good. Don't you want any?"

"I am full..."

Not that she had been at Granny's for ages or anything, wondering if Joseph might come through.

"Belle?," an excited voice asked.

"Leigh!," said Belle, getting up to give the woman a hug. "It's so good to see you. I'm so glad Rumple could find you."

"Well, it was quite a surprise to hear from him, but it wasn't about the rent so that was all good," she said, sitting down across from them in the booth. "This must be her. The Dark Princess I didn't get to deliver."

Belle smiled. "Sorry." Belle turned to Beatrice. "Leigh was the best midwife in Avonlea and I assume Storybrooke."

"You would assume correctly, though business was a bit slow during the Curse," Leigh said with a smile.

"What did you do?," asked Belle.

Leigh shrugged. "I read. I took up knitting. I watched a lot of talk shows, then Oprah went off the air and I was very bored for a few years."

"Why do you need a midwife?," asked Beatrice.

Belle shook her head. "For Mary Margaret, silly. She is supposed to be meeting us here."

"She was so traumatized for a moment," Leigh teased.

"Well, she does like having three hundred years between her and the next sibling," Belle admitted.

"I don't care what you people do..." said Beatrice.

"Squeamish, is she?," asked Leigh. "Your mother never would have stood for that."

The door opened. Beatrice looked up to see Joseph walking in. He flashed one of his quick smiles.
And she was with her mother and a midwife.

Awesome.

Before Beatrice could come up with a convincing opening line, Joseph had taken a seat at the counter. Ruby was quick to come over, nearly knocking over another waitress in the process.

"So, how was your nature walk?" asked Ruby.

"Very good. Tea, I think."

"Hot?" asked Ruby.

"I should think so."

Beatrice wanted to scream. Of course he wanted the tea hot! If he was talking to her, she would be doing a much better job.

Oh, who was she kidding? She had no idea how to make tea.

"Have we lost your interest?" asked Leigh.

"Sorry. What were we talking about?"

"Mucus plugs."

"Oh, God. Ew."

Belle giggled.

"I was only joking," said Leigh. "We were wondering where her highness might have gotten off to."

"I'm so sorry she's late," said Belle.

"Oh, no apology necessary. It was lovely to catch up with you." Leigh's phone beeped and she looked at the screen. "Oh, dear, one of my patients just went into labor. I must be off. We'll reschedule?"

"Of course," said Belle.

"Lovely to have met you, Beatrice," said Leigh.

She left as Beatrice got distracted again. This time Ruby had proudly returned with a cup and tea in a bag. Joseph didn't comment, but it did not seem to be a hit with him. Ruby leaned forward.

"Do you have any plans tonight?" asked Ruby.

He looked up at her.

"Because I was thinking of heading over to the Rabbit Hole for a drink."

"He's cute," Belle whispered.

Beatrice froze. She forced herself to look away.

"What?" asked Belle.
"Nothing. I never said anything."

The brave thing would be to talk with him," said Belle.

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Belle eyed her. "Really? That's your story?"

Beatrice squirmed.

"Sweetheart, it's okay to have a crush on someone," Belle whispered. "I hope you feel like you can tell me these things."

Belle hurried to follow Beatrice out.

"I think you should talk to him again."

Beatrice stopped and turned. "What?"

"You obviously find him attractive- he's not my type-"

"Clearly," said Beatrice with a shudder.

"You've hardly spoken to him, though. If you talk to him, you can find out if there's anything else you like."

"Why would you tell me to do that? He's probably in college, he's from another country, he's not a fairy tale character... This is some irresponsible parenting!"

Belle grinned. "Telling you to talk to a boy you like is irresponsible?"

"Yes! You don't know what I could get into! Don't you watch Dr. Phil?!"

"I know you. I know you are not the type to jump into bed with someone just because he was nice to you." She smiled at Beatrice and took her hand. "I trust you."

Today

Belle and Beatrice had just finished eating when Merlin and Gold arrived back at Granny's with Joseph in tow.

"Was she there?," asked Belle.

"Yes and just as friendly as she ever was," said Merlin sitting at the booth. "I think I prefer her company dead."

"Why would anyone want to bring over Cora?," asked Beatrice.

"The question is what she had to do with this new curse," said Gold.

Beatrice walked over to Joseph.

"That woman has a vault full of hearts," Joseph announced matter of factly.

"Yeah," said Beatrice.
"This Dark Curse," said Joseph. "At the meeting, you mentioned something about the hearts of the things you loved most?"

"That's the most important ingredient," said Beatrice. "You have to sacrifice the heart of the thing you love the most."

"Anyone missing anyone?"

Beatrice hesitated. "My brother is missing."

"Well, it wasn't your father."

"You know that?"

Joseph nodded. "Your father created a Dark Curse, but he had someone else cast it which means that he is a very clever manipulator and also unwilling to sacrifice. Certainly not his own child."

"And you have no idea why you're in Storybrooke?"

"I had never heard of Storybrooke before I woke up this morning."

"Where are you from?"

"London."

"London," Beatrice repeated, nodding with approval.

"I had just finished a case."

"A case?"

"Well, it's a bit of a hobby, really."

"Here you go," said Ruby, leaning too far over. "Let me know if you need anything else."

"Thank you," said Joseph, taking the hot water and tea bag. He placed it inside with disdain.

"She is Little Red Riding Hood," said Beatrice. "And the wolf."

"Good to know," said Joseph. "Your father is Rumplestiltskin. Your grandfather is Merlin. I take it your mother is the Belle from Beauty and the Beast?"

"The library is a pretty big hint, right?"

"And who does that make you?"

"Nobody."

"I don't think so."

Beatrice shook her head. "Nope. Nobody."

He leaned forward to whisper. "The way they looked at you at the meeting. They were afraid, not really of you but of what they thought you could do."

"Should we be worried about Venus?" Belle asked Merlin.
Merlin shook his head. "A year has passed. My mother has never stood still for that long."

Belle looked at Gold. "Rumple?"

"I'm going to work at the shop tonight, to see if I can find a way to strengthen the locator spell."

"And when are you going to sleep?"

Gold ignored her, nodding towards where Joseph spoke with Beatrice. "What do you suppose that is?"

Merlin glanced back.

"I think he's a cute boy and she's interested in talking to him," remarked Belle.

"How old is he?"

"How old are you again, sunshine?," asked Merlin.

"She is only sixteen-" said Gold.

"Seventeen," Belle corrected.

"Seventeen," said Merlin. "That's almost eighteen which is- I believe- the age Belle was when she took up with you."

Belle tried unsuccessfully to hide a smirk as that statistic made Gold squirm.

"I'm going over there," said Gold.

"Rumple," said Belle, putting her hand over his wrist. He reluctantly squirmed in his seat. "If I went to live with you, certainly Beatrice can be trusted to talk to a boy across a diner from her parents and grandfather."

---

Then

Beatrice walked past the window of Granny's a few times.

He was there, sitting at the counter. Ruby didn't seem to be in there.

"Do the brave thing," Beatrice muttered, even as she rolled her eyes.

Willing herself not to think, she opened the door and walked into the diner. She caught the old woman's tsk-ing look as she walked away. Beatrice sat down in the empty chair at the counter next to him.

"What car?," she asked.

"Excuse me?"

She swallowed again. "When we met you said you wondered where the car was."

"Oh. That. Well, if you were turning sixteen, your father would have gotten you a car, wouldn't he? That's why your Volkswagen is the one that would have been newest in the showroom in October of last year."
"You didn't see my car, though."

"No, exactly. If your father had given you a car, he would have made a production of it and done
it in front of everyone at your party."

"Maybe he doesn't like to show off."

Joseph shook his head with a slight smirk. "His rings, his watch, the gold tooth, the cufflinks, the
two thousand dollar suit with a silk tie and dress shirt? Not to mention the jewelry your mother
had on which I assume were all gifts from your father on one occasion or another. It's not just that
he enjoys making conspicuous displays of wealth, it's a compulsion. He grew up poor, he came
into money later in life. I think when your brother was a teenager."

"Um, how did you come up with that?"

"He's not comfortable with the money. Also, your mother is clearly a second wife, probably just a
few years older than your half-brother, if that."

Beatrice frowned. "Did you just call my mom a gold digger?"

"Hardly. You're seventeen which means that your mother's relationship with your father is the one
that's taken up probably her entire adult life. Fortune hunters get in and get out. Also, they don't
take jobs as small town librarians. No, she's devoted to your father and he to her, but that's
obvious."

"Is it?" She shrugged. "So, you've just been hanging around town, watching everyone."

"Observing. Then there's you."

"Me?"

"You're attractive, clever and rich. By all rights, you ought to be queen of the social circle, but
you're not. There were no teenage boys at your party, no teenage girls for that matter. You're an
outcast."

"Maybe I want to be."

He shook his head. "No one wants to be an outcast. You only do it because you have no choice." He
looked at her necklace. "Then there's that."

Beatrice held her pendant, trying not to touch the stone.

"A gift from your mother. Family heirloom."

"Yeah," said Beatrice. "You're really good at this."

"Beatrice."

Beatrice turned to see her father standing in the doorway. He had Martha by the leash.

"Aren't you forgetting someone?"

"No dogs in my diner," Granny called.

Gold turned to look at her. "Really, dearie? Are you sure you want to go down that particular
road?"
Granny scowled.
"I have to go," said Beatrice.

**Today**

Belle entered the kitchen to see Gold was quietly at work. Martha padded around him, hoping for handouts.

"Rumple?"

He looked up at her trying to disguise the piece of egg he had just given the dog. "I didn't wake you, did I?"

"No, of course not," said Belle. She wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him in for a kiss. "Any luck?"

"None. I suppose I'll have to sort out where everyone else has been disappearing to. Perhaps that's where Bae went."

"You'll find a way. I know you will," said Belle. "I'm glad you're home. We were both worried about you."

"I wanted to make Beatrice breakfast."

"Such a good papa..."

He grimaced.

"What, Rumple?"

Gold returned to his puttering around the kitchen. "She has... Have you noticed... In the year that's passed... Physically..."

Gold winced with disgust. Belle smiled.

"You mean how she's blossomed," said Belle.

"For lack of a better word."

"That is the word, Rumple. It was a year, she's becoming a woman."

"Oh, don't say it... Not to mention that young man."

"She spoke with him."

"When has she spoken with a young man?"

"He walked up to her and said he had no idea what he was doing in Storybrooke or that any of this was real. Any compassionate human being would have spoken back."

"She was flirting."

Belle opened her mouth in a mocking gasp. "A seventeen year old girl flirting with a boy! We should call Doctor Hopper."
"Don't mock. I bet you never flirted."

Belle rolled her eyes. "I only had Gaston to flirt with and we were engaged when we met. Why would I bother?"

Gold shook his head "I don't want her to get hurt."

Belle wrapped her arms around him. "It's love, Rumple. If you don't get hurt a bit, it's not worth it."

Then

Beatrice never had many chores. When she had lived with her mom in Manhattan, she had to help with some dishes and make her own snacks, but Belle dealt with the housekeeping, maybe harkening back to her time as a Rumpelstiltskin's maid on some subconscious level. She however still preferred books to reading and so most cleaning fell to the wayside. Moving to Storybrooke had only lessened Beatrice's responsibilities since her father was the one to cook and the one to clean up after. A cleaning lady, Pearl, who was formerly one of Cinderella's mice did the dusting and so forth.

Gold had finally decided to give Beatrice one task. Six days a week, she drove out to the field where the dwarves had helped Tiny plant the magic beans. She was to use blood magic to open the lock and recast the invisibility spell, then went about her day and drove back to reverse the process. Tiny did it on his own most of the time and Beatrice took any harvested beans to put up back in the safe at the shop. The Charmings hadn't been thrilled with the plan, but they decided it was better than scorching the whole field which had been Gold's other proposal. They also hadn't been thrilled when he reminded them that possession was nine-tenths of the law.

Beatrice pulled up.

"Good morning, Tiny," she said, getting out of the car.

"Good morning, Beatrice," he said. "Here, I made you some strudel."

Tiny then proceeded to hand her a dish the size of a large pizza pan wrapped in plastic film.

"Wow," she said.

"They came out sort of small."

"Is this supposed to be one?!," asked Beatrice.

"I know. It's pathetic."

"Tiny, it's three times the size of my head! Thanks, though. I'll just snack on that throughout the school day..." She put the strudel on the hood of her car. "Okay, let's do this."

She walked over to the border of the cloaking spell and had just raised her hand when...

"Good morning!"

Beatrice froze. She and Tiny turned to see Joseph walking up towards them with a camera with a giant lens and a deerstalker cap.

"Good morning..." said Beatrice. She turned her head toward Tiny. "He's not from here. Don't say
anything weird."

"What do you mean weird?"

Beatrice then remembered she was talking to a giant who used to live up a beanstalk in the Enchanted Forest.

"We're doomed," said Beatrice.

Joseph walked over. "I'm surprised to see anyone out here. What brings you out here?"

"Well, this is Tiny and he just does some gardening for my father on this property that he... owns."

"Gardening?," asked Joseph. "In a wood?"

Tiny nodded, game to play along. "I'm the gardener. I garden."

"It's forest."

"It's a carbon offset thing," said Beatrice.

"Does your father often have you handle his business or just the green ones?"

"No, I was just..." Beatrice realized that she did not quite have a great excuse. "I was just checking on how the offsetting was going."

She turned to the grass and trees to give an appraising gaze.

"Yeah, good job, Tiny. Keep up the good work. I'll see you later."

"But what about-"

"I will see you later," said Beatrice, lifting up her huge strudel and going back to the car. "You know, after you go home."

Beatrice walked into the pawn shop.

Her father appeared to be marking a ledger. She put what was left of the giant strudel on the counter.

"What's that?," he asked, not looking up.

"That is cherry strudel. Tiny made it. There's about two pounds left."

"Did anything else of interest happen at the field today?"

"Not really..."

Gold sighed and put his pen down. "Beatrice, I find that you use the phrase 'not really' to cover up the opposite of what I believe the true meaning of it is. Did your nature photographer pop up at the field?"

"He's not my nature photographer. He was out photographing nature. I just happened to be in it."

"Charming as he may be," Gold said, contempt dripping for that first word, "he is an outsider. There are many things in this town that he should not see, such as a field of magic beans."
"He didn't see it."

"You know we must be cautious, particularly after Greg and Tamara."

"I know. He didn't see anything. It's invisible. He couldn't have seen something that's invisible, that's what invisible means."

"I think you ought to limit your contact with him."

"Oh," said Beatrice. "No problem."

"Good," said Gold. "I trust you."

---

**Now**

Beatrice knocked.

Joseph opened the door, wearing a robe over his clothes. "Beatrice."

"Good morning."

"Do come in."

He stepped aside to reveal piles of shredded paper on the floor. The wall had pinned up pieces of paper, some of which were taped together.

Beatrice surveyed the mêlée then eyed him. "Are you insane?"

"Not legally."

Beatrice shrugged. "Good enough."

"I am attempting to reconstruct the last year of my life." He motioned at the floor. "Someone has made confetti of those. Apparently, I arrived at Logan Airport in October. Any idea what I might have been doing here in October?"

"Not unless we had a thirtieth anniversary of the Dark Curse festival," said Beatrice.

"What's that?"

"Late October. It's the only things I can think of happening, thirtieth anniversary of the Dark Curse, Emma's birthday and my birthday."

"Someone doesn't want us to remember what's happened for the past year," said Joseph. "If we could figure out what that was, we could easily decipher who it was."

"Didn't you tell anyone you were coming here?," asked Beatrice.

"Probably."

"Probably?," asked Beatrice.

"I rang my brother, but he is not answering."

"He hasn't answered?," asked Beatrice.
"He will, I just don't know that I would have told him I found myself in a town full of fairy tale characters." He took the robe off. "We need to get out."

"We can't leave town," said Beatrice.

"Yes, about that, why not?"

Beatrice shrugged. "Curse rules? Three of the dwarfs are missing and they were last seen at the town line."

"That sounds like an excellent place to start," said Joseph.

Beatrice shook her head. "Why are you helping?"

"Why did you come here?"

"Because there are so few people capable of rational thought in this town."

"It just so happens that I excel at rational thought," he said, picking up his coat.

---

**Then**

Beatrice walked down Main Street, wondering how much longer she would have to avoid Joseph. The problem was solved when he walked up to her.

"You weren't at Granny's yesterday."

Beatrice turned. "Oh, hey."

"You're usually there."

Beatrice shrugged. "I didn't feel like hamburgers."

"I wanted to ask you something."

"Oh?"

"Yes," he stepped closer. "Have you ever heard rumors of anything unusual happening in the woods?"

Beatrice shook her head. "No, I can honestly say I haven't heard rumors of anything unusual happening in the woods."

"Well, someone's living out there."

"Oh?" Beatrice tried to run through her head who was out there.

"He looked like a wooden man."

Oh God. Was that where August had gone off to?

"Of course he's not a wooden man," said Joseph.

"Right. That would be ridiculous."
"Cosmetics or some kind of tattoo. All sorts of strange fetishes in the world. You don't know anyone like that, do you?"

"No."

He smiled. "Too bad. I was hoping to procure an introduction. I thought it might make for some interesting photographs."

"Yeah," Beatrice agreed. "Well, gotta run."

Beatrice hurried off, leaving Joseph in the dust.

Martha rode happily in the passenger seat of Beatrice's Volkswagen.

"Basically, the plan is that we need to go find August and get him to come out of the woods until Joseph's gone. Which I don't know how long that will be, until the leaves fall off, I guess?"

Martha didn't respond, she just continued to happily hang her head out the window.

"I mean, we can't let Dad do it because then he'll give him a memory potion and send him home like Adi and we'll never see him again. Not that there's much of a future in this anyway. I would just prefer not to have his memory wiped away."

Martha just began to pant.

"I mean, not that I care."

Martha was just not interested in the conversation.

"I know I can't let him find out we're all magical because of outsiders, though I don't know what they would do to us. Do you think it would just be tourists or would we get locked up like some sort of X-Men gone wrong? Or would the Disney company just own us outright?"

Beatrice parked the car and looked to her dog.

"Okay, if Joseph is out here, we are on a walk."

Martha did nothing.

"Just come on," said Beatrice, grabbing the leash.

They walked out.

"Okay, Martha," said Beatrice, "you don't know how to sniff out wood, do you?"

Martha broke free of her leash and Beatrice went after her.

"What are you doing?!," she shouted. "I can't run in the woods all day! Who do you think I am??"

When she caught up with Martha, she found that her dog had stopped at a silver retro looking trailer. She looked in amazement at the pleased Dalmatian.

"I knew magical puppies were a thing!," exclaimed Beatrice.

She carefully made her way up with Martha by her side.
"August?," called Beatrice, opening the door to the trailer.

He was waiting and yeah, August pretty much did look like a stiff wooden puppet.

"So," said Beatrice, "how's it been?"

August didn't say anything which Beatrice found troubling since the whole wood thing was making him difficult to read.

"Beatrice, what are you doing here?"

"I sort of need you to come out of the woods."

August shook his head and turned away.

"I can't go back. Not like this."

"Yeah, well, I can't leave you out here like this."

"Everyone will know what happened. I didn't do what the Blue Fairy told me to."

"Right, well, Mother Superior is gone."

August turned. "What do you mean gone?"

"She's alive. She's just mortal and sort of living in Olympus. Apparently being mortal there sucks or something."

"Olympus?," asked August.

"Yeah, it turns out all that mythology stuff is real and Venus is my great-grandmother and the Blue Fairy had a thing with my grandfather..."

August stared at her. Not that he had many expressions, but Beatrice began to feel it was a stare of blank incomprehension.

"Merlin. Not Peter Pan who is my other grandfather."

August didn't say anything.

"Also, I can make it snow."

He still didn't say anything.

Beatrice motioned at Martha. "I got a dog."

"The Blue Fairy is gone. No one can help me."

Beatrice shrugged. "I don't know. I mean, Merlin's good at stuff. My dad-"

"Your dad wants me dead."

"Right, well, I don't know, I do stuff a lot-"

"Has your father been teaching you magic?"

"Yeah..."
August didn't say anything.

"What?"

"Mother Superior tried to tell me about you."

"Are you kidding me? August, she's been trying to kill me."

August didn't say anything.

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't have time for this. There is a photographer out here from the real world and I have got no way to explain you which is not good because if he finds out... well, I would rather not, so have you got a hoodie or something?"

"I'm not going back there," August said with dogged determination.

Beatrice sighed. "Look, I've got easy and I've got hard and I don't have all day so--"

Things went black.

Now

"Who was Cora?"

Beatrice glanced over as she drove. "Regina's mom."

"Your father and grandfather seemed to have a history with her."

Beatrice shrugged. "She dated my dad or something. Actually, I get the feeling that it was sort of a messed up relationship. Kind of a Lifetime movie thing."

"The miller's daughter?"

"What?"

"The story. Rumplestiltskin and the Miller's Daughter. Is that what happened?"

"Something like that, but Merlin says it ended with her ripping her own heart out."

"She turned herself into a sociopath."

"Well, I don't think she was all that stable if she ripped her heart out to begin with," said Beatrice.

"Touche."

She stopped the car. They got out to see David, Hook and some others milling about the town line.

"Beatrice, what are you doing out here?," asked David. "It's not safe."

Beatrice motioned at Hook. "What are you still doing here?"

"Lovely to see you as well."

"Come on. I remember us coming into the dock after Neverland, you said you were out of here."
"It would appear fate had other plans."

"Does my dad know you're here? And not dead?"

David pointed at Joseph. "Who's he?"

"He's Joseph."

"We wanted to see what was happening at the town line," said Joseph, walking closer towards the line of orange spray paint.

"I wouldn't," warned another man.

Joseph looked the man up and down. "Let's see, a bow and a quiver. You're obviously the leader of these..." Joseph smiled. "Robin Hood."

"And yet we haven't been introduced."

"No, we haven't," said Joseph. "Then again, there's only so many fairy tale characters to choose from. What are you all standing around here for?"

"One of my men disappeared when he approached the town line," said Robin.

"Disappeared?," asked Joseph.

"He was taken away by a giant winged creature of some sort," said Robin.

"A giant winged creature?," asked Beatrice. "A dragon?"

"Why would it be a dragon?," asked Hook.

Beatrice turned to Hook. "Seriously, don't act like I'm stupid for guessing dragon, Captain Hook."

Joseph turned to the line. "Well, there's one way to settle this."

"What are you doing?," asked David.

"I think I'm crossing the line."

"Joseph-" said Beatrice.

As soon as his foot went over the line, a great beast flew out of the sky and towards him. At the moment it looked as if the beast had Joseph in its grasp, Beatrice instinctively raised her hand and froze it in a giant ice cube.

"See?," said Joseph. "It's much easier to look at now."

"You didn't know I could do that!," Beatrice shot back.

"I assumed you could do something."

Hook turned to the ice cube as the Merry Men began to marvel at it. "This isn't a bird," he proclaimed.

"Brilliant bit of detective work there," Joseph said to Hook. "No, it would seem to be a monkey."

"A monkey with wings?," asked David.
Beatrice's phone rang, but the most thing about it was that she had neglected her choice in ringtone until now.

*What is this feeling?*

*Fervid as a flame, does it have a name? Yes!...*

*Loathing, unadulterated loathing...*

"What is that?," asked Joseph.

"That is Wicked," said Beatrice. She looked up at the winged monkey in the ice cube. "That is a Flying Monkey."

"I've never heard of such a beast," said Robin.

Joseph shot him a glare. "We need to get it back in town. I need to examine it."


---

*Then*

Beatrice opened her eyes to find herself in the hospital, across from Martha sprawling on a neighboring bed.

"Strange hospital," said Joseph. "You come in with a head wound, you don't get so much as a second glance. Then again the nurse was going on about someone falling off a wall. Apparently, all the doctors are trying to put him together again."

"You brought my dog in," said Beatrice.

Joseph shrugged. "I decided against leaving her in the car. Besides, once I said she was your dog, no one seemed to object in the slightest. Exactly how much of the town does your father own?"

"I don't think he owns Regina's house."

Joseph walked over. He looked at Beatrice's head.

"The doctors here are shockingly incompetent," he remarked as he held her head.

"You're still not one."

"My brother's in medical school."

He walked to a tray of neglected instruments and took a pair of tweezers out of its wrapping. He walked to Beatrice, used one hand to hold her chin and took the tweezers to the cut.

"What are you doing?"

She winced as he pulled something and held up the tweezers triumphantly.

"There's a splinter in your wound," said Joseph.

"That's weird."

"There was nothing wooden in the trailer, not the floors, the furniture was cheap plastic..."
"Well, it's not like a wooden man hit me..." said Beatrice.

The door opened. Gold and Belle burst in.

"Sweetheart, what happened?," asked Belle.

"Where is he?," demanded Gold.

"Rumple, not now," Belle said quietly. She looked back at Beatrice, checking the wound. "Does it hurt?"

"She lost consciousness," Joseph added.

Gold looked at Joseph. "And what were you doing there?"

"I wasn't there. I was nearby and Martha found me. The dog seemed anxious and I was of course curious as to what she was doing so far out in the wood. She led me back to the trailer where Beatrice was. I roused her and brought her to hospital."

"Thank you," said Belle, signalling Gold to keep his cool.

"Excuse me," said Gold, storming out.

"Well," said Joseph, "you're in good hands now. I should leave."

"Thank you again," said Belle. "We'll have to find a way to repay you."

Joseph shook his head. "Nonsense. I'm only happy I could help."

Joseph left. Belle looked back at Beatrice.

"Emma and your brother are looking for August," said Belle. "Did he say why he did this?"

"Someone else on the Blue Fairy brainwashing team, I guess."

"I can't believe this." Belle shook her head. "He was our friend for so long."

"I can," said Gold. He walked over to Beatrice and took her chin in his hand. "He is going to be ashes."

"Ashes? Dad-"

"You could have died."

"No, I had my magical Dalmatian who apparently does Lassie things," she protested as she motioned at Martha.

Belle shook her head. "No, that's just all dogs in the Enchanted Forest."

"Really?," said Beatrice. "Is Lassie from the Enchanted Forest?"

Gold took his other hand and Beatrice felt the tingle of magic over her wound and her head became clearer.

He looked at Belle. "Drive her home."

"Rumple, don't do this," said Belle.
"He impersonated my son. He kept my children and you from me. Now Beatrice has been hurt. How much exactly am I expected to tolerate from a puppet?"

"Rumple!"

At Belle's behest, he stopped and turned. Belle approached carefully. "Promise me you won't kill him."

"Why?"

"Because Beatrice is fine and it won't solve anything. Promise me you won't kill him."

"I promise I will not kill the wretched puppet boy," Gold seethed, as if he was chewing on glass. Gold finally stalked out. Whale came in.

"So, what do we have here?," he asked.

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Already done with it because apparently this hospital is self-service now."

"Okay then," said Whale, walking out.


Belle combed her fingers through Beatrice's hair.

"So," she said.

"So?," Beatrice repeated.

"Your knight came to rescue you."

"So not my knight," said Beatrice. "Besides, let's give Martha some credit, not overlook her like her namesake."

Belle turned to the Dalmatian. "My apologies, Martha. You behaved heroically. Well done. There might be some chicken for you at supper."

Martha jumped off the bed and eagerly walked towards the door.

"All dogs in the Enchanted Forest?," asked Beatrice.

"All of them," confirmed Belle.
November 23, 2013

It was here.

It was finally here.

The Day of the Doctor.

Beatrice had waited for this day basically fifty years. As the television played the marathon of episodes leading up to the final event, Beatrice made her final preparations.

"Blue cupcakes?," Gold asked.

"Yeah, what else would they be?"

Gold looked around at the preparations. In addition to the cupcakes, there were specially ordered Jammie Dodgers and Jelly Babies, along with a selection of drinks, bananas and what seemed to be fish sticks and pudding.

"How many people did you invite?," asked Gold.

Beatrice shrugged. "Well, Henry, Aurora, Ariel, Neal, but I'm pretty sure they're going to blow me off. Oh, and Joseph."

"Excuse me?," asked Gold.

"He sort of saved me from my head bleeding on the floor of August's trailer, I kind of have to offer cupcakes," said Beatrice.

"You invited him here?"

"Mom said it was okay."

"Did she?"

"Everything magical is locked away. Besides, he's not coming."

Despite his relief that the dreaded boy would not be there, he did arrive at the conclusion that his daughter was preparing a party that she did not expect anyone to attend.

He simply kissed her on the cheek. "I will leave you to it then. I'll be at the shop."

Beatrice continued with her preparations and as predicted, none of the invited guests arrived. At quarter to two, she began setting up her watching space in front of the TV in the living room when the doorbell rang.

She looked at Martha.

"Oh, God help them if they think I am doing some magical crisis right now. Jack and Jill can just roll down that stupid hill for the rest of their lives for all I care."
She got up and went to the door, fully prepared to chew out anyone who dared to encroach upon this sacred hour and she found Joseph on the front step.

"Joseph," she said. "You actually came."

"Was I not supposed to do that?"

"No, it's just you said you don't watch TV."

"You invited me."

"Yes, I did."

Beatrice stepped aside as Martha bounded up to Joseph, eager to greet the visitor.

"Hello, girl," said Joseph, rubbing her behind the ears. "How are you?"

"I have snacks," said Beatrice, leading him into the kitchen. "Um, we have tea. Real tea, not in a bag."

"That would be lovely."

"I unfortunately have no idea what to do after you boil the water," said Beatrice.

"I think I can manage. Is this it?," he asked, picking up a gold tin.

"Yeah," said Beatrice, who was suddenly very aware she was in yoga pants and a Doctor Who tee. "Excuse me one second."

Beatrice ran upstairs and into her room, searching for a outfit that was better than what she had on, but in no way conveyed actual interest.

Because she wasn't interested. Neither was he. He was just British. They were super polite. Still, she looked like a schlub. She went hunting for the TARDIS leggings she had just gotten in the mail, a black tunic sweater and ballet flats. She brushed out her hair and hurried back down.

"You changed your clothes," said Joseph.

"Yeah, I got something on those," said Beatrice.

"What do you drink?"

"What?"

"I've never seen you with hot tea."

"I drink it when I'm sick."

"Your program's starting."

Beatrice's face dropped as she realized she heard a countdown on the television in the next room. She flew in just as a picture of the Second Doctor flashed up and took her seat.

It was about thirty minutes in when Beatrice noticed that Joseph had not said anything. She looked over to see him eating his blue cupcake.
"You haven't said anything."

"You invited me for a party to watch a television show, I assumed you wanted to watch it."

"Yeah, thanks." She looked back. "Crap, I missed something."

"The glass on the paintings was broken from the inside."

"What?"

"Whatever came into the archive came from inside the paintings. You can tell by the shatter pattern. I haven't seen much of this show, but I assume this is the sort of thing that's within the realm of possibility?"

"Yeah."

The doorbell rang. Martha stood to attention.

"Oh, seriously," said Beatrice.

"I'll get it," Joseph volunteered, getting up.

Joseph returned. "It's your brother, the sheriff, the town handyman and the town psychiatrist."

"What?," asked Beatrice as the four filed into the room.

Neal pointed at Joseph. "Who's he?"

Beatrice paused the show. "He's my friend and he actually came to the party I invited him to. Thanks for finally coming to the party by the way. Now, have a TARDIS blue cupcake and be quiet."

"Beatrice, we are looking for your father," said Marco.

"We need to know what he did to August," said Neal.

Joseph looked curiously at Neal.

"Though maybe we could do that someplace else," Emma suggested.

"Where is he?," asked Neal.

"He's at the shop," said Beatrice.

"We were just there!"

"Then I don't know and leave me alone."

She reached for the remote as Neal swiped it from her and turned the television off.

Beatrice dropped her jaw. "Are you insane?!"

Emma rolled her eyes. "Neal, don't be an idiot."

"We're talking about real people, not a television show," said Neal.

"It is not a television show!," Beatrice protested. "It is a global simulcast television event and you
are making me miss it."

He glanced at Joseph. "Other room. Now."

Beatrice reluctantly got up as her remote control left the room. "Excuse me."

Emma followed her and shut the door behind them.

"Are you siding with him?," asked Neal.

"Siding with him? What?," asked Beatrice.

"Neal," said Emma, "you are being really unfair."

"Beatrice, you don't know half the stuff he's done. Now, what has he done to August?"

"Look, as far as I know, he hasn't done anything and he promised he wouldn't kill him."

Neal snorted.

"He keeps his promises," said Beatrice. "And it was those exact words. If he lies, it's by omission. Or word choice."

Emma nodded. "Okay, she makes a good point."

"Like the time he let me go through a portal to another world?"

"Oh, the one you wanted to go to?"

"What?," asked Neal.

Beatrice tried to backtrack, quickly regretting that the words had left her mouth. "Nothing."

"No, if you have something to say, say it-"

"Neal, lay off," warned Emma.

"He's your friend, too, Emma."

"Yeah and I want to make sure he's okay, but I don't think berating your baby sister is the way to do it."

"Emma, you don't know what he's like when he wants to be and neither does she. He is so screwed up as a father."

"What? You mean like the time he gave up his soul to save you from getting slaughtered by ogres?," Beatrice said before she could stop the words leaving her mouth.

"Do you really want to go there, Bea?"

"Stop making me go there. Okay, maybe he's not going to win any father of the year awards, but the way I see it, neither are you since you framed your pregnant girlfriend for a watch heist or whatever."

"I didn't know."

"Oh, well I guess it's all okay then," Beatrice snapped.
"Guys, this isn't getting us anywhere," said Emma. "Beatrice, do you have any ideas about how we can find August?"

"Guy who hit me in the head," Beatrice reminded her.

"Yeah, I know, not exactly my favorite person, either," said Emma.

Beatrice walked over to the china cabinet. Waving her hand a drawer popped open.

"When did you learn that?," asked Neal.

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Just blood magic." She pulled out a bottle and handed it to Emma. "Your basic locator spell. Pour it on an object that belonged to the person and it will lead you to them. For safety reasons, I am going to suggest you don't use his typewriter."

"Thanks," said Emma.

"How do we know that's what it is?," asked Neal.

"Excuse me?," asked Beatrice.

"Neal!," Emma exclaimed.

"I have to take Dark Princess crap from everyone else, do I have to take it from you now, too?"

"I didn't say anything," said Neal, walking out.

Emma looked back. "Are you okay?"

"Fine. Go do the finding August thing."

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**Today**

"Mom. Flying Monkeys."

Belle looked up to see Beatrice and Joseph rushing in the shop. She had come here to help Rumple, but he was back searching through Neal's apartment for anything that might be useful.

"Flying Monkeys?," asked Belle.

"Like there are Flying Monkeys."

Martha emerged from the backroom. She bounded up to Joseph, surprising everyone, putting her front paws on him.

"Sorry," said Beatrice, trying to pull the dog down. "She doesn't normally do that."

"No, it's fine," said Joseph.

Belle shook her head. "Flying Monkeys. I've read about them, of course. They're only found in one land. Oz."

"Yeah, well, check out my ringtone," said Beatrice, getting out her iPhone. She played it.

"Wicked!," Belle gasped.
"So, you're suggesting that you knew you were about to lose your memory," said Joseph. "Knowing this, you tried to leave a clue for yourself."

"The Flying Monkeys would suggest I am right," said Beatrice.

"I think she may be right," said Belle, turning back towards the shelves of magical tomes. "All morning, I've been lamenting that these were out of order. There are several volumes about Oz and every time I go to find a new locator spell, I happen to find one."

"Did you go to Oz?," asked Beatrice.

Belle shook her head. "No, I only know what I've read."

"And what about the Wicked Witch?," asked Beatrice. "Did you meet her? I think Dad knows her."

"I never met her and your papa never mentioned her."

"We aren't related, are we?"

"Beatrice..." said Belle.

"Why would you think that?," asked Joseph.

"Because I've got a history of this. Merlin, Peter Pan-"

"Peter Pan?," asked Joseph.

"It is even more messed up than you think," said Beatrice.

Gold entered. He looked at Beatrice.

"Why is there a frozen Flying Monkey sitting in the bed of Charming's truck?"

"Because we caught it," said Beatrice.

He looked from Joseph to her. "You caught it."

"Yeah, we went to the town line-"

"The town line," said Gold, approaching closer.

"Yeah and listen to my ringtone!"

Gold stood nonplussed through the playing of the song.

"Beatrice, I fail to understand the significance of this."

"It's Wicked! The Wicked Witch of the West! That's who cursed us!"

Gold didn't say anything.

"Rumple?," Belle finally asked.

Gold looked at her. "I think you ought to take Beatrice home and not come out until I have dealt with this problem."
"So you do know her," said Joseph.

"I wasn't talking to you, dearie," Gold snarled.

"You know her and you don't want your family to know you know her which means you're either embarrassed or frightened. Perhaps a bit of both. Sending them home, though, with those particular instructions suggests that you are frightened for them--"

"You can shut up now," said Gold.

"Which with a woman usually suggests something personal..." Joseph said as he could not stop himself from finishing the sentence,

"Rumple, who is she?," asked Belle.

"Her name is Zelena and she is Cora's daughter."

"Oh, God," said Beatrice, burying her face in her hands. "Not this again!"

Gold stared in confusion at her.

Beatrice looked up at him. "No surprise relatives! That's all I asked! I just wanted to know if I was related to anyone else who might be a fairy tale or a myth or a nursery rhyme or a Pixar short and consistently, this is the one thing people can't give me. Why couldn't it have been Regina? I know she's a psychopath, but at least she doesn't have flying monkeys!"

Gold shook his head. "What are you talking about?"

"This is the part where you break it to me I have a half-sister."

"No," said Gold. "Zelena was born before I knew Cora."

"She was?"

"How did you know her?," asked Belle.

"She was my pupil for a time. I was training her to cast the Dark Curse. She proved too unstable to the task."

"Because the woman with the roomful of hearts was the stable one?," asked Joseph.

"You know the price of the Dark Curse," said Gold. "The thing she wanted to sacrifice, I didn't want to."

"Wow, really?," said Beatrice. "You had to go there."

"There was no there," said Gold. "I wasn't interested."

"You never mentioned her," said Belle.

"Because you didn't need to know."

"Well, I do now!"

Gold motioned at Beatrice.

Belle relented and turned to her daughter. "Why don't you go to Granny's? I think Mary Margaret
mentioned she was going there. Ask her to come back to the shop so we can all discuss this.”

"You're sending me away for the argument?,” Beatrice asked.

"Go,” said Gold.

Beatrice shot a look at her parents. "Fine, next thing you know I'm going to end up related to Buzz Lightyear..."

November 23, 2013

Left alone with Marco and Archie, Joseph excused himself to the bathroom.

Presumably, Beatrice and her brother wouldn't argue long. Beatrice should have won any argument handily. That left the upstairs out, the one room readily available appeared to be a study, thought it seemed to be mostly library. There was a great cabinet with dark wood and he went to open the doors, finding he couldn't. Upon closer examination, Joseph couldn't even find a lock. He was very tempted to break it open, but that would definitely give away that he had been looking.

Antiques. Antiques everywhere, though Gold didn't seem to focus on any one period. Cream Victorian armchairs. Louis XV French style sofa. Tiffany lamps. A typewriter from the 1960s. A mahogany grandfather clock, various little porcelain statuettes including a unicorn and for some reason an antique Mickey Mouse radio.

He went to the books. Organized by the Dewey Decimal system, no doubt the work of the lady of the house. They were a curious mix of first editions, vintage editions and recent hardcovers.

He then noticed a book sitting in a glass case. Beyond antique, more like extremely old. A folio. Much Ado About Nothing. Oh, yes. Beatrice? There was a Beatrice in there, wasn't there? He retained so little of the literature school tried to force upon him.

Time was getting away. He turned to a desk. The pictures were facing outwards and judging by the dust behind the chair, no one ever sat there. The photographs were going to be more useful than whatever had been left in the desk. So, Gold and Belle. One of Gold, Belle, Beatrice. Gold, Belle, Beatrice, Neal, Henry. They all seemed to be recent. Beatrice took up a generous portion of the photos. Baby Beatrice, Toddler Beatrice, Child Beatrice. Always with glasses, she didn't seem like a contact lens wearer, so it must have been LASIK. Sometime last year because none of the pictures with the brother had them.

Always with Belle. Younger Beatrice was either alone or she was with Belle, like the photo posed in front of the Cinderella's Castle at Walt Disney World. Gold might have taken them so he looked at that one closer. A passing tourist off to the side in mirrored sunglasses looked with annoyance at the photographer who seemed to have an oddly bright plaid waistcoat and brown trousers. He hesitated to recall his family's own holiday to Disney World, his brother and sister had enjoyed themselves, but it was two weeks of him having to pretend that Mickey Mouse wasn't played by a girl who was only 4'11. How could no one else see that? Yes, though, the outfit was a uniform. Gold hadn't taken the photo.

One solitary photo of younger Beatrice and Gold. She was in his lap grasping a white and gold blanket in her hands.

The blanket wasn't in any of the other photos. The way she was holding it in that photo, she was compulsive with it as children often were with such security objects. It surely would have featured
in the Christmas morning photos.

She had no glasses on. It couldn't have been vanity. The glasses were in every other photo and this one appeared to have been taken in the front room in their regular dress, it wasn't a special occasion where one might ask a child to remove her glasses, though neither Belle or Gold seemed as if they were the sort to care.

It had been too long.

His absence ought to have been felt by now.

Joseph went back out to the living room. The visitors had left. Beatrice sat in front of the television but had not restarted her show.

"Beatrice?"

"Yeah, were you ready to start again?"

Her eyes were just the slightest bit red. She seemed just the slightest bit congested.

She had been crying and she was trying to hide it as one might for a guest, to spare the awkwardness and the embarrassment, but it was more than that.

Beatrice was practiced at trying to hide when she was crying. What sort of girl did that? Certainly not one whose parents doted on her as he had observed every moment. No, there was something else about her, some sadness...

"What did your brother say?"

Beatrice shook her head. "What makes you think he said anything?"

"You shared a birthday party with the sheriff which means she's not annoyed by you, she thinks of you as a friend and the separation in your ages means there's no opportunities for petty little fights or a conflict over lovers. She wouldn't make you cry. The psychiatrist and the handyman, they're too worried about the handyman's son, they wouldn't dare do anything to offend you and consequently your father. That leaves us with your brother. Child of the second wife, maybe he resents that you've had the easier childhood, maybe he thinks you got the better end of your father's parenting, he may not admit it, he may not even be conscious of it, but all resentment comes out in one form or another."

"Something like that," said Beatrice.

"You think he's right."

Beatrice looked over as Joseph sat down.

"There's stuff about my dad," Beatrice said carefully. "It's sort of like we got two different fathers and he doesn't really like the one I have, but he's the only one I have."

"Oh," said Joseph.

Beatrice shook her head. "Never mind. It's too weird." She put on a smile. "Let's finish the show since the rest of the globe probably has."
Beatrice and Joseph walked into Granny's. They quickly spotted Mary Margaret talking to a woman with red hair.

"Mary Margaret," said Beatrice. "We need to have a meeting."

"What? Here?"

"No, the shop. Soon."

"Oh, well, just give me a minute. I was just talking to Sally. She's a midwife," Mary Margaret said excitedly.

"My mom just got you a midwife."

"Always good to get a second opinion," offered Sally.

"Excuse us," said Joseph, dragging Beatrice away by the arm.

"Okay, what?," asked Beatrice.

"That woman doesn't like us," said Joseph.
Beatrice glanced back at Sally. "That woman I've never met in my life doesn't like either of us?"

"Or us together. It's in her eyes."

"What us? There is no us."

"Did you see it?"

"See what?"

"You would have to be blind not to notice it."

"What are you talking about?"

"The giant emerald around her neck? Actually, not quite emerald, but my point is that it's a giant green stone of some sort."

"What? You think she's the Wicked Witch?"

"Why else is she making friends with Snow White? Is there anything special about her baby?"

"What?"

"Why else would she be posing as a midwife? She needs access to the child, what better way to get it? What's special about the baby?"

Beatrice rolled her eyes out of embarrassment. "Babies born of True Love. They're sort of... magical. Emma broke the first curse. I..."

Joseph raised an eyebrow.

"I do stuff."

"So, the Wicked Witch and a magical baby, I suppose that would be bad?"
"Yeah."

"Okay," said Joseph. He looked around and picked a bucket off the floor that was left by an abandoned mop. "Where's a faucet?"

"What are you doing?," asked Beatrice.

"Wicked Witch. Bucket of water. I may not have an extensive knowledge of storybook characters, but I do know that much."

"You want to just throw a bucket of water at her?"

"That was the course of action I was suggesting."

"What if she's not the Wicked Witch?"

"Then the worst case scenario is that we've been rude. Best case scenario is that she melts."

"Well, maybe I can call my dad-"

"If she is the Wicked Witch, she'll be scared off. Now, go talk to her while I get some water."

Joseph walked off. Beatrice went back to the table.

"So..." said Beatrice. She looked back at the woman calling herself Sally. "You're new."

Her smile never wavered. "I missed the last curse."

"Wow, that must have sucked for you..."

Mary Margaret eyed her suspiciously. "Beatrice, are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm good, hey, guess what was at the town line?"

Mary Margaret shook her head.

"Flying Monkey."

"A what?"

"Basically, it's a monkey with wings. So, we are pretty much dealing with the Wicked Witch of the West. Did you see Wicked? Anyway, she's supposed to be crazy."

A sideways glance at Sally showed that her cheeks were burning. Beatrice tried to hide that Joseph was approaching with the now-filled bucket.

"Anyway, so it turns out I missed a lot on Doctor Who. It turns out there was a doctor between Eight and Nine that John Hurt played-"

That was about when a bucket of water landed on Sally.

Mary Margaret looked up at Joseph in shock. "What did you do that for?"

The diners looked up in shock. 'Sally' stood. She looked up at Joseph and Beatrice, waving her hand to dry herself with magic.

"Is this the part where I'm supposed to say I'm melting? That little trick only worked in Oz, Dark
Princess, and it didn't even work then.

"I've never been to Oz," said Beatrice.

"Memory problems, dear? Such a shame. Then you don't remember me or what I want or even..." She glanced at Joseph and smirked. "No, that would be giving it away, wouldn't it?"

Beatrice glared at her. "Where is my brother?"

"You needn't worry about him. Once I have what I need, everything changes."

"Where is he?"

"Is that what you're worried about? When there's so much more to do?" She leaned forward to Beatrice. "When I'm through, everyone is going to know who the most powerful in all the realms is and it won't be you, Princess."

Beatrice glared at Zelena. "How am I supposed to give a damn if I have no idea what you're talking about?"

"I know. It's wicked of me. Then again, I am wicked," she said with a laugh and disappeared.

"Puns?!," asked Beatrice. "Seriously?!"

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**November 23, 2013**

Emma poured the locator spell on Pinocchio's hat. She and Neal pursued it, just in case he had become kindling at Gold's hands or gone through an enchanted woodchipper. In any case, Emma didn't want Marco and Archie there.

They followed it throughout Storybrooke.

"Why were you such an ass to your sister?," Emma finally asked.

"Excuse me? She was the one-"

"You hassled her about your dad and about magic," said Emma. "She can't do anything about either one of those things."

"She can help the magic," said Neal.

Emma shook her head. "I don't think it's that easy for her."

"Why not? You don't use your magic."

Emma eyed Neal.

"There," he said, pointing at the hat as it flew into the library.

They walked in to see Mrs. Foley behind the desk.

"Sheriff?," she asked, eyeing the hat.

"Was August here?," asked Neal.

She shook her head. "No."
Merlin came down the staircase holding the hat. "It looks like someone learned to use a locator spell."

"Beatrice said it would lead to the owner of the object."

"Or the last place they were," the wizard offered.

"Merlin, have you seen August?," asked Emma as Mrs. Foley stepped away from the circulation desk.

"Not since two days ago," said Merlin.

"What happened two days ago?," asked Neal.

"Pinocchio came to me, I offered to help him transform back to flesh, but he wouldn't have it. Some Blue Fairy nonsense," said Merlin.

"What did you do to him?," asked Neal.

"I took him where he wanted to go," said Merlin. "The Enchanted Forest."

"Did Gold give you a magic bean?," asked Emma.

"You forget, Savior, I can go between realms."

"Yeah, but just you," said Emma. "Not another person."

"Well, in this case Mr. Booth was less of a person and more of a puppet. I can take puppets."

Neal shook his head. "Figures."

"He asked me, I took him," said Merlin. "And seeing as the wood appears to have eaten away at his brain in regards to Beatrice, I thought it was a fair solution since we already sent Moe and most of the Round Table back."

Emma tried to take that in, but Neal was on full attack.

"And what about his dad? He's worried."

"His father isn't my problem," said Merlin. "Beatrice is my problem. I did what was best for her and incidentally saved him from being turned into firewood by your father."

"Why is it always about what's best for Beatrice?," asked Neal. "Why is it never about anyone else?"

"For me, it's about what is best for her."

"Yeah, I know."

"Neal, now is not the time-" said Emma.

"Something you want to say, Baelfire?"

"Yeah, why did you have to screw up my life?," asked Neal.

"When you came to me, what did I say?," asked Merlin.
"Don't-

"What did I say?"

Neal shook his head. "Don't try to put this on me."

"I warned you that any attempt to strip your father of his powers would end badly and look where we are. I'm not saying you bear the responsibility for the Dark Curse nor do I even blame you for believing what that floating blue tart told you, but I never meant you any harm. This was never my plan."

Neal stormed out. Merlin handed Emma the hat.

"Would you like to berate me?," asked Merlin.

Emma shook her head. "No. I know what I would do if someone hurt Henry and he's alive. I don't know if I could have done a lot better."

"There's still always the chance for a happy ending," said Merlin.

"How do you figure?"

"So long as there's life, there's hope," said Merlin. "Perhaps Mr. Booth will see the error of his ways."

"Yeah, I just wish I could figure out why Neal is being a jerk."

"Three hundred years."

"Excuse me?"

"Three hundred years of anger, resentment, abandonment," said Merlin. "It had to come out some time. Don't you watch talk shows?"

"Yeah, but he acted fine before," said Emma. "We were all at Christmas together. We went on a quest to Neverland."

"And you?"

Emma shrugged. "What about me?"

"Your parents sent you away. Are you fine with it yet?"

Emma froze.

"No," she finally answered quietly.

Beatrice and Joseph finally finished watching the special, then retreated into the kitchen where they noshed on Beatrice's selection of Doctor Who-themed snacks.

"You made a party," remarked Joseph.

"Sorry?"

He motioned at the snacks. "You made a party. You assembled... what are those? Marshmallow people?"
"Adipose."

He eyed her and she shrugged. "There was like this pill and people's fat just sort of walked out of them..."

"Anyway, how many did you invite?"

Beatrice shrugged. "No one I expected to come."

"Am I included in that number?"

Beatrice nodded. "You are definitely included in that number."

"Then what sort of girl makes cupcakes for guests that she knows won't come?"

Beatrice shook her head and occupied herself with cleaning imaginary cupcake crumbs. "Clearly a moron."

"The sort of girl who wishes they would come."

"Well, wishes are for morons."

"I don't know," mused Joseph.

"Oh."

They both looked up to see Belle carrying a tote of books.

"Don't let me interrupt," said Belle.

"No, we were just wrapping up," said Beatrice. "We have a lot of cupcakes."

"Maybe later," said Belle, backing out of the room. "I will let you two finish."

Belle walked back in the living room and straight to where Martha was greeting Gold.

"Hey," he said, kissing Belle. "How was it?"

Belle shook her head. "The high school library is even more wretched than the elementary school library was."

"Well, you're there to help now," said Gold.

"What did Mrs. Collier do in our land?"

"I believe she was Regina's official boot polisher," he answered.

"Hardly a prerequisite," said Belle.

"Where's Beatrice?"

"She's in the kitchen. Don't go in there."

"And why wouldn't I?"

"Joseph's in there."
"What?," asked Gold. He began to walk towards the doorway. "I don't think so."

"Rumple," Belle said, grabbing him by the wrist, "please don't spoil this for her."

"He is-"

"The one person who came to her party," said Belle. "Do you see anyone else here?"

"Oh, he came to her party, by all means, let's marry her off!"

"Sorry," said Joseph.

They looked up to see him in the living room.

"I was just leaving. Excuse me," he said, walking out.

Beatrice appeared in the living room next. She immediately caught Gold's glare.

"I said I invited him," she said plaintively.

He rolled his eyes. "Not the point."

"So, was it like a date?," asked Belle.

"No, it was more like him taking pity on a dork and midway though her brother interrupted with a search party," said Beatrice.

"Bae was here?," asked Gold. "What did he want?"

The conversation flashed back through her mind.

"Just to find August," she said. "I still have TARDIS velvet cupcakes."

"TARDIS velvet?," asked Belle.

"Yeah, that's the name I'm going with," said Beatrice. "Plenty of them."

"I trust Mr. Gillette behaved himself," said Gold.

"Oh, my God, yes," groaned Beatrice.

Today

Beatrice, Joseph and Mary Margaret entered the pawn shop.

"Beatrice, what did you do that for?," asked Belle.

"You know?"

"Granny called." Belle hurried to squeeze Beatrice tightly. "What were you thinking?"

She pointed at Joseph.

"Well, sorry, I saw a Wicked Witch and a bucket. I thought I would actually try to solve the problem unlike her who was just about to get her baby delivered by her," said Joseph.

"What?," asked Emma looking at her mother in disbelief.
"I didn't know she was the Wicked Witch," Mary Margaret protested.

"Really?," asked Joseph. "Perfect stranger walks up to you, starts discussing midwifery and has a giant emerald at her neck, you just tell her everything?"

"I got you a midwife," said Belle.

"She said she knew Johanna."

"Said she knew her!," Joseph emphasized.

"I don't see what was so wrong with Leigh. You told me Doc delivered Emma," said Belle.

"Doc!," exclaimed Emma. "Doc delivered me?"

"Yes," said Mary Margaret.

"Is he even a real doctor?," asked Emma.

"You," said Merlin, emerging from the back room. He pointed at Beatrice. "What the hell am I supposed to do with a monkey in an ice cube?"

Beatrice shrugged. "I don't know. Magic stuff."

"I wanted to examine it," said Joseph.

"And what? Compare it to all the other flying monkeys you've seen?," he asked.

Gold and Regina came out of the back.

"Water?," Gold asked Beatrice.

"You know, at least we tried stuff," said Beatrice.

"Could we get on to discussing what level of psychopath your sister is?," asked Merlin.

"I don't have a sister," said Regina. "I think my mother would have mentioned it. I don't know what you all are playing at."

"Right because mothers always mention the children they gave up," said Joseph.

"Your sister?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Zelena is Cora's firstborn," said Gold.

Regina was livid. "Then why did I cast your curse?"

Beatrice motioned at Regina. "Because this is what we want to argue about."

"Wait, that blood magic thing," said Emma. "That's how she broke into your office."

Regina shook her head. "No."

"If you're going to be stupid, I quit," said Merlin. "Snow White and Prince Charming I expect it from, but not you."

"How was I supposed to know?!," asked Mary Margaret.
"Giant emerald," Joseph said.

"Oh, hey, I promised I would call Walsh," said Emma.

"Who's Walsh?," asked Beatrice.

"Her new boyfriend," said Mary Margaret. "He's so nice. He bakes homemade banana bread."

"Oh, by all means, stop and call your boyfriend," said Merlin.

"I had to spend all night in her car with those two," Regina said distastefully.

Beatrice looked at Gold. "Where did you put the Flying Monkey?"

"He's in the backroom," said Gold.

"Whose mobile is that?," asked Joseph.

Everyone got out their phones.

"Nobody has a song?," asked Joseph.

Beatrice shook her head. "Everyone here has flip phones because apparently Regina couldn't curse them with a decent cell phone carrier."

"I never heard complaints before you," said Regina.

"That's probably because you killed them," said Gold.

"It's coming from the back room," said Joseph.

He walked back as the others followed and that was when they noticed a light in the flying monkey ice cube and heard the ringing.

"What-" began Beatrice.

Joseph ripped the phone from Emma's hand and hung up.

"Hey!," Emma protested.

He redialed and the ringing began again.

"Oh, my God," said Emma.

"Your new boyfriend is a Flying Monkey," said Joseph.

"Okay, Charmings, you people aren't allowed to meet anyone new," said Beatrice.

"Okay, maybe the Flying Monkey stole his phone-" suggested Mary Margaret.

"And his wristwatch?," asked Joseph.

Emma's eyes widened. "Oh, God."

Regina scoffed. "Just when I thought your taste in men couldn't get any worse," she sneered.

"I'll handle this," said Gold.
"How?," asked Emma.

"The way I handle things."

"Gold, we need to work together," said Mary Margaret.

"Working together? You mean you come running to me with a problem and I solve it? As we normally do?"

"What do you intend to do?," asked Regina.

"Send the monkey back to his mistress and then I'll confront her," said Gold.

"Rumple..." said Belle.

"I have no intention of getting killed." He looked at Merlin. "You'll stay with them?"

Merlin nodded.

"And what do the rest of us do?," asked Emma.

"There's a witch from Oz called Glinda. She was exiled to the Enchanted Forest. Perhaps this new curse brought her over. You can find her," said Gold.

"Do you think she knows how to defeat the Wicked Witch?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Well, you had better hope she does," said Gold.

They dispersed.

"Hey, before I forget, does anybody have any idea why I might have been in Oz last year?," asked Beatrice.

Gold stopped his exit and turned. "You what?"

Joseph spoke up. "The Wicked Witch insinuated that they had met before in Oz and that she had let Beatrice think she beat her. I don't know the specifics, of course, but she did not seem pleased to see us."

"I'll be sure to ask her," said Gold.
Chapter 56

I do not own Once Upon A Time which is a show on ABC where their sister channel has a movie called Descendants coming out where Belle is played by the actress who plays the Blue Fairy so no one who has read this story will be able to take it seriously. Sorry. Also, sorry I haven't gotten back to anyone, I've had a really busy week. I also don't own Frozen or anything else. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

Last December

"You did not," said Beatrice.

"I did too," said Joseph.

Beatrice and Joseph has just gone to Augusta to see a movie. After their return, they had gotten frozen yogurt and were now eating it as they walked down the street and froze because Ashley had just gotten a job there. Joseph insisted he had seen the movie's plot twist coming at the beginning.

"How could you have known?"

"The clues were all there."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "What clues?"

"He never took off his gloves. Before he tells Anna he doesn't want her to get hurt, he looks at the townspeople. He was clearly trying to win their favor. He pushed the thug to make the arrow cause the chandelier to fall. Not to mention the song. We finish each others sandwiches? Really? We're meant to believe he was thinking that?"

"The song gave it away?"

"The whole song is Anna just saying things and Hans agreeing with them. How stupid could she be?"

Beatrice glanced around the sidewalk to see that it was clear and leaned over. "Fairy tale characters are not known for their intelligence."

"As if that's a secret," said Joseph. "My little cousins love princesses. They can overlook a lot of flaws in favor of a sparkly dress."

"Well, they aren't all dumb."

"Alright, name the smartest fairy tale princess."


"Is that bias?"
"Hardly. She reads-

"She goes off with a beast."

"For a good reason."

"Why? Because she knows he's really a handsome prince?"

"No, because she can see the good in him even when he can't see it himself. Besides, they're both weirdos, they just manage to find each other."

Joseph nodded. "Alright, dumbest fairy tale princess."

"Cinderella."

"Really? I was going to say Sleeping Beauty. Why is Cinderella dumber than Sleeping Beauty?"

Beatrice tried to think of a non-baby selling reason. "Well, why does she need her fairy godmother? Her stepmother and stepsisters have already left, there's presumably a house full of ball gowns, just put one on and go."

Joseph nodded. "Alright, dumbest fairy tale princess."

"Cinderella."

"Ah, Madame Mayor, perhaps you can be of help."

"Gladly," Regina said stiffly.

"Beatrice and I were just debating who the dumbest fairy tale princess was. I say Sleeping Beauty, she says Cinderella."

Regina grimaced and cast a wary look at Beatrice. "As insipid as those two are, you're both wrong. It's Snow White."

"Really?," asked Joseph. "Why do you say that?"

"Why wouldn't I say that? She can't keep her mouth shut, she's so fixated on being good she'll let anyone bully her and won't do what needs to be done, her birdhouse fall apart, her husband is an even bigger moron, she hangs out with dwarves-"

"Nothing about eating a poison apple from an evil witch in there?," asked Joseph.

Regina leaned in to Joseph. "That was a brilliant trap."

"Okay, so we're going," said Beatrice.

"Right," said Regina, straightening herself. "Well, good night then."

Regina walked off.

"She seemed to take that rather personally," said Joseph.

"Yeah, she gets emotional about stuff like that."

"Why did you want to see Frozen anyway?," asked Joseph. "Aren't you a bit old for fairy tales?"
Beatrice threw away her cup and checked her phone. "I need to get home. Thanks for coming. I had fun."

"It wasn't bad."

Beatrice waved and left. Joseph looked up to see Merlin.

"Mr. Avalon," he said.

"Mr. Gillette," he said. "How was the film?"

"Alright."

"Glad to hear it. Look, I'll make this brief. At some point in the near future, Beatrice's father is going to ask to speak to you alone."

Joseph found this curious. "And what do you advise?"

"Go. Then come see me. You can usually find me at the library."

"And what might we discuss?"

Merlin shrugged. "I believe a topic of conversation will come to us at that time."

Merlin walked off leaving Joseph confused.

Which he never minded.

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**Last Summer, London**

Joseph had been in his aunt and uncle's house in Westminster since the summer. It was the only way he could stay in London. His brother was off at school or army training. His sister wouldn't be bothered. This was the bargain his aunt and uncle had forced him into given his history. Stay with them in London or...

The countryside.

It gave Joseph shivers.

He could hardly complain about the accommodations. The house was rather large and they let him occupy the top floor with an en suite in the place where servants formerly would have lived. There weren't really servants. There was a cleaning lady and the mother's helper, Mariah Moristani, a student from Barcelona. When Joseph has taken residence in the top floor, she had suddenly decided it was drafty and switched to one of the guest rooms. It gave him space to conduct his experiments and play.

There was his aunt and his uncle and the children.

Children were troubling for Joseph. Their emotion and the lack of critical thinking sometimes, but they were forgiving with his lack of social etiquette. There were Kate and Chloe, seven-year old ginger twins and the baby, Will, who really Joseph found to be extremely pleasant company as he could only speak ten words, none of them irritating.

It wasn't a bad situation at all, but it did leave Joseph...
"Bored," he groaned, lying on the sofa. "Bored..."

The twins were laying on the floor, imitating their favorite cousin.

"Bored."

"Bored."

"You can't be bored," Joseph admonished. "You don't even know what bored is. Once someone puts in a DVD of The Lion King you're entertained."

"We are too bored!," said Kate.

"Really bored!"

His aunt, Nellie, walked into the sitting room with her arms crossed. She was in her forties, ginger. She had a successful career at some office job, but had left to have the girls and subsequently look after her sister's much older children after the accident, which mostly meant looking after Joseph.

"Aren't you three a sorry sight?," she remarked.

"We're bored," said Chloe.

"No, you're not," Joseph snapped.

"You know, someone once told me that no intelligent person should be bored."

"That expression was clearly coined by an idiot to make other idiots feel superior that they don't know the utter agony of the dullness of existence," said Joseph.

"My gran told me that."

"Precisely, my point stands."

Nellie scowled.

Joseph continued unabated. "She did excellent tea, serviceable biscuits, but let's be honest, not one of the towering intellects of the twentieth century. Not even one of the towering intellects of twentieth century Tottenham."

Nellie looked at Kate and Chloe. "You two. Go play."

The girls grudgingly got up and scampered off. Nellie leaned over the couch.

"You might not be bored if you found something to do," she suggested.

"There is nothing to do. Every time I try to find something to do someone says I'm breaking some silly law."

"You posed as a police officer."

"I never said I was a police officer. Why would I ever want to be mistaken for one of them?"

"You went through that poor woman's house."

"It was a crime scene."
"Joseph, she had enough to worry about with her son missing without you playing detective."

"And why doesn't that bother anyone else? Adil Rahim goes to bed, gone the next morning, no sign of a struggle, nothing but an open window, nothing on the roof, nothing on the pavement, no sign of a forced entry."

"Scotland Yard-"

"Are morons. It's not as if he just flew out the window!"

His uncle, Hector, came in. He was training for the marathon and Joseph noted he had been a few minutes late.

"Forget to hydrate, Hector?," asked Joseph. "It makes you sluggish."

"What's this?," asked Hector.

Nellie turned to him. "Adil Rahim again."

"Oh, so you heard then?"

"Heard what?," asked Joseph.

"They found him."

"What do you mean they found him? Scotland Yard?"

Hector shook his head. "No, he was in America. I read it in the Guardian."

"America?," asked Nellie. "All that way?"

"That's impossible," said Joseph. "His photograph was distributed to all major law enforcement agencies and customs authorities. He shouldn't have been able to leave Britain or get in anywhere else. A smaller country, maybe, where authorities could be bribed, plausible, but America? It doesn't fit."

Hector shrugged. "That's where they found him."

"How?"

"Maybe we should just be grateful that the little boy found his way home," said Nellie.

"Oh, wouldn't that be a cheery world?," asked Joseph. He got up.

"And where might you be going?," asked Nellie.

"Investigating."

"Joseph, remember your ASBO," said Hector.

Joseph stopped and groaned, not turning back to his aunt and uncle.

"No going near the Mrs. Rahim or her residence," said Hector. "I got you out of it last time, but I don't think a judge will be so kind next time. Even my skills have a limit. Though I suppose there's always an insanity plea."

Joseph hated that his uncle was right, though he couldn't just leave the investigation alone. He had
to find out why.

He needed an accomplice to go to Adil and get the answers he couldn't.

Or rather two accomplices.

Two ginger-haired accomplices.

---

*Last December*

Joseph entered the pawn shop. He had never been inside. It was a strange mix of items, some seemingly worthless, some priceless. Mr. Gold stood behind the counter as if he had been waiting there for hours.

"Mr. Gillette," said Gold. "Thank you so much for accepting my invitation. You must be wondering why I asked you here."

"No," said Joseph. "When I received your invitation, I immediately concluded what you wanted to discuss."

"Well, then," said Gold, "then I suppose it comes as no surprise to you that I have already considered what your response might be."

"Naturally."

"Obviously, I've had the opportunity to think on that as well."

"And what might that be?"

Gold tilted his head. "That it would be best if you leave town, of course."

"Oh, I don't know. Things are just starting to get interesting."

Gold's face grew dark. "You see, Mr. Gillette, my only desires in life are for my children's happiness."

Joseph frowned. Where was Gold heading with this?

"Beatrice is beautiful and brilliant and talented and furthermore, she is mine to protect. I've done my research, Mr. Gillette and I don't care for what I've found."

Joseph stared as Gold pulled out a folder.

"Dropped out of Cambridge, three stints in rehab and multiple arrests..."

"I was never charged."

"A fixation with violence." He motioned at the folder. "That's what your psychiatrist says, dearie. You are no more a photographer than-"

"Than you are a pawnbroker?" Joseph suggested.

Gold's face remained still as he closed the file folder. "You know, it really doesn't matter who I am, the problem is you. You need to stay away from my daughter."

"This is about Beatrice?"
"What else would I talk to you about?"

"I never meant her any harm-"

"She's smitten with you. The harm is done."

The door to the shop opened. Belle stalked in towards Gold.

"The backroom. Now."

"Belle-"

Belle ignored Gold, turning to Joseph. "You can go, Mr. Gillette. Mr. Gold has just made a mistake."

"I have made no such mistake-"

"Now, Rumple," said Belle heading to the back room.

---

**Last Summer, London**

It was a simple matter to discover what park Mrs. Rahim took Adi to every day after school. She was distracted while she chatted with the other mothers and it would be easy to send in his accomplices.

It was an even simpler matter to bribe the two ginger accomplices with trips to the park, ice lollies, a tenner to share, Cadbury Flakes and some Peppa Pig coloring books.

Though he wasn't certain it was paying off.

"Do you know the story of Rumplestiltskin?," Kate asked on their way home one day.

"Oh, just your standard fairy tale. Idiot miller's daughter, gives away her first-born for some gold, marries king."

"That's not how Adi told it."

"The miller's daughter was the Evil Queen's mother," said Chloe.

"The Evil Queen from Snow White?," asked Joseph. "Why do you think that?"

"Adi said so," said Kate. "Besides, it's in his book."

Joseph looked across the park. Adil was holding a leather-bound book with gilded letters.

"Where did he get that?," asked Joseph.

"He says he brought it back from America," said Kate.

"Did he?"

Joseph eyed the book.

He reached into his wallet and took out a tenner.

"See the ice cream van?"
"Yes," the girls said in unison.

"Take this with you and buy Adi the most sugary thing they have."

"Mummy says we shouldn't have a lot of sugar," said Kate.

"You get him loaded up on sugar and bring me the book."

The girls looked to each other for guidance.

"A tenner each," said Joseph.

"Twenty each," said Kate.

"Twenty?" They weren't budging. "Fine."

---

**Last December**

Joseph left the Golds arguing in the pawn shop and made his way to the library. Surely Mr. Avalon might be there. He walked inside to see a slender woman with her back turned to him.

"Pardon me, but I was looking for Mr. Avalon."

The woman slowly spun towards Joseph on her chair. "I'm afraid he's out this evening. Is there anything I can help you with?"

Joseph froze.

He stared at Mrs. Foley taking in every feature. His few memories of the time before the Watsons took him in were hazy, but those blurred visions had been played and replayed in his mind a thousand times. Slender build, dark hair. The fingers. He could remember the fingers as they flipped through books or used a quill.

Or a pen. It must have been a pen.

Or was it a quill?

"Are you alright?," she asked.

Joseph reached to feel his own nose which the woman sitting across the desk seemed to share.

"What was your name?," he asked.

"Lila Foley," she answered. "I help out when Belle and the others are busy."

Lila Foley.

Because of course it wouldn't be the other one.

Because the other one was ridiculous.

It would never be that one.

He turned around and rushed out of the library, eager to set his mind right.
"Joe, read to us," pled Chloe.

He grimaced. Somehow the twins had found their way into his sanctuary. He had been poring over the book for days and now was in the midst of forensics.

"Joseph," he corrected. "I'm examining this."

"But it's a book," said Kate. "You're supposed to read it."

"And what good would that do? I'm dusting it for fingerprints."

The girls glowered as he kept on with the brush.

"It's fairy tales. I wanted to read about princesses," said Chloe.

"There's some magazines on the tea-table. Surely one of them has something on the Duchess of Cambridge," he said, rolling his eyes.

Kate rolled her eyes. "Not her. A real princess. Like Belle and Cinderella."

"Or the Dark Princess," said Chloe.

"The Dark Princess?," Joseph asked mockingly.

"Princess Beatrice. Adi says she saved him."

Joseph stopped dusting. "He was saved by the Dark Princess Beatrice? How?"

Kate and Chloe exchanged looks. They turned back to Joseph.

"We'll tell you when we get our story," said Kate.

It had been ages.

Absolute ages.

Kate and Chloe sat on either side of Joseph in the pink tent erected on the floor of their bedroom.

He glanced at the twins as he finished the story.

"Cinderella called out for her prince. In the search for her Thomas, she only found his cloak at the well. She went running up to the wagon where Grumpy and Prince Charming were securing the dark sorcerer. She clutchered the cloak and demanded that the sorcerer tell her what she had done with her love. He spoke-"

"Do a voice," said Kate.

"I'm not doing a voice," said Joseph.

"Daddy always does a voice when he reads to us," said Chloe.

"Then get him to read to you," said Joseph.

"Then you won't get to hear about the Dark Princess."
"I don't even know what he sounds like."

"Use your imagination," said Kate.

Joseph put on the most imp like voice he could think of. "I have no idea, dearie, but I did warn you: all magic comes with a price. And it looks like someone has just paid."

"Prince Charming tried to reassure Cinderella that she would find her princes, but Rumplestiltskin quickly contradicted him. 'No, you won't. Until that debt is paid, until that baby is mine, you're never going to see him again. In this world or the next, Cinderella, I will have that baby!'"

"Then what happens?," asked Chloe.

"Nothing. That's the end," said Joseph.

"Stories don't end like that," said Kate.

Joseph flipped through the next pages. "Yes, I would tend to agree, but that is where the story ends. Now, do I get my story?"

The girls looked at each other.

"Adi was kidnapped by Peter Pan's Shadow," said Kate.

"It took him to Neverland where he thought he would live with the Lost Boys, but they were mean," said Chloe.

"Neverland? Lost Boys?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah," said Kate. "Then one day Pan's Shadow kidnapped the Dark Princess, but she was magical. She could fight Peter Pan."

"Peter Pan's the villain?"

"Yes, and he's her grandfather," said Chloe.

"How is that even supposed to work?," asked Joseph.

The girls looked at each other and shrugged.

"Fine," groaned Joseph. "How did she fight him?"

"With her ice powers. She froze Neverland!"

"After she sent Princess Ariel to find Beauty and the Beast on the Jolly Roger!"

Joseph paused. "I think that's about four stories."

"Girls?"

Joseph looked up. His aunt and uncle had come in the room.

"Time for bed," said Hector, pointing at his watch.

"I haven't gotten my story," said Joseph. "The sun isn't even down."

Nellie crossed her arms. "Joseph."
"Fine," Joseph said with a grimace as he stood up. "I am keeping the book until I get a satisfactory explanation."

This cursed town.

This infernal small town.

What the hell did someone have to do to score some drugs?

Joseph briefly gave thought to robbing the local pharmacy. In these circumstances, a prescription opioid would do just as well. Those with a basis for comparison thought they might even do better. There were two problems. The little man that ran the place never let his eyes off Joseph and it was across the street from where the sheriff lived.

So he went to the Rabbit Hole.

The bar was crowded.

"Joseph!," said Ruby. "I can't believe you came. Did you want to shoot some pool?"

"I have no interest in socializing."

Joseph went to the bar.

"What can I get you?"

"Yes, what do you have that will get me drunk fastest?"

"Sorry?"

"You see, my mind is not working properly. I need to perform a reset on it. I usually prefer a selection of opiates, but these do not seem to be available in walking distance. I could drive somewhere, but since I wouldn't use drugs and drive, I would have to go somewhere, score some drugs, drive back and then use them, but that takes too long and I need to get back to work. What will result in my loss of consciousness first?"

The bartender paused before reaching under the counter. He pulled out a dusty bottle.

Joseph examined it. "Absinthe? Le Fae Verte?"

"Yeah, it's pretty strong." The bartender watched in astonishment as Joseph quickly downed the first glass he poured. "Uh, well, it usually is..."

"Yes, this will do," said Joseph. "I already can't feel my toes. I'll have the entire bottle."

Beatrice looked at the clock. Her parents were usually extremely prompt and they should have been home by now.

She sat on the sofa with Martha and watched television. Then finally around eight-thirty, she heard a car outside. Her mother stalked in, her heels clacking against the hardwood floors.

"Hi-" Beatrice began. Before she could get much further with her greeting, Gold was inside, letting the door slam shut.

"I was not done yet," said Gold.
"Yes, you were, you just didn’t know it," said Belle.

"Why is it you are so unwilling to accept my judgment on this matter?"

"Because you're wrong!"

"She is my daughter! I am more than entitled to a say in her life!"

Beatrice frowned. "What are we arguing about?"

Belle and Gold seemed to ignore her.

"She is a young woman, Rumple, nearly an adult, she has thoughts and wishes of her own! No one decides her fate but her!"

"Wow, we had to throw in that..." said Beatrice.

Gold was livid. "I showed you what I found!"

"This is just the sort of thing Maurice would have done to try and control me!"

"That's a low blow to compare me to him."

"Then don't act like him!"

Beatrice leaned in. "So, what were we saying?"

They stopped and stared at her.

"Nothing," said Belle, heading up the stairs.

"Nothing," Gold said, going in the kitchen.

"Right," said Beatrice, again left alone. "Because it sounded like nothing."

---

**London, Last Summer**

Joseph met Inspector Strand in the parking garage below Scotland Yard. The detective eyed him with his usual expression of annoyance.

"You got one hit on those fingerprints," said Strand, handing him an envelope.

Joseph quickly tore into it, pulling out the two sheets of paper.

"Belle French," Joseph read, looking at the black and white photo of what seemed to be a very attractive woman. She had kind eyes. For some reason he could picture them sparkle. "What did she do?"

"She doesn't have a criminal record, she was fingerprinted when she got her job at the New York City Public Library."

"She's a librarian?," asked Joseph. "In New York?"

"She's no longer in New York. It seems she moved away, off to some town in Maine."
"Where in Maine?"

"How should I know? I shouldn't be helping you at all. Consider yourself lucky you got that." He pulled out another piece of paper. "She might as well be a ghost for all we found on her."

"A birth certificate?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah, turns out she has a daughter."

"Beatrice Elizabeth French..." Joseph read. "Born October 23, 1996, Beth Israel Hospital, Manhattan. No father listed."

Strand was growing impatient. "What about we discussed?"

Joseph put the papers in his jacket pocket. "Your thief is clever, but also quite a disturbed individual."

"What?"

"Seemingly random targets with identical signatures, all committed in the same way? You had the answer the entire time sitting right in front of you." Joseph held up a map of red dot stickers with a blank hole in the middle. "He's filling in a grid. All his thefts are at roughly the same interval apart, just be waiting. Obsessive compulsive, makes him easy to catch if you know what you're looking for."

He handed Strand the map and turned to walk away.

"You could be the greatest detective at Scotland Yard, you know," said Strand.

Joseph scoffed. "That would hardly be an achievement."

Last December

Beatrice awoke to her phone ringing. Martha gave her a look of irritation as she took it off the charging dock and answered it.

"Hello?"

"Who are you?"

Beatrice frowned. "Who is this?"

"It's me. I'm me. Who are you?"

She furrowed her brow, trying to discern her caller. "Joseph? Is that you?"

"Maybe, but who are you?"

"Are you drunk?"

"Hardly. I'm still conscious, aren't I?"

"Maybe you should go to bed..." She glanced back at her clock. "It's three in the morning."

"Yeah, but who are you?"
Beatrice sat up, trying to collect her consciousness. "It's Beatrice Gold. Who did you mean to call?"

"I meant to call you, but who are you?"

She shook her head. "I don't know what you're asking."

"You don't make sense."

She scoffed. "Do you think that's the first time I heard that?"

"No, you really don't... Who are you?"

"Just Beatrice."

"Beatrix."

"What?"

"Beatrix, it means blesses in Latin, it derives from the feminine form of the late Latin name Viator which means voyager. Is that who you are? A voyager?"

Beatrice was silent.

Joseph didn't need her to respond. "Of course you must know the Shakespearean reference, but the poet Dante Alighieri, he held a courtly love for a Florentine girl called Beatrice di Falco Portinari."

"You care about Dante?"

"Yes, I often find myself on the mountain of Purgatory. Do you know what Beatrice does in the Divine Comedy? She is his guide in paradise."

"Wow," said Beatrice. "That's..."

There was a sudden crack in the air outside. Beatrice hurried to her window to see lights at play and the wind swirling not far off.

"What's that?," asked Joseph.

"Nothing," said Beatrice, thinking it was definitely something like a stronger version of a portal between realms. "Just the wind."

"Is it an east wind? It seems like an east wind."

"Uh, I'm not all that good at directions..." Beatrice said, opening her window to try to stick her head to peer out further.

"That's okay. You can still be my guide."

"Um, your what?"

The lights disappeared, the air stilled.

Beatrice quickly dressed and made her way out to the clearing.
It had been a portal. There was the telltale clear pit of dirt she had seen when Moe and the knights were sent packing.

Someone had taken one of the magic beans and used it.

Which was impossible because the magic beans were guarded by blood magic, so the only people who ought to have been able to use it...

She hurried to the pawn shop. The door was unlocked and she hurried to the safe behind the oil painting. She quickly checked the contents to see that the sack of magic beans was nowhere to be found.

The only people that should have been able to open the safe were Beatrice, her father and...

Neal.

Neal could have opened the safe.

"Beatrice, what are you doing?"

Feeling caught out, she turned to face her father. His face lowered as he approached to see the contents of the safe.

Or more specifically, what was missing from the safe.

Joseph awoke to the sound of knocking on wood which he took at first to be the pounding of his skull.

Upon closer inspection, he found that someone was in fact knocking on his door.

"Good morning," said Merlin, sipping on his coffee. He carried a paper bag and another coffee.

"How's your head, sunshine?"

"Mr. Avalon..."

"Yeah, why don't you have a seat, sunshine?" Merlin sat the bag on the table. "It's an inferior bagel, but the smoked salmon is excellent."

Joseph frowned, trying to figure out what Merlin wanted.

"I heard about the discussion my son-in-law had with you. For such a clever man, he can be remarkably thick. Then again, that's because I haven't told him what to look for." He motioned at the violin on the table. "You play."

"When I work."

Merlin smiled. "Yes, yes, of course, your work. That's what's brought you to our little town, isn't it? That's what keeps you here. You can't make the puzzle pieces fit together."

Joseph held his tongue as Merlin sat down.

"The thing about puzzles is that they work best when you know what you're trying to make a picture of."

"I know what I'm trying to make a picture of. A kidnapping."
"Yeah, but that too is just another piece."

"Adil Rahim's mother might feel differently."

Merlin shrugged. "Adi stumbled upon something this world does not deem possible."

"And what would that be?"

Merlin sipped his coffee. "What my son-in-law missed is the most critical thing. That you were found by a young boy when you were equally young. You appeared out of nowhere and neither Scotland Yard nor Interpol has a record of a missing child of your description. No one ever came looking for you and you have wondered why all that time."

"And what does that have to do with Adil Rahim?"

"There's a recurring theme in both stories."

"And that might be?"

Merlin shrugged. "I'll get to that in due time. The answer to why no one came looking for you lies in the name you introduced yourself with that day. The name that the world has told you is impossible. The name that you won't even speak because it has power and you're afraid of losing yourself to the madness."

Merlin took a book wrapped in brown paper and put it on the table.

"What is that?"

"You're the one coming up with answers. You tell me."

Joseph didn't move.

"Or you could always open it, sunshine."

"You're trying to trick me."

"Why? I want you to stay."

"And why would I stay?"

"Because there was a mystery here you weren't quite expecting and it has to do with why you're so drawn to my granddaughter." He placed his hand over the wrapped book. "See, in this life, you ought to have met her long ago."

"I've read that book and there's no girl in it."

"You say that as if it matters," said Merlin. He stood. "Come find me when you're ready to know what the big picture is."

---

**Today**

Gold used a locator spell on the thawed monkey and followed it to a farmhouse on the edge of town.

Zelena was waiting on the porch as the flying simian went to greet his mistress.
"You found me," she said with a menacing smile. She came off the porch. "Well, Rumplestiltskin, what do you think of me now?"

Gold shook his head in amusement. "Really, dearie? I'm embarrassed for you. One simple memory spell. You can do better."

"Oh, but I did," purred Zelena. "And I will."

"Planning something, are we?" He tsked. "I wouldn't get my hopes up if I were you."

"What? Do you suppose anyone is powerful enough to stop me? Do you think your Dark Princess can?"

"You will stay away from her," Gold seethed.

"So concerned about her, but what about your son?"

Gold eyed her.

"What? Did something I say pique the Dark One's interest?"

"It certainly wasn't anything I'm looking at."

She ignored his jab. "I need a brain."

"Well, the first step is admitting it."

Zelena scowled this time. "I need a brain for my spell and not just any brain will do. It has to be a particularly clever one."

"Well, if you're looking for mine-"

"I think we can avoid that unpleasantness," said Zelena. "I want Joseph Gillette's brain."

That truly surprised Gold. What did she want with the stranger? "What's he to you?"

"What's he to you? All you need to be concerned with is that when I get my brain, you get your precious boy back," she said, edging closer to him. "Tell me, Rumplestiltskin, does that seem like a fair deal?"

"I never make a deal without knowing the price."

"Well, if you fail to deliver, your son dies," said Zelena. "That's the price."

Zelena stalked away, waving for the monkey to follow her.

"Come along, pretty!," she called.
Chapter 57

Today

"Got it!"

Beatrice and Joseph looked up as Emma walked into the main room of the Storybrooke Sheriff’s Office.

"Okay," said Emma entering the room with a stack of papers. "Someone had the foresight to make a list of all the new residents with their non-fairy tale names..."

"Yeah, that was probably my mom," said Beatrice.

"No, my parents could have-" She paused and shook her head. "Never mind. You're probably right."

Joseph took the papers. "What are we looking for?"

Beatrice sighed. "Someone whose name vaguely reminds you of some detail about them in the story."

"Like Mr. Gold?," asked Joseph.

"They're usually harder. I hope you're good at name etymology," said Beatrice.

"Actually, I am," said Joseph.

"Though I don't think we need it." She pointed. "Billie Chenoweth."

"What? How do you know?," asked Emma.

Beatrice took the list. "You never listen when I talk about Wicked."

"What?," Emma asked.

"Popular..." Beatrice started singing as she walked out the door. "I'm gonna make you popular..."

Joseph followed.

"What are you talking about?," asked Emma.

Last December

Emma looked up from her cocoa at Ruby. "Is that one of the guests?"

"No, that's Beatrice," said Ruby. She motioned towards the alley. "She sits in her car and sings sometimes."

"How long has this been going on?," asked Emma.
"Well, since Neal left with Marco and Archie to find August," said Ruby. "Gold's been less than his charming self, I can only guess at what he's been like at home."

Emma then heard a violin playing.

"Is that on the soundtrack?," asked Emma.

Ruby shook her head. "That is Joseph."

"Joseph?"

"He says he composes while he works."

"He's a nature photographer, how can he be working in his room?," asked Emma.

"You know, I brought the same thing up to Merlin and he said not to worry about it."

Emma furrowed her brow. "Merlin said not to worry?"

"Let it go! Let it go! Can't hold it back anymore!"

Emma rapped on the window startling Beatrice. She looked up and rolled down the window.

"Is this the people Pissed Off at Neal Cassidy Club?"

Beatrice shrugged and unlocked the doors. "Come on in."

Emma got in the passenger's side. She motioned at the music. "Is that helping?"

"It's helping a lot actually. Idina Menzel gave me another song with which to express my emotions."

Emma frowned at her.

"Wicked is my angry music," said Beatrice.

"What?"

"Wicked, the true story of the Wicked Witch of the West. Idina Menzel played Elphaba. See, she's born green so everyone kind of treats her like a freak, then she goes and meets Galinda, then she finds out the Wizard of Oz is a jerk doing horrible things to talking animals-"

"Is this going somewhere?"

"Of course it is. Then she sort of goes around trying to free the animals and Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion go to hunt her. And Dorothy throws a bucket of water at her and she melts."

Emma stared at her.

"Well, it's better with the songs obviously," said Beatrice.

"So, I'm pissed at Neal for leaving two weeks before Christmas," said Emma. "Worse than that, Henry thinks it's great that he's gone to be a hero and helps Marco and Archie. I didn't have the heart to tell him August went crazy. Oh, and Mary Margaret is being so optimistic about it I could scream."
"You're still calling your mom Mary Margaret?"

"Well, sorry, we all haven't progressed like you and your fairy tale parents."

"His name is Rumplestiltskin, I was sort of backed into a corner."

"Okay, your turn," said Emma. "Do your rant."

Beatrice considered this. "Well, ditto the Christmas thing. Second, stealing the thing I was in charge of, don't I look like a moron? Third, sending my father spiraling into a deep depression. Fourth, said depression making my life miserable. Fifth, I seem like a bitch if I bring any of this up, hence..."

She hit play on the music again.

"LET IT GO! LET IT GO! LET IT GO!"

"I get it," said Emma.

"Don't you have angry music?"

"No."

"How do you get through life without angry music? Especially your life."

"Gee, thanks," said Emma.

"You know what I meant."

"It's not like they're going to make a musical about the daughter of Snow White and Prince Charming getting put through an enchanted wardrobe to another world."

"I bet it would sound like Les Mis..." mused Beatrice.

Emma gawked. "My life is not that crappy!"

"Come on," said Beatrice, picking up the iPhone. "Give angry music a try."

"I don't think so."

"You'll like it. Come on. We'll listen once to get the hang of that and then you're in the next one. Oh, and the hand motions help."

A few minutes later Regina walked down the street and stopped when she caught sight of Beatrice and Emma sitting in Beatrice's car and singing.

They both suddenly stopped to Regina's icy and critical eye.

"How long do you think she's been there?," asked Beatrice.

"Long enough," said Emma. "It gets worse."

"How much worse?"

She pointed up at the window of one of the rooms at the inn. Joseph was standing in the window staring at them.
"Oh, God," said Beatrice.

*Today*

"La la! Laa la! I'm gonna make you popular!," Beatrice sang as she drove.

"Beatrice. Come on. We have a curse to break," said Emma. "And a Wicked Witch to fight."

"Yeah, hence my theme."

They pulled up to a white cookie cutter house.

"Things would be much more fun if we sang and broke curses at the same time," said Beatrice getting out of the car.

"Why is there a doorway in the front garden?," asked Joseph.

"That seems like it's worth exploring," said Beatrice as they walked into the front yard.

She opened the door revealing a snowy scene with a blonde in a sparkly white dress.

"What is that?," asked Emma.

"Oh, my God, this is so Doctor Who right now," said Beatrice.

The three walked into the scene.

"You know there's a house right over there?," asked Emma.

"Hi," said Beatrice. "I'm Beatrice, this is Emma and Joseph. I'm guessing you're Glinda?"

"Yes."

"Okay, great, we need to defeat the Wicked Witch of the West and you are the Good Witch of one of the other directions, so you know, we could use some help with that."

"I'm sorry. I don't know who you're talking about," said Glinda.

"Oh, come on," said Emma. "Even I know this one. She's like your enemy or something."

"My dad said you know her," Beatrice protested.

"And who might he be?"

"Rumplestiltskin." Beatrice held up her hand. "Yes, the Dark One. You can save the speech."

Joseph pointed as he edged up to Glinda. "Your pendant. Zelena has one just like it, but it's green."

"Green?," Glinda gasped.

"Yes, green," said Emma. She looked at Beatrice. "Seriously, is this what it's like to be you?"

"Why would it be green?," asked Joseph.

"The pendant must hold her powers," said Glinda.
"So, if we can get the pendant off her, she becomes powerless?," asked Joseph.

"Yes, but only a purveyor of the strongest light magic would be able to accomplish such a feat," said Glinda.

"Light magic?," asked Emma.

"Magic created from love," said Glinda.

Beatrice nodded. "Okay, Emma, you're up."

"What? Why me?"

"Well, you're the product of True Love. You're the Savior. This is under general savior duties. You're up."

"That's not fair," said Emma.

"No one expects the Spanish Inquisition," said Beatrice.

Emma turned to Glinda and pointed at Beatrice. "She's the product of True Love, too."

"Yeah, but I'm not the Savior."

"She does way more magical stuff than me," said Emma. "She can change the weather and has a thing with a fireball."

"Dark Curse, she broke it with a kiss," said Beatrice. "Number of curses that I have broken, zero. Zero."

Joseph shook his head. "What are you two even arguing about?"

"Your dad made me the loophole. She has all kinds of magical powers."

"I'm the Dark Princess." She looked plaintively at Glinda. "Come on. The strongest purveyor of light magic cannot be the Dark Princess. Just by definition."

Glinda seemed to be agreeing with Beatrice.

Emma pointed at Beatrice again. "She travelled through time."

Glinda spoke again. "I'm sorry. It would appear fate has chosen you, Emma."

Emma rolled her eyes. "Great."

"Then I guess we'll be going," said Beatrice. "Oh, my mom is having a 'Welcome to Storybrooke' seminar at the library."

Glinda stared at her blankly.

"You know, if you want to know how to use your cell phone or shop on Amazon."

"Amazon?"

"Yeah, it's a website..."

"She doesn't know what a website is," Joseph interjected.
"Well, she's going to need it to buy the sheet music from Wicked if we are ever going to get the singing and curse breaking thing together."

"I am not singing while I break the curse," said Emma.

"Just tell me if anything sounds familiar," Beatrice said to Glinda. "One short day in the Emerald City..."

"That does sound oddly familiar," said Glinda.

"Did you go to Shiz?," asked Beatrice.

"Okay, never mind that," said Emma. She held up her phone. "I just got a message from Mary Margaret. We have to meet back at Granny's. Something big happened."

_Last December_

Joseph entered the library. The party was well-attended by the townspeople who seemed to be in a cheery mood. He spotted the gardener who had been in the field with Beatrice dressed as Father Christmas. He seemed to be giving each of the children a wrapped book in turn. The waitress and her grandmother were manning the refreshment table.

Merlin was across the room.

Talking with Lila Foley.

She seemed to have a girl no more than a year old on her hip and was calling after two other boys.

Whom he of course recognized.

Which was of course impossible.

Merlin spotted him and motioned for him to come over. Joseph hesitated.

"Hey."

He looked to his right. Beatrice had snuck up on him, wearing a green lace dress. The ever-present Dalmatian walked at her side. She held up a book.

"You have come just in time to hear me read 'Babar and Father Christmas.'"

"You read to children?"

She motioned at her mother, happily chatting with Mary Margaret and some other women. "She makes me."

"Where's your father?," he asked.

"He's not coming," Beatrice said, obviously trying to hide her discomfort.

"Oh. I don't see your brother, either."

"He is out of town," she said stiffly.

Before he knew what had happened, that bubbly redhead with the unusual gait bounded up to Beatrice.
"Beatrice, I finally found you!"

"Okay..." said Beatrice.

"Eric says he has a surprise for me tonight. Do you think this is it?"

"For what?"

"The engagement, silly," said Ariel. "It's been months since we got back from-"

Beatrice coughed and motioned at Joseph.

"That island..." Ariel finished uncertainly.

"Engagements aren't really my thing," said Beatrice.

"Aurora said I should dump him."

"Don't dump him. In fact, don't go to Aurora for advice," said Beatrice. "I mean, I don't know, he did ask you to go around the world the night you met, so maybe?"

This was enough to make Ariel squeal.

"He's here!" she said.

Joseph turned to see Eric walk in. He came up to greet Ariel.

"He's not proposing," said Joseph.

"What?" asked Beatrice.

"What?" Ariel echoed.

Eric stared at them dumbfounded. Joseph turned back to face the couple.

"Well, first off, his smell. One part fish, I assume that's from your job at the cannery given the calluses, cuts and healed cuts on your hands. Second part is a budget men's cologne that he wears to cover up the fish smell- it's really not working by the way, third part off your breath, cottage cheese. Fourth part, Juicy Couture, the scent worn by your previous companion this evening who I also suspects enjoys eating cottage cheese. Ariel wears Jean Paul Gaultier Classique Summer, known for it's beachy scent."

Ariel stepped back from Eric and looked at Joseph. "What else?"

"Ariel-"

Joseph was only too happy to continue. "Well, his mobile has a locked screen, lots of people have locked screens with a pin, but he has it set to where you can't even read the messages while it's locked like the one that just lit up from a Patience Moffat?"

"The secretary?!" Ariel shouted. "I got legs for you!"

Ariel stomped off as Eric followed.

"It's not my fault!" he pled. "Regina gave me another girlfriend!"

"What are they talking about?" asked Joseph.
Beatrice looked at Joseph. "Did you just spend a day sniffing perfumes once?"

"Yeah," said Joseph. "I was kicked out of three different Sephoras before I smelled them all."

"What am I wearing?"

"Your body wash is one of those ones that smells like baked goods. I would say sugar cookie today. The expensive one, the cheap ones leave a much more unpleasant after odor. Your hair is Wen, the fig scent and your perfume is Yves Saint Laurent Paris chosen by your mother for its strong rosy notes."

"How did you know my mom gave it to me?"

"You buy cupcake scented body wash, your mother has more expensive tastes, this sells for thirty-nine dollars an ounce. There are roses on her desk. Favorite flower, I'm guessing? Does your mother pick things on a whim? Well, her choice in spouses might lead you to such a conclusion, but you would be wrong. She values things with an emotional connection, hence why she treasures books, hence why she wears the jewelry your father gave her, why she gave you the necklace that came from her family. Rose scented perfume for her only daughter? It reminds her of your father, ergo I would say the first flower your father ever gave your mother was a rose." He paused. "How did I do?"

"You might have missed a detail," said Beatrice. "Overall, it was pretty good."

"What detail?"

Beatrice leaned over to the circulation desk and picked up a wrapped box.

"Who's that for?" asked Joseph.

"That's for you."

"Oh." He examined the box.

"You know you don't have to deduce it, you can just unwrap it," said Beatrice.

"How is that fun?" he asked.

"Ripping paper is fun."

He opened it. "A metronome."

"Yeah, I don't know much about cool photography equipment and figured you probably had it all. I just looked up gifts for violinists and I figured if you had one, it wasn't bad to have more than one and this one is from my dad's shop. It's Bakelite which is sort of cool, there were some wood ones if-"

"No," said Joseph. "No, this is good. Thank you."

"Beatrice," said Belle.

"I'm going," said Beatrice, picking up the Babar book again.

Beatrice walked off. Belle picked up a tin off the desk with a pre-made bow stuck on top of it.

"Decent tea," she explained. "I have my own blend."
"Oh," said Joseph, again caught off guard by a gift. "Thank you."

**Today**

Gold had gotten Belle's message shortly after he met with the witch. Whatever it was, the Charmings thought it was an emergency so he made his way back to the diner where the first thing he spotted was his daughter talking again with the young man whose brain he needed.

"Dad," said Beatrice.

"Did you find the Wicked Witch?," asked Joseph.

"Not that it's any of your concern, but I did not. She has several wards in place," said Gold.

"You said she was a pupil of yours?," asked Joseph.

"We found our witch," said Beatrice. "Long story short, Emma has to save us all. Kind of again."

"Lucky me," Emma grunted as she drank her cocoa.

"Strongest purveyor of light magic, there you go," said Beatrice.

Belle and Mary Margaret entered.

"Isn't David here yet?," asked Mary Margaret.

"He's fine. Regina's with him," said Emma.

Merlin shook his head. "Words that ought not go together." He turned his gaze to Joseph. "Have you always lived in London?"

"Yes," said Joseph.

"Any hobbies?"

Beatrice eyed her grandfather. "What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to have a conversation. This is how mortals talk, is it not?"

"The fact that you use the word mortals shows that you have no idea how they talk," said Beatrice.

Unfazed, Merlin turned back to Joseph. "So, any hobbies beside crime solving? You have sheet music in your pocket."

He looked down. "I suppose I do. I compose while I work."

Gold glanced over. The sorcerer was right. Sheet music there in his pocket, the product of his thoughts, perfect to transform into a brain and so easy to magic away.

The perfect opportunity presented itself as Regina, David and Robin Hood entered the diner.

"Robin!"

"Belle?," he asked.
"They're serious?," Joseph asked Beatrice.

"They're so serious," Beatrice said as her mother hugged Robin Hood.

"How do you two know each other?," asked Regina.

"She was kinder than a thief deserved," said Robin. "Did you escape from that imp?"

"Really?," asked Beatrice.

"She had a baby with that imp," said Regina.

"Yeah, hi," said Beatrice.

"Oh," said Robin.

"Hello, dearie," said Gold.

"Anyway," said David, "I thought I saw the witch and chased her into the woods. When I saw fought her-

"With your sword?," asked Joseph. "You tried to fight a witch with a sword?"

"No," said Beatrice. "Don't try to put logic in this."

"I pulled aside the cowl and saw myself," said David. "Then I put my sword in to the hilt and the creature vanished."

"So my sister wanted David's courage for some reason," said Regina.

"Courage and a baby?," asked Belle. "What can you do with that?"

"More than you might think," said Regina. She turned to Gold. "Did you find her?"

"Afraid not, dearie."

"So, basically, our team is the only one that did what they were supposed to do," said Beatrice, motioning between herself, Joseph and Emma.

"For all the good it does us," said Emma. "Just how am I supposed to take the Wicked Witch's pendant from her?"

"That's what this Glinda said?," asked Regina.

"Strongest purveyor of light magic," said Beatrice.

"You're so quick to harp on that," said Emma.

"Except you have no training, dearie," said Gold.

"Thank you for remembering that," said Emma. She looked at Beatrice. "You're back in."

"I'm not putting her up against Zelena," said Gold. "I have been known to offer instruction..."

"Yeah. Do all your students go crazy?," asked Emma.

"Hey," said Beatrice.
Emma looked at Merlin. "What about you?"

Merlin shook his head. "I'm very selective with my pupils."

Emma turned to Regina.

Regina rolled her eyes. "You can't be serious."

"Come on, Regina. If this is really the only way..."

She sighed. "Fine, but don't think I'm going to coddle you. This is serious."

"Yes, well, try not to damage her as you do so many other things," said Gold.

The group broke up.

"Rumple?," asked Belle. She met him at the door. "I thought we could go to Mushu's."

"Yes, of course," said Gold. "I just thought I'd check on Martha."

Belle looked over at Beatrice and Joseph. "They seem to make a good pair, don't they?"

"Perhaps she ought not get attached."

"What do you mean?"

"I only mean he's an outsider and will doubtless will be back to his own life after this curse is broken," said Gold. He kissed Belle on the cheek and left for the shop.

He took a look at the sheet music in his pocket and was shocked as he read the title.

For Beatrice.

He glanced back in the diner. Regina was being bizarrely awkward with Robin Hood, but his girl was back at the counter with Joseph. Smiling. Even her eyes were smiling.

This was not good.

___

**Last December**

When Beatrice read at the library, it always filled Belle with pride and wonder. This creature had grown inside her, nursed at her breast, those days had seemed like they would last forever and now they were gone. She looked every bit the young woman tonight and Belle could not have been prouder.

Gold hadn't come, though and that didn't sit right with her. So she grabbed her coat and braved the freezing walk to the pawn shop. As she left, Regina rushed in, nearly knocking her over.

"Merlin! Someone was in my vault!," she shouted.

Gold was as Belle suspected he would be. Polishing, dusting, any number of senseless tasks.

"Is that your plan? Are you just going to sit here and polish?"

"I doubt I would be very good company at the party. Besides, it's not as if anyone would miss me."
"I miss you. Beatrice misses you."

Gold didn't answer.

"She looks so beautiful tonight."

"Of course she does."

"Did you bother asking who the metronome was for?"

He shrugged.

"Joseph. She is giving it to Joseph and you didn't even know."

His eyes shot up at her. "Obviously, you and Merlin have your own plans," he grimaced.

Belle took Gold's hand in hers. "Do you know what I think?"

"What might that be?," Gold quipped.

"I think you miss Beatrice as well. I think you're mad at yourself for Bae leaving and you want to punish yourself. The best way you can think to do that is keeping yourself from her, but you're punishing her as well. I know you would never want to hurt her."

"I'm unworthy of her," said Gold.

Belle squeezed his hand. "Come on."

They walked into the library.

"Where is she?," asked Gold.

Belle searched around, but eventually zeroed in on where Martha was heading. Beatrice and Joseph sat in one of the library's reading corners with comfy chairs.

Gold turned back to Belle. "She's with him again?"

"Please, it's Christmas."

They walked over.

"Dad," said Beatrice, looking up with surprise.

"Come here."

Beatrice stood and was only half-surprised when Gold took her into a deathly tight embrace.

"Dad, Dad, seriously, can't breathe," said Beatrice.

Joseph looked at Belle. "Did your father leave?"

Belle looked around. "He was here a moment ago."

Merlin walked with Regina to her vault.

"Someday you might consider putting a decent protection spell on your vault," said Merlin.
"I don't need you to tell me how to do magic," said Regina.

"Well, apparently you do since you came running to me for help."

"I was looking for Gold, you just happened to be there."

"Alas, sunshine is somewhat concerned with finding his son. Again."

Merlin stopped, holding Regina by the arm. He pointed at a pit of earth.

"You didn't mention that."

"Mention what?"

"The obvious evidence of a portal," he said.

Regina looked. "Do you think they're connected?"

"Someone travels from another realm and someone breaks into your vault on the same night?," asked Merlin. "Yeah, I think they might be connected."

"What would be the point? I don't have anything they could want," said Regina.

---

**Today**

Gold shut the door of the shop behind him.

"Martha!"

The dog bounded up to him.

"Good girl, good girl," he said. "Come on. I need your help. It's about the young man who seems so taken with our Beatrice."

He went to the back room and got out the dream catcher.

Martha stared at him curiously wagging her tail.

"Zelena is very powerful, yes, but she's impulsive and impulse does tend to make one sloppy. I'm willing to bet she didn't bother erasing your memories," said Gold.

He sat on the cot and motioned for the dog to come over. He ran the dream catcher over her back and then tried to divine what he saw.

A kiss.

It got worse.

"That's True Love's Kiss," said Belle.

Gold looked up as he still held the dream catcher.

"It was, wasn't it?," asked Belle.

"Yes," said Gold.
"Well, can we get more? Find out what Zelena's plotting?"

Gold motioned at Martha. "She's a dog, Belle. I'm sure we didn't discuss the ins and outs of Zelena's nefarious scheme in front of her and if we did, it's not as if we can retrieve our speech, only what she saw."

He finally dropped the dream catcher on the floor, disgusted with it.

"He's her True Love," said Belle. "Beatrice was right. There must have been another curse that brought the others to Storybrooke because they broke it with True Love's Kiss."

Gold didn't answer. Belle spotted the sheet music on the workbench. Gold didn't have the will to stop her as she picked it up.

"Rumple, why do you have this?"

He didn't answer.

"Why do you have this?," she demanded.

"The witch needs a brain," he said.

"And since when do you run errands for her?," Belle asked.

"Since she has Bae," he snapped.

Belle paused. "I'm sorry, Rumple, but you know you can't give her a brain. She's planning something-"

"I need my son back."

"Right and we'll just tell Beatrice that she's out of luck." She folded the sheet music and put it in her jacket pocket. "I'm not going to let you do this."

"There is no choice-"

"There is always a choice," said Belle. She edged up to him. "Right now, Zelena has the advantage because we lost our memories. You just saw the way to get our memories back."

"True Love's Kiss?," asked Gold. "You want to throw our daughter at some stranger?"

"They've already apparently thrown themselves at each other," said Belle. "They just don't remember it. Once we do that, we'll know what she's planning and we can stop her."

"And what am I supposed to do about my son?," he asked harshly.

"We'll find another way. You don't even know that Zelena has Bae."

Gold shook his head as he slumped down on the cot. "Belle, you know I just can't take the chance."

"Rumple, do you trust me?"

"What sort of question is that-"

"Do you trust me?," she repeated.
"My darling Belle, there is no one I trust more in any realm."

"Then trust me now," said Belle. "Please."

He stared at her again.

"Please. Please do it my way," she plead.

"Why?"

"Because you trust me," said Belle.

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**Last December**

Beatrice awoke with a start. Looking around her room, she couldn't figure out why.

Then she started to feel it.

Martha began to bark. She looked to the window to see a cloud of green smoke gathering.

She hurried down the hall with the dog a footstep behind her. She rushed into her parents' room as the cracks of magic began to shake. They were already awake, Belle seemed to be just stirring.

"Beatrice, come here," said Gold, taking her in his arms.

"Rumple, what's happening?," asked Belle.

Gold opened the drapes, revealing billowing green smoke looming larger and growing closer.

"That looks like the Curse cloud," said Belle.

"The Curse cloud?," asked Beatrice. "Like the Curse?"

"Rumple," said Belle.

Gold looked at Belle. "I know nothing about this. Nothing."

"So, what? We're going to the Enchanted Forest?," asked Beatrice. "We're getting cursed here?"

"I don't know, sweetheart," Gold said. He kissed her on the forehead.

"There's nothing you can do?," asked Belle.

Gold shook his head and led Beatrice to sit on the bed next to Belle. Belle wrapped her arms around her daughter as Martha jumped onto the bed.

Belle looked at Beatrice. "No matter what happens we'll be alright."

"Oh, right, because nothing's going to happen like us getting separated for twenty-eight years!"

Gold was silent, linking hands with Belle as they sat on either side of their daughter.

"I can't do this," said Beatrice. "I can't, I don't want to be separated or cursed or-"

"Shh," said Belle. She kissed Beatrice's cheek and tried to rub soothing circles on her back. Beatrice looked at her father who was gripping her so tightly she thought there would be bruises.
The drapes weren't enough and green smoke came into the room. Beatrice began to shake and hooked one of her arms under her dog. Martha whimpered and the green smoke was all that could be seen or felt or breathed.
Chapter 58

Last December

Beatrice awoke in the middle of her parents' bed with the dog crushing her legs.

"How humiliating," she said.

Belle and Gold both awoke with a start and looked at each other.

"Please tell me you know who I am and who you are," said Beatrice. "Otherwise, this is going to be really awkward."

"No, sweetheart, of course we remember," said Belle.

"Mind telling me just so I can be clear?"

Gold sat up. "Rumplestiltskin and you are my darling girl," he said, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

"So, what happened?"

Gold opened the drapes. "Well, we still appear to be in Storybrooke."

Belle got up and joined him. The street appeared as it had the day before. "So, we're cursed more now?"

"We didn't at least get a Starbucks, did we?," asked Beatrice.

Belle's phone began vibrating on top of the night table. Beatrice reached over and grabbed it.

"It's Mary Margaret."

"And so it begins," said Gold.

"What does?," asked Belle.

"A new curse. The plebeians will quickly seek to blame one of the three most powerful sorcerers in Storybrooke or any other realm. That would leave me, your dear father and to a lesser extent, Regina."

"So, is Christmas still on?," asked Beatrice. She gasped.

"What, sweetheart?," asked Gold.

"Is DirecTV working?" Beatrice rushed out of the room and back to her own.

Where her phone was ringing on her nightstand.

She picked it up. "Hello?"

"Beatrice."
"Oh, Joseph, hey."

"I was just wondering if you were alright after the... whatever that was."

Beatrice finally remembered that Joseph had no idea what was going on and it looked as if they were finally going to have to break it to him after keeping it from him for two months.

"Yeah, quick question, do you keep up with the Disney movies?"

"What?"

Belle popped her head in. "Beatrice, you need to get dressed. Regina and Merlin are arguing in the center of town. Grumpy's forming a posse and Granny already has her crossbow out."

"What did she just say?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah, if you look outside your window, you will probably see an angry mob forming," said Beatrice.

There was a delay as Joseph walked to his window. "Yes?"

"I'll meet you there in thirty minutes."

---

**Today**

Gold looked across the diner as Joseph came in. The young man went and sat at the counter and ordered a tea.

"What is the point of this exercise?"

"We're trying to figure out what she fell in love with," said Belle.

Gold snorted. "Of course it couldn't be simple like the Charmings."

"If it were simple like the Charmings, it wouldn't be Beatrice," said Belle. "Now think."

"It's Beatrice. I haven't the slightest idea what's in her head, certainly not what she makes of boys."

"Well, he's handsome," said Belle.

"Is he?," Gold asked.

"In sort of an imperfect way. Have you noticed his eyelashes?"

"Is this what goes through women's heads?," asked Gold.

Belle patted his hand. "I'll try not to shock you too terribly."

"Amateurs."

They looked up to see Merlin.

"Bloody amateurs."

Gold looked at Belle as Merlin sat down. "You told him."
"He's been uniting True Love for fourteen generations," said Belle. "Of course I told him."

"I did unite Snow and Charming," said Gold.

Merlin laughed. "Oh, yeah, love at first sight with a meet cute in the woods. That's very hard. Do you know how many times in those fourteen generations there was love at first sight? Zero. Attraction, yes. I'm talking about love for the skeptical. Loving without knowing is no trouble at all."

"And what do you propose, dearie?"

"It's a meeting of the minds for those two."

"Speaking of which..." Gold looked up at Merlin. "Do you know why Zelena wants his brain?"

"He's very clever. You've noticed."

"Whatever she is planning is extreme, she must want a very particular brain, why his?"

"Because of who he is, I would think."

"He's no one," Gold protested.

Merlin shrugged. "Have it your way, sunshine."

"He's an outsider. I don't even understand how he can be who he supposedly is."

Merlin turned to Belle. "Get them to work together again. Find a way to have him get to know her." He paused. "Her room."

"Her room?!," Gold exclaimed so loud some of the diners glanced up at him.

"Why her room?," asked Belle.

"I don't care who he is or how much True Love there is," Gold said punctuating the last words with a mocking hand gesture, "there is no way that I am letting that man into my daughter's bedroom."

"Calm down, sunshine," said Merlin. "I'm not suggesting anything unseemly-"

"Really, dearie?," Gold bit back.

Merlin turned to Belle. "He likes deduction. She likes watching him deduce..."

"And if it was about her..." said Belle.

"See, she gets it," said Merlin.

Gold looked at Belle in disbelief.

"Girls like to know boys are paying attention," said Belle.

"Why does she need him to pay attention?," Gold protested.

Merlin just groaned.

"Not to mention there might be clues in Beatrice's room," said Belle. "Some evidence of how she
spent the past year. I'm going to go ask him over."

Before Gold could stop her, Belle was walking over to the counter.

"Are you pleased with yourself?," he asked Merlin.

"Ask me after the wedding," said Merlin.

---

**Last December**

"Guys!," Emma exclaimed. "This isn't solving anything!"

Merlin continued unabated as the crowd of townsfolk grew yet larger. "Who keeps a Dark Curse locked away in a vault that a ten-year old can and has broken into?!

"I am not going to stand here and be lectured by you, freak show," Regina shot back.

"You ripped your own father's heart out and I'm the freak show?"

"Your father was an incubus!"

"Yeah, but I didn't rip his heart out!"

"Okay, which one of you cast the new curse so we can know who to beat?," asked Grumpy.

Merlin spun around. "Do not start with me, dwarf! I will cast until you all look like Walt Disney drew you!"

"Calm down, everyone," said David.

"The same goes for you, Charming," Merlin added.

The mob parted as Gold walked through with Belle and Beatrice behind him.

"So, what have I missed?," asked Gold.

"Gold, we know you miss Neal," said Mary Margaret. "We would understand-"

Gold scoffed. "You really must be joking now. Your Highness. No one can cast the Dark Curse without giving up the heart of the thing they love most. Do you think I would be stupid enough to do that?"

Beatrice spotted Joseph and made her way over to the sidewalk.

"Yeah, so what's going on?," asked Joseph.

"Long story short, there are worlds parallel to this one-" said Beatrice, cutting herself off. "Never mind. Forget long story short. I've got no way to make this short. Worlds running parallel to this one, the people in this town are from one of those worlds called-"

"The Enchanted Forest?"

Beatrice paused. "Okay, how did you know that?"

"I may have been lying about the nature photography."
"Then what was the point of the hat?"

"It's a hat for the country. I wore it in the country."

"Okay, so, if you aren't a nature photographer, what do you do?"

"I was investigating a curious disappearance. A little boy who vanished from his room and then reappeared?"

"You mean Adi?" Beatrice shook her head. "Adi wasn't supposed to remember us. We were just supposed to be stories. That's why Mom gave him the book."

"That didn't quite happen. By the way, my little cousins are quite taken with you."

"What? Really?"

Joseph nodded. "The Dark Princess who fought Peter Pan. Is he really your grandfather?"

"Yeah."

"How does that work?"

"We so don't have time for that."

Joseph nodded. "So I take it that everyone here has a fairy tale identity?"

"Yes."

"I'm guessing your mother is the Belle. That would make your father-"

"Rumplestiltskin."

"What happened to the Beast?"

"Rumplestiltskin is the Beast."

"So you can be more than one character?"

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah, more like all the characters. He even gets in Frankenstein's story."

"You have a Frankenstein? It's not just fairy tale characters?"

"Good morning, Miss Gold," said Archie. "Beautiful day, isn't it?"

"Yeah, good morning." Beatrice paused and turned. "Doctor Hopper?"

Archie stopped. "I hope you haven't forgotten about our session later."

"We don't have a session later. You weren't even here yesterday and it's like two days before Christmas and why am I- Dad!

The sea of people parted again.

"Doctor Hopper," said Gold.

"Oh, hi, Mr. Gold. I'll have the rent ready for you on the first."

"Where's my son?," asked Gold.
"Your son? I haven't seen Neal."

"Archie, how did you get back?," asked Emma.

Without warning, Gold grabbed Archie by the lapels and shoved him against the building.

"Where is my son?"

"Rumple-" said Belle.

"Now, Mr. Gold, don't do something you're going to regret, please, let your conscience be your guide."

"My conscience is clear on this, dearie," said Gold.

Henry sided up to his grandfather. "No, don't you see?! This is just how he acted when he was cursed the last time!"

"That must mean they're all as cursed as we were," said Mary Margaret.

With a sneer, Gold released Archie.

"Henry, we really have to discuss the line between fantasy and reality..." said Archie.

"So, the new curse brought him back from the Enchanted Forest and he has his cursed memories. Again," said Emma.

"Bae could be back," said Gold.

"We'll find him later," said David. "We still have a town to deal with, Gold."

"No, you have a town to deal with, dearie. I have my own priorities." He turned to Joseph. "Mr. Gillette."

"Mr. Gold."

The Charmings led a shaken Archie away.

"Since you are here now I suppose there's no way to conceal the truth from you. Has Beatrice has a chance to give you an account of me yet?"

"You're Rumplestiltskin and the Beast."

"One of the other names I am known as is the Dark One. Would you care to know how I came by that name?"

"Rumple," said Belle, "this really isn't-"

"I stabbed the previous Dark One in the heart in order to protect my son. I spent three hundred years finding a curse to take me to a Land Without Magic to find him. I will do anything for my children. Do you understand?"

"That you're threatening me? Yeah. Caught that."

"Dad, seriously..." said Beatrice.
"Rumple, come on," said Belle. "We can try your blood magic again."

Belle led him away. Merlin walked up to Beatrice and Joseph.

"And who might you be?," asked Joseph.

"Merlin."

Beatrice looked to her grandfather. "Did the new curse bring everyone over?"

"It's early to say. It just strikes me that there might be some people we left behind in the Enchanted Forest for a reason..." Merlin looked to Regina.

"You mean my mother," said Regina.

"Well, she definitely makes my top ten," said Merlin.

"Who's her mother?," Joseph asked Beatrice.

"The Queen of Hearts. Also, the Miller's Daughter. Also, she used to date my dad. It was creepy."

"I am right here," said Regina.

"You don't find it creepy that your mom and my dad were like two seconds from eloping before she ripped her heart out?"

"Sorry," said Joseph. "She ripped her heart out? Her own heart?"

"My mother did not cast this curse," said Regina. "She doesn't have her heart. She can't love anything."

"This is your fault," said Merlin.

"My fault? How is it my fault?"

"Because you didn't kill her properly!"

"What about you?," asked Regina. "You didn't kill her the last time you saw her."

"You know what?," said Merlin. "You're right. I ought to have killed her. I ought to have killed her the day I met the heartless wench, but no, I had to distract Rumplestiltskin and let him plan out his little curse so, yes, in retrospect, I should have killed her and you ought never have been born. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

Regina stiffened.

Belle returned. "Beatrice! We found your brother!"

Beatrice found. "The blood magic thing worked that fast?"

"Doctor Whale called. He's in the hospital, come on," said Belle.

---

**Today**

"Beatrice!," Belle called.
Beatrice paused her TV as Martha ran downstairs. She followed the dog to see her parents walking in with Joseph.

"Hello, girl," said Joseph as the Dalmatian stood on her hind legs to greet him.

"Hey," said Beatrice.

"Hi," said Joseph as the dog settled.

"Merlin thought that Joseph could put his investigative skills to good use here trying to sort out what we've been up to the last year," said Belle. She looked at Joseph. "Why don't you start in Beatrice's room?"

"My room?" asked Beatrice. A quick glance at her father made her uneasy.

"Well, you have to start somewhere," said Belle. She smiled. "I'll make tea."

---

_Last December_

Joseph tagged along to the hospital Belle and Gold went ahead into the room after talking to Whale.

"Frankenstein is the doctor?," he asked.

"Yeah, you'll have to ask Regina about that one," said Beatrice.

They entered the room. Apparently, Neal was not happy to see his father.

"Bae-"

"Don't call me that!," Neal snapped. "You're not a rapper!"

Gold looked confused. He turned to Belle.

"Bae is a slang term," Joseph offered. "An abbreviation for 'Before Anyone Else.'"

"It's hard to describe how much I don't care," said Gold.

"Look," said Neal, "you don't need to be here to pretend you care. You just go back with your pretty trophy wife and your perfect little princess-"

"Hey," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice, he's not himself," said Belle.

"Yeah, I don't need you making excuses for me, okay? Even your own dad knows you're a whore-"

"That's enough-" said Gold.

"Come on, Dad, she was three years ahead of me in high school! She was obviously after your money! Why the hell else would she-"

"This is a twisted world in your head," said Beatrice.

"More twisted than the real one?," asked Joseph.
"Maybe this isn't a good time," offered Whale.

"I don't want them here," said Neal.

Beatrice stepped up. "You're not remembering this right. That isn't what happened."

Neal snorted. "And why would I ever believe you?"

"Because I'm your sister."

"You ruined my life," Neal sneered.

"Okay, this is enough," said Belle. She started leading Beatrice and Gold away.

They got in the hallway.

"Did he say anything to you?," Belle asked Whale.

Whale shrugged. "He thinks he's estranged from his family. He had quite a story in his mind about you and Gold."

"Oh, yay," said Beatrice. "So glad whoever created the new curse could get super creative with us."

"He's alive and he's here. That's what's important," said Belle. "Alright? We're just going to have to sort out the rest like everyone else who has been cursed."

"Oh, believe me, I'll sort it out," said Gold.

Belle led Gold away as Beatrice's phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Bea, it's Ariel."

"Hey, what's up?"

"That show you like with the doctor. Isn't there a blue box in it?"

"Yeah..."

"Because there's one on Main Street."

"I'll be there in five minutes," said Beatrice.

"Well, it's just a box-"

"Ariel, watch that box. If there's a loud brake grinding sound and the wind starts to blow, shout 'Doctor' a lot and run towards it. If a guy comes out, play the mermaid card to keep him here."

"The mermaid card?"

"Yes, he's totally going to want to know what a mermaid is doing in Maine with legs!"

She hung up the phone. "Gotta run."

Beatrice started walking as Joseph followed her.
"Where are you going?"
"TARDIS!"

Today

Beatrice opened the door to her room.

"Well, this is it," said Beatrice.

Joseph looked around. Beatrice tried to follow his gaze, wondering what he would make of the posters or shelves of Doctor Who collectibles. He gave a passing glance to the heap of shoes at the foot of her bed, then bent down to pick up a black ankle boot.

"Do you do any farm work?"

She frowned. "Do I look like I do farm work?"

"These boots," said Joseph. "There's dirt on the bottom, as if you dug your heels in as if someone were dragging you."

"And the farm?"

"It's not caked on, so the dirt was initially dry. Everything around here is covered in snow, snow melts, dirt plus water is mud. Dirt but indoors suggests barn."

"I don't hang out in barns."

He resumed his survey of the room.

Beatrice threw her arms up. "Well, are you getting anything from this?"

"Yes. You spend a lot of time in your room and this wasn't always your room."

Beatrice nodded. "Yes on the first one. How are you getting the second one?"

Joseph motioned at the floor behind the fuzzy white rug. "There are scrapes on the floor. It looks as if there was a bigger bed here. If you had always been in this room, the furniture would have gotten bigger, not smaller."

"It was a really scary bed," said Beatrice.

"And someone bought all of this at the same time," Joseph observed. "Colors change season to season. Next year's cerulean won't be the same as this year's cerulean, but everything in here is in the same shade of teal. Probably when your father repainted, which is curious."

"Is it?"

"Normally, I would say that he was a stepfather who was attempting to curry favor, but you have his eyes and the little bump in his nose."

Beatrice tried to subtly run her finger down the ridge of her nose.

"There's no animosity between your parents and thus could never have been a separation. So little that I would question your maternity if I couldn't put you and your mother together from two streets away from each other. Your figure is a little fuller, but that still leaves your hair, your
cheeks, your forehead, your chin. So, I have to ask why you haven't always been in this room. There's closer rooms to the Master Bedroom, which surely would have been your mother's preference when you first came home from hospital. Even if your father tried to move you further down the hall, he most likely would have acquiesced to her wishes -

As he talked Beatrice desperately tried to take her attention away from his quick description of her looks. It had been hard enough waking up with a lost year with a body she didn't remember without anyone drawing attention to it. "How do you know which one is the Master Bedroom?"

Joseph shrugged. "Victorian architecture. So, a curse brought you all here, but you haven't been in this room and you're not in the room next to your parents..."

"I wasn't here the whole time," said Beatrice. "My mom and I were in New York."

"How did that happen?"

"She didn't remember who she was or who he was. He thought she was dead and didn't know I existed until we came to Storybrooke."

"Well, that explains some things," said Joseph.

"Like what?"

"You're not like anyone else in this town which is fortunate."

"You haven't been to high school with these people. It's really not."

"You're a technology fiend," said Joseph, walking over to the desk and cast a curious glance at the faux fur chair before sitting down. He opened her Macbook.

"I've got Facebook, but it's not going to do you any good. I have like twenty friends and it's not like I can make a status update like 'Beatrice Gold is fighting the Wicked Witch of the West' or post pics from Neverland."

"You were tagged in pictures."

"What? Someone tagged me?" Beatrice peered over his shoulder.

"Your friend, Mahnaz."

"Mahnaz? I don't know a Mahnaz."

"Well, let us meet Mahnaz Khalidi. She's in high school in Augusta, Afghan parents, three younger sisters and oh, she likes Doctor Who as well..."

Beatrice looked to see a picture of a girl whose hijab coordinated with the Doctor Who tee she was wearing.

"She was here," remarked Joseph.

"She was?"

Joseph pointed at a series of photos. "'Had a great time with Beatrice Gold this weekend. Thanks for having me! Mr. Gold makes the best chocolate chip pancakes ever!.'"

"She took pictures of my dad's pancakes?"
"Yes, it appears you met for dates at the cinema and attended Boston Comic Con together. Oh, this is interesting. Her status from July."

Beatrice read. "Just a quick update to let everyone know I'm okay. There was a freak storm that destroyed my dorm. They finally found my roommate. She's in the hospital. Please pray for her."

"Beatrice."

"What?"

"You were her roommate." Joseph motioned at a picture of Beatrice and the girl in a dorm room.

"MIT Science Camp," said Beatrice.

"Did you register for that or-"

"I looked at the brochure. I thought it was a long shot."

"This freak storm in Boston landed you in hospital," he said, opening another tab on the browser. "That's curious."

"What is?"

He pointed. "National Weather Service. Freak tornado in Boston, uncommon for urban areas, uncommon for Boston, but not impossible. The Wicked Witch says you were in Oz, isn't that how one gets there?"

---

**Last December**

It took Beatrice no time at all to get from the hospital back to Main Street where the blue box sat. Ariel waved at them.

"Does this not seem odd to you?," asked Joseph.

"My whole life seems odd to me," said Beatrice. "The only difference is that it's awesome!"

Beatrice walked up to where Ariel waited by the police box.

"It's not even the right dimensions for a police box," said Joseph. "The windows are wrong."

Beatrice shook her head. "You are so not a fan."

They walked up to Ariel.

The mermaid motioned at the blue box. "It's just been sitting here."

"That's what it does. Until it travels in time."

"There is no such thing as time travel," said Joseph.

"Yeah, actually there is and I can do it," said Beatrice.

"How?"

"Well, I don't know how yet," said Beatrice.
Ariel frowned. "So you're just going to go off in a time machine?"

"It's also goes through space," said Beatrice.

She knocked on the door of the blue box and as she did, the door flew open and she found it was bigger on the inside.

Just not in a good way.

---

**Today**

"What is it we're looking for?" Beatrice asked.

Her father was currently deep inside her closet, not that she had anything all that scandalous in her closet unless she started some bad habit in the past year. Joseph was still scrolling through her computer and her mother was researching this Boston cyclone on the iPad.

"I'll know it when I see it," said Gold.

"Right..." said Beatrice. "If I went to Oz, you think I got a postcard or something?"

"Who's Jamie?" asked Joseph.

"I don't know."

"He keeps sharing articles on your Facebook page," said Joseph. "Johnlock? What is Johnlock?"

"This article says that the cyclone appeared without warning and didn't appear on any radar," said Belle.

"Well, I don't know how to conjure a tornado and I thought this stuff didn't work in the Land Without Magic."

"Magic is different here," said Gold.

"That explains nothing."

"How many swimsuits do you own?" demanded Gold.

Beatrice looked at Belle. "Mom!"

Belle put the iPad down and went to the closet. "Rumple, if there's anything it won't be in the swimsuits."

"Yeah, obviously, check to see if I have an Oz souvenir t-shirt, not to be confused with my Wicked souvenir hoodie," said Beatrice.

"I'm counting ten," said Gold.

"Put that aside," said Belle, closing the storage box. "What about the shoes?"

"Okay, granted, I haven't had a lot of time to look, but I don't think I have any ruby slippers."

"What does OTP mean?" asked Joseph.

Beatrice turned back to Joseph. "What are you looking at?"
"Tumblr."

"Okay, I like tumblr, too, but we are trying to do something and I haven't finished some stuff yet so I need to avoid spoilers."

"Do you recall where you got these?"

Beatrice turned back. Gold was holding a pair of silver heels and a plastic bag from a hospital with her name on it.

"No, they're ugly, though. They're like disco pilgrim shoes."

"Well, I know," said Gold. "I've seen them on someone else. Zelena."

"I stole her shoes?"

"These shoes have the ability to travel between realms."

"Or they're just ugly," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice, they have to be magical," said Belle. "You would never buy them."

"Did I do something in Oz?"

"Zelena was never a great strategist," said Gold.

"I wouldn't be so sure," said Joseph. "She seems to be playing us all fairly well."

---

**Last December**

Beatrice found herself in a dark room.

"Oh, no."

Beatrice spun around. There was no escape, everything was black.

Don't panic. There's no need to panic.

Holding her hand out she attempted to summon a fireball or a candle or a freaking match would do, but nothing would conjure.

"Beatrice!"

"Joseph?"

"Are you alright?"

"Mostly."

"You're panicking. Why are you panicking?"

"Because it's dark!"

He paused.

"Beatrice, there is a way out."
"I don't see it!"

"You went in so that you means you can come out."

"I don't see it!"

"It's there! It has to be!"

"It's not!"

"It's logic! If there's a way to get in, there's a way to get out!"

"There is no logic in this town!"

"Then what is there?!"

"Magic! Belief! A bunch of random crap!"

Beatrice turned around again, trying not to hyperventilate and screeched as Joseph's hand landed in her face.

"Sorry!" Then it became enveloped in flame and disappeared.

"Joseph?"

"I'm fine," said Joseph, looking down at the fresh burns on his hand. "Beatrice, I'm going to put my hand back and you are going to take it."

"You'll get burned."

"I'll be fine!"

"I'll get burned!"

"Beatrice, just try."

Joseph took a breath and put his hand back in.

Beatrice closed her eyes and took his hand.

Joseph pulled her through the doorway and she couldn't stop hyperventilating.

"Beatrice, Beatrice, look at me," said Joseph, grabbing her by the shoulders.

She did, her eyes shooting up into his.

"You're fine," he said.

"Yeah."

"Beatrice!," called Belle.

She looked up just as Belle and Gold came towards her.

"Mom, Dad, how-"

Belle motioned at the box. "A blue box appeared. We got calls."
Gold examined the door. The fire had disappeared, the darkness and it was just wood.

"What is it?," asked Joseph.

Gold turned to Beatrice. "Sweetheart, what was in here?"

She shook her head. "It was dark, there were flames, just like the Netherworld."

"Netherworld?," asked Joseph. "Were you there?"

"No, this is an illusion. A very good one," said Gold. "I would say I admire the sorcerer, but I'm more interested in finding him and ripping him limb from limb."

"So, we should keep the box, right?," asked Beatrice.

Gold sighed. "We can keep the box."

"Rumple," said Belle, "it's the thing she fears most inside the thing she loves."

"It's a trap," said Joseph.

"Indeed," said Gold.

Belle gasped and gingerly took Joseph's wrist. "Gods! What happened to your hand?!"

"You said it was fine!," said Beatrice.

"Rumple," said Belle.

Joseph surprised Belle by fingering her bracelet.

"Where did you get that?"

"Rumple made it for me, years ago. It's gold that he spun and braided."

"Do you want me to fix your hand or not, dearie?," Gold asked brusquely.

"Dad!," hissed Beatrice.

Gold took Joseph's hand from Belle and waved his other hand. He waved his hand and the burns were healed.

With rage at the happy reunion scene across the street, Zelena transported herself through green smoke into the cellar where Cora sat.

"Well," Cora sighed, "you've finally come to visit your mother. How nice."

"It didn't work," Zelena fumed. "The trap didn't work. How could it not work? I put the strongest curse possible on that box and now it's just plywood! How is that possible?"

"Rumplestiltskin is a clever and wily opponent-"

"It wasn't Rumplestiltskin!," shrieked Zelena. "It was someone else. A man. He reached for her and pulled her out!"

A rueful smile played at the edges of Cora's mouth.
What?,” demanded Zelena. "What's so funny?"

"True Love is the most powerful magic in any realm,” said Cora, stepping up as she walked to the edge of her cell. "Now you're going to let me out."

Zelena scoffed. "And why would I do that?"

"Because I'm going to show you that love is weakness. We're going to use that man and then you will have everything you need for your spell and we can start again.”
Chapter Notes

Sorry I've been busy and haven't added more. I'm going to try to add some more pretty quick. Please let me know what you think and happy reading!

---

**Sometime Last December**

Neal landed back in the Enchanted Forest with a thud.

"Here, let me help you," said Marco.

Marco helped him up. Archie was dusting himself off. Neal was kind of glad to see he hadn't become a cricket since he wasn't sure how that was supposed to work.

Nobody ever had these questions in New York.

The Enchanted Forest. After all this time spent running away, Neal wondered what the hell he was doing back here.

"Now," said Archie, "how do we find August? I mean Pinocchio."

"My father's castle," said Neal.

Marco looked skeptical. "The Dark Castle?"

"It'll be fine," said Neal. "My father loves to use blood magic. I'm sure it will be safe for me."

---

**Last January**

Beatrice walked down the street to the library. She noticed Tinker Bell talking to Regina and groaned internally. One of the things that had been made clear in the short time she had a fairy godmother- well, two, really- was that one did not simply ignore her fairy godmother. She had stop and talk to her, even if she was talking to Regina.

"It's like you don't even want to be happy," Tinker Bell said to Regina.

"I have a curse to break," said Regina.

"You can't just use that as an excuse."

"He lives in the woods!," said Regina.

"Okay, what are we talking about?," asked Beatrice.

"Regina's soul mate," said Tinker Bell. "You know Leon?"
"Oh, him?," said Beatrice. "He's super nice. You're sure he's Regina's soul mate?"

Regina scowled at Beatrice. "It's not necessary to be so like your father all the time."

"I can't seem to help it, actually," said Beatrice. "His son is adorable. He's like a baby hobbit."

Regina continued to scowl.

"What? He comes to story time at the library," said Beatrice. "Hey, just to put this out there, we are currently in a curse situation and as I know you're aware- since you tried to trick my mom with it- True Love's Kiss can break any curse. So, maybe if you and Leon could, I don't know, start with coffee?"

"You're insane," said Regina.

"It's true. You don't want to be happy," said Tinker Bell.

"I'm done with this," said Regina getting up. She looked at Beatrice. "And if you are so concerned with True Love's Kiss, why don't you try it on that boy you've been spending so much time with?"

"I don't have a True Love," said Beatrice.

"Enough of that," said Tinker Bell.

Regina stalked away. Beatrice and Tinker Bell chatted for a few minutes until Beatrice saw Aurora coming her way.

"Weren't we going to eat?," she asked.

"Yes. You know what I feel like?," asked Beatrice.

Aurora rolled her eyes. "No..."

"Yes, Mushu's, what a great idea. Let's go," said Beatrice.

Neal, Marco and Archie made their way cautiously inside the Dark Castle. They had just gained entry when a voice boomed out at them.

"Stop where you are! Hands where I can see them!"

Neal frowned. "Hook?"

The pirate stepped out of the shadows. "Baelfire? What the hell are you doing here?"

"I could ask the same of you."

"I've come to rob the Dark Castle. What are you doing here?"

Neal shrugged. "Robbing the Dark Castle."

Hook looked back. "It's alright, Smee. Just our old friend."

Smee stepped forward into the light of the torches.

"More importantly, why aren't you in Storybrooke?," asked Hook.
"I've got something I've got to do, that's all," said Neal.

Hook frowned. "What about your son?"

"I'll worry about Henry." Neal looked back at Marco and Archie. "Come on, this way."

Neal walked into the Great Hall, covered in dust and cobwebs as it was. There were still dishes on the table and on the floor he saw his father's old walking stick from lifetimes before.

He knelt down and picked it up, running his fingers along the notches Rumplestiltskin had made in it to mark his son's growth.

As he did and as he somewhat expected, a cabinet appeared.

"What's that?", asked Archie.

"Magic," said Neal.

Neal went to work looking through the contents of the cabinet.

"I thought only your father controlled the magic beans," said Hook, suddenly at his side again.

"They were guarded by blood magic," Neal answered tersely.

"So you stole from your father?"

Neal looked up at him. "What the hell do you care, Killian? You were about to steal from my father."

"Well, he's not my father."

"Is that all this is? You're not still looking for a way to kill him?"

"No, when I left Storybrooke, I left that behind. Now, what are you doing here?"

Marco spoke up. "My son."

"Yeah, you haven't seen a wooden guy around, have you?", asked Neal.

Hook frowned. "Can't say that I have. So, you've abandoned your son to find his?"

"I haven't abandoned my kid," said Neal.

"It seems as if you have."

"I have more magic beans. When we find August, we can go back."

Suddenly the doors to the Great Hall slammed shut and the men looked up in alarm.

"I think it's time to leave, Captain," said Smee.

"A sentiment I share at the moment, Smee," said Hook.

"The window!," Archie suggested.

As soon as they headed towards the windows, the glass was replaced with brick.
"What the hell?," said Neal.

"Hello," a woman's voice called out from behind them.

They looked behind them to see a green-skinned woman in black flanked by flying monkeys.

"Now, forgive me for listening, but did I just hear you say your father is Rumplestiltskin?," she asked, her lips becoming a smile.

---

_Last January_

Once at Mushu's the girls got their usual table and their usual waitress.

"Just look at her," sneered Aurora.

Beatrice sat across from Aurora as Mulan or rather Minh worked behind the counter of Mushu's.

"You do realize that she has no idea who she is and she doesn't know she supposedly stole your boyfriend?"

"My True Love."

"Sorry, I'm no expert, but if it was True Love, how did she steal him?"

"Philip awoke me from the sleeping curse. Of course it was True Love."

Beatrice nodded. "Okay, then..."

Mulan/Minh came over with their appetizers, some steamed dumplings.

"Here you go," she said.

"Oh, I thought we got the order of six," said Beatrice.

"I had the cook add in a little something extra," she said, turning to wink at Aurora.

"Okay, thanks," said Beatrice.

Aurora grimaced as Mulan walked away.

"That is the fourth time we've gotten extra food," said Beatrice.

"I know. Do you think she's trying to make me fat?"

Beatrice paused. "Hold on. I can solve this." She picked up her phone and started texting.

---

Hook, Smee, Marco and Archie soon found themselves magically transported to the dungeon of the Dark Castle.

"Ah, home at last," said Hook.

"I can't say I share the sentiment," said a man.

A man stepped forward out of the shadows.
"Who are you?," asked Hook.

"Robin of Locksley. And you?"

"Captain Hook of the Jolly Roger. This is my first mate, Mr. Smee."

"A pleasure to have you join us," said Robin.

"What are you doing here? You can't have been in the Dark Castle this whole time?," asked Hook.

Robin nodded. "We had the misfortune of staying here when the Wicked Witch decided to take up residence," said Robin.


"Zelena. Surely you met her by now. She seems to have a fixation with the proper owner of this estate."

"One I believe the Captain shares," said Mulan.

Hook turned as the warrior woman stepped out of the shadows, flanked by Prince Phillip.

"Ah, Mulan, I had nearly forgotten about you," said Hook.

"Where is Aurora?," demanded Phillip.

"The princess is fine," said Hook. "She's in Storybrooke, she has a part-time job at the library as I understand it."

"A job?," Phillip asked incredulously.

Mulan stepped forward and grabbed Hook by the throat with a surprisingly strong grip.

"We can't trust him. He worked with Cora."

"Times have changed, love. Nobody's heard from Cora in some time."

"Not so," said Robin. "You just met her daughter."

"Regina?"

"No, her other daughter. Zelena," said Phillip.

"Cora is being held prisoner elsewhere in the castle," said Robin.

Hook looked at Mulan. "Do you mind letting me go, love?"

"Yes," said Mulan.

"The way I see it, we're all in here together," said Hook.

"Mulan, he's right," said Phillip. "We need all the friends we can get in here."

Mulan released Hook and turned to Phillip. "He wants the same thing as the Wicked Witch, revenge on Rumplestiltskin. What will keep him from siding with her?"
"Well, allow me to reassure you," said Hook, "I have given up revenge on Rumplestiltskin. I even accompanied him on a mission to save his daughter."

"The Dark Princess?," asked Robin.

"You know the Dark Princess?," asked Mulan.

"Yes, of course I do," said Hook. "Why?"

"Because Zelena seems to think that she is the only one who can defeat her," said Mulan. "She wants to kill her."

"Well, she's just going to have to get to the other realm to do that first, isn't she?"

"Actually..." began Archie.

Hook looked back.

"We had some extra magic beans," said Archie.

"Extra magic beans?," asked Hook. "You brought extra magic beans?"

"There won't be any stopping her," said Robin.

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**Last January**

"I am not your personal private detective," said Joseph, looking at Beatrice.

"Since when?," Beatrice asked with a smile.

"What is the point of this?," asked Aurora.

"She's coming back," said Joseph.

Beatrice was surprised as he placed his arm over her shoulders.

"What are you doing?," asked Beatrice.

"Play along."

"So, do you guys know what you want?," asked Minh.

Joseph looked at Beatrice. "You first, darling."

Beatrice tried to get her heart back in her chest. "The Mongolian Beef, please."

"That sounds good," said Joseph. "I'll have the same."

Aurora ordered something that Beatrice wasn't quite catching because she was slightly distracted and Minh left.

"What is going on?," asked Aurora.

"Oh, her?," asked Joseph. "She's in love with you."

"What? No, she stole Philip from me," said Aurora.
"I assume bisexuals exist in the Enchanted Forest," said Joseph.

"That's crazy," said Aurora.

Joseph turned to Beatrice, their faces were only a couple of inches apart.

"You said you've been here multiple times and she's given you free food. Not a mistake, it's part of a larger plan. That leads to what plan. It's obvious from the way she's been looking you over."

"She's been looking me over?," asked Aurora.

"Yes, hitting all the high points, but she was holding back. I assumed that was because of Beatrice, that she thought you two might be a couple so I've taken her out of the equation hence this display," said Joseph. "Free food plus worrying about rivals plus that looks equals love."

"Is that what we're doing?," asked Beatrice.

"I'd say it's working," said Joseph. "What about you?"

"Yeah, I think so."

Aurora shook her head. "I'm going to powder my nose."

"Good, I'll watch her watch you leave," said Joseph.

"Are we just going to stay like this?," asked Beatrice.

"Much more convincing if we do..."

"Mulan just left, though."

"Never give up a good disguise."

"Disguise is always a self-portrait."

"How are your father and grandfather coming with finding who cast the curse?"

Beatrice frowned. "You want to ask about my father and grandfather right now?"

He leaned down to whisper in her ear. "Yes."

"Well," said Beatrice, "to cast the Curse you need the heart of the thing you love the most."

"Cheerful."

"I thought so," said Beatrice. "Nobody seems to be missing anyone."

"I thought you said Aurora hadn't found Philip."

"Well, no-"

"And Mulan, she was involved with him?"

"Well, yeah, but why would Mulan cast the Dark Curse? This isn't Regina we're talking about."

"An honorable woman, a warrior like Mulan, no matter how upset she was would never be so spiteful. Just as she would never give any thought to sacrificing herself so it wasn't to save her
own life. She's disciplined enough to crush the heart of the thing she loved most, but she would need a very good reason."

"To save someone," said Beatrice. "But who would she need to save people from?"

Aurora returned and sat down.

"Was it a good kiss?" Joseph asked quietly.

"I don't know what you mean-" Aurora stuttered.

"You left, then she left. Now your lipstick is smeared, your hair is mussed and your top is disheveled."

Beatrice had to turn and look. Joseph was right.

"Oh, my God," said Beatrice.

Aurora looked mortified.

"I'm not judging or anything, just..." Beatrice said. "Oh, my God!"

"Do you think I know what to think?," asked Aurora. "I am supposed to be with Philip."

Aurora got up.

"Where are you going?," asked Beatrice.

"Home."

"We were supposed to have dinner. Don't be lame," said Beatrice.

Aurora stalked out.

"She took that well I think," said Joseph.

"Do you really think that's what happened to Philip?"

"It would explain why you've been unable to find him."

"It's not like we found Hook yet, either."

"Hook?," asked Joseph. "As in Captain Hook?"

"As in my dad's first wife's boyfriend."

"Really?"

Beatrice nodded. "He's also got a thing for Emma."

"Why don't you use your locator spell?"

"I need something that belonged to the person."

"Like this?," asked Joseph, holding up a gold clasp with a seal emblazoned on it.

"You stole that from Aurora," she stated.
He shook his head. "Your point?"

Hook had been a prisoner in many lands. It came with the territory of being a pirate, but Zelena asked very little of her captives. They sat in the dungeon and waited.

And waited.

Until one day, Marco vanished before their eyes.

Not long after, the doors to the dungeons opened and they were summoned to the Great Hall.

"Welcome," said Zelena. "I needed an audience. A girl does like to be noticed."

Hook looked around.

"Cora," he said.

"Captain," said Cora. "You broke our deal."

"You hardly seem in a position to complain," he said, motioning at her iron bonds over her hands.

Preparing to trade barbs with his one time partner some more, he happened to look across the room. Neal was tied to a chair, looking worse for wear. He rushed over.

"Baelfire."

"I'll be fine," said Neal.

He looked up at Zelena. "What have you done to him?," Hook demanded.

Zelena shrugged. 'I only asked a few questions. He didn't want to give up the answers that easily, but I found my way around that.'

"What do you want, Zelena?," Phillip asked.

"I thought you would never ask. I want to enact the Dark Curse, that was why I sent your friend there. It seemed he was terribly worried about his son, the wooden man who just happened to be a guest of mine and he didn't care if he took Regina's scroll."

Marco looked down guiltily.

"If you want to get to the other realm, there's no need for that," said Archie. "You can just use the magic beans we brought."

"No, I know that. I want to enact the Dark Curse."

Phillip shook his head. "Why would you want that?"

"Because when I do, Rumplestiltskin and my mother and sister will finally know who was the most powerful. It should have been me all along. I got nothing and Regina got everything."

"Well, it hasn't exactly made her happy," Hook offered.

"I'm willing to take the chance," said Zelena. She walked to Cora.

"Zelena, perhaps I was wrong-"
"You were wrong," said Zelena, taking out a small dagger. She cut a lock of hair from Cora's head. "That's alright, though. We are going to do it all over."

She tossed the hair in the cauldron as it continued to bubble.

"And what the hell does any of this have to do with my sister?" asked Neal.

"Well, if you must know, the Dark Princess has the four elements I need for my spell," said Zelena. "All wrapped up in one nice little package that will break Rumplestiltskin's heart. You would have done well enough, Baelfire, but you'll work as a distraction."

"What four elements?" asked Mulan.

"I would rather discuss today's spell," said Zelena. "I need a heart."

Zelena's captives looked furtively to each other.

"Not just any old heart, the heart of the thing you love the most..."

Cora looked nervous.

"Don't worry, Mother," said Zelena. "You did such a good job that I don't love anything. So, someone else will have to pick."

She looked to Robin. "There is always the heart of your adorable little son..."

"You're a twisted soul," spat Robin. "I would never do that."

"What if I killed all your men? How many would you let die to save your son?"

"Leave the boy alone, Zelena," said Hook.

Zelena turned to Hook with an amused smile. "Is the pirate trying to be noble?"

"I harbor no illusions about what I am but I have no desire to watch others suffer because you are unhappy."

Zelena shrugged. "That's exactly why they must suffer."

She stopped and walked back over to Mulan and Phillip.

"Which one of you will it be?" asked Zelena.

"I would never help you," said Mulan.

"You grow tiresome. I never said you had a choice." She looked between the two. "One of you is losing a heart today or I will kill everyone in the dungeon. I'll make my mother's massacres look like picnics. One dies for many. You nobles can do the math, can't you?"

Phillip looked at Mulan.

"Phillip, no," said Mulan.

"You have to," said Phillip. "It's the only way."

"You know something?" asked Zelena as Mulan glanced at her. "He's right."
With that, Zelena plunged her hand into Phillip's chest and pulled out his heart. The prince staggered to the floor. Zelena held the heart in front of her.

"Crush it," she commanded.

"No."

"Yes."

"That will kill him!"

Mulan looked to Phillip.

"I can still slaughter everyone here if that's what you want," said Zelena.

Mulan looked around the room at the rest of the hostages as Zelena placed the heart in her hands. Slowly, she took the steps up to the cauldron and held her breath as she crushed Phillip's heart and the smoke began to plume.

"Thank you, that will do nicely," said Zelena.

Mulan turned back to the witch.

"I will kill you for this if it is the last thing I do."

"You'll have to remember me first," said Zelena. She looked to her audience. "You're all free to go now. The Curse cloud will take care of you soon enough."

Hook walked over to Neal.

"Except for him," said Zelena.

Hook looked up in surprise.

"As I said, Rumplestiltskin is going to need a distraction."

"It's okay, Killian," said Neal.

"Captain, come on," said Smee.

Hook gave one last look at Zelena and hurried along with the other fleeing captives. It was chaos as they ran and jostled. Hook watched as Robin scooped up his boy to run for it.

He turned around.

"Captain!," Smee objected.

Hook ignored his first mate and went in the Great Hall. The cauldron that held the Dark Curse was beginning to bubble over. Neal was still tied to a chair, but Cora and Zelena were nowhere to be seen. The only other occupant of the room was the deceased Phillip.

"I told you to go," said Neal.

"And I remembered that you were a boy once," said Hook, untying the ropes.

"Zelena's curse..."
"Don't worry."

"I've got to warn my family."

"I know," said Hook, releasing him from the ropes. He helped him up and he walked weakly. "If we hurry, there may be another way to Storybrooke."

"There's no time."

They made it out into the gardens. The others were far ahead of them.

"Killian, stop," said Neal.

"Baelfire, we have to hurry," said Hook.

"No, you have to hurry," Neal grunted. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a magic bean. "You still have one."

"Yeah, I figured it couldn't hurt to hang on to one." He put it in Hook's hand. "You take it."

"I'm not abandoning you here."

Neal shook his head. "I'm too weak to use that and we both know Zelena wants my father to suffer. I'll be alive for a while with whatever she's got planned. You go to Storybrooke and warn my family. Tell Bea I'm sorry."

"Baelfire, I can't-"

"You owe me, Killian," said Neal. "You owe me."

Hook closed his hand over the bean.

Hook threw it to the ground and the earth opened up, creating a portal. He gave Baelfire one last look and jumped in.

As he did, Zelena flew in on her broom. She waved her hand and the lights of the portal flickered and burst into light.

Neal looked up. "What the hell did you do?"

"Don't worry, Baelfire," said Zelena, the smoke growing larger behind her. "He'll be fine, he's just taking a little side trip. It ought to be enough time for me to get my revenge on the Dark Princess."

Neal slumped to the ground. "Look, whatever my father did to you, he's not going to just let you hurt her. That's one thing he's always been pretty clear on."

Zelena laughed. "By the time I'm done, he won't know she ever existed."

Neal frowned at that as the smoke grew and billowed to envelop him.

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_Last January_

Beatrice walked in the house. Martha greeted her and Joseph as they walked to the kitchen.

"Where are your parents?," asked Joseph.
"Probably at the hospital with Neal," said Beatrice. "Do you want anything?"

"I'll make tea," said Joseph. "I've run out of what your mother gave me."

Beatrice raised an eyebrow. "She gave you her tea?"

"Yes, at Christmas."

"Don't tell my dad. That's his tea." She walked to the china hutch and waved her hand. A drawer popped open. "One locator spell."

"His tea?," asked Joseph as he filled the kettle.

"His tea," Beatrice repeated, getting a Coke out of the fridge.

"How did your parents meet?," asked Joseph. "I can't imagine your grandfather getting trapped in anyone's dungeon."

"They made a deal. He saved her people from ogres and she was to be his servant forever."

Joseph frowned at her.

"He let her go," Beatrice said defensively. "Then she came back and he kicked her out, then she came back again. It's better than it sounds."

"And how did they raise a daughter who won't drink tea?"

"They didn't. We were separated. I just moved here a few years ago."

"Oh. I'm sorry."

Beatrice sat at the counter. She shrugged. "It's fine."

"Not really," said Joseph.

As Beatrice eyed him, the kettle whistled and he busied himself with making the tea.

"I, uh, I thought I had been abandoned when I was three," said Joseph.

"Oh, my God," said Beatrice.

"A boy around my age found me in his back garden. My brother. John. When no one came forward, his family adopted me."

"You were just abandoned?"

"I thought I was, now I'm not certain." He shrugged. "Really. I've been alright. I've had a family. My adoptive parents died a few years ago, my aunt and uncle have looked after us since then."

"Why aren't you in school or something?"

"It's a long story," said Joseph, bringing his finished teacup over to the counter.

"Why don't you think you were abandoned anymore?," asked Beatrice.

Joseph shook his head. "Just some things that have come to light."
"There's more to it."

Joseph looked down. Beatrice's hand was on his knee.

He shook his head. "You don't want me, Beatrice."

"I don't?"

"You're a princess. Shouldn't you have a prince or something?"

"I don't have a prince and if you knew more of them, you would know what dorks they are."

Beatrice leaned forward towards Joseph, thinking she must be on the edge of a huge disaster.

It wasn't like he could turn into a frog, was it?

She closed her eyes as their lips crashed against each other and they flew back open as she felt a wave of magic.

It was magic, right?

"What's the matter?," asked Joseph as they broke apart.

"I'm not sure."

"I thought it was going rather well."

"Yeah, let's get back to that," said Beatrice, returning to kiss him.

Then there was an urgent knock at the door.

"Are you kidding me?!," shrieked Beatrice. She then realized Martha had been watching the whole thing. Wow, the dog liked to stare.

"Excuse me," said Beatrice. "I have to go smite someone."

Belle and Gold had been spending most of their free time in the hospital visiting Neal, who incidentally was still cursed to hate them, convinced that they had some scandalous affair that ruined his life. Belle knew that her True Love found it taxing, but he was a glutton for punishment if it meant seeing his son. She walked up to Gold and handed him a cup of tea as he paced in the waiting room.

"Thank you, sweetheart."

"You're welcome," said Belle.

"Where is Beatrice this evening?"

"She was going to eat with Aurora."

"Not the boy?," he asked, taking a sip.

She was about to speak in defense of the boy when she felt a ripple of magic. Everyone in the hospital stopped;

She looked up at Gold. "What was that?"
"The Curse being broken."

Gold began to turn back towards the hospital room as the door swung open.

"Papa," said Neal.

"Bae."

They hugged tightly and Neal broke it off before Gold.

"Where's Bea?," he asked urgently.

"Beatrice?," asked Gold.

"You've got to find her. Zelena, that's who she's after. She needs her for a spell."

"Who's Zelena?," asked Belle.

Gold had his phone out, praying that she would answer.

Beatrice opened the door to find Hook.

"Oh, seriously, Hook," said Beatrice. "You can come back-"

Beatrice began shutting the door as Hook stuck his hook between it and the frame.

"What is your problem?," asked Beatrice.

"Where is your father?"

"I don't know. Why? Are you trying to kill him?"

"Your mobile is ringing," said Joseph, coming in from the kitchen. He looked at Hook. "Is there a problem?"

"I should say, mate," said Hook, pushing through the door into the front room. "I came to warn you all.

"Warn us all about what?"

"The new curse," said Hook.

"Yeah, you're kind of late for that," said Beatrice.

"It's not my fault," said Hook. "Baelfire and I attempted to escape Zelena, but he was too wounded to continue. He sent me with the magic bean to come warn you all, but I found myself in a strange land called Orange County-"

"Oh my God, I want to see that on Bravo," said Beatrice.

"Suffice it to say between the wenches I met there and a mystical force called the TSA, I had a difficult time traveling. There is no respect in this realm for a man's hook."

"Who is Zelena?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah, who is Zelena?," asked Beatrice.
Hook looked at her in surprise. "Do you mean to tell me you don't know?"

"No..." said Beatrice.

"She knows you."

"Well, I don't know her."

"You do, but you don't remember," a voice from behind her added.

They turned around to see a woman in black.

"We met back in Oz. We made a deal for you to return home so you could go back to your precious family and I gave you this time. Time is up."

"Watch yourself, love," said Hook.

"Oh, Hook, I'm surprised at you."

The front door slammed behind them and Cora appeared from the kitchen.

"What happened to your thirst for revenge? You were so determined," she said.

"Oh, seriously, you too?," asked Beatrice. "Where did you two meet? Craigslist?"

"Can't you see the resemblance?," asked Zelena.

"Mother and daughter," said Joseph.

Beatrice turned to him. "Really? You're going to have to walk me through that one."

"No time, Princess," said Zelena, approaching closer. "Let's get down to business. Who do you love more?"

"What?"

"Is it this boy or your mother? Maybe Rumplestiltskin's your favorite, though I can't imagine it."

"What do you want?," asked Beatrice.

Zelena shrugged. "I want you."

Beatrice suddenly found herself in Zelena's clutches as Joseph and Hook stepped forward.

"How valiant, but one more step and I squeeze the life out of her. I don't need her in pristine condition where she's headed," said Zelena. She leaned down to Beatrice. "And don't you try to get clever."

Beatrice struggled against Zelena. Seeing this, Cora stepped forward and reached her hand into Joseph's chest, pulling out his heart.

"Put it back," said Beatrice.

"And why should I?," asked Cora.

"If you don't, I'm not going anywhere. You know I'm good. I can hold out long enough to disrupt whatever you have planned. Crush it and well, nobody's leaving this room."
"She's got her father's brains," said Zelena.

"Just what we need," said Cora. She slammed the heart back into Joseph's chest leaving him reeling again.

He struggled to catch his breath. Beatrice, Zelena and Cora disappeared in plumes of smoke.

Joseph turned to Hook. "What the hell just happened?"
"Mom! You're falling asleep again!"

Belle shook her head. She had been up most of the past two days looking after Beatrice. Her daughter had been sick with the flu. Belle loved her daughter more than anything, but illness often made Beatrice almost intolerable. This time, though, Belle had been fortunate in that Beatrice had stumbled across some British science fiction show called Doctor Who and been immediately taken with it. Between her exhaustion and worry about Beatrice, Belle had a difficult time following, though she had mostly liked the episode with Dickens.

"I'm sorry, sweetheart," said Belle. She looked at the television. "What's happening?"

"Rose wanted to go back in time to be with her father when he died, but now she's just being stupid!"

"Oh," said Belle, sitting up. "Why is that?"

"Well, she saved him and now the world is doomed!"

"Well, he is her father..." said Belle.

"Yeah, but the world is doomed!" Beatrice looked back at the television. "Oh, no!"

"What?," asked Belle.

"Don't touch the baby! The Doctor said not to touch the baby!" Beatrice screamed. "Ugh! She touched the baby!"

Belle felt Beatrice's forehead with the back of her hand. "Your fever's going down. I'm going to get you something to drink."

Belle went to the kitchen and came back with a Sprite. She sat back down with Beatrice.

"Beatrice... do you think about your father a lot?"

Beatrice shrugged and stared at her soda. "Not really."

Belle tried to smile at what she guessed was a minimization. "If an alien could take you in an enchanted box to meet him, would you?"

"It's a time machine. Why would you call it an enchanted box?"

Belle shook her head. "It just seemed right. So?"

"I wouldn't doom the world to do it," said Beatrice. She looked up at Belle. "You?"

Belle smiled. "I just want you."

"There's another episode," said Beatrice, eager to get back to the television show.
Princess Eva had been staying with the Duke and Duchess of Padua since her mother's death. It had been her father's wish that she receive a proper education in what it was to be a lady and the Duchess was admired throughout the land. However, their semi-permanent house guest had tried Catherine's patience and she had known since the Royal Messenger arrived today was one of those days.

"How could he?!," shrieked Eva.

Catherine looked down at the princess as she nearly blew apart over the news, throwing herself to the sofa.

"I thought there was a contract," said Reinette.

"There was," said Catherine. "Your father and I did help to negotiate it, but plans change."

The Duke spoke again. "He's met a peasant girl called Cora. He wishes to marry her, the wedding is mere weeks away."

"Why her?," asked Reinette.

"Yes, why her?!," Eva screeched bitterly.

The Duke shrugged and sat. "Eva, your father wishes that the Duchess and I travel to meet King Leopold and get the engagement reinstated."

"You will. Won't you, Papa?," asked Reinette.

The Duke looked at Catherine. "We shall attempt our best, Reinette."

"How could he?," asked Eva.

"Eva," said Catherine, "the king has never met you. We don't know if this woman Cora is an infatuation or indeed, True Love, but you need to behave like a lady."

"Like a lady?"

"Not a jealous, petty teenager," said Catherine.

Eva scowled. "I think you forget who you're speaking to,"

Catherine leaned forward. "No one likes a teenager who pulls rank. Besides, I think you forget that I am the Ice Princess of the Far North Kingdom and thus outrank you. Understood?"

"Yes, Your Highness," said Eva.

"Good. That's the sort of thing I mean when I speak of mature behavior. Some kindness and proper decorum would not go amiss here."

"Yes, Your Highness."

"Now, go to your maid and instruct her to begin packing for the journey. I shall be up to instruct you shortly."
Eva nodded and left the parlor.

Reinette turned to her mother. "Why are you so hard on Eva?"

"Because she's terrible," said Catherine. "Don't look so aghast. All teenage girls are terrible."

"Except you," said Alec.

Catherine turned to her husband. "Do you not remember the fit she threw when Lady Jane wore the purple gown before she did?"

"Well, the dressmaker never ought to have made two," Alec insisted, giving Reinette a wink.

"Eva's been expecting this match since she was born," said Reinette.

"There. Aren't you glad your mother and I have never chosen a husband for you?;" asked Alec, fixing himself a cup of tea. "You are to marry for True Love and nothing else."

"If I am ever to find such a thing," said Reinette.

Catherine and Alec looked at each other.

"What is that?," asked Reinette.

"Nothing," said Catherine. "Our family always marries for True Love. We're certain you shall as well, but there's time for that yet."

"Hear, hear," said Alec.

Catherine stood. "I will go see to Eva. Reinette, have Molly send a message to the dressmaker to finish her work. You should have your new gown to wear to King Leopold's Court."

"I'm to go as well?!" Reinette asked in surprise.

"Of course," said Catherine. "It's our only hope of keeping her from clinging to His Majesty the entire time. If he gets to know Eva as well as I have, there is no chance of success."

Catherine left. Reinette looked to her father.

"I've never been to court," said Reinette.

"You're the daughter of the Duke of Padua, Heiress to the Far North Kingdom, you ought to fit right in," said the Duke.

"I've never even been to the Far North Kingdom," said Reinette.

"It's cold," said Alec with a shiver. "Yet as beautiful as its princess. We shall have to venture back sometime."

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**Storybrooke, Last January**

"I thought you knew everything about magic!," said Aurora.

At the risk of getting them stuck this time, Merlin rolled his eyes at the princess for the fortieth time. He had spent most of the day investigating the Curse with Regina, but she was all bothered with her soul mate appearing in Storybrooke. He had come to the library to clear his head and lose
himself in call numbers. He hadn't expected an all out interrogation from Aurora about the nature of True Love's Kiss.

"You know, I'm starting to think that Maleficent might have been getting at something when she placed you under that sleeping curse."

"Answer me!"

"You know, why don't you go down to the basement and ask her?"

Merlin caught Lila Foley's amused smile from behind the circulation desk.

"I don't understand! How could Phillip be my True Love, but Mulan kissed me and I liked it!"

Lila Foley dropped her book. Aurora shot her a look.

"That was completely unrelated," said Lila.

"I'm sorry, did you run right over here to ask me why you like kissing girls?" asked Merlin.

"It's just the one girl and I had a question about magic!," said Aurora. "Or you could ask your mother."

Merlin scoffed. "Do you think she's going to have an answer for you?"

Just then, a wave of magic burst through.

"What was that?," asked Aurora.

"See, that was a True Love's Kiss," said Merlin. He looked over at Lila. "Lila?"

She shook her head. "I'm not Lila. Oh, Gods..."

Lila turned away from the desk, putting her face in her hands. Aurora and Merlin rushed to her side.

"Lila?," asked Aurora.

"My son. He's been missing since before the Curse..."

Aurora looked over at Merlin in concern.

"Violet," said Merlin.

She looked up to meet his eyes. "The Blue Fairy-"

"He's fine," said Merlin.

"What? What do you mean?"

"I can explain everything later," said Merlin. He looked at Aurora. "Where did Beatrice go after Mushu's?"

"I don't know. She was with Joseph."

"Well, I might have guessed that," said Merlin. He picked up his coat. "Aurora, make her tea and see her home. I'll see you later."
It was an easy journey from Padua to King Leopold's kingdom. Reinette watched Eva's frown as they saw the wedding preparations from the window of the carriage. The village was decorated with banners with Cora's new seal and bunting. Even flowers were planted to herald the arrival of a new queen.

"It does make for a compelling story," mused Catherine looking out the window. "Peasant girl becomes queen."

The carriage finally stopped outside the palace.

Catherine turned to Eva. "Please take this one last reminder that we are here to get your marriage contract reinstated-"

Eva opened her mouth to speak and Catherine raised her hand.

"No, it's no longer a birthright. He has a wedding planned and a bride ready to go, you need to give him a reason to throw her over, so a bit more maturity would be welcome if we are to have any hope of success. Understood, Your Highness?"

Eva nodded. "Yes, Your Grace," she said dutifully.

"Are we ready, ladies?" asked Alec.

Catherine nodded and Alec waved his hand as the footmen opened the carriage. Leopold and Cora were already waiting as Alec helped out Catherine, then the footmen helped out Reinette and Eva.

"Your Majesty," said Alec.

"Your Grace," said Leopold.

"You do of course remember my wife, Catherine?"

"Your Highness," said Leopold.

"That's very generous, Your Majesty, but hardly necessary."

"Nonsense. The heroine of the Far North Kingdom will always be accorded the highest title at my court." He motioned. "May I introduce my fiancée, Cora?"

Cora curtsied. "Your Highness, Your Grace."

"I think you remember our daughter, Reinette," said Alec.

"Of course. My lady."

Reinette curtsied. "Your Majesty."

"And of course, Princess Eva."

Eva curtsied. "Your Majesty."

"Your Highness." He motioned towards the door. "Let us go inside."

The men walked next to each other. Cora sided up next to Catherine.
"I'm sorry," said Cora. "You were a princess?"

"Yes, I ruled the Far North Kingdom."

"Why would you give that up?"

"For love, of course."

Catherine looked at Cora to see a flicker of incredulity in her face, one that she quickly tried to hide under scrutiny.

"Of course," said Cora.

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**Storybrooke, Last January**

Joseph loved not knowing. That was one thing to be said for magic, it gave the game an added layer of difficulty, but until he knew the ins and outs of it, there were a lot of holes in his theories.

It was now that Captain Hook stared at him.

"Forgive me for asking," said Hook, "but who are you?"

"I'm Joseph Gillette."

"And you and Beatrice are..."

"Friends," he said quickly.

He walked back into the kitchen with Hook following him. Martha barked at Hook.

"Well, that beast has grown," said Hook. "What are you doing, mate? As much as I hate to say it, we need to find Rumplestiltskin."

Joseph picked up the locator spell that Beatrice had placed on the counter. "The woman, Zelena. Who is she?"

"The Wicked Witch of the West."

"Really?" Joseph grabbed Beatrice's blue wool coat off the chair.

"What are you doing?," asked Hook.

"A locator spell."

He walked back outside the house with Hook following. He looked back at the pirate.

"What else did the witch say about Beatrice?"

Hook shrugged. "That she has the four elements necessary to cast whatever spell she is planning."

"Four elements? What are they?"

"She wasn't in a sharing mood, I'm afraid."

Joseph held the bottle and the coat. "Do you know how these work?"
Hook shrugged.

"Thank you. Your assistance has been invaluable," said Joseph, pouring the spell on the coat.

As Belle, Gold and Neal walked out of the hospital, they were soon met by the Charmings.

"What the hell happened?," asked Regina.

"If I knew that, dearie, it would be dealt with..."

"It's Zelena," said Neal. He looked at Regina. "Your sister."

"I don't have a sister," said Regina.

"Check again," said Gold.

Regina turned to Gold. "You knew this and you didn't tell me?"

"You never told me Belle was alive so I guess we're even," Gold snapped back.

"Guys!," said Emma. She looked at Neal. "Neal? Is that really you?"

"Yeah."

Emma gave Neal a hug. Belle looked at Gold.

"She's still not answering."

"What does this Zelena want with Beatrice?," asked Mary Margaret.

"And how did the new curse get broken?," asked David.

"I don't care. Right now I need to find my daughter," said Belle.

Regina nodded and pulled a vial from her pocket. "I brought a locator spell. Do you have anything of hers with you?"

Belle pulled a book from her bag and handed it to Regina.

"I borrowed this from her," said Belle.

Regina poured the potion over the book and they watched as it flew into the night.

Beatrice found herself alone in a barn with Zelena and Cora.

Which was not a great place to be.

"Really you ought to think of this as a compliment," said Zelena.

"Mind if I don't?"

Zelena waved her hand to light some lanterns. Beatrice looked down at the floor to see an intricate pattern with circles dug in, like a sand garden.

It somehow looked familiar.
"I didn't leave everything I learned back in Oz as you can see," said Zelena. "Unlike you. So weak. So desperate to get home."

Beatrice cast a glance at Cora. "Yeah, well, if she was my mom I wouldn't be so desperate to get home, either."

"I am going home, though. I am going to have everything you take for granted."

"What do you mean?"

Zelena approached. "Oh, the Time Lord doesn't know what I'm talking about?"

Beatrice frowned. "I said I was a Time Lord?"

"Don't want to tell me how you can see the universe?"

Oh, God, what had she referenced?

"Did I ever mention an episode title?" asked Beatrice.

"Reinette!," called Eva. "I have wonderful news!"

Reinette put down her embroidery as Eva sat next to her.

"Has King Leopold reinstated the contract?"

"No, even better. I was in the garden when I saw that peasant girl, Cora, talking to a man. It turns out he's one of the servants. He works in the gardens if you can believe that. Cora is pregnant with his child. She's going to try to pass it off as the King's!"

Eva looked at Reinette with a huge, gleeful smile.

Reinette frowned. "I don't know if I quite see how this is wonderful news."

"He'll have to call off the wedding! He can't have this peasant's bastard on the throne!"

"I dare say you are taking too much pleasure in this."

Catherine and Alec entered.

"Pleasure in what exactly?," asked Catherine.

Eva turned excitedly. "The peasant Cora is carrying the bastard of one of the servants."

"And you know this for certain?"

"I heard it from her own lips."

Catherine looked at Alec.

"Yes, well..." said Alec.

"Well, doesn't this solve it?" asked Eva. "He can't marry her. The contract can be reinstated."

The Duke relented. "No, His Majesty cannot marry the girl if she does indeed carry a child that is not his," said Alec.
Eva beamed.

"That doesn't mean he will necessarily marry you," said Alec. "Particularly if you walk in there looking like the cat that ate the canary."

"I was promised to him at birth and now I'm the villain for wanting his promise kept? How is that fair?," asked Eva.

"Remember your station," said Catherine. "You are asking to be queen of this kingdom. It will not do to appear to take pleasure in the misfortunes of others."

"Misfortune? She has it coming."

"I will handle this and you are to stay out of it," said Alec.

Joseph chased after the coat with Hook right behind him.

"And when you find the witches, what is your plan?," asked Hook.

"I'm sure a solution will present itself," said Joseph.

Joseph then watched as Beatrice's coat smacked into a book.

"Who the hell is that?!"

"Oh, gods," muttered Hook.

"Mr. Gold?," asked Joseph.

They walked further forward and found themselves meeting with Gold, Belle, Neal, Emma, Mary Margaret, David and Regina.

"Hook?," asked Emma.

"Hello, Swan."

Belle went to pick up the coat and book off the ground.

"You morons," said Regina.

"What happened?," asked David.

"You can't use two locator spells for the same person at once," said Gold. "Instead of finding the person, the objects find each other."

"Sorry," said Joseph. "It's my first time using magic."

"You don't say, dearie," said Gold. He pointed at Hook. "What are you doing with the pirate?"

Neal stepped up towards his father. "It's okay, Papa. I sent Killian to warn you all."

"And yet he hasn't."

"I ran into some difficulties," said Hook.

"We can get into that later," said Belle. She looked at Joseph. "Were you with her? What

Zelena motioned around the circle. "The four elements, remember?"

"Not really."

She pointed. "Well, first Rumplestiltskin's brains. Your mother's heart and her courage, both necessary to love the greatest beast in the Enchanted Forest. And of course, innocence."

"I don't know, I did flirt pretty hard with a guy like fifteen minutes ago."

"Time dwindles, Dark Princess," said Zelena. Beatrice found herself pulled into the center of the circular pattern, her heels digging into the dirt of the floor.

"Have you thought about this?" asked Beatrice. "Really thought about this? There are paradoxes. If you go back to do whatever crazy thing you want to do and change your past, you never come back to travel back in time again. It doesn't work! The thing falls apart!"

"I won't have you waste your last breaths to change my mind, Princess."

Beatrice felt herself being pulled, like she was coming apart as different swirls of fire separated and recombined. She felt ice fly from her hands and at Zelena. The witch screamed as the ice raced through her, but that was all Beatrice remembered because everything was covered in blinding light.

Reinette's parents had instructed her to remain scarce while they dealt with King Leopold and the consequences of what Eva had overheard. She and Eva took breakfast in their suite of rooms, then
Reinette settled in with a book.

She looked up to see Eva dressed. A little too well dressed for a day to be spent doing needlepoint.

"Eva..."

"I'm telling him."

"You can't. Eva!"

Before she knew it, the princess was out the door. Reinette hurried to follow her down the endless corridor.

"Eva! You know what my parents said!"

Eva snorted. "Yes, and they're wrong. How could Leopold be anything but grateful to me for saving him from a horrid alliance! From being misused by a scheming harlot!"

They walked a few steps more down the hall.

"Eva, please reconsider."

They stopped as a tower of flame appeared in the room. As it stopped, a woman in black stood over a girl laying on the floor. She had to have been around Reinette's own age. Both were dressed strangely.

Reinette did have a moment to recognize one thing on the girl: the pendant of the Ice Princess. She had never seen it in person, it was kept in the Far North Kingdom, but it featured in the official portraits around the house.

The redhead's mouth became a smile.

"Well, let's get to it, then, no need to dillydally about..."

The girl was trying to get to her feet.

"Who are you?," demanded Eva.

Reinette hurried to the girl's side.

"Are you alright?," she asked.

The girl shook her head.

"You'll be alright. My name is Reinette."

The girl's eyes widened. She turned to the other woman. "Stop her," she begged.

Reinette spun around to see the other woman ripping out Eva's heart.

Eva stood in shock.

"What are you doing?," she gasped.

"I'm taking what's mine," said the woman, crushing Eva's heart into powder.
As Reinette screamed, the girl disappeared, leaving her alone with the woman.

"Now, what to do with you," said the woman.

"Not so fast."

Reinette looked up to see an older man, not that age seemed to be affecting him as he strode across to the woman.

"What have you done?," he demanded.

"I've changed my past," she said.

The door opened and Cora entered. She saw Eva on the floor and the scene before her.

The woman turned. "Run to the king, tell him Eva's been murdered or else she'll tell him your secret. She's Merlin's apprentice."

"I-" Reinette failed to find words as Cora ran off.

"I suppose you think you're clever," said Merlin.

"We're going to do it all again," said Zelena. "I'm going to have the life I deserved! Rumplestitskin is going to choose me! And your precious Dark Princess, well, I don't think she's going to be in the new version, do you?"

Merlin dropped Zelena to the floor. He held his hand out for Reinette.

"Where are your parents?"

"In their room, I think."

"We must go to them and leave now."

"But Eva-"

"No, we must go now."

Merlin hurried Reinette back up the hall, where they soon ran into a furious Catherine and Alec.

"That girl..." grumbled Catherine.

"Merlin," Alec gasped.

"Merlin, what are you..." Catherine trailed off as she caught sight of Reinette. "What's happened?"

"Oh, Mama, it was horrid..."

Reinette collapsed into her mother's embrace.

"Princess Eva is dead," said Merlin. "Murdered at the hands of a terrible witch, a murder that Reinette will soon take the blame for."

"What?," asked Alec. "I'll speak to His Majesty-"

"We don't have time. Time is changing. Someone has done something that ought never have been done. We must go now."
"Who is he?," asked Reinette.

"He is a friend to our family and we will listen to him," said Alec.

"There she is!," shouted Cora.

They turned to see the queen to be, flanked by palace guards.

"What are you waiting for?! Get her!," said Cora.

Merlin waved his hand and the four vanished from the hall.

Reinette opened her eyes to find herself in a new world.

A new, icier world. Great ice walls, a palace of ice as the sun shone through the walls.

"Guys!"

Reinette turned to see what the source of the shout was and saw a snowman bouncing towards them.

"You're back! Did you get the sweaters I made you?," the snowman asked.

Catherine and Alec looked at each other.

"Yes," said Catherine, "we wear them all the time."

"Why aren't you wearing them now?," asked Olaf.

"Olaf, this is our daughter, Reinette," said Alec.

The snowman turned to her. "Hi. My name is Olaf and I like warm hugs."

"Hello," Reinette said skeptically. "Where are we?"

"Your new kingdom," said Merlin.

"My new kingdom?," asked Reinette, stepping towards the wizard. "I don't want a kingdom-"

"Well, you have one," said Merlin.

"King Leopold believes that I murdered Eva, soon everyone else will believe it. I want my name cleared."

"While you sit in the Ice Palace, you are protected," said Merlin.

Reinette turned to her parents. "Mama? Papa?"

"He's right, Reinette," said Catherine.

"This is unbelievable. You ought to be helping me."

Merlin ignored her. "When the red-headed witch appeared, what did you see?"

"A girl," said Reinette. "My age, but she wore the pendant of the Ice Princess. Then she disappeared."
"The pendant of the Ice Princess?," asked Merlin.

Catherine and Alec exchanged glances.

"This girl," said Alec, "did she happen to have dark brown hair and brown eyes?"

"Yes," said Reinette.

"Do you know her?" asked Merlin.

"Yes," said Catherine. "She is Beatrice, the Dark Princess."

"Oh, Beatrice!" exclaimed Olaf. "I love her! Is she coming, too?!"

Beatrice awoke with a start.

It was cold.

It probably had something to do with the ice palace she had woken up in. She sat up and turned to get out of bed.

Looking out the window, she saw she was in the Far North Kingdom. There were servants bustling in a courtyard below and she could see polar bears in the distance.

"Okay, that's weird..."

Beatrice got up and shrieked as her feet hit the icy floor. She quickly located a fuzzy pair of slippers at the bedside for just that purpose.

"Catherine?," she called. "Alec?"

Nobody answered.

"Olaf?," she said tentatively.

The door opened.

"What's the matter, sweetheart? I heard screaming."

Beatrice was now confronted by her father.

The scaly, weird-colored version of her father.

"This keeps happening..." said Beatrice.

"What keeps happening?"

"I... um..."

"What's wrong, sweetheart?"

"What's going on?"

Rumplestiltskin walked closer to her. He stopped in front of her and put his hand to the side of her face.

His face fell. "Oh, sweetheart, you really don't know, do you?"
"Know what?"

"What was it you last remember?"

She shook her head. "I was with Zelena. In a barn? She was going on about some time travel spell."

Rumplestiltskin nodded. "And then?"

Beatrice tried to piece it together. "We were back in time. She killed Eva and I..."

"That's where you were, sweetheart," said Rumplestiltskin.

Beatrice had a sudden realization.

"This isn't a dream, is it?," asked Beatrice. "This is what happened when Zelena killed Eva."

"You might say that," said Rumplestiltskin.
Chapter 61

Rumplestiltskin did not sleep much, but for months on end now he felt as if he had been cast into the worst kind of nightmare. His days at the Dark Castle felt like the worst kind of limbo.

For hundreds of years, he had regretted letting his son go and the only thing to get him through that time was by soothing himself with the plan of the Dark Curse. He would find his boy and then he could fix everything.

Eva's death had changed something. He had known she was important because of the daughter and granddaughter who would now never be born, but he hadn't thought that part of the plan was irreparable. There was other True Love to be found in the Enchanted Forest. The problem was this new Queen Cora. Her daughter was supposed to be the one to cast the Dark Curse and though Rumplestiltskin knew the little princess was well on her way- certainly further along than the King could have known about- there was danger. There were whispers that Cora had some sort of advisor, transformed into living ice. It was with this woman that Rumplestiltskin sensed the problem. Every time he went to divine his future he never found his son and it was because of what had happened with Eva.

"Rumplestiltskin..."

He grimaced and turned from the wheel to see Maleficent.

She held up her hands.

"I haven't come to fight. I'm on my way out of town."

"And what do you want?"

"I've been invited by Merlin to the Far North Kingdom."

Rumplestiltskin scoffed. "You mean with the little murderous princess?"

"She didn't do kill anyone. That was Zelena's story, one that Queen Cora has been only to happy to run with."

"And who pray tell is Zelena?"

"The Queen's advisor. The one who's becoming a block of ice as we speak." Maleficent motioned at the table. "Aren't you going to offer me tea? This is really poor manners."

"I have no maid. How did she become ice?"

"I'm not going to stand here and tell you the whole story. My unicorns are waiting outside."

"Then why come at all?," he asked in irritation.

"Merlin wants to invite you come to the Far North Kingdom as well."

"And who is Merlin to be issuing such invitations?"

Maleficent ignored the question. "He told me to tell you one thing. One thing to convince you to come hear him out."
"Oh, I look forward to hearing this, dearie..."

"He says if you don't come, you will never find the boy." She shrugged. "Whatever that means."

He paused.

"I will visit," he said tersely.

Maleficent nodded and vanished.

Now

This couldn't be real. Yet she knew it was.

Beatrice tried to get to her feet and Rumplestiltskin stilled her.

The bed was unfamiliar, but she recognized her blanket and her lamb. She grabbed the latter out of desperation for something familiar.

"Easy, sweetheart," her father cautioned. "You're always a bit out of sorts after these fits."

"Fits?," asked Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin shrugged. "For lack of a better word. Your visions of the other side."

She was taken aback. "They aren't visions, they're real."

He nodded in sympathy. "I know, sweetheart. Your grandfather thinks that when Zelena sacrificed you, you went scattering through creation. What you experienced there has come back to you, lately more than before."

"Where's Mom?," asked Beatrice.

"Sweetheart-"

Beatrice rushed out of the bed, past her father.

"Mom!"

At which point she went sliding down the hall on her face. Stupid ice floors. Suddenly, she had servants rushing to her side.

"Beatrice?"

The servants parted and Beatrice looked up to see Belle in a sparkling blue dress.

"Here, sweetheart," said Belle, helping her up.

"Mom," said Beatrice, throwing her arms around her mother.

Belle looked to the servants. "You may go. I'll see to her."

A man in a fancy frock coat hurried forth. "Your Majesty, the court-"

"Can wait, Zazu."
"Yes, Your Majesty."

The servants dispersed as Belle turned to Rumplestiltskin.

"You let her come running out here? You know how she gets."

"And you know what she's like when she worries about her mama," he reminded her.

Belle turned to Beatrice and pushed her hair aside from her face. "Oh, sweetheart, there's no need to worry," said Belle.

"I am worried about how these floors have no traction," said Beatrice staring down at her icy surroundings.

"Come," said Belle, walking with her arm around Beatrice's waist. "Back to bed with you."

"Back to bed? I've got questions."

"You need rest."

Beatrice sat on the bed. Rumplestiltskin arranged the covers around her as Belle sat on the edge.

"But we're in the Far North Kingdom," said Beatrice, eyeing the window again. It was then that Beatrice noticed the nature of the sparkly blue dress her mother had on, reminding her of an animated film she had recently seen. "Oh, come on."

"What?," asked Belle.

"You're the Snow Queen?"

"The Ice Princess," said Belle.

"You became Ice Princess..." said Beatrice.

"Why don't you begin by telling us where you left off?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

Beatrice shook her head. "Where did I leave off?"

Belle began. "You told us about the other realm and the land called Storybrooke. How we were there, along with Eva's daughter and granddaughter."

"Um, everything was going along weird as usual," said Beatrice. "Then we got cursed again."

"By Zelena?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Yes. I don't know how, but she brought everyone from the Enchanted Forest and then she wanted to travel back in time. I tried telling her it wouldn't work and seriously, I thought it wouldn't, but I am here..." She looked around.

"And no idea of her weakness?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"I barely know who she is..." said Beatrice. "But she says she knows me. That we met in Oz."

Belle nodded and looked at Rumplestiltskin. "Then my father's gone to the right place."

"What?"
"We suspected that Zelena's powers had their origin in that land," said Belle.

"Suspected?"

"The Flying Monkeys," said Belle.

"Flying Monkeys? Seriously."

It was then that Zazu entered the room.

Rumplestiltskin waved a hand and the man froze.

"You dare enter my daughter's room unannounced?"

"Rumple..." said Belle.

He waved his hand again and the man returned to life.

"A thousand apologies, Dark One, but Sir Mycroft and Sherlock are arriving-"

"I'm sorry, who?," said Beatrice.

Zazu looked stunned at her.

"Sir Mycroft and Sherlock-"

"Holmes. Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes exist and they are coming here?"

"Yes, your higness-"

"You may leave. Thank you, Zazu," said Belle.

The man bowed and left.

Belle turned back to Beatrice. "Sweetheart, you should know that we haven't let anyone outside the family know about your visions of the other realm."

"No one?," asked Beatrice.

"Your mother thought it was best," said Rumplestiltskin. "And it wouldn't do for the Queen to think you were weak."

"So if you must, try and say as little as you can," said Belle.

"Sorry, are we talking about the same Sherlock?," asked Beatrice.

"No, of course he and Mycroft know," said Belle.

"Beatrice, you remember Sherlock?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Uh, yeah," said Beatrice. She got up. "Do I have a closet?"

"What are you doing?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"I'm getting dressed so I can see Sherlock. One of these days a TARDIS is going to show up, people."

"The wardrobe is over there," said Belle.
She walked away.

Belle looked to Rumplestiltskin. "She remembers him. That's something."

"I suppose so."

Belle smiled. "You'll always be her papa. She just has other interests now."

He grimaced.

"If you're thinking of the woman, you ought to remember he saved her life," said Belle.

"He should never have put her in danger-"

"Guys!," Beatrice called from the closet. "Is there an index in here or something?!"

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*Then*

Reinette hated the Far North Kingdom.

It was cold. Her sole friend at present was a snowman. Her brothers and their families had just managed to escape from Padua in the first few months of their exile, but that was about the only highlight. Reinette had no magic, at least none that she could access. She was a disappointment as an Ice Princess and Merlin had enlisted a former fairy to help her mother regain her powers. Then he said he had invited her to stay on.

Her mother and father were amenable to it as always. They seemed to trust Merlin.

Reinette could not stand him.

Reinette came into the sitting room. She found Merlin sitting across from a blonde woman holding a staff. A small black unicorn stood at her side as Olaf teased the creature with his nose.

"I had no idea you had taken up breeding unicorns," said Merlin.

"I find animals to be soothing," said the blonde. "Comforting."

"Perhaps Zelena ought to take it up," said Merlin.

"I wouldn't subject any creature to her affection," said the woman. "It's alright, dear. You can come out from the shadows."

Reinette stepped out of the doorway.

"Meet Reinette, Heiress to the Far North Kingdom. Reinette, this is Maleficent."

"No need to stand there like a statue, dear," said Maleficent. "Sit. Talk."

Reinette sat across from the two sorcerers and made a cup of tea.

"Does King Leopold know of Zelena?" asked Merlin.

"Which one?"

"The elder."
"He does, though she is seen as more of an angel than you described. He even sent for the Blue Fairy to save her from the ice."

"How is the blue tart?"

"On the run." Maleficent turned to Reinette. "You took the blame for that as well."

"How?," asked Reinette.

"Well, your ice magic was so strong the Blue Fairy had to flee to save her life," Maleficent said in a fey voice. "Anyone who knows anything knows it was Zelena. She's powerful even as the ice kills her."

"The ice?," asked Reinette.

"Yes, it doesn't seem to have the same speedy effect in her as it does in others," said Merlin.

"Oh, speaking of speedy effects, did you know Princess Zelena was born three months early and miraculously the child bore no ill effects?," asked Maleficent.

Merlin smiled.

"The king cannot be so foolish," said Reinette.

"It is adorable that you think that," said Maleficent. "So young and fresh faced. You remind me of the girl I put under a sleeping curse."

Reinette sat quietly, taken aback as the sorceress continued on discussions of this and that. Olaf rode the unicorn out of the room.

"What of our mutual friend?," asked Merlin.

"I invited him to join us," said Maleficent.

Reinette stood to pour herself another cup of tea. Merlin brought by the strangest people and she was not terribly pleased by the prospect of another one.

"And did he give you any indication that he would be joining us?"

"Well, I'd hate to be predictable!," a shrill voice cried with a little laugh.

Startled Reinette turned to see from whom the voice had come. She saw a strange man clad in dragon hide, his own skin covered in scales like a reptile, in the oddest color and the strangest eyes she had ever seen.

She dropped her teacup.

"You really ought to be more careful," he said sharply.

Maleficent groaned audibly. "Your tricks grow tiresome."

"So does your face, dearie, but I haven't mentioned it."

Merlin, however, was pleased. He smiled his incomprehensible smile.

"Welcome to the Far North Kingdom, sunshine."
"I don't plan to stay long."

"Well, we're certainly going to see about that, won't we?" He stood. "Follow me, sunshine."

The men left. Reinette turned to Maleficent.

"Who is that?," she asked.

Maleficent mouth curved into a smile as Olaf returned with her unicorn and dismounted. She patted the animal's muzzle.

"Why, dear, that's the Dark One."

"Really?," asked Olaf. "I've heard he makes great pancakes."

Catherine stood outside the ice palace appraising her new expansion.

"I think it needs more turrets," said Alec.

"You're all too fond of turrets."

"You were quite insistent upon my mother having one."

"We were all insistent upon that," said Catherine.

"Still, good to have everyone safe here," said Alec.

Catherine smiled ruefully at her husband. She squeezed his hand. "I know it pained you to leave your land behind."

"As I know it once pained you to leave your land behind. Seems fair enough that it's my turn, but tell you what, we'll spend the next thirty years here and then go back to Padua."

Catherine smiled. "Assuming we can deal with Queen Cora. She's already taken over the dwarf mines, control over the fairies won't be far behind."

Olaf bounced outside into the courtyard.

"Ah, Olaf, what was all the commotion?," asked Alec.

The snowman came over. "Oh, nothing. Just the Dark One."

"The Dark One?," asked Catherine.

Alec looked at his wife. "Should we introduce ourselves?"

"Oh, and say what? So glad you're here to be the father of our great-granddaughter? We'll call you down when our granddaughter is born."

"I thought he was Beatrice's father," said Olaf.

Catherine sighed. "Olaf..."

"Beatrice hasn't been born yet. We absolutely cannot let him know that she will be," said Alec.
"It seems like he's going to find out," said Olaf.

"Well, eventually, yes," said Alec. "Just in the meantime, play it cool."

"You want me to play it cool? Guys, I'm a snowman."

"Of course."

"When do you think he's going to make breakfast?," asked Olaf.

"Olaf, you don't eat," said Catherine.

"Okay."

Rumplestiltskin followed Merlin into the deep recesses of the Ice Palace. He outlined the general idea of what he had been up to since Princess Eva's death.

Rumplestiltskin didn't care about that.

"I've managed to restore Catherine's powers," Merlin continued. "Reinette is not as talented as I may have hoped or even expected. It's difficult to catch on at her age."

"Maleficent said you have a proposition," said Rumplestiltskin, rolling his eyes.

"What is it?"

"You have been seeing the future for some time now. You must know it's changed."

"Cora's daughter is still powerful enough-

"That's not the point. The point is if she's motivated enough to cast your Dark Curse." Merlin poured the tea and handed the cup to Rumplestiltskin. "Or if she can be trusted to do so, especially with her mother's new advisor. I think she's very likely to give you the cold shoulder, sunshine and not just because she's made of bloody ice."

"It doesn't exactly sound like your Reinette is a great sorceress."

"Of course not, but she will have a daughter who will be quite important to you."

"In what way?"

"For many generations, I have been cultivating a line of True Love."

Rumplestiltskin snorted. "When you're not harassing me?"

"You see, things have not worked out as they should. You know it. You can feel it. Until Cora's firstborn daughter is defeated, Baelfire and the Land Without Magic is closed off to you. The only hope is Reinette's granddaughter."

"Her granddaughter?"

Merlin nodded. "She is to be a powerful sorceress. However, that child and more immediately her mother will never be born if you can't find Reinette's True Love."

"Her True Love?" Rumplestiltskin contorted his face in disgust. "You brought me all the way here to play matchmaker?"
"Must we play this game?"

"What game?"

"I know you, Rumplestiltskin. I know who you are. I know what lies beneath the dark necrotic layers of your heart. I know what you're capable of and I know you want to see your son again. Is the Dark One so above playing matchmaker that he would throw away his only chance?"

Now

Beatrice found that she had a huge closet. The space in it rivalled the studio apartment she and Belle had shared in Manhattan when she was a toddler. Her father gave her the tour, there were about a million dresses and he pointed her towards the selections suitable for court. She chose a lilac one with lacy sleeves and a satin skirt.

"Beatrice, I realize you may not remember much, but I just want to caution you that your affliction is not widely known."

"The parallel universe thing?"

"As you call it."

"Well, seriously, not like it's important to anyone, right? Just me."

He frowned at her. Beatrice then turned to see a line of people waiting.

"Your Highness!," began the clamor.

Beatrice turned to see a crowd of people bowing, clamoring, trying to thrust scrolls at her. She looked at Rumplestiltskin helplessly.

"Alright, dearies, that's enough!," Rumplestiltskin snapped in a high voice. He took Beatrice's hand again. "The Dark Princess isn't taking any requests today so your groveling is just going to have to wait!"

This seemed to quell the petitioners.

She walked into the next room which turned out to be a throne room.

Where her mom was sitting.

Belle smiled at them. "Beatrice, Rumple. You're just in time."

"Oh?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"I need someone who knows about sheep," said Belle.

Rumplestiltskin let go of Beatrice's hand in front of a chair at a lower position on the dais. She didn't sit as he walked towards the petitioners.

"That's not one of the areas of expertise you call on often."

"Oh. Ought I call another expert in sheep?," Belle asked playfully.

Rumplestiltskin snorted with disapproval. "Alright, what seems to be the bother?"
Belle glanced over at Beatrice. "Sweetheart, sit."

"Oh, on the throne," said Beatrice. "Right..."

Beatrice slowly sat. The peasants began their tale. It seemed to have Rumplestiltskin's interest though there was something about counting sheep and a shared fence.

"What do you think, poppet?," he asked Belle.

"Whatever you advise."

Rumplestiltskin turned to the peasants. "If you can't separate your flocks, combine them. Split the proceeds accordingly and everyone prospers. Better than all this petty fighting."

The peasants thanked him with no hint of resentment- something that surprised Beatrice- and left. Zazu entered.

"Sir Mycroft Holmes and Sherlock Holmes."

Beatrice looked up to see a portly man walk in who she thought looked like an older version of Henry's friend, Mike Foley.

He was followed by Joseph.

Beatrice's face dropped. "What?"


"Your Highnesses," said Mycroft, bowing his head once at Belle, once at Beatrice. Joseph did the same.

Beatrice waved her hand again. "I'm sorry, what?"

Belle and Rumplestiltskin glanced between each other.

"Zazu," said Belle, "would you clear the room?"

The majordomo led out the other visitors and shut the ice doors as he exited.

"You've had one of your visions, haven't you?," asked Joseph. "I thought I could tell by the way you're holding your hands."

"Hold up just a minute," said Beatrice. "You're Sherlock Holmes? You're Sherlock Holmes and you never bothered to mention it?"

"I believe I mentioned it when we first met. I was six, you were three-" he began.

"Beatrice," said Belle, "what are you talking about? Sherlock's never been in one of your visions before."

"No, he was and he was called Joseph." She turned back to Joseph/Sherlock. "And you were from London where you liked solving crimes for fun and you..."

"I what?"

Beatrice's face fell as she thought her way through the other details. "You played the violin and you had the hat and you just told me you had a brother named John who I am willing to lay
money has the last name Watson." She shook her head. "Are you people kidding me? I mean..."

Belle and Rumplestiltskin exchanged looks of concern.

"So, in the Land Without Magic, I'm just another fairy tale character?," asked Sherlock.

"Oh my God, Sherlolly is not happening."

"Sherlolly?"

"I know she's not canon, but..." Beatrice paused. "Okay, I'm going to run some names by you guys. Lestrade?"

"No."

"Mrs. Hudson?"

Silence.

"Moriarty."

Again, silence.

"Great. We don't have to worry about that. Irene Adler."

Rumplestiltskin pointed in the affirmative at Sherlock.

"Oh, seriously?," asked Beatrice.

"As much as I would love to revisit one of my brother's less inspiring episodes," Mycroft began, "I wonder if your highness has discovered the way to defeat the Green Queen?"

"Green Queen? Seriously, is that what we're calling her?," asked Beatrice. She paused. "Oh, is she green here?"

"Rolls off the tongue, don't you think?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"No, Mycroft Holmes, I did not have the answer to defeating the Wicked Witch of the West," she said, thinking it one of the more ludicrous sentences she had to utter. "It was more losing hence we're here... Wibbly wobbly timey wimey."

"We'll put that aside for now. What did you come to tell us, Sir Mycroft?," asked Belle.

Mycroft turned to Sherlock. "My brother has news of the Queen's plans."

The younger Holmes brother stepped forward.

"For some reason, Zelena is determined to hasten her plans. The Queen's army is gathering at the southern frontier, my sources inside her palace say she's hoping to stage an assault from there."

"Your Majesty, we need to strengthen our defenses in that area," said Mycroft.

"Then I should travel there," said Belle.

Rumplestiltskin snorted. "I don't think so."

Belle turned to her right to shoot him a look. "I do."
"Beatrice has never had a vision of Zelena before and now she has. This is the moment the Queen chooses to launch an assault?"

"I can't leave the people there defenseless." Belle turned back to Mycroft. "When should I leave?"

"The sooner the better, Your Highness, though I would like to point something out if you would permit it."

"Of course, Sir Mycroft."

"The Dark Princess' visions have made her unavailable to the people. She's soon to enter the age of her majority. The people want to see her and her absence gives rise to rumors and doubts."

"Sorry, people want to see me?," asked Beatrice. "Seriously?"

The others turned to stare at Beatrice.

"Yeah, I'm just going to shut up for now," said Beatrice.

Belle turned to her. "You should come with me."

"I don't think so!," Rumplestiltskin said.

"With our powers combined, we can make the frontier all that much stronger." She looked back at Mycroft. "The people can see her on our progress south."

Mycroft bowed his head. "As you wish, Your Highness."

---

Then

Rumplestiltskin could not say that he hated the Far North Kingdom.

Indeed, it was a pleasant, if chilly land. Alec and Catherine made pleasant company, though he thought it curious he had encountered the former Duke once back at the Dark Castle. Maleficent and the snowman were even tolerable from time to time, though he still didn't know what a pancake was. Most days he sat in the ice turret that had been made for him in the castle and tried all of the spells and visions he could think of to find Reinette's True Love.

The girl spun and wove. It was an occupation for a noble lady, not meant to be done to exhaustion as Rumple once had. Still, the girl took the task seriously and he could always find something to talk about with a fellow tradesman.

"Who taught you to spin?," he asked, watching as she sat at the wheel again. "Your mother doesn't strike me as the spinning type."

"Indeed not," said Reinette, eyes never moving from the wheel. "I learned from a woman in the village in Padua."

"She taught you well."

"Who taught you?," asked Reinette, glancing up.

Rumplestiltskin pointed back down at the wheel. "Eyes. I learned from two spinsters who took me in when I was a boy."

She frowned. "Your parents sent you away?"
"They did far more than that."

"Was it because of your curse?"

He paused. "My curse came later."

"Could you spin straw into gold when you started?"

"No, that came later. Focus on the spinning."

"Then how do you do it?"

"Not for you to worry about, dearie." He sat down as Reinette resumed her task. "No other hobbies in Padua?"

"I've always been fond of music. I sing. I play the piano, the harp, the violin."

"No other interests?"

She scowled. "Are you going to interrogate me like Merlin?"

"Ought I?"

"I can answer you now. I have no magic. We've all seen my feeble attempts at ice. I should never have been here."

"All children born of True Love have some magic."

She sighed. "And what is that?"

"A monster wouldn't know."

"Are all children not born of love?"

"No and even if we lived in such a happy world, they would not all be born of True Love."

"You think me a fool, don't you?"

"No, dearie," Rumplestiltskin answered carefully. "I think you too fortunate to know what it is to not be loved."

"And you did?"

"I'm a beast, remember?"

"That's not an answer."

Merlin entered. He spotted the spinning wheel and immediately rolled his eyes. Reinette glared back. "Do you wish to again tell me how I am wasting my time?"

"No, I'm sure as Ice Princess there will be a great need to spin wool."

"I never wanted to be Ice Princess anyway."

"Well, you are."
"Must we do this again?" Rumplestiltskin asked.

Merlin now turned his attention to the Dark One. "Remind me. Did I not ask you to do something?"

"These things take time."

"Oh, the Dark One needs time, does he? Well, time you have, sunshine. Time you have." He looked back at Reinette. "Come. There are other matters to attend to."

Merlin left without awaiting Reinette's answer.

"I hate that man," said Reinette.

Rumplestiltskin snorted. "Join the club, dearie."

Reinette left and Rumplestiltskin wondered how he was ever to find the girl's True Love. Then he realized there might be a fairy amenable to making a deal.

Now

Beatrice sat through the other visitors, trying to not look out of place. When the business of the day was done, she finally excused herself and spotted her great-grandparents.

"Catherine! Alec!"

Beatrice rushed over, slipping slightly so that Alec managed to catch her wrists and take her in a hug.

"One of those days, is it?" asked Catherine.

Beatrice stepped back.

Catherine sighed. "This is usually the bit where you try to hide how old you think we've gotten."

"I was trying not to say anything."

"That was over fifty years ago."

"So," said Beatrice, "maybe you can clue me in on some things."

"Such as?" asked Alec.

She leaned in. "Sherlock Holmes is my boyfriend?"

"He's a bit more than that," said Catherine.

"What do you mean?" asked Beatrice.

They eyed each other.

"What?" she repeated.

"Well, he's your True Love," said Alec.
"What?!

"It was proven," said Catherine.

"What?"

"Is that all you say?," asked Catherine.

"Do you not know him as another fairy tale character?," asked Alec.

"No, just as the greatest detective in literature and a TV show- BBC definitely not CBS- and a bunch of movies and preferably played by Benedict Cumberbatch-"

"What's a Benedict Cumberbatch?"

Beatrice shook her head. "It's hard to explain."

"Beatrice..." said Catherine.

"I mean, where do you even start?"

"No, behind you," said Catherine.

Beatrice turned to see Joseph.

Or rather Sherlock.

"Your Highness, Your Grace," he said, nodding his head at Catherine and Alec.

"Sherlock," said Alec.

"I was wondering if Beatrice might like to join me in the courtyard."

Beatrice didn't answer. Catherine nudged her.

"Yeah, sure."

She started to follow him out.

"Beatrice..." said Catherine.

Beatrice stopped and turned. "What?"

"Change your frock."

"To go outside?"

Catherine didn't answer which Beatrice took as a yes.

"Okay, so we've got Downton Abbey mixed in or something. That's just great." She looked at Sherlock. "So, I guess I'll be back."

---

Then

Tinker Bell had been resistant to the idea of the first, asking aloud why she would betray the Blue Fairy's trust like that, stealing from the now dwindling supplies of pixie dust. Cora had the mines
at work for her now and the magic in them would be used to her ends.

Then the fairy arrived one day and took her full size as she handed Rumplestiltskin the little sack.

"What changed your mind, dearie?," he asked.

"The Blue Fairy and most of the others..." she said, biting back tears. "They're gone."

The news surprised Rumplestiltskin, but it didn't sadden him. He went to his work table and began examining the dust. "How?"

"Cora's ice woman. She made dark fairy dust. I managed to escape."

Rumplestiltskin thought on how much he would have liked to have been the one to put an end to his least favorite fairy, but certain things had to be in place.

"This girl, Reinette's granddaughter. She's the only hope to stop this?"

"Merlin certainly believes so," said Rumplestiltskin, pouring the dust in a vial.

"Then I want to help," said Tink. "I just hope there's something left of this realm to save by the time she's born."

Rumplestiltskin didn't answer. He had rather hoped the fairy would buzz off, but she remained.

"You're making a potion?," she asked.

"Yes."

"I've never seen Dark Magic before."

Ignoring her, Rumplestiltskin took a hair of Reinette's he had found on the floor and combined it with the potion. He went to the window and threw it out, watching as it coalesced and floated to a lower floor of the castle.

"Her True Love. He's here?," asked Tink.

Rumplestiltskin teleported himself and the fairy flew down to the room that now glowed with magic.

Rumplestiltskin found Merlin.

The wizard looked up at him.

"Do you not see I'm trying to read?," asked Merlin.

Tinker Bell arrived and stared slack-jawed.

"No..." she said. "Him?"

"I was thinking the same thing," said Rumplestiltskin.

Merlin snapped his book shut.

"I only had twenty pages left, but that's just fine. I suppose I didn't really need to know the ending. It doesn't matter if I have a payoff to the previous four hundred pages. What do you two want and why is the room glowing?"
Neither answered.

"Any day now, sunshine."

It mattered not to Rumplestiltskin because if Reinette had to fall for Merlin so they could have a daughter and that daughter could get him to his boy, that is what he would make happen.

He would have his son again.

---

**Now**

Beatrice walked into the courtyard. She spotted Sherlock past the servants.

He didn't even look up from the bench.

"When you're yourself, you have your hands in your lap because that's what your grandmother taught you. Actually, to be fair, she was irritating on the subject. When you've had visions of the other life, your hands sit on the edge of your chair." He finally glanced up. "You were going to ask."

"Actually that is pretty far back in my questions at the moment."

"I would explain everything but it gets boring."

"Right, yeah and you're..." She shook her head. "How many times have we done this?"

"Twenty over the past year."

"Twenty?"

"You have always had an intuition about the other side. It's come out in stories and drawings, peculiar requests as a child. Since the sleeping curse the episodes have become more acute and focused. They have also been accompanied by this temporary memory loss."

"Crazy my whole life. That figures."

"And you met me in the latest vision?"

"Yeah, some stuff happened..." She walked closer. "I know it's boring, but how much has happened with us here?"

He frowned. "What do you mean?"

"Okay, if you don't know, then..." She paused. "So, Irene Adler?"

"We're not discussing that again." He turned. "You know the Queen has spies everywhere."

"I thought just my family knew."

"She has her methods as I have mine. They'll find out that you've had the final vision."

"That was my life," said Beatrice. "Okay? It's been screwed up."

"Yes, it must seem that way."

"Where's my time travel box thing?"
"Safe," he answered curtly.

"That's not an answer. I know where it went wrong, I can fix it-"

"You know what your father and grandfather have known since it happened," said Sherlock. "It's not merely going back, it's knowing how to defeat the Green Queen and as you still don't, well, there's not really much point in that, is there?"

Beatrice grew annoyed. "I'm not an idiot."

"Yet you're so attached to a former life where you were nothing but hounded and persecuted by morons," he snapped again.

"It was my life," she said simply.

Beatrice stood up and started walking back towards the doors.

"Where are you going?," asked Sherlock.

"Oh, just deduce it!"

Beatrice stomped inside to find her father.

"Shall I turn him into a toad until he learns to behave?," he asked.

"I screwed up."

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "What do you mean, sweetheart? Come here."

She soon found herself in the imp's embrace.

"Now," he crooned, "what could my Beatrice have done?"

"I didn't figure out another way to fight Zelena. I got myself scattered in time. Eva died. Snow, Emma and Henry were never born. I- do I have a dog?"

"No, sweetheart."

She threw an arm up in exhaustion at the total loss of her former life. "My dog was never born."

"You're tired, sweetheart. Time for you to go back to bed. We've a long journey ahead of us tomorrow and when you remember more, you'll feel better."

Rumplestiltskin led her upstairs and Beatrice pondered the worst thing of all, the one she hadn't mentioned.

Because she hadn't done better, her father had never found his son.
"Alright, mirror," Zelena said, tired before she even made the request. "Show me Princess Beatrice."

"Are you sure that's a good idea-"

"Show me!," she snapped.

The mirror quickly complied and the princess appeared. Mirrors were kept covered in the Far North Kingdom- that land foiled Zelena's every move- but it was made of ice and ice provided enough of a reflection for the magic to work. The princess appeared in the throne room of the Ice Palace, wearing a deep blue gown.

Princess Belle appeared to be holding court as various lords and ladies paid tribute. The Dark One stood at her side and Princess Beatrice only appeared to be paying half attention as she scribbled on some enchanted paper as that snowman peered over her shoulder. With a flick of the wrist, the paper disappeared and then reappeared a few moments later.

"What's that name? Who's she writing to?," asked Zelena.

The mirror paused. "It says Sherlock."

"Who is he? Find him!"

"What are you writing?," Olaf whispered to Beatrice. "I can't read it from here."

"Shh," hissed Beatrice.

"Is that everyone, Zazu?," asked Belle.

"Yes, Your Highness."

"Then perhaps now would be a good time to discuss an upcoming celebration," Belle said with a smile. She looked at Rumplestiltskin. "What do you think?"

"I would agree, poppet, if a certain princess could be bothered to stop writing."

Beatrice made one last flick of her wrist and the paper vanished. "Sorry."

Belle turned. "Sir Mycroft?"

The man stepped forward with some papers. "I have the guest list for Your Highness' approval as well as a proposed itinerary for the day's celebrations."

Belle took the papers. She passed the guest list to Beatrice and kept the itinerary.

"The festival is to start at one with words from Your Highnesses. It will run until dusk when the fireworks begin and after that the ball."
"Are we having cupcakes at the fair?" asked Beatrice.

"There was discussion of light refreshments," said Mycroft.

"Can they be blue?" asked Beatrice.

"Blue?" asked Belle. "Why blue?"

Beatrice shrugged.

"Alright," said Belle. "Blue cupcakes if at all possible."

"Is this the final guest list?" asked Beatrice.

"Is there a problem, your highness?" asked Mycroft.

"Sherlock's not on it."

"I'm certain he has his duties, sweetheart," said Rumplestiltskin.

Belle shot him a look.

"Yeah, I mean, it's too bad we don't have ways of magically transporting people from place to place," said Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin rolled his eyes as his own sarcasm shot back at him in the form of his daughter.

"Why don't you just use some magic?" asked Olaf.

"That's the one," said Beatrice.

Belle looked at Mycroft. "How is Sherlock's assignment in Agrabah going?"

"Splendidly, Your Highness. We ought to have news to report soon, but I believe my brother could be spared if that is what the Dark Princess wishes."

Belle looked over at Beatrice who gave a pleading look. Belle looked back at Mycroft with a smile.

"Yes, Sir Mycroft, I believe it is."

"A crush," Zelena said with pleasure. "The Dark Princess has a crush. How could we have fun with that?"

"You want the Woman," said the Mirror.

---

Now

Beatrice awoke to find someone tending to the fire in her room. A girl, a little younger than her, blonde hair. She made eye contact with the girl and she quickly bowed her head.

"I'm so sorry, Your Highness. I didn't mean to wake you."

"Uh, that's okay..."

"Alexandra, Your Highness."
Rumplestiltskin entered, quickly casting a glare at the girl. She bowed her head and collected her things, rushing out.

"Is that Cinderella's kid?" asked Beatrice.

"That was the name of her birth mother, yes," said Rumplestiltskin, passing her a robe.

"So she still sold her?"

"Many royal households underwent a great deal of turmoil when the Green Queen's march began. That kingdom offered me something I needed and in exchange, I saved their princess."

"To be a maid?"

"It's still a damn sight better than that idiot mother of hers," said Rumplestiltskin. "The reindeer groom and his wife had no children of their own, they took her in. She's been very well looked after, but she didn't want to continue her education and she had to take up an occupation."

"Seriously, she's a teenager..."

"You've said before the Land Without Magic is different. Is this one of the ways?"

"You mean like teenagers stay in school whether they want to or not? Yeah."

"Your mother tried to institute such a thing. It didn't meet with the approval of the whole kingdom. Besides, the world needs maids and stable boys and spinners."

"And me?"

"You need to get dressed." He waved his hands and a purple wool riding habit appeared. "We have a long journey ahead of us."

Now

Beatrice walked to the courtyard where the party that was going to the southern frontier assembled. Olaf walked behind her.

"Are you sure you're okay, Beatrice?"

"Olaf, I've got this. I don't know what I've done here, but it's not my first magical adventure," she assured him.

"You don't know Zelena," said Olaf. "She can be very cranky."

Beatrice turned to see Sherlock standing in front of her.

"Good morning," said Beatrice.

He frowned and turned around.

"What?!," snapped Beatrice.

"You're still not you," he replied without looking back.

"How can you even tell that?!"
"Your scarf is tied wrong!"

Beatrice groaned and looked at Olaf.

"Do I like him when he's this irritating?"

"It's never bothered you before."

"Your horse, Your Highness."

Beatrice turned to see David bringing her a horse.

"Uh, okay," said Beatrice. She looked up as the animal nuzzled her.

"Shall I fetch your saddle, Your Highness?"

"That seems like the thing to do."

Beatrice was suddenly aware of Mycroft standing next to her. "Perhaps Your Highness would like to ride in the carriage today."

The horse kept nuzzling Beatrice. "Uh, no, saddle, I guess."

David nodded and left. Beatrice turned to Mycroft.

"Do you know who that is? Or who he would be? Or who he is?"

"I think his name is James or something. I know you don't ride in your other life and I am taking the carriage, Your Highness."

Beatrice frowned. "So, I've been doing this a lot?"

"A fair amount, Your Highness."

Beatrice looked down the path where the other guards and whoever it was that travelled with royalty were getting ready. Sherlock stood by his horse. He looked to be rather unsuccessfully avoiding eye contact by fixing his gloves.

"Do the people really want to see me?"

"Of course, Your Highness."

"I'm the Dark Princess."

"Precisely, ma'am."

"Yeah, usually that's meant ominously."

"It is known throughout the realm that the Dark Princess is the only hope for defeating the Green Queen. The people have known this since the day of your birth."

Beatrice shook her head. "Weird world."

Then

Agrabah was hot.
It was all anyone from the Far North Kingdom would think about there. Hot. Sherlock had been born in a little mountain village called Edelweiss, but even that was known for its short summers. It fell under the Dark One's protection, though and early in his life it became surrounded by the ice walls that protected Princess Belle's subjects from the whims of the Green Queen. It was when he was six that his parents had been summoned to the capitol to become tutors to the Dark Princess. That service had been enough to get their eldest two sons positions with the Ice Princess' government and when Sherlock came of age something had to be found for him. Sherlock could have managed as a soldier, but it would have been an ill fit for all parties. Mycroft had a lot of pull by then and had come up with the idea of dispatching Sherlock as a spy.

Which was how Sherlock Holmes had come to Agrabah.

He sat in his room, hands steepled, thinking. Agrabah was not against the Far North Kingdom, but they were not allies and there was nothing for them to be gained in becoming closer ones except in becoming a target for Zelena. The Sultan had to be dealing with Zelena. Nothing could have made the marks Sherlock had found except a Flying Monkey.

Truth be told, the only distraction from his work were the little notes Beatrice wrote and magically appeared in his pocket.

The door to his apartment opened. Two men walked in carrying a rug.

"What the hell is that?," asked Sherlock.

"Your rug, sir."

"I didn't order a rug."

"A gift, sir."

The rug unfurled as Sherlock stood. It rolled out to the floor revealing a woman. She was raven haired with a slash of red lips, her figure clad in an embroidered silk gown.

She turned to the men. "You can go now."

The delivery men quickly nodded their acquiescence and scurried out.

She looked plaintively at him.

"Aren't you going to help me up?"

"I think you can manage for yourself."

The woman pouted and twisted her body to stand.

"Usually I find men to be more useful things. Then again, I never expected you to be so handsome, Mr. Holmes."

Sherlock considered her words. "So, what do you want?"

"What makes you think I want something?"

"You've come to my apartment and you know who I am and that means you must know where I'm from, so you must want a deal."

"I've spent the past few years with the Sultan, but I've tired of his company." She approached to
where she stood inches away from Sherlock. "I'd like to go someplace cooler. Can you help me with that, Mr. Holmes?"

Sherlock turned away. "And what would you be offering the Far North Kingdom in return?"

"How is this?"

Sherlock turned to see that the woman was holding a pewter box emblazoned with a glowing emerald.

"A gift from the Green Queen to the Sultan," said Irene. "Do you think it might be worth something?"

Sherlock took the box. Whatever it was, the magic it used concealed its true purpose. He didn't know the ways of magic well enough. If there was one thing they had in the Far North Kingdom, it was mages.

"I would need to ask an expert."

"Well, that box is my life. I'm not letting it out of my sight so wherever your expert is, I'm going as well."

Now

Once they had left the Ice Palace walls, it became apparent to Beatrice that this was a much different world. The people had all stopped for the procession with cheers for Princess Belle and Princess Beatrice. She sat slack-jawed as the horse went along.

"Wave," Sherlock hissed.

She looked to her side, she hadn't even realized he had advanced from the back.

"What?"

"You're acting as if this has never happened to you before."

"Well, it hasn't."

"Yes, it has. Wave."

Beatrice looked back to the smiling faces of the people and attempted a wave. It came across as something between Miss America and what it might look like if she had a Barbie arm.

"Look at your mother," Sherlock said with some exasperation.

Beatrice looked up where her mother was.

"Of course she would pull off some elegant princess wave," muttered Beatrice, attempting a poor imitation of it. "Why do you care?"

"Zelena has spies everywhere. You can't give up your disguise for one moment."

"Right, let me just keep on this disguise."

"It is a disguise."
Beatrice groaned. "What is your problem?"

"My problem? My problem is that you know who you are less time than you think you're this other Beatrice."

"Sorry I'm not good enough for you."

Sherlock rode on.

"Oh, yeah, ride your horse away. That's really mature!"

Then

A day after the woman arrived, a message arrived by bird from Mycroft for Sherlock to return home for the Dark Princess' birthday party. The journey would take weeks and required a ship to travel around Zelena's territory. When they did arrive it was already Beatrice's birthday and Sherlock organized her rooms for her before she insisted on accompanying him to the palace.

When Sherlock and Irene got there, the crowds had already gathered for the opening of the Princess' Birthday Frost Fair and it was in full swing as the sun went down. He and Irene headed for the castle entrance just as the fireworks began.

"What's this?," asked Irene.

"The princess' birthday."

"It seems a big production for some spoiled girl's party."

"They do this every year," said Sherlock. "All of the children in the city are invited and they partake in games. There are refreshments for all."

Irene scoffed. "Even more spoiled then. Attention seeking."

"She was born the Dark Princess, she could hardly escape the attention if she wished to."

"So I've heard. The one person who can defeat the Green Queen," she said, dripping with sarcasm. She looked at Sherlock. "Tell me. If she's so capable, then why doesn't she just do it?"

"Sherlock."

Sherlock turned to see his elder brother, unsuccessfully trying to disguise disapproval.

"Ah, Irene, meet my brother, Mycroft. He runs the kingdom."

"I hold a minor administrative position. Sherlock, may I speak with you alone?"

Mycroft walked away before Sherlock could reply and thus left him bereft of a choice. With no options, he followed his brother to a corner of the ballroom.

"What do you think you're doing, brother?"

"I'm attending a ball. You were quite insistent on it."

"It wasn't I who was insistent. It was the Dark Princess herself who requested your presence."

"Do your career ambitions really rely on my seducing a young girl?"
"And you pretend you have no affection for her."

"Affection? Is that some form of sentiment? Really, Mycroft, I expected more from you."

"You shouldn't look upon it as sentiment, self preservation might be a more apt description."

"Self preservation? Really, Mycroft..."

"You've never been in a room alone with the Dark One, have you? Believe me, there is a reason he has the title."

"What's he going to do, Mycroft? Turn me into a snail?"

"Simply put, yes, little brother."

Irene approached. "Am I missing all the fun?"

"Then I'll see you tomorrow," Sherlock said to Mycroft. He led Irene away.

Beatrice looked in the mirror. Her father had worked on the lavender gown himself, with little stripes of gold thread in the skirt.

"Ten more seconds," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Papa!"

He waved his hand and the mirror disappeared.

"I wasn't done," Beatrice complained.

"The Queen can find even new mirrors and besides that there's no need to stare in a mirror all day looking for some flaw you don't have. Ask your great-grandmother about a man called Narcissus some time."

"I just-"

"You just what?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

She shook her head. "Never mind."

"What, sweetheart?"

"I just don't want to look stupid."

"Oh, sweetheart, how could you look stupid?"

Belle entered. "Oh, my baby." She gave Beatrice a quick squeeze. "You look so very grown up."

"Not too grown up," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Well, what is it?," asked Beatrice. "Do I look grown up or not grown up?"

"You look perfect," said Belle.

They made their way to the balcony that looked down onto the ballroom. One of the dances had already begun and Beatrice searched through the crowd, seeking out Sherlock.
Her trouble was starting at the wall first. He never put himself out on the dance floor on his own and could be counted upon to hang back and people watch. She didn’t find him there and searched through the dancers.

Where she found him.

With a woman.

An actual grown up, not just some sixteen year old that was pretending for the evening.

"Beatrice," Belle said, gently pushing her along.

The dance ended and the trumpets once again sounded.

"My lords, ladies and gentlemen please welcome the Dark Princess Beatrice!"

The attendees applauded as Beatrice descended the staircase.

Belle spoke. "Loyal subjects, visiting dignitaries, my family and I would like to thank you personally for coming to celebrate Beatrice's birthday with us. It is hard to believe the Dark Princess is sixteen already and will soon be entering her majority. I know of no one more capable and I, like all of you, look forward to the golden age that Beatrice's rule will doubtless usher in."

The subjects applauded as Beatrice accepted hugs from her parents. She stood by her parents' side and politely greeted the various dignitaries.

She found him at the refreshment table. The woman was hanging all over him and as Beatrice watched, she ended up accidentally freezing her punch glass as she held it in her hand.

"Beatrice."

She suddenly looked up to see Sherlock.

"Hi," she said.

"Is something the matter?" he asked, looking at the glass.

"No, my drink just wasn't cold enough and I overcompensated," said Beatrice. She pawned off the glass on a passing waiter. "When did you get back from Agrabah?"

"Only today."

"Just today?," said Beatrice.

"Yes."

Beatrice then found herself face to face with the woman as she sided up to Sherlock.

"So," said Beatrice, "who's your friend?"

"Princess Beatrice, Irene Adler. Irene Adler, Princess Beatrice."

Irene curtsied. "Your Highness."

"Are you new to the Far North Kingdom?"

"Yes, Sherlock brought me."
"From Agrabah?," asked Beatrice. "What were you doing in Agrabah?"

"I make my way. The Sultan was very good to me," she said in a way that meant even Beatrice could decipher what she meant.

Another waltz began.

Irene turned to Sherlock. "Take me around again."

Beatrice looked to him and before she could think of something to say, the pair was on the floor again. The couples swirled around her and Beatrice was left standing alone on the dance floor, feeling like a fool in a fancy gown.

"Sweetheart?," Rumplestiltskin asked after an eternity.

"I am done," said Beatrice, turning to run up the stairs.

Throwing herself on the bed seemed to be the best answer.

"Beatrice..." said Belle, getting on the bed next to her. Beatrice hadn't even realized she had been followed. "Come on now. It's your birthday. You can't cry on your birthday."

"Then maybe someone should toss out the, the-" Beatrice couldn't even find the words.

"The presumptuous tart in the red gown?," offered Rumplestiltskin.

"Yes!," said Beatrice.

"Very well."

"Rumple!," Belle hissed. She turned back to Beatrice. "And then what? Your father vanquishes this woman with magic and Sherlock will just fall into your arms?"

Beatrice paused. "Well, maybe we could put a few more steps in the plan."

Now

Beatrice rode on with the rest of the procession. Suddenly, Sherlock grabbed the reins of her horse.

"Ready to talk?"

"Shut up," he snapped.

"You shut up," Beatrice shot back.

He looked at her. "Don't you see the trees?"

Beatrice looked up at the treetops. She took too long to see what was so different about them.

"Surely you have those in the Land Without Magic. You might have looked at one from time to time."

Beatrice fumed. "Do you have to be such an-"
Before she could utter some words that her father would surely scold her for, the winds shifted around them, tearing up the earth, a wall of spinning dirt and slush and grass blocked her parents from view.

"Beatrice!," she heard Belle call.

"Mom!"

Before she truly knew what was happening, the horse had bucked landing her on the ground. She suddenly found herself confronted with a Flying Monkey headed straight towards her.

Which Sherlock Holmes basically hacked at with a sword.

"Okay, ew..."

Sherlock grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her from the ground.

"Get us out of here," he barked.

"What? I can't get us out of here."

"Of course you can!"

She shook her head. "The teleportation thing? I don't do that!"

"What exactly can you do?!!"

Faced with another wall of Flying Monkeys, Beatrice put up her hands and a wall of ice grew from the ground, causing the Flying Monkeys to fly straight into it.

"Not really smart for primates, are they?," asked Beatrice as they continued to smack to the ground.

"Well, well, Dark Princess," a taunting voice called out, "How are we feeling today?"

Beatrice looked up. The reflection of the glass showed Zelena in her green skin.

"I heard you were missing a few pieces," said Zelena.

"I'm good. How are you?," said Beatrice.

"Oh, you're deciding to be brave today, are you? Just like mummy taught you?"

"Better than whatever crap Cora taught you," said Beatrice.

"Don't you dare speak of my mother!," snapped Zelena. "Your wretched grandfather killed her! You're not worthy to speak her name!"

Beatrice looked at Sherlock. "Really?"

"It was complicated as I understand it."

"Look, whatever it is you want, why don't you just come up here and get it?"

"You can't hide in the ice forever," said Zelena.

"Well, the cold never bothered me anyway," said Beatrice. She looked to Sherlock for
confirmation, but realized he didn't know the reference. "Come on, this is worse than Storybrooke."

Zelena disappeared.

"Come on," said Sherlock.

"Where are we going?"

"The regiment isn't far away. They'll send search parties for you, but I know the way to the camp."

---

**Then**

Beatrice spent the morning after the ball in bed, staring at her pillow.

Catherine entered. "Alright, you are running out of relatives, young lady. I'm going to have to send Maleficent in next. Time to get up."

"Why should I get up?"

"Because it's almost noon."

"No, really. You need me to defeat Zelena? Fine. Come get me when you have a way to do that, but otherwise, forget it."

Catherine sat down in the chair beside the bed. "Beatrice, you can't let yourself be so consumed by a man. You need to have a life of your own."

Beatrice sat up. "That's just it, though! I'm the Dark Princess, I have to defeat the Green Queen and save the realm. I don't have a life of my own."

Catherine nodded. "We all know the burden you bear is a heavy one, but some are born to greatness."

"I just wanted someone to love me for me, not because I'm the Dark Princess, not because I can defeat Zelena."

"Your family loves you."

"My family has to love me," said Beatrice. "He doesn't, but then again, he doesn't love me. He's with her."

Catherine laughed. "Her?"

"You saw him," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice," said Catherine, taking her hand, "you are very young and innocent."

"Yeah, that seems to be my problem."

"My point is that you don't know how women can be. I spent years in different courts when I was your age. I've seen everything and trust me, that woman is a social climber."

"She is?," asked Beatrice.
"Yes," said Catherine. "I overheard Sir Mycroft saying she was in the harem in Agrabah. Bored of the Sultan, she probably looked to Sherlock for the first ticket out, an invitation to the Far North Kingdom with connections to the royal family? It's just the sort of opportunity that women like her jump at."

"They do?"

"Yes. Believe me, once she finds someone with a title or land or whatever it is she's after, she'll leave Sherlock alone."

"What do I do until then?"

"Well, you certainly don't tell Sherlock," said Catherine. "We could hasten the process along."

"How?"

"Let me think on it. The best way to deal with this sort is to make a friend of her."

Sherlock entered his brother's office.

Mycroft didn't look up.

"Did you happen to notice the rain last night?"

"Rain could hardly escape my notice even if you think so little of my powers of observation."

"Did you happen to notice the events that preceded the rain?"

"I assume it had something to do with moisture in the clouds."

Suddenly, Mycroft slammed the journal he had been writing in shut and looked at his brother.

"You made her cry."

"Made who cry? What are you talking about?"

"You swirled around the dance floor at her birthday ball with a concubine of the Sultan of Agrabah. What was the poor girl supposed to think?"

"I was more concerned with what Miss Adler would think."

"I'm sorry?"

"She's an agent of Zelena's. It only took an afternoon to tear apart her harem story. She's not even from this realm. I bribed the portal jumper who retrieved her for the real story. I wanted the woman to think I had fallen for her game. To that end, the ball suited my needs perfectly."

Mycroft sat in consideration of these facts. "Do you think she knows anything useful?"

"That's why I brought her here. I'm not skilled in potions, but you have people who are."

"And what is the Dark Princess supposed to think?"

"We're friends. She'll understand."

"Friends?," asked Mycroft. "Is that what you call it?"
After finishing with Mycroft and his people, Sherlock ventured back into the residential area of the palace. Belle was holding court, Rumplestiltskin was at her side, but Beatrice was not.

He did find Olaf.

"Olaf, where's Beatrice?"

"Beatrice? She went to meet your friend."

"What friend? I only have one friend."

"Wow, Sherlock, I'm really flattered, but I think Beatrice is going to be upset when she hears that."

Sherlock shook his head. "I didn't mean you. I meant her."

Olaf stared at him. "So, we're not friends?"

Sherlock sighed in exasperation.

"It just seemed like we were friends," said Olaf.

"Fine, I have two friends, but where is Beatrice?"

"So, if I'm one of the two who was the woman?"

It clicked. "Irene? Beatrice went to see Irene?"

"Yeah. Why?"

Sherlock turned and ran.

"Sherlock!," called Olaf. "We're still friends, right, buddy?"

Now

They walked.

And walked.

And walked.

They continued walking until the camp was finally in the distance.

"The southern frontier," said Sherlock. "Colonel Mulan and her soldiers have been here for some time now since the border expands every day. Zelena's kingdom shrinks more and more, but she becomes more dangerous. The dying serpent is the most dangerous."

Beatrice looked at Sherlock. "Then I suppose we should go. My parents will be worried."

"Right," said Sherlock.

"And yet we're not moving."

"I don't hate you," said Sherlock.
"Good to know," said Beatrice.

He turned to face her. "When I was six, my parents got the appointment to be your tutors. We moved to the Far North Kingdom from Edelweiss and I tagged along that first day because my brothers were pretending I was invisible."

Beatrice frowned.

"No, they pretended I was literally invisible. You don't want to know how thoroughly I tested that premise..." He shook it off. "I ought to have been amazed by the palace or stunned by your mother's beauty or terrified by your father or possibly the talking snowman, but I wasn't."

Beatrice shrugged. "Well, you couldn't be Sherlock Holmes if you were scared of a talking snowman."

"You came out from behind your mother's skirt and everything else fell away. Nobody has ever been able to do that for me and when you are not here, I'm the only one who knows that."

Sherlock walked away.

"It was my birthday," said Beatrice.

He stopped and turned. Beatrice walked closer.

"I was turning seventeen and I had just had the most awful summer," said Beatrice. "I'm lucky if I can get a civil word in Storybrooke and I had exactly one date from this kid who was struck with Cupid's Arrow by King Arthur. I'm untouchable, nobody was ever going to fall in love with me. Ariel invited me to a beach party and it was all couples. So I got my parents to let me go to physics camp at MIT."

"MIT?" asked Sherlock.

"Yeah, it's this university. Anyway, I went and I thought I could be free to find someone, to have a boyfriend and there was this guy I thought I really liked, but he had a girlfriend. A real girlfriend and he didn't see why he should choose me. I was just some dork from Maine."

Sherlock scoffed.

"Then I started hanging out with Jamie and he was nice and liked watching Doctor Who and Sher-
"

Sherlock glanced up at her inquiringly.

"Side note, there's a TV show called Sherlock. TV is-
"

"You've explained TV before. So, every week people watch some story about me?"

"Not every week," said Beatrice. "Like for three weeks every two years because of well, The Hobbit and Star Trek. Let's not even talk about Elementary. So, I just hung out with him and my dad could see right through it. He knew I was settling and I just don't get my parents sometimes because they think the answer is always magical and I can't see that. So, my mom made me wish on a birthday candle that I would meet my True Love... then you walked in."

"I walked in?"

"And I don't know what to call it or what happened, but something changed then. I tried to
pretend it didn't. You were it, but I never thought there was any way you could stay or that you were from the Enchanted Forest.” She inhaled in shock. "Oh, my God, I'm Sherlocked."

"You're what?"

"It's just this thing from the episode with the woman." She started walking with him.

"I see. And what do they say of the Woman in this land?"

"Well, she's the Woman. The one Woman who could outwit Sherlock Holmes. In the short story. The one woman who matters."

"I don't think they got that quite right."

"She impressed you."

"Hardly."

---

**Then**

Sherlock entered the apartment he had gotten for the woman. Beatrice laid in state on the chaise.

"Beatrice," he said rushing over. He found no pulse, no breath, but the body was perfectly preserved, no signs of death taking hold.

"Oh, Sherlock, thank the Gods you're here," said Irene. "I don't know what happened. She just took a sip of the tea..."

Sherlock looked to the tea service on the table. Smelling the tea in the cup he detected nothing, but a sniff of the chip in the rim told a different story.

"I don't know what could have."

Sherlock thundered across the room, grabbing the woman by her reedy neck and slamming her against the wall.

"What did you do?"

"Sherlock, I don't know what-"

"I have enjoyed the game, but the game is over."

"What game, Sherlock?"

"You don't think I knew you were the Green Queen's agent? You arrive the same time as my orders back here along with promises of information only you have? Now, what poison was it?"

"There's nothing you can do for her now."

"I have the Dark One and Merlin on call, somehow I think I'll manage."

"It wasn't a poison. It was a sleeping curse."

"Curses can be broken."

She shook her head. "Not this one."
Sherlock smiled. The woman wondered at what he was doing.

"When I was a boy, Beatrice told me a story about a beast and I learned all curses can be broken. Sometimes they must not be, but they can be."

"Oh, poor man. You're not serious. You don't just conjure True Love's Kiss even if you are somewhat clever." She approached him. "I know you, Sherlock Holmes. You love the game and that's it."

"I imagine you all think love is a mystery to me, but it's not," said Sherlock, removing his cloak. He knelt down next to Beatrice and pushed her hair aside. "Love makes us sick, haunts our dreams, destroys our days. I know it all too well and so I have tried to spare myself and her."

Sherlock kissed Beatrice on the lips and as he did a wave of magic broke through the kingdom.

Beatrice's eyes flew open and she gasped to life. Sherlock sat back as she looked at him.

"I was unconscious," she said. "Creepy."

"Sorry."

Irene made a beeline for the door. Beatrice waved her hand and she was encased in a block of ice.

Beatrice turned to Sherlock.

"You can try that kissing thing again."

---

Now

It wasn't much longer for Beatrice and Sherlock to make it to the camp. Soldiers waited at the gate with the rest of the procession.

Belle and Rumplestiltskin simultaneously ran for Beatrice and took her in their arms.

"Don't scare us," said Belle, eyes full of tears.

Still holding on to Beatrice, Rumplestiltskin looked to Sherlock.

"What did she want?," he asked.

"I believe she knows about the memory loss," said Sherlock.

Belle and Rumplestiltskin exchanged stricken looks.

"I know this must be getting boring, but why is it everyone thinks I can defeat Zelena?," asked Beatrice.

"Because you already did it once," said Belle.

"And when was that?"

"The day you were born," answered Rumplestiltskin.
Beatrice awoke in the dark, panting, sweating. Everywhere around her, she felt it was ice cold. She went to reach for her glasses to find they just weren't there.

"Mom!," she screamed. "Mom!"

Within seconds, a distant door had opened and candlelight drifted in from the hall as a shadow moved towards her. Up close, the moonlight gave her the hint that it was Belle in a silky blue nightdress and a white fur robe of some kind.

"Beatrice, what's wrong?"

"It's dark. You have to turn on the lights."

"Beatrice, what's wrong?," a male voice asked.

She clung to her mother, not liking the sound of a stranger at the moment.

"Who's that?"

A candle was lit casting a glow onto reptilian skin. Beatrice shuddered and clung to Belle tighter.

"Please, please turn on the lights," said Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin waved his hand and the room was illuminated with candles that floated in midair. Beatrice gasped at the sight.

"Oh, my God, it's finally happened, I've finally gone crazy," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice," said Belle, taking her daughter's face in her hands, "you're home. You're safe. Papa and I are with you."

Beatrice looked out the window. Instead of city lights and the outlines of buildings, there was a vista of a quaint winter village and ice on the horizon.

"This is not Manhattan..." said Beatrice.
Chapter 63

Olympus

Venus walked into her temple. She eyed the chorus waiting in the upper levels and stepped towards the center.

"Viviane, the relic."

The former fairy grumbled as she handed the box to the goddess.

"Is there a problem, Viviane?"

"I don't even know why you made me come here."

"Your punishment," said Venus. "I just can't get enough of it, really."

Viviane held out the box.

"Daughter of Venus, come home," the goddess incanted.

The sisters of the temple repeated the mantra after her and the center of the temple was struck with four bolts of light.

In the center, Beatrice came to.

"Okay..." She looked up to see her great-grandmother. "Venus!"

Beatrice ran to embrace the goddess.

"Hey, baby, had a rough day?"

"You might say that."

"Though from what I saw it was going pretty well right before that..." Venus teased. "That boy is hot. I love those eyes. You know, that's how Merlin's father got me. The eyes."

"Do you just spy on everybody's love life?"

"I am the Goddess of Love, aren't I?"

Beatrice looked to see the former Blue Fairy.

Venus caught her gaze immediately. "Don't worry. She can't hurt you."

"It doesn't seem to stop her trying," said Beatrice.

"Actually, no one can hurt you."

"And why is that?"

"Well, are you familiar with the term non-corporeal?"
"Sort of..."

"Well, that's you right now. You're non-corporeal."

"What?"

"Are you hungry? Thirsty? Are you not really either but could go for a Starbucks?"

Beatrice thought on it. "No..."

"That's because you're not alive. You're just a spirit."

"Oh my God, am I dead?!"

"Hush, calm down, baby," said Venus. "You're not dead, you're just not alive."

"That's the same as dead!"

"Walk with me. You'll feel better."

Beatrice followed her great-grandmother out where she saw the edifice of the shining yet ancient temple that bore statues of her grandmother. The outside was lush and green. Viviane followed them dutifully.

"That Wicked Witch thought you were the perfect solution to her problem: you contain all the necessary qualities. Your father's intelligence, your mother's heart and courage, your own innocence. There was one thing she wasn't counting on."

"And what is that?"

Venus stopped and turned. "Your mother's heart is capable of the most incredible love because it's her father's heart. Her father's heart is my heart. The heart of Venus, the goddess of love. Do you understand? Zelena unintentionally used an ingredient more powerful than she could possibly imagine. She tore you apart and instead of being sacrificed, you have been scattered through creation."

"I'm Astrid Peth."

"Who?"

"Kylie Minogue, she gets scattered through space?"

"No idea who that is. Zelena tried to change history, but Merlin made it so that the timeline of the Enchanted Forest moves around you."

"So now I'm Donna Noble."

"Who?"

"The Most Important Woman in Creation?"

"Whatever. What you do not have right now is a body, you're floating like a leaf."

"Okay, now I'm Clara Oswald."

Venus looked at her. "Beatrice, I'm starting to get the feeling that this is a situation where these women you mention are going to turn out to be television characters."
Beatrice nodded. "Yeah."

"Do you want to get a body or not?"

"Yes, please," she sighed.

"Luckily, you have a body coming."

"I do?"

"Come here," said Venus.

Beatrice followed her over to a reflecting pool lined by white pillars. She pointed.

"Look there."

Beatrice stared into the pool as it morphed into an image of Belle. She was walking around a library in what Beatrice thought looked like Catherine's Ice Palace. Walking out from behind a shelf revealed an extremely swollen belly clad in the maternity edition of Elsa's dress from Frozen.

"I'm in there?"

"Where else would you be?"

"Well, here."

"Your body is there."

"Yes, well, I'm here, how do I get in there?"

"I thought that would be obvious."

"No, it's not obvious. I've never had to re-enter my own body before. Besides, what about the me that's in there? Do I have to share with her?"

"Well, if you time it right, she'll be a baby. Innocent, remember? A blank slate. Some of you will fade, but I think you'll get the salient information."

"And how do I stop Zelena?"

"Well, it's really too bad you don't have a time travel spell of your own."

"Are we back in time now? How do you know me?"

"This is Olympus. From this realm, all things are possible. You can leave here and go back there."

"Right. Just have to possess my own body."

---

"I don't see it, Belle!," Olaf cried from the top of the ladder.

"I had it right there," said Belle.

"You know, when Rumplestiltskin gave you this library he really could have given you a filing system."

"I've sorted all the books my father ever gave me, but I just haven't read this one."
Belle looked up from her book to see a purple light. She approached it carefully, but it didn't move.

There was something incredibly familiar about it.

"Hello..." said Belle. "Who are you?"

Suddenly, the light moved and knocked a book off a shelf. Struggling with her serious center of gravity, Belle picked up the book. She recognized it as one her father had gifted her from the Land Without Magic.

"Much Ado About Nothing," Belle read. She looked up.

The light was gone.

"Whoa," said Olaf. "I don't know about you, but I have chills."

Belle eyed him.

"Chills."

Belle had a notebook.

A freaking notebook.

Beatrice had to admit, though, if anybody was going to keep detailed records of her daughter's visions of an alternate reality, it would be Belle.

The outpost had set the royals up in the best rooms available. Upon further questioning about these visions and how in the hell she had defeated Zelena on the day she was born, Belle pulled out the notebook.

"This was the first," Belle explained. "The day of the Woman's sleeping curse. You awoke, you had no idea who Papa was, you thought we lived in a land called Manhattan and you were concerned about missing the wedding of someone called River Song."

"Yeah," said Beatrice. "Sounds right. Like two and a half years ago, maybe?"

"And you wondered where your glasses were," said Sherlock. "You spoke poorly of someone called Taylor Billingsley."

Beatrice turned back to Belle. "What was the next one?"

Belle flipped the pages. "You didn't recognize Papa again, but you thought he was someone called Mr. Gold. You had just gone to a place called Storybrooke."

"And I'm guessing the next time I recognized him as my dad, but the skin freaked me out. She looked at Rumplestiltskin. "Sorry."

"It did," said Sherlock.

"Yeah," said Beatrice. "What was the one before this?"

"You knew us both, knew the ice palace, knew about Peter Pan..."
"So, it sounds like I've been catching myself up on my life in chronological order," said Beatrice.

"But how is that possible?" asked Belle.

"Wibbly wobbly timey wimey," said Beatrice.

"Oh, good, your favorite phrase," Sherlock said dryly.

"I am not getting into an argument with you about Doctor Who," said Beatrice.

"Gods forbid," said Sherlock.

"So, your confrontation with Zelena, that was the last thing to happen to you?," asked Belle.

"I saw Eva get killed for a second, but that was it."

"And that was enough for everything to change," said Rumplestiltskin.

Bored.

Actually, bored wasn't enough to describe it. Belle was restless. She hadn't left the palace since the summer— or rather, what passed for summer in the Far North Kingdom— because her pregnancy had begun to show. Normally, the insistence by her father and her husband that she hide herself would have compelled her to defy them on principle alone, but in this case the reality was just a bit more complicated. Belle didn't just have herself to think about. She had the precious girl growing inside her to worry about as well as the future of the whole kingdom and possibly the realm, so she reluctantly stayed in the palace.

Then word traveled that the newly minted Green Queen could use mirrors to see other places. Sometimes just reflections.

And she lived in an ice palace.

Her room had been set aside, covered in rugs and tapestries, the windows shuttered and Belle had to remain in there. Her family were frequent visitors, Rumplestiltskin was almost constant and most importantly, Belle had her books. She had lately taken to reading aloud so her girl could hear her.

Each night the table was magically laid out for the evening meal in her room. It was only a little crowded, but Belle was grateful for the sense of normalcy as her father, grandparents, husband and Olaf dined with her.

"I was thinking of names," said Belle.

"Names?" asked Rumplestiltskin.

She looked up to see her grandparents exchanging furtive looks.

"Ooh, I know!," said Olaf.

Catherine clapped a hand over the snowman's mouth.

"What name were you thinking of, love?," asked Merlin, not looking up from his plate.

"I actually read one in that last book you gave me for my birthday. I finally got around to it," said Belle. "Beatrice."
"Beatrice?," asked Rumplestiltskin.
"You don't like it?," asked Belle.
"The first part sounds like an insect."

There was silence.

Catherine broke it. "Seriously? Have you forgotten your name?"

"Grandmother..." said Belle.

"We were all thinking it," said Catherine.

"I think Beatrice is a great name," said Olaf.

"Thank you, Olaf," said Belle.

"I think it's beautiful, love," said Merlin.

Belle looked at her grandparents.

"Yes, I think that name will do nicely," said Alec.

"Names have power," said Rumplestiltskin. "What power does the name Beatrice have?"

"Oh, sunshine," groaned Merlin. "She's a baby. You can't just name her the Destroyer because you want her to frighten Zelena and the block of ice."

"Did I say the Destroyer?"

Belle rubbed her stomach. "She's not something awful. She doesn't deserve an awful name."

"I never said that, poppet."

"She's not just some chess piece, either," snapped Belle.

The others exchanged glances. Rumplestiltskin turned back to his dinner, suddenly losing his appetite.

Belle had lost hers as well.

Beatrice and the others were taken away from their review by an invitation to dinner. The encampment was on the edge of a little town, the mayor and his wife were hosting a small banquet. Belle, Rumplestiltskin, Mulan and Mycroft luckily took up most of the talking. That left Beatrice with Sherlock at a table to the side.

"It's like we're at the kids' table," said Beatrice.

"The what?"

"At Thanksgiving and stuff, sometimes adults get one table, children get another."

"Thanksgiving."

"Wow, it is really hard for me to tell any stories."
"I would think it would be better if you didn't."

Beatrice took her glass off the table and turned to face Sherlock.

"Sherlock Holmes," said Beatrice. "Solve crimes, wears a weird hat-"

"It is not weird."

"Plays the violin. Anything else I should know about? How's the cocaine thing?"

"I only did that because I was bored."

"Right, my dad must love you..."

"If it helps at all, I think your father only tolerates my living because he thinks you would be sad if anything were to happen to me."

"How serious is our relationship here?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, come on. True Love, I get that, but how serious are we? Usually in fairy tales people just get married about thirty seconds after meeting."

"I conclude then that Princess Beatrice isn't in any fairy tales in that world."

"No, not until there's some Beauty and the Beast meets Frozen mash-up. I thought I was getting close with this Disney Channel movie, Descendants, because it was a magical land where King Beast and Queen Belle ruled the kingdom..."

"Ahh..."

"But it turns out their son, Ben, is about to take the throne."

"Their son?"

"I wrote an email. I don't think it's going to make a difference."

"Well," said Sherlock, "Princess Beatrice would never marry anyone she had just met and besides that, she's not even eighteen yet. Besides, do you really think your father would allow his daughter to be so easily lost?"

"That still doesn't answer how serious."

Sherlock took a sip from his glass.

"I've asked this before, haven't I?"

"You have."

"What conclusion did we come to the last time?"

"More than kissing, less than other things."

"Well..." said Beatrice.

"Bear in mind your father is the most powerful sorcerer in all the realms."
"Yeah," said Beatrice. She stood up. "I'm going for a walk."

"You can't go for a walk alone," said Sherlock.

"Then make sure I'm not alone."

Beatrice walked out. Sherlock waited a moment, smiled and followed.

Sleep eluded Belle all night. She tossed and turned disturbing her husband and eventually Rumplestiltskin made excuses about having something to do in his tower. As she saw the crack of morning light from underneath the drapes, Belle admitted defeat. She finally emerged from bed feeling more restless than ever.

Belle dressed in a simple gown, still feeling horribly uncomfortable. She hoped she wouldn't have to muddle through too much today, she was just off.

"Your Highness," said Zazu, coming in, "Major Mulan and Prince Philip."

Belle looked over as the pair entered. They bowed quickly.

"Mulan, Philip, I don't remember us having a meeting scheduled." She fervently hoped they didn't. She was a young monarch, soon caught up in the whirlwind of her marriage and a pregnancy she was certain was eating at her brain. Belle was mortified she would make some mistake and then everyone would know how much of her brain was gone.

"We did not, Your Highness," said Mulan. "A messenger arrived this morning who brought word of an attack on the village of Saldana, just a day from the capital."

"A day?," asked Belle. She looked up to see that Merlin and Rumple were joining them. "How big is her force?"

"Her army and her monkeys," said Philip.

"I have to do something," said Belle.

"Absolutely not," said Rumplestiltskin.

Belle turned to her father, hoping Merlin would back her up. He shook his head. "I'm sorry, love. You are in no condition to travel. Rumplestiltskin and I will go to the village."

"And who's to watch her?," snapped Rumple.

"She's not defenseless, she can control the ice from here and we will leave Maleficent."

"She also has ears," Belle said tersely.

"I will personally check the palace fortifications before I ride," offered Mulan.

"That will have to do," said Belle.

"I'll go speak to Maleficent," Rumple snarled.

Belle was left alone with Merlin.

"Dear girl..." he began.
"I'm not a girl!," Belle protested. "Can't you see that?"

Belle turned away, resisting the urge to stamp her feet, a quirk that was sure to reveal her as a girl.

"No, I'm afraid I can't see that," said Merlin. "I see the toddler who ran into my arms. I see the infant I held in my arms the day she was born. That is my curse."

"I am not the same as her. I can take care of myself."

Merlin narrowed his eyes. "Is that what you think? That your dear mother could not take care of herself? Reinette may not have had magic, but she would have ruled worlds without it. The fact that you are here proves it."

Belle's face grew hot. Merlin never yelled at his daughter, Belle could have yelled back just as loudly and the stars would have gone dark before either stopped. His chastising came in the form of a disapproving look.

"I did not mean to sound disrespectful."

"Of course not, but your condition does remind us of our loss that day."

"As if I could ever forget it," said Belle, closing her arms around her stomach. "I never even knew her."

"I know," said Merlin.

Merlin walked over and kissed his daughter on the forehead.

"Look after yourself and we will look after your people."

Beatrice let Sherlock lead her on a path. The night was clear and cold and the sounds of the banquet got further and further away.

"Sherlock, have I mentioned my brother?," asked Beatrice.

"Baelfire? You did once," said Sherlock.

"What did I say?"

"You said he was lost in the Land Without Magic."

"I didn't mean that," Sherlock eyed Beatrice as she checked around her. "Did I mention we found him in this other life?"

"No."

"I didn't?"

Now it was Sherlock who checked around. "You might have intentionally left it out."

"Intentionally?"

"The Beatrice who was- she would never admit to feeling this way, mind you- but she has spent her whole life living in the shadow of a sibling who might as well be a legend. Her- your father has spent lifetimes looking for him and-"
"And next to that what the hell do I matter?"

"I see it was pointless to tell you how you feel." He paused. "So, in this other life Rumplestiltskin finds his son?"

"Not just that," said Beatrice. "Eva was supposed to have a daughter, Snow White. She had a daughter named Emma and she had a son named Henry. My nephew."

"Baelfire's son."

"Yeah."

"But your life was awful," said Sherlock. "You were maimed, idiotic knights tried to kill you and you were cut off from your father for most of your life."

Beatrice sighed. "Neal- Bae got cut off for three hundred years. How can I complain about fifteen?"

"You're trying to think of a way to turn things back, aren't you?"

Beatrice remained silent.

"You are," Sherlock accused. "Well, allow me to remind you of the relevant facts. You are talented, but you're not a match for the Green Queen, not yet. You don't know the secret to beating her which Merlin is currently searching worlds for."

"I can travel through time, though and that's what I need to do."

He stopped walking, forcing Beatrice to do the same. As she turned back, his eyes shot at her. "And if you die when you get there, everything ends up the same only you're dead. Then we're really in trouble unless you've got some plan for reincarnation."

Beatrice paused. "That seems familiar."

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

"No, really, was there something like that?"

"How should I know? I don't even understand magic, let alone metaphysics."

"Oh, haven't you heard, the explanation for anything magical is 'It's magic.'"

"Did your father tell you that?"

"Just almost every day I've known him." Beatrice looked around. "Where are we walking?"

"I assumed we wanted somewhere far enough from the banquet hall so that we would go unobserved, but not so far that we would be attacked by a horde of Flying Monkeys."

"And what was your plan when we went unobserved?"

"I have no agenda."

"Oh, really?"

"You're not my girlfriend, likewise, I assume you're more attached to my counterpart."
"Actually, I kissed the guy once and Captain Hook showed up, then I got torn through time."

Beatrice turned back and looked out. There was a field with what looked to be round stones in rows and rows.

"We've gone too far," said Sherlock.

"What is this?," asked Beatrice. "Trolls?"

"What? Why would it be trolls?"

"Frozen."

"It's a graveyard."

"A graveyard?" Beatrice looked back. "It's huge and it goes right up to the ice wall."

The southern frontier she and Belle were meant to repair in the morning had to be a mile away, on the edge of what she could see in the night.

"What kind of graveyard does that?"

"A battlefield graveyard."

"What battle?"

"The Battle of Saldana."

"What?," asked Beatrice.

"The battle the day you were born."

In addition to feeling restless, Belle now felt useless.

She was confined to her room while her father and husband went off to do the real work of defending her kingdom. Worse yet, she wasn't with her people. She had listened to her grandmother's advice and watched her rule carefully. It did the people enormous good to see their princess in battle, sharing in their struggles. Catherine always went to the battle and it had always worked. Now her first real test had come and she wasn't permitted to be a part of it, to let the people know that Princess Belle would not fail them in their hour of need.

Ariel looked up at Belle interrupting her train of self loathing.

"I like the name Beatrice. I don't know what your Rumplestiltskin is thinking of."

"What's it like outside?," asked Belle.

"Oh, you know the usual," said Ariel. "Cold. I don't mind, but what I would give just to lie on the rocks in the sun for an afternoon."

"That sounds nice," said Belle. "I've barely been out of the kingdom."

Ariel smiled. "Just the time you ran away."

Belle rolled her eyes. "Everyone likes to bring that up."
"Well, if you hadn't, you never would have met me."

Belle let out a deep breath and Ariel looked up from her needlepoint.

"I read in my books about all these places, places I was never going to get to go and sometimes I feel like my whole life has been about this..." Belle looked down.

"Oh," said Ariel with wide eyes.

"It's not that I don't want her, I love her," said Belle. "But is that all people will ever remember of me? 'Here lies Belle, the Ice Princess, she bore a daughter.'"

"Of course not," said Ariel. "Your daughter will probably name a library after you."

Belle scowled and Ariel burst out laughing.

"Oh, come on, Belle," said Ariel, "what fun is it if your best friend can't mock your crisis about the meaning of life?"

"Seriously, though," said Belle, "how are the people?"

Ariel shrugged. "They're worried. About you, about the battle. The messengers keep bringing such awful news and the first refugees have begun to arrive."

The door burst open. Maleficent, Tinker Bell and Catherine walked in with Olaf bobbing behind them.

"What is it?," asked Belle, worried about the battle that was surely taking place in Saldana.

Tink pointed at Maleficent. "She keeps changing the colors of the nursery."

Maleficent rolled her eyes. "You're a fairy. You have fairy tastes."

"What does that even mean?"

"Your decorations were positively gauche. We want Zelena to be frightened of the Dark Princess, not of your decorating."

"I still say we should consider green," said Tink.

"What if the baby comes out green? Then she'll clash."

"This is all very constructive, ladies," said Catherine. "As it has been the past four days. The point was to help Belle, not catch her up on your drama."

"I thought we were going to do violet," said Belle.

"Violet and green? Won't that be a bit much?," asked Maleficent just as Alec and Olaf came in.

Lightning cracked and Belle grabbed her stomach.

"Belle, dear?," asked Alec.

The roll of thunder sounded through the ice palace. The other diners looked up in alarm.

"Thunder here?," asked Tink.
"No," said Belle. "That's me."

"What?," asked Catherine.

"Her, I mean," said Belle, stammering her way through. "Her magic. It's coming out. I don't think I have any control over it."

Lightning again cracked in the air. Belle moaned.

"Belle?," asked Ariel.

Alec and Catherine were already on their feet, headed towards Belle's side.

"I think she's coming," said Belle.

"Of course she is," said Catherine. "Tinker Bell, you fetch the midwife. Maleficent, you ready the wards on the palace. Ariel, send a bird to Saldana. Alec, help me get Belle to her bed."

"What do I do?," asked Olaf.

"Well," said Catherine, glancing over at Alec, "you can provide moral support."

"Moral support?," asked Olaf.

"Yeah," confirmed Catherine, helping Belle to her feet. "Moral support."

Sherlock led Beatrice down to the field. In addition to the markers, there was a library dedicated to the fallen which was close. Sherlock led her to a wall made up of a series of huge white stone edifices.

"These tell the story of the battle," explained Sherlock.

"It's dark," complained Beatrice.

"Then you ought to do something about it."

Beatrice glared, then used her hand to conjure a fireball.

"What happens if you try to do ice at the same time?," he asked.

"I don't know, I've never tried it," said Beatrice.

"See here, the etchings of your father and grandfather," said Sherlock.

Beatrice looked. Rumplestiltskin and Merlin looked decidedly more heroic than they had ever been portrayed in her experience.

"The Green Queen herself came here with a legion and her monkeys," said Sherlock. "They laid waste to the city."

"What city?"

"The one that used to be here," said Sherlock.

"She destroyed a city?"
"Yes and the inhabitants."

"How many?"

"No one knows for certain. Thousands."

"Why did Zelena attack here?"

"Because the tempest had begun."

"The tempest?"

"The one that heralded your birth."

Lightning was a rare occurrence in the Far North Kingdom.

As was thunder.

The people watched as it flew across the sky and towards the Ice Palace. The wind blew, snow fell hard.

And Maleficent chased a purple light through the palace.

"There you are!," she snapped, waving her hands to capture the light in a field of magic.

It stood suspended in midair as Olaf wandered up to it.

"It's beautiful..." the snowman said in awe.

"It's a troublesome little pest," said Maleficent, capturing it in a jar she conjured. "A will o'the wisp. They can't be trusted and they certainly can't be allowed around the Dark Princess."

Olaf eyed it as Maleficent put it down on a table.

"Don't touch it, snowman."

"How do you know it's bad?"

"I know these things," said Maleficent. "Don't touch it."

Just then, Leigh, the midwife hurried up the staircase, carrying a bag of supplies.

"About time," said Maleficent.

"Well, excuse me, there's a blizzard out there. Accomodations must be made unless you were planning on delivering the princess yourself," Leigh said cheerfully. "Now make yourself useful, I need clean towels, warm blankets and tea."

"Tea?," asked Maleficent.

"Yes, the weather's a bit bracing or haven't you noticed?"

Leigh breezed into the bedroom.

"Well," she said brightly, "quite a storm out there. Tinker Bell told me our little princess is to blame for it. Quite a way to make an entrance into the world."
Belled gritted her teeth. Ariel mopped at her forehead with a cloth. Catherine sat at her side, holding her hand.

"She's not saying much," said Ariel.

"Not being friendly?," asked Leigh. "Where's our usual cheerful Belle?"

"Get her out," Belle snapped.

"All up to her, I'm afraid," said Leigh. "Let's see where we are, Your Highness."

Belle threw her head back against the pillows as Leigh went to exam.

"You're fully dilated," Leigh announced. "You don't waste any time, do you?"

"What?," asked Belle. "I just went into labor."

"Not according to what I just looked at," said Leigh.

"Or the weather," said Catherine.

"Look on the bright side. You'll be ready to push soon," said Leigh.

"I'm not ready. Rumple's not here!"

"Well, technically speaking he's done his part," said Leigh.

"So, my dad and Merlin came here and fought off the Green Queen," said Beatrice, following the story of the edifices. "So there were two Zelenas at one point. What a fun thought."

"You know, you do this time travel business rather well."

"Well, that's what seeing every episode of New Who ever will do for you." She looked back. "I'm working through the classic series. I made some progress when I was recovering in the hospital."

"You were in the hospital? What for?"

"Oh, when I was in Boston, there was a freak tornado. I had to spend some time in the hospital because they wouldn't let me go to Storybrooke where Dad or Merlin could have fixed me."

"A tornado?"

"I know. Boston, right?" Beatrice went back to the engravings. "Then how did I defeat the Ice Witch?"

"Because she and more monkeys went to the palace. The battle here was a distraction to get Rumplestiltskin and Merlin away. The Ice Witch thought you would be undefended, but if there's one thing you never are, it's undefended."

"Good girl, good girl," said Leigh.

Belle shouted something unintelligible in frustration as she stopped pushing.

"Nearly there, Your Highness," said Leigh. "In your own time, I want you to prepare yourself to push again, only this time I just need two more and you can have your girl."
Maleficent entered. "I've taken care of that troublesome will o'the wisp. No news from Saldana, the weather's making it impossible to send messengers by horse. Tinker Bell ought to be back soon."

"What did you do to it?," asked Catherine.

"It's fine. It's just in a jar. I'll deal with it more permanently later."

"I'm sure this is all very interesting," said Leigh, "but her highness was just about to give birth so let's focus on that. Belle?"

"Have we heard from Rumple?," asked Belle.

"No news yet," reported Maleficent.

"And when he returns, you can show him his new daughter."

Lightning cracked making the candles flicker.

"She seems ready to come out," said Ariel.

Catherine turned back towards her granddaughter. "Come on, darling. You can do this."

Belle looked at Ariel. "Rumple made her a blanket, it's in the nursery. His magic is in it, it can protect her."

"I'll get it," said Ariel, hopping up and hurrying out.

"Belle?," asked Leigh.

Belle nodded and readied herself as she took Catherine's hand. She took a breath and started pushing. The weather outside grew more raucous and they could hear something smack against the window.

"What was that?," asked Belle as she pushed.

"Never mind, keep pushing," instructed Leigh as Maleficent vanished to investigate.

Belle did, shouting as she felt the most awful discomfort and stopped.

"We have the head, Your Highness," said Leigh. 'Just once more.'

The lightning cracked again as Belle began the final push. There was a great release followed by the baby's first cry. Leigh wrapped her in a towel and placed her on Belle's chest.

"Hello," Belle wept as she gazed upon her daughter for the first time. "Hi."

The creature squirmed and cried as Belle cried back. She found it hard to fathom that something so wonderful had happened to her. She felt so much pure joy that she didn't know what to do with it.

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Olaf walked up to the jar Maleficent had set down. He stared at the purple light.

"Well, I don't see what's so bad about you," said Olaf. "You're kind of cute."

The light shoved up against the edge of the jar facing the snowman.
"You know, you seem kind of familiar," said Olaf. "Have we met before?"

Alec entered. "Olaf, are you talking to a will o'the wisp?"

"It's so glow-y."

Maleficent reappeared. "We have a problem."

"A problem?," asked Alec.

"The Ice Witch is here along with her Flying Monkeys."

"So," said Catherine, "Beatrice."

Belle shook her head. "I want Rumple to be here when we decide for certain."

"Right," said Catherine, "that's one route."

Belle frowned at her grandmother. Before she could ask more, Alec and Maleficent entered.

"Alec," said Catherine. "Come meet our great-granddaughter."

"Nothing would give me greater joy, but I'm afraid it may have to wait," said Alec.

"The Ice Witch has arrived," announced Maleficent.

"She risked coming here?," asked Catherine.

"What does that mean?," asked Belle.

"Ice against ice is unpredictable, the same element battling, it's anyone's game," said Catherine.

"That's what's kept her away all this time," explained Maleficent.

"Can you feel your magic?," asked Catherine.

"No," Belle said in alarm.

"That happens after birth sometimes," said Catherine.

"What do we do?," asked Ariel.

"Get me to Rumple's tower," said Belle. "He has more magic there to protect me."

"You are in no condition to walk," said Leigh.

"I don't have a choice," said Belle.

The others helped Belle into a robe and slippers. Belle bundled the baby up in the blanket Ariel had retrieved. Rumple's tower was a straight shot across the palace and up a staircase.

The walk included Belle's first look out a window in some weeks where she saw the chaos unfolding in the courtyard. The knights Mulan had left were battling an onslaught of Flying Monkeys that was so numerous they threatened to obscure the view entirely.
"Keep moving," Alec instructed. Belle felt her grandfather's palm against her back.

"But-" Belle lost the will to fight her grandfather mid-sentence. She clutched the baby closer and let her grandmother lead her along the corridor.

Olaf bobbed up. He was holding the jar with the will o'the wisp.

"Hey, guys, I don't think this is what you think it is," said Olaf.

"Not now, snowman," Maleficent growled in irritation.

Just then, the window broke open with an invasion of Flying Monkeys. The others pushed Belle into the wall behind them. Alec and Ariel raised their swords and started fighting off the monkeys.

Behind the mass of her protectors, Olaf appeared next to Belle.

"I just think that this could be something important, that there might be a reason this particular will o'the wisp appeared today."

"Olaf, I'm sort of in the middle of something," said Belle. The baby began to cry, not that Belle could blame her.

"Enough of this," said Maleficent.

She stepped forward and off the balcony, taking on her dragon form in midair, swooping at the monkeys as she flew.

"That gives me an idea," said Catherine. "Belle, say I have your permission to temporarily take on the powers of your office."

"What?"

"Now, Belle!"

"I give you permission to temporarily take on the powers of my office!"

The magic in the air snapped to attention. Catherine waved her hand and a giant ice monster took form in the courtyard, swatting at the Flying Monkeys.

"Now let's go," said Alec.

They hurried back down the corridor. Belle felt bereft of Ariel and Alec, glancing back to see them fighting two particularly petulant Flying Monkeys.

"Grandfather!," shouted Belle.

"Get her out of here!," Alec shouted back.

Catherine took Belle's arm.

"Do not get yourself transformed!" Catherine shouted as she hurried away. "I may have fallen in love with a frog, but a Flying Monkey is entirely out of the question!"

"You would love me as a Flying Monkey!," Alec shot back as she swung his sword.

Catherine groaned. "I hate the man because he's right."
Catherine and Belle finally arrived at the staircase to Rumple's tower. Belle looked down to see the baby fussing.

"I know, little one. I know," said Belle.

"Alright, first half hour of motherhood, how do you think it's going?," asked Catherine. Belle cracked a smile at her grandmother. "Come on," she said, heading towards the staircase. "You go."

"What? Grandmother..."

"I'm going to ice over the entrance. I don't know if it can stop the Ice Witch, but it will give you a chance. When your husband and father return, their magic ought to be enough to stop her and then I'm going to kill them for lollygagging."

"Grandmother, I don't want to leave you alone," said Belle.

"You don't protect me, I protect you, remember?," asked Catherine. Belle nodded. "Yes, Grandmother."

Catherine kissed Belle on the cheek.

"I love you and your mother would be so proud of you."

"I love you, too," said Belle as tears began streaming down her cheeks.

"Go now," said Catherine.

Belle turned and hurried up the stairs as fast as she could clutching the baby against her.

Olaf scurried towards Catherine still carrying the jar.

"Okay, seriously, not to be too critical, Catherine, but the Flying Monkeys are getting out of hand."

"Olaf, why are you still carrying that?"

"So, this might sound crazy, but I think this is important."

"Might?"

"I was with Belle when she first saw this. Belle asked who it was and it knocked over a book. The one Belle found Beatrice in?"

"Oh, gods," said Catherine, realizing the implication. She then looked up to see the Ice Witch. "Hello, Granny," said the Ice Witch. If Zelena expected to intimidate Catherine, she was mistaken.

"I have never hated an ice thing so much as I hate you."

The Ice Witch waved her hand and Catherine fell to the ground. Olaf watched as she walked into the wall of ice, merging with it and coming out the other side.
Olaf looked at the jar. Left with no option, the snowman opened the jar.

The purple light buzzed up and out of the jar, shattering through the ice wall.

Belle waited in the tower. The sole window had been sealed off so she could only guess at the reality unfolding in the palace and on the grounds below. She heard the roar of Maleficent and Marshmallow's monstrous footfall.

The baby, for one, didn't like any of it and cried without letting up.

"Come on, my love," said Belle. "Quiet, please."

"She's more of a screamer than I expected."

Belle gasped as the Ice Witch entered the workshop. She had never seen her before: there were no eyes, just the outline of where they ought to be and her figure lurched towards her. Clutching the baby, Belle grabbed the nearest potion she could off Rumple's table and tossed it at her.

There was smoke, but it fizzled.

"I suppose you want me to say I'm melting," said the Ice Witch.

The baby cried more.

"Tsk, tsk," said the Ice Witch. "I had her pegged as a more quiet baby, though I suppose she did have her quirks."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Belle.

"Oh, did you not know she and I have met before? In the future, of course. So very pretty, looked just like you except for her father's eyes, of course. Clever, but weak. So paralyzing attachment to her mama and papa, but that's never going to happen, is it?"

Belle looked up as the Ice Witch strode towards her, one halting step after another.

"No, please," said Belle, clutching the baby closer to her. "You can't want to do this. This is madness! She's a baby! She was just born! She hasn't done anything to anyone!"

"Oh, but you're wrong," said the Ice Witch. "She has done plenty to me."

"No," said Belle. "I won't let you hurt her."

"That's alright. I don't need you, either."

Belle looked down at the infant, seemingly unaware of the doom about to befall them.

"It's alright, sweetheart."

Out of nowhere, Belle saw a purple light. The will o'the wisp was flying towards her. Belle watched in stunned silence as the light dissipated into her baby. She might have screamed, but confusion and the general fear of the Ice Witch clouded her brain.

Beatrice's eyes shot open. Something had changed. They were preternaturally focused for a newborn.

The infant wriggled an arm free. She pointed a tiny hand at the Ice Witch.
"No!," shouted the witch. "No! This isn't fair! I did everything right, I-"

The hand made a dismissive wave and a pulse of pure magic shot back at the ice woman, shattering her into thousands of tiny pieces. Belle turned away as it did, covering the baby with her body.

A moment passed. Belle looked back to see the pieces. She looked back down at the baby.

It took her a moment to even feel the breath in her lungs.

"Beatrice," Belle said in shock, "what did you do?"

"Belle!" Rumple's voice rang out to her like the most welcome sound in the world.

"Rumple!," Belle called back, feeling tears streaming down her face. "I'm- we're here!"

Rumplestiltskin came up the turret, breathing in relief at the sight of Belle and a millisecond later, confusion at the pieces of ice scattered across the floor of his workroom. He made his way gingerly. Merlin and the others steps behind Rumplestiltskin as he crouched on the floor next to Belle.

"Belle..." said Merlin. "What did you do?"

Belle shook her head. "I did nothing. It was our daughter."

"Her?," asked Rumplestiltskin. He gazed down in wonder at the infant who stared back up at him with brown eyes. She then reached up and swatted at his nose.

"The will o'the wisp or whatever it was, it went inside her and then..."

Merlin turned to Maleficent. "What will o'the wisp?"

"It appeared in the palace with the storm, I trapped it but the snowman here let it go."

"At the time it seemed to be a good idea-" began Olaf.

"And a damn good thing he did," said Merlin.

"What?," asked Ariel.

Merlin crouched down next to Belle. "Your daughter was the impetus for the Ice Witch's original travels through time. She was scattered through Creation and I believe she just came home."

"Home," said Belle. She looked over at Rumple and smiled. "Our Beatrice came home."

"Yes," agreed Rumplestiltskin. "Our Beatrice."

"Beatrice!," called Sherlock.

"I can't do this! I don't know how you people think I could ever possibly sign off on this!"

"You aren't signing off on anything! You can't change this! It's in the past!"

Beatrice spun around and pointed down the hill at the field of graves.

"That was never supposed to happen! It only happened because I screwed up!"
"You did nothing wrong!"

"Yeah and that's a great comfort to the thousands of dead! I guess it's all okay because I did nothing wrong! You sound like Snow White!"

"What does that even mean?!," he shot back.

Beatrice pointed again. "This. I can change this."

"No, you can't! Not while you have no idea what you're doing!"

"I am doing it! Thousands of people can't die because of me! I can't live with that!"

"No, what you can't live with is your father never seeing his son again and there's nothing you can do about that, either."

"Watch me," she snapped.

Beatrice marched back towards the camp.

Sherlock followed, unwilling to leave her alone.

It was a long journey into morning as the ice palace was cleaned and restored. Belle insisted upon hearing reports of the wounded and what had transpired in Saldana as she held Beatrice. She was finally hustled into bed by her husband, but there was one last thing to be done as the sun rose over the Far North Kingdom.

Belle watched from her bed as Merlin held his granddaughter.

"Well, well, Beatrice, quite a way to make it into the world. That Ice Witch tried to get you, but you certainly showed her, didn't you?"

Belle smiled and shot Rumple a scolding look for his eye-rolling.

"Alright, Beatrice, here it is, love is not a weakness and you ought to know more than anyone. You are the product of an unbroken line of True Love on your mother's side, I won't even start with the absolute wreck on your father's side."

Rumplestiltskin shook his head again.

"You at times may think you don't belong, but you are exactly where you need to be. You don't see the world like others. You are exactly what all of us have been waiting for, beautiful Dark Princess."

He kissed her on the forehead and Rumplestiltskin took the baby from him. Merlin walked over to Belle's bedside and sat next to his daughter.

"Did you give me a speech when I was born?," asked Belle.

"I did as I have all your ancestors."

"What did you say?"

"I said that you were from an unbroken line of True Love, that you were perfect for what you were going to do, that you would fear no beast and no one decides your fate but you and-" The
wizard cut himself off.

"What else, Papa?"

"I told you that you would fulfill the promise of your mother's sacrifice." He kissed her on the forehead. "As you have each day since your birth."

Belle felt tears again for about the hundredth time since her daughter's birth. Merlin said good night and left.

"Rumple?," said Belle.

"Try to rest, poppet," he said.

"I think I understand now."

"Understand what?," he asked.

"You're a father before everything else," said Belle.

He turned to look back at her.

"I knew that before, but I understand it now because I'm her mother before everything else," said Belle. "And I am fine with that."

Rumple sat back down and pressed his forehead against hers, Beatrice cradled between them.

"You continue to amaze me," said Rumplestiltskin.

Belle smiled, looking at her daughter. "She amazes me."

Rumplestiltskin waited at the entrance to the barracks.

Beatrice and Sherlock never fooled him with their joint exits. What he did not know, he chose not to know. Belle was all too fond of reminding him that Beatrice needed freedom. Rumplestiltskin figured the semblance of freedom was just as good from Beatrice's perspective.

He expected swollen lips, to see her as lovestruck as she ever got, but he didn't.

Beatrice walked back up furious. That infernal boy was just steps behind.

"Sweetheart?"

She stopped. "Let me say this, the game is changing. I'm not going to hide up here and let people get killed anymore. Okay? I'm going to find a way to stop Zelena and I will fix everything."

"Beatrice-" he began, but she marched off back to her room.

Rumplestiltskin turned his attention to Sherlock.

"What did you do to her?"

"I did nothing."

"She's upset. You said something," he accused.
"Ah, brother, there you are," said Mycroft, hoping to intercede.

Sherlock ignored him, preferring to level his attentions at Rumplestiltskin.

"No, you did it to her," said Sherlock.

"What did I do?"

"You let go of your son."

"Sherlock," Mycroft said urgently.

"You have no right-"

"Every day of her life has been about you fixing your mistake. Forget Princess Eva, you did something, something that changed everything and it will never be enough, will it? Not until she can fix your mistake. That's why you came to the Far North, isn't it?"

Rumplestiltskin stared at Sherlock.

"You understand nothing about children."

Sherlock turned on a cold smile.

"Well, if it ever fits into your plans for me to have any, then I hope that I'm brave enough to give them their own lives."

Sherlock walked away. Mycroft quietly left after him.

Rumplestiltskin was left to look into the night's sky and he didn't have to wonder if the boy's words were true.

He knew it.
Now

It was so easy when Beatrice was young.

When she was an infant, it was simple. She just needed to be fed and changed and rocked to sleep. That was all.

Then she just needed to play. He could do that, he could play with her.

When she was three, that was where things began to get complicated. It became apparent just how smart Beatrice was. She learned to read from Belle's lap and while that was predictable, her affinity for things like the stars was not. Simple enough. He secured tutors for her. Beatrice would learn whatever she wanted.

When she grew, she began to use her ice magic and Rumplestiltskin found she had a larger breadth of magic than he anticipated.

Then exposure to the people meant that she grew curious about what they meant when they expected her to save them.

So they told her. It was prophesised that she would defeat the Green Queen, which Beatrice immediately took to heart, letting it take root in the pit of her stomach, giving her nightmares.

Then she found Bae's shawl and the whole awful truth came out.

And he remembered why he came to the Far North.

When he came his notion had been to wait for the girl to be born and take her. He could train her. Then it happened that the girl was his and nothing was to be gained by his taking her.

She was a sober and reflective sort of girl, her only levity was brought about by a love for a boy who was more sober and reflective than her.

She never forgot what was expected of her.

Rumplestiltskin hated himself for that.

He hated Sherlock for knowing that.

If he had been better, stronger, this never would have happened.

He watched her leave the palace gates, headed off in search of her Sherlock, no doubt.

Then

For hundreds of years, Rumplestiltskin had lived alone.

Then necessity dictated he come to the Far North Kingdom. He was welcomed into the Ice Palace with open arms and even given his own turret. He tried to stay alone, to avoid their company.
Then came Belle.

It had been a terrible day when Reinette died, but Rumplestiltskin had taken solace in the fact that the infant lived. His quest wasn't over. He still had a chance to find Bae, a chance that depended on Belle growing up and bearing her own daughter.

He had gotten too close.

The beautiful baby delivered on the promise of her namesake. Oh, how the people liked to ogle, but Rumplestiltskin kept them at bay. Then she had become a girl whose blue eyes lit up a room—he tried not to pay attention to if they were actually her father's. Rumplestiltskin didn't like to think of any part of Belle belonging to Merlin. She was so good and so kind and loved her books. He started calling her poppet.

Then the real trouble began. Belle had entered adolescence with an awkward phase accompanied by a streak of defiance that reulted in Rumplestiltskin having to retrieve the princess from various calamities. She couldn't stand Merlin even for her magic lessons. Catherine had to teach her about ice, but Merlin suggested that perhaps Rumplestiltskin ought to tutor her in various other forms of magic.

Skipping the heart ripping of course.

He stuck with potions. It played to the girl's bookishness and she was a diligent pupil even if she was the clumsiest woman who ever lived. She walked around Rumplestiltskin's workshop and hummed tunes, generally casting light into the ocean of darkness that was his existence.

Then the awkward phase ended. He could remember the little girl who asked him to build snowmen, but he couldn't see her in the woman who swished about his workshop in her skirts. She was a curvy little thing with her corsets revealing a swath of creamy cleavage.

Then the gown.

The Ice Princess gown.

"Rumple?"

"Yes, poppet?"

"What do you think?"

He looked up from his workbench and what was left of his blackened heart stopped.

"What do you think?," she asked spinning around.

What did he think?

Catherine had worn white, but Belle wanted to distinguish herself and it had been Rumplestiltskin who suggested blue. He had been thinking of her eyes and the dressmaker, Eudora, agreed, suggesting they harken back to the first Ice Princess. The sleeves were translucent going back all the way to a new corset that Rumplestiltskin thought was definitely too low, but then again. The corset was sparkling with jewels and hugged every curve then the skirt.

The skirt had a slit. If Rumplestiltskin had not been thinking about the skin revealed between her shoes and the hem of her work dresses, he was definitely going to be thinking about the creamy calf that was on display and not nearly hidden enough by the translucent cape.
"Rumple?"

"Very good, poppet," was all he said, praying to any gods that would listen that she would just leave

"It's for my ascension," said Belle, walking over to the work bench and casually sitting on top.

Sitting in front of him, Rumplestiltskin could now see a part of her thigh.

Why had he never stopped her from doing that before now? It seemed an oversight on his part.

He tried to carry on with the potion he had been creating, but instead he found his joints were frozen and he could only think about Belle sitting on the table as she swung her legs.

"I don't know what to do with my hair," said Belle.

Merely out of reflex he looked up to where Belle fidgeted with an auburn lock. He was grateful to be drawn away from her bottom on his table, but he was now staring at the nape of her neck, trying to cast out all thoughts of kissing it.

"I don't know that it matters, poppet," he said gruffly.

"You're coming tomorrow, aren't you?," she asked.

Oh, that was all he needed. To watch Belle- in that dress - take her oath and then to watch the ball where she would dance with every eligible young prince in the realm. He had watched them file through the palace courtyard for days. They were all handsome and strong and none of them had scaled skin or a dagger that controlled them. One of them would be Belle's True Love and they would marry and have their daughter.

Then he could finally find Baelfire because that was what mattered. That was the only thing that mattered.

"Rumple?," she asked. "You will come, won't you?"

"You don't want me there, poppet."

"Yes, I do."

"No," he said. "How would that look for you to have a monster at your ceremony?"

"You're not a monster."

He snapped up at her. "Don't patronize me."

"I'm not patronizing you. You're my friend."

"If you must know, I'm too busy to be bothered with pomp and circumstance and little girls' birthday parties. I have deals to make, dearie, better ways to spend my time."

She was blessedly silent for once and he finally looked up at her.

Her eyes were full of water and her lip trembled.

"Anything else, dearie?," he asked with a snarl.

Belle hopped off the workbench and ran out. Rumplestiltskin listened as her footsteps flew down.
There was a moment where he heard something clatter which was undoubtedly Belle, whose beauty was matched only by clumsiness.

And her wit.

And her kindness.

It was not long after his daughter's departure that Merlin entered the tower.

"What do you want?," Rumplestiltskin snarled.

Merlin shrugged. "Nothing really. Have you seen the young men filing in to meet my daughter?"

"I can't say I have."

"Oh, dozens of them. Princes, knights and so forth. The Sultan has sent three of his sons. Mind you, he has twenty."

"Any contenders?"

"I think she likes Prince Eric, from one of the maritime kingdoms. Same sense of adventure. Belle longs to see new places."

Rumplestiltskin looked up. "She wouldn't leave here. She has a kingdom to rule and she's not safe from the Ice Witch and the new Queen anywhere else."

"Well, we'll see."

"How can you be so cavalier about your own child?," he seethed.

"I suppose it's all to do with where True Love leads her."

"And you really have no idea who it is?"

Merlin shrugged. "I urge you not to follow your previous path of fairy dust. Even if you could find him, you and I both know Belle's temperament enough to know she will reject anyone she is told to marry outright."

"No idea where she got that stubborness," Rumplestiltskin said dryly.

"I was perfectly agreeable to the notion," said Merlin.

Rumplestiltskin snorted. "Why wouldn't you be? A bastard like you with a bright young thing to fall in love with him?"

"Indeed," said Merlin. He started out of the room. "Good night, sunshine,"

______________________________

Now

Sherlock opened the door to his flat. Beatrice stood in the doorway.

"So, here's what I'm thinking," she said, walking herself in. "In the Land Without Magic, there was a giant who was growing a field of magic beans. Some long story about how the stable guy's identical twin and his girlfriend laid siege to the giants, but hey, that never happened here. I asked and the stable guy's brother is some kind of pub dweller. I bet there's a whole field of magic beans up there."
"You're back," said Sherlock.

"Yes."

"And you want to climb up a beanstalk where you'll presumably face a number of giants."

Beatrice nodded. "Right after I finish off Zelena."

"And you're gone again," lamented Sherlock.

"Hey," said Beatrice sitting down, "you were awfully down on the alternate version of me, but she has ideas and she gets things done... which means I get things done now. So, yes, I have ideas and I get things done. When Merlin gets back from Oz, he'll have discovered what her weakness is and we'll use it to defeat her. Then we'll get the magic beans and go to the Land Without Magic and find my brother."

"And your kingdom?"

"Yeah, I'm going to have to work on a way to get back. I believe it involves bringing magic to a Land Without Magic. Something with a True Love potion and a well."

"So you have it all planned then."

"Yes, then I have to figure out how we can get BBC One here. There is a show you should really watch."

"You can tell me about it. I need to check on my bees."

Beatrice groaned. "The bees?"

---

**Then**

Night was no friend to Rumplestiltskin.

He had too many long nights of the soul, times other, mortal men would not have made through. He busied himself with his plans. Find Belle her prince, wait for their daughter. Surely it was too much to think he could take the child back to the Dark Castle and train her himself? Merlin could be annoying when he wanted to be which seemed to be all the time. No, he would have to be content with training her here.

Then that turned him back to the rather pressing matter of the princes who had arrived to seek Belle's hand. How one of them, all worthless swine, would marry and bed her. He had been hoping Belle might fall for some peasant or other. That stable boy, David, seemed worthy enough even if his brother was pond scum not fit to kiss Belle's boot. Belle had declared that she thought the stable boy nice enough, but a dull sort. That ended all hopes for a non-prince. The only other men Belle knew she was related to or were Rumplestiltskin.

And it wasn't as if that was about to happen.

"Rumplestiltskin, come quickly."

He looked up from his table to see light.

And Tinker Bell.
"What?," he snapped.

"It's Belle. She's gone."

Rumplestiltskin ventured down to the throne room to see that the usual suspects were in a suitable tizzy.

"What do you mean she's gone?," asked Catherine.

"She's gone," said Maleficent. "She didn't even leave a note, but some of her books are missing."

"She didn't leave a note?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"No."

"I hate to ask, but our collection of young princes..." said Alec.

Rumplestiltskin's blood boiled. How dare one of these worthless fools think he could just vanish in the night with his Belle- with Belle.

"Prince Eric sent word his ship was to set sail early and he would not be staying," said Maleficent.

"I'll send a guard-" said Catherine.

"Right," said Merlin. "Sunshine, you go on ahead to Prince Eric's kingdom in case we miss them."

"Me?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Of course you," said Merlin. "I'm her father. Whatever I say to do, she'll just do the opposite. Just don't kill the boy if he's her True Love."

"Right," said Rumplestiltskin. "I'll be back as soon as I've found her."

Rumplestiltskin vanished into a puff of garnet smoke.

Merlin sighed in relief.

"I thought he would never leave."

"I'll let Olaf out of the cupboard," said Alec.

---

**Now**

Rumplestiltskin felt a warm hand on the back of his neck.

Belle pressed against him and he could feel her breath against his cheek.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing, poppet."

"Don't try to lie to me. You haven't been yourself since we returned from the frontier."

She walked around to face him.
"Don't you have a kingdom to run?"

"I have to see to my consort."

"Well, we all know what that entails..." he quipped.

"Rumple?"

He sighed. "Have I been a good father?"

"Of course you have," said Belle.

"No, but really, have I? Is Beatrice just a means to an end?"

Belle shook her head. "You love her. You would do anything for her."

"Except the one thing I can't do."

"What's that?"

"Sunshine!," they heard Merlin call as he entered the workroom.

Belle broke out in a grin. "Father!"

She ran to give him a hug but Rumplestiltskin knew immediately there was something off with the other wizard.

"What is it?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Did you not get your answer in Oz?," asked Belle.

"I did, but new questions have arisen here in the interim. Come. We need to talk to the others."

Then

Belle was starting to think that sneaking onto Eric's ship was a bad idea.

It had seemed like the only way to get out of the Far North Kingdom, away from her worries.

Now, though, dancing with princes she didn't love didn't seem so bad.

The ship was in turbulent waters as it neared Prince Eric's kingdom and no one knew she was onboard.

Which seemed like a mistake.

She snuck to one of the higher decks to try to get some air.

Which she knew was a mistake when she fell overboard.

She tried to tread water against the ferocious waves.

"Rumplestiltskin!," she shouted against the howling wind and thunder. "Rumplestiltskin!"

"It's okay. I've got you."

Belle turned her head against the pounding rain to see a mermaid.
The redhead smiled.

"Hi. I'm Ariel."

Now on the beach, somewhat dried out, Belle thought this still may have been a bad idea, but she was glad to find the mermaid a delightful companion.

"I can't thank you enough," said Belle.

"It's okay, really," said Ariel, flapping her tail against a rock. "Saving humans is kind of my thing."

"I just wish there was something I could do to repay you," said Belle.

"Well, unless you can give me legs..."

"Sorry?," asked Belle.

"The prince whose boat you stowed away on? I'm kind of in love with him." Ariel shrugged. "It's sort of a hard luck tale."

Belle nodded. "I understand."

"Who is he?"

Belle hesitated. "He's a friend. I've known him my whole life, but he would never be interested in me. He said as much. He doesn't have time for foolish princesses. I thought that adventure could cure my broken heart, but I think all I've done is moved it."

"And gotten it wet," said Ariel. She pulled herself closer to Belle. "Let's do it."

"Do what?"

"Adventure!"

"What about Eric?"

"Oh, don't worry about me and Eric. I'm going to find a way to get to him, but that doesn't mean we should just sit around here."

"Well, how are we going to do that? You can't walk anywhere."

"We could find a sorcerer or."

"Oh," said Belle. "That's right."

"What?"

"I do a bit of magic myself," said Belle. She turned to her satchel and pulled out a book. She held it up triumphantly. "Legs here we come."

---

Now

Beatrice watched from afar as Sherlock dealt with his bees.
"Other Beatrice would have thought this was so dorky..." said Beatrice.

"What does dorky mean?," he shot back.

"Um, what do you think, Sherlock?" She paused. "Did I tell you in the Land Without Magic they use your name sarcastically?"

Sherlock moved one of the combs and all the bees from his hive flew out at once.

"Sherlock?!," cried Beatrice, rushing over.

"I'm fine," he said, tossing aside his hat in anger. "Years of work ruined. I brought that hive from Agrabah!"

Beatrice shook her head.

"All they said was something about a Dark Curse."

Beatrice's eyes shot up at him. "What Dark Curse?"

---

**Then**

Belle walked with Ariel on her new legs down the dock.

"How do you do this?," asked Ariel. "They're all wobbly and heavy."

"You'll get the hang of it," said Belle.

Ariel looked down the dock. "You really think there's adventure here?"

Belle smiled brightly. "One of these ships has to be going on an expedition somewhere."

"And we just have to hope they're in need of a couple of renegade princesses," said Ariel.

"Ladies..."

They looked up to see a man in a red knit hat.

"I don't suppose you're looking for passage? My ship is always in need of services from women like you."

Ariel opened her mouth to speak and Belle stopped her.

"What sort of services?"

"Well, the men have needs. Cooking, cleaning-"

Belle cut off the man. "You can't afford me."

"Oh, Smee, I do hope you're not harassing these lovely women."

Another man joined them. Younger, fitter, clad in black leather with a silver hook.

"We were just done," said Belle.

"Pardon him. We're on an expedition to El Dorado and we're in need of supplies."
"We aren't supplies," said Ariel.

"El Dorado?," asked Belle. "The city made of gold?"

Hook seemed impressed. "You've heard of it?"

"I've read about it," said Belle.

"Read about it," Smee chuckled.

Hook shot him a look. "Books are occasionally useful things, Smee."

"I could help," said Belle.

Ariel turned Belle towards her. "Are you sure that's a good idea? We can't trust them. They're pirates. Pirates who just tried to get us to- I don't know what they tried to get us to do, but you seemed to be against it."

"See that's where you're wrong," said Belle. She turned back to Hook. "I know I can trust you."

Hook smirked. "And what has inspired this change of opinion?"

"It's not my opinion that's going to change, it's yours," said Belle.

She waved her hand at Smee and soon the pirate was encased in a block of ice.

Hook stared at Belle with his jaw dropped.

"You see, I'm not some defenseless girl and if there's any trouble at all, I will turn you into an ice cube and throw you overboard."

Hook opened his arms with a flourish. "Welcome aboard the Jolly Roger."

Belle waved her hand and defrosted Smee.

"My hat is still damp," he complained.

Now

Beatrice and Sherlock entered the palace. Mycroft was waiting.

"Oh, good. I was about to send Anthea."

"Has something happened?," asked Beatrice.

"Yes, Your Highness. Your grandfather has returned from Oz and we just received some news from the forest."

"Did you sources happen to mention a Dark Curse?," asked Sherlock.

"How did you know?," asked Mycroft.

Sherlock looked at Beatrice. "Do you know what this is?"

"Merlin had better have good news," said Beatrice.
She walked into the throne room where her family was. Mycroft shut the door behind them.

"Beatrice," said Merlin.

Beatrice gave him a quick hug. "Do you have it? Zelena's weakness?"

"I do have Zelena's weakness," said Merlin.

"Interesting word choice, dearie," said Rumplestiltskin.

Merlin sighed. "The timeline of this world is an aberration from the rest of reality. Do you understand?"

Beatrice nodded. "Yeah, I've seen Doctor Who."

"I was able to obtain the weakness of the Wicked Witch of the West. Only the strongest purveyor of light magic can remove her pendant."

Beatrice shut her eyes. "The big ugly emerald."

"The same."

"The Green Queen doesn't wear an emerald," said Sherlock.

"Therein lies the rub," said Merlin.

"The Green Queen is going to cast the Dark Curse, the one she obtained from the Ice Witch. The forest is abuzz with it," said Mycroft.

"Rumple's Dark Curse?," asked Belle. She looked at her husband. "So, you know how to break it? All curses can be broken."

"That may present a problem," said Rumplestiltskin.


"Surely not. How was this curse broken in the other world?," asked Alec.

"A True Love potion was made," said Beatrice. "My dad placed a drop of it on the parchment."

"So only the product of the True Love in the potion could break it," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Who was it?," asked Catherine.

Beatrice looked up ruefully. "Emma. It was Emma."

Sherlock shared her dread. "Eva's granddaughter."

"What does that mean?," asked Belle. She looked at Merlin. "Does that apply if she never existed? We can find something else."

"If the parchment has indeed been touched by the potion only that will do," said Merlin.

"Beatrice is the product of True Love," Belle argued. "The most powerful True Love in all the realm. Maybe all the realms."

"And utterly useless," said Beatrice.
Belle looked over. "Don't say that. Don't you dare say that."

Sherlock looked at Mycroft. "Beatrice thinks there's magic beans."

"No one's seen them-"

"Just because no one's seen them does not mean they don't exist. We could escape this curse-"

"What? Evacuate the whole realm?," asked Catherine.

"So there's no choice but to be cursed," said Belle. "A curse without remedy. An eternity trapped in time."

"No," said Beatrice. "There's a choice."

"Beatrice-" said Rumplestiltskin.

"No, I think we all know what this has been heading towards. I have to go back."

"What?," asked Belle. "No."

"Zelena had her necklace then. If I go back and I stop her then none of this has to happen."

"No," said Belle.

"Okay. Does anyone have a better plan? One that doesn't end up with us trapped in a never-ending curse? No, really, I want to hear it. Please, tell me what it is."

Beatrice looked around at the silent people in the room. She turned to Catherine and Alec.

"Do you have the blue box?"

"Of course we do," said Catherine.

"So, I need that and I need some way to get Zelena and myself back to Storybrooke." She looked at Rumplestiltskin. "Have you got anything?"

"Yes," he said softly. "I think I know what you need."

"That's it then. Go back and save Eva while we still can."

"No," said Belle.

Before Beatrice knew it, her mother was out of her throne and had thrown her arms around her.

"No, no, please, no," said Belle, squeezing ever tighter as her voice cracked. "I can't let you go. This isn't how this should be."

"None of this is how this should be," Beatrice replied, trying to curb her own tears. "I'll be fine. I promise."

---

Then

Belle looked at the scrolls about El Dorado laid out on the table as Hook stood at the wheel. Each map more detailed than the last.
"You can read this?," asked Hook, giving a glance over.

"I'm good at languages," said Belle.

"Well, what does it say?"

Belle closed up the scroll.

"I want an agreement," said Belle.

"I assure you you'll get your part of the reward when we reach El Dorado."

"Gold isn't important to me," said Belle. She looked back up at Hook. "What do you need it for?"

He shrugged. "Pirate, love."

"Don't you have enough?"

"There's never enough."

"There must be something you want."

"What I want I can never have," said Hook. "What will suffice is revenge."

"Revenge?," asked Belle.

"A beast killed the woman I loved. If I come up with enough gold, I have a source in the Frontlands who will tell me how to slay that beast."

Belle paused. "What was her name?"

Hook looked down. "Milah."

"I'm sorry," said Belle. "Revenge won't bring her back, though. Would she want you to devote all this time to avenging her?"

"That's just it, love. Milah can't want anything." Hook glanced back. "Anyway, enough about me. What about you? What brings a young lady of obvious breeding and intellect and power to a pirate vessel?"

"A broken heart."

"Well, that seems to be an epidemic. What beast took your love?"

Belle shook her head. "It wasn't like that. He just doesn't love me."

"Unrequited love," mused Hook. "Well, don't feel so bad love. As long as something's never started, it can't really break your heart."

It didn't take long to scare Prince Eric and Rumplestiltskin believed him when he said he hadn't taken Belle. Then he started down the docks and the elderly dockmaster did not need much convincing.

"Yes, I saw that girl," the dockmaster trembled. "She joined up with one of the ships, I think."

"A ship?," Rumplestiltskin snarled. "What sort of ship? Did it have a library?!!"
"The Jolly Roger, I think."

Rumplestiltskin's heart stopped and he edged closer to the dockmaster. "You think the Jolly Roger?"

"No, no, it was definitely the Jolly Roger. Captain Hook's ship-"

"I know whose ship it is!," Rumplestiltskin snapped as he vanished.

Now

Beatrice watched her last sunset in the Far North Kingdom as the curse cloud approached. She looked over to see Sherlock next to her.

"The curse cloud is heading here," he said.

"Yeah, a black one. I thought she would go for green. I've seen purple. Well, I sort of saw purple."

She looked down as Sherlock held out an envelope.

"What's this?," she asked.

"A waltz."

She took the envelope. "A waltz?"

"Every princess needs a waltz."

"You wrote me a waltz?," she asked.

"I had saved it. It's a, well, it was going to be a wedding gift."

Beatrice bit the side of her cheek to try not to cry.

"I hadn't asked yet," said Beatrice.

"You were going to."

"I can't read sheet music."

"You're clever. Find someone who can."

"Beatrice."

Beatrice looked up to see Merlin standing above them.

"It's time."

Beatrice and Sherlock followed Merlin into the library. Maleficent waited and held a black wand.

"This wand has the ability to redo any spell that's cast," explained Maleficent. "It should work even for the Wicked Witch's time travel spell."

"You have to use it as quickly as possible and make certain the witch comes with you," said Merlin. "You must cause as little disturbance to your original timeline as possible, but you must
also travel back to the moment after that spell was cast."

"Or I'm not redoing anything," said Beatrice.

Merlin nodded. "Exactly, dear girl."

Beatrice turned to Alec and Catherine.

"So, as for my time travel spell," said Beatrice.

"It has been kept with a trusted companion lo these many years," said Alec.

"Who?"

Alec and Catherine turned to Olaf.

"Just a sec."

They watched as Olaf pulled the blue box from his torso.

"Might be cold," said Olaf.

"You kept it with the snowman?," Rumplestiltskin asked with disdain.

Beatrice took the box.

"Thank you, Olaf," said Beatrice. She then bent down to embrace the snowman.

"This is nice," said Olaf.

"I know you like warm hugs," Beatrice said as her voice cracked.

She stood straight and looked up at her great-grandparents.

"We never really met in the other time line," said Beatrice. "Just that one time."

Catherine and Alec were silent.

"I'm killing you," said Beatrice.

"Of course you aren't," said Catherine. "This is not your doing."

"My Beatrice," said Alec, "your future, everyone's future, is in the world that is to come. Go forward assured in our love for you and our confidence."

Beatrice struggled to hold back tears as she hugged her great-grandparents. She stepped forward to her parents.

Belle hugged her first. Beatrice began to fear she would never speak.

"You are the bravest, most wonderful, most generous, funniest, kindest..." Belle stopped herself and shook her head. "I could stand here all night and say words, but it would never be enough to tell you how deeply I love you."

"I love you, too," said Beatrice.

Belle didn't so much stop hugging Beatrice as her daughter slid away. Tinker Bell took over
hugging Belle.

Beatrice turned to Rumplestiltskin.

"Papa."

Rumplestiltskin embraced her and Beatrice wasn't shocked so much by the tightness of it as the violence of it.

"I can't let you go."

"It's okay, Papa. This is better."

"I can't let you go," he repeated.

Beatrice felt her father's magic tugging at the blue box in her hand.

"Papa, please, stop it."

"No, I can't let you go-"

"Sunshine-"

"Rumple!"

Beatrice saw one option and she did something she had never done before.

At least in this life.

"I'm sorry," said Beatrice.

She kissed her father on the cheek.

Rumplestiltskin's skin changed color, his hair straightened and his reptilian eyes returned to a more human brown.

Before they could fully appreciate the transformation back to human, the blue box spun as it rattled to the ice floor.

"She's gone," Belle gasped.

Belle slumped to the floor and cried until tears became sobs and sobs became howls of agony. Rumplestiltskin sank down next to her, his face frozen.

Sherlock walked out of the throne room as Mycroft followed him back to the window as the black cloud drew nearer.

"Little brother?"

"I'm fine, Mycroft. Remember? It will have never happened. I can't grieve what never started."

---

Then

It was Belle's knowledge that had helped the Jolly Roger find the magical secret entrance to El Dorado and open it. As soon as she did, there was gold as far as the eye could see and the crew became very excited, declaring Belle their new hero somewhat to Hook's chagrin. The pirate
captain could be a pragmatist, though. He was getting what he needed.

They took a small boat ashore.

"You don't seem excited," said Ariel.

"What?," asked Belle.

Ariel smiled. "Come on. How many golden thingamabobs must there be here and you don't care! Are you still thinking about him?"

Hook cut Belle off before she could answer.

"Give it up, love. Think of all the loot."

Belle shook her head. "Gold can't buy happiness."

"Alas no, but it can buy rum."

They stepped off the boat and took a short walk up the beach to where the paved street of gold began. While the others stared at the ground beneath their feet, Belle looked up to see Rumplestiltskin.

"Rumple..." she breathed.

"Crocodile..." growled Hook.

"No," said Ariel, trying to decipher Rumplestiltskin's strange appearance. "I'm pretty sure that's a... Some kind of person?"

"Rumplestiltskin, what are you doing here?," asked Belle.

"You know him?," asked Hook.

"Belle, step away from the pirate. I'll be with you in a minute," he said, a fearsome sword appearing in his hand.

"What is going on?," asked Belle.

"Step aside, love," said Hook as he drew his sword. "I've a crocodile to kill."

Before Belle knew what had happened, the pair had launched into a sword fight. Hook's crew watched to cheer their captain, Ariel watched in curiosity and Belle wondered at what she was watching.

She knew Hook was a pirate and guessed he must have had enemies, but Rumple...

Rumplestiltskin was looking at Hook with such eyes, full of rage and pain and murder...

Rumple had the pirate in his sights, the blade at his neck.

"I shall take such pleasure in gutting you, pirate."

"Stop!," Belle shouted. She ran to place herself between the two men. "Rumple! Stop!"

"Out of the way, poppet," said Rumplestiltskin.
"You had better do it, love, wouldn't want you to get caught up in this. This beast loves no one!"

"No!," Belle shouted. She eyed Rumplestiltskin, pushing him back. "I am not going to let you do anything until you tell me what is happening."

"Go ahead, crocodile," taunted Hook. "Tell her about the monster you are."

Belle looked back at Hook. "I'm trying to help you. Be quiet!"

"This scum doesn't deserve your charity, poppet."

"I'm not just trying to help him." Belle stepped closer, so close she was almost pressed up against him and Rumple could smell her mixture of frost and roses.

He didn't speak.

"Rumple, I've never seen you hurt anyone."

Hook scoffed.

"Do you love him?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"What? Is that who you think I am? Some shallow girl who can just fall for a pirate?"

"I do have that effect," said Hook.

"I told you to be quiet!," Belle snapped back.

"You don't love the pirate?"

"No, I-" Belle paused and Rumple stared at her.

He didn't seem to appreciate that he was cutting off her sentence.

"Then what are you doing with him?"

"Adventure." She straightened herself. "I am not a little girl. I am not just some princess. I want things for myself, I want adventure, Rumple."

"Belle, it may all be well and good in your books to go off to the great, wide..." He waved his hand dismissively. "Somewhere, but here, the Queen wants you dead."

"And why do you want Hook dead?"

Rumplestiltskin looked away, didn't speak.

Belle squeezed his free hand between hers.

"You can tell me anything, Rumple."

"I'll tell you," said Hook.

Ariel groaned and shot Hook a glare. "Really?"

"Go ahead, crocodile. Tell her how you ripped Milah's heart from her chest and crushed it."

"Rumple?," asked Belle.
"How you abandoned your son! How you let him go!"
Rumplestiltskin nearly shoved Belle aside in his quest to get to the pirate.
There was only one way the pirate could know that.
"Where did you see Bae?"
Smee looked pensive.
Hook seemed to realize he may have overstepped his bounds.
"In Neverland."
Rumple looked as if he were about to break. "Bae is in Neverland?"
Hook shook his head. "Not anymore. Baelfire managed to escape Neverland."
"He was there..." said Rumplestiltskin. "All this time..."
"Rumple?," asked Belle, taking his hand.
He jerked his hand away.
"Go, then," he said. "Go on. Have your adventure."
Rumplestiltskin walked away, leaving Belle a ball of confusion.
"See then? A coward as always!," Hook taunted. "Can't finish me off, crocodile?!"
Ariel groaned. "Are you stupid?! Shut up!"

Belle found Rumplestiltskin in a cave, sitting on a golden log among numerous treasures.
"Rumple?"
He turned around to look at her in astonishment. "What are you still doing here?," he asked.
"You didn't tell me what happened."
"You heard the pirate," he said bitterly.
"I did," said Belle. She walked over to sit on a rock just across from him and smoothed her skirt.
"I want to hear it from you."
"I murdered my wife, abandoned my son, cut off the pirate's hand. That's all there is to tell."
"I know there's more to it."
"Why? Because that's what your books tell you?"
Belle pursed her lips.
He had insulted her books.
"I have known you my whole life and you never once mentioned a son or a wife. And you have never hurt me or anyone!"
"That's just an act, poppet."

"No, I don't think it is. I think that's the real you and the rest of you, that's the darkness."

"What did your father tell you of me?"

"When I was a girl, he said you were a noble man who took on your curse for the best of reasons."

"Your father's a liar." He looked up. "I was a coward. A coward who ran from the field of battle, whose wife couldn't stand to look at him, who, who let his son go."

"Your curse. Why did you choose it?"

He smirked ruefully. "To save my son."

"Yes?," Belle asked.

"Bae was about to turn fourteen. He was about to be taken to the army to fight the ogres. I tried to run away with him, but we were stopped by a group of knights. They would have taken Bae then, but I kissed the boot of one of the knights. An old beggar told me of a magical dagger that controlled the power of the Dark One. To take the power, all I had to do was stab the Dark One in the heart. So I did. Then I went back and killed the men who came to take my son."

Belle stared at him.

"Why aren't you leaving?"

"I didn't realize you were finished."

"Baelfire saw I was changing and he sought out the Blue Fairy. The fairy gave him a magic bean to take us to a Land Without Magic, where my curse would no longer control me. When the time came to go there, I..."

It seemed like an eternity passed while Rumplestiltskin tried to find the courage to admit what he had done.

"I let him go, Belle. I chose a dagger over my own child."

"And who was Milah? Hook's lover."

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "My wife."

"Oh," said Belle.

"So, run off to your adventure."

"What?," asked Belle.

"My plan has failed. I'll never see my son again, unless I manage to kidnap your daughter-"

"My daughter?" Belle was confused.

"Well, let's face it, you'll never be stupid enough to sell her and I'll have to figure a way past your father. I'll try not to kill him for your sake but I can't make any promises, poppet-"
"What does my daughter have to do with anything?"

"Your father didn't want to tell you, but you're supposed to have a daughter who is the only one who can defeat Zelena and defeating her is the only way I can see Baelfire again. Let's face it, you're not going to let me anywhere near her-"

"Don't presume to tell me what I'm going to do. I don't even have a daughter. Maybe I never will, but I don't think you would hurt her."

"Poppet, I only stayed at your side so I could get to her."

"No," said Belle. "You've been my friend and as for True Love, the only man I've ever loved is you!"

Rumplestiltskin thought he might pass out.

"Rumple?," asked Belle. "Aren't you going to say anything?"

"You can't love me."

"Of course I can. You don't love me, remember?"

"Of course I do," he spat.

"What?!," Belle exclaimed.

"I stopped killing the cur pirate for you! Do you think I would do that for just anyone?!"

Belle leapt forward and kissed him before either one of them realized what was happening. About the time Belle realized it, she was looking at a pair of brown eyes and jumped back.

"Well, that was short-lived," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Your skin changed color," said Belle.

"What?," asked Rumplestiltskin. He moved his hand to feel his face and as he did, tan skin once again returned to scales.

"I'm sorry, it was a good kiss, not that I would really know," said Belle. "It's just not often that people start changing skin colors as you kiss them."

"You can break my curse," Rumplestiltskin said in flat astonishment.

"Should I kiss you again?," asked Belle.

"No," said Rumplestiltskin. "What have I taught you?"

"All magic comes with a price?"

"No."

"Never substitute newt eyes for frog eyes?"

He grimaced. "True Love can break any curse."

Belle grinned. "You mean..."
"Yes."
"Can I kiss you now?"
"No. I need my power, Belle, to protect you and find my son."
"We'll find him together," said Belle. She threw her arms around Rumplestiltskin.
He took her hug and her love, reveling in it but at the same time he knew nothing had changed.
He still needed the girl.
Even if she was his.

**A Long Time Ago**

Reinette looked from the girl who had disappeared on the floor to see a girl in a purple dress tapping on the witch's shoulder as she walked towards Eva.
The same girl that had just disappeared from the room.
Zelena turned her head around to see Beatrice.
"Yeah, see, here's the thing," said Beatrice. "I don't think so."
Beatrice grabbed Zelena's pendant and the witch howled as the magic fizzled away. Beatrice turned to face Reinette.
"It's you..." said Reinette. "But you were just-"
"Yeah, I wouldn't put too much thought into that," said Beatrice, reaching in her pocket for the black wand. She waved it and the portal opened. Beatrice jumped in dragging the powerless witch with her.
"What just happened?," asked Eva.
"I have no idea," Reinette answered.

**Then**

Tinker Bell entered the throne room.
"They're here!"
"Right, everyone act surprised," said Merlin.
"I already put up the banner," Olaf complained.

Merlin looked up as Maleficent's magic finished hanging the banner. It read "Congratulations Belle and" in a magnificent hand and then "Rumplestiltskin" was where the snowman had clearly realized he didn't have enough room and the name curved around into increasingly small letters.
Belle marched in looking full of righteous indignation. Rumplestilkin and Ariel were behind her.
"Belle, you've returned," said Catherine. "We can have the ball this evening-"
"I'm sorry, but no. I will take my oath, but I am not going to parade around with a bunch of idiot princes!"

"No?"

"No! I'm marrying Rumplestiltskin! He's my True Love and if anybody doesn't like it, that's just too bad! I love him and that's all that matters!"

Belle continued her impassioned tirade as Ariel pointed out the banner for Rumplestiltskin. He then looked to Merlin who seemed amused by his daughter.

"And I don't suppose there's anything I can do to change your mind, dear girl?," asked Merlin.

"I am not a child! You cannot tell me what I feel or who I love and I will not just sit here and do what you have planned-"

"Poppet..." said Rumplestiltskin.

"I'm almost finished, Rumple!," said Belle. She then caught a glimpse of the banner.

"You knew," Rumplestiltskin accused Merlin.

"I did."

"I knew," said Olaf.

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "Olaf knew?"

Ariel pointed at the snowman. "I know I'm new here, but are those supposed to talk?"

Now In Storybrooke

Beatrice and Zelena reappeared on the floor of the barn.

"What?," asked Cora. "What just happened?"

"Not interested in talking, lady," said Beatrice.

"You impudent little-" Cora raised her hand, Beatrice raised hers back, sending the elder sorceress flying backwards into the barn wall.

"Why? Why did you do it?," screamed Zelena. "I had finally won!"

Beatrice turned back to the Wicked Witch, spotting where her clothes and shoes were on the floor.

"Why did I do it?," asked Beatrice staring at the spot where she had died yet not died. "Why did I do it?"

Zelena's eyes widened.

"You did this! You turned me into this! You are a total insult to Idina Menzel!"

The Wicked Witch went flying back into the wall. She writhed against the magic.

"Beatrice?," Belle asked. Belle rushed towards her and took her hands, causing the witch to fall to the ground. "Beatrice, what are you doing? Stop."
Beatrice turned around. The whole gang was there. Her parents, Emma, David, Mary Margaret, Regina, Neal, Hook and Sherlock.

Or was it Joseph?

"What's going on?," asked Regina motioning towards the women on the floor.

"Yeah and what are you wearing?," asked Emma. "And are those your clothes on the floor?"

"Seriously, what the hell's going on?," asked Neal.

Beatrice caught Joseph's quizzical eye as he tried to figure this out. Merlin walked over to Beatrice.

"The spell worked, didn't it?," asked Merlin. "Time changed."

"I changed it back."

"Changed it back?," asked Belle.

"What spell?," asked David.

"Why is my mother unconscious?," asked Regina.

"She's irritating," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice," Merlin said slowly, "what happened to you when time changed?"

The others stared at her. Beatrice was suddenly very aware of how much stuff was floating around in her head versus how much time had passed.

It made the barn spin.

"Guys..." she panted. "Don't take me to Doctor Whale. He is useless."

She collapsed to the ground as Belle caught her. Gold rushed over.

"What is wrong with her?," he demanded of Merlin as Beatrice’s unconscious form lay between he and Belle.

"Time changed and she changed," said Merlin.

Long Ago In A Land That Never Was...

The others prepared Belle for the ceremony. Rumplestiltskin walked over to where Beatrice laid in the bassinet. The infant wore an absurdly long white gown with his own gold thread. She cooed as he picked her up.

"My sweet Beatrice," he whispered back as he rocked her.

Poor sweet Beatrice with so much to do and no idea.

"Rumple?," said Belle. "It's time."

Ariel walked with Belle as Rumplestiltskin carried the infant downstairs to the palace steps.
Catherine, Alec, Olaf and Merlin were waiting.

The doors opened and the royal family stepped through to the cheers of the people lining the courtyard and the streets.

"My good people," said Belle, "we are here because a happy day shared the sun and moon with a sad one. I know much was lost and nothing will ever change that, but the Ice Witch is gone. Today, I share with you the reason for that victory and the source of our future victories. Your new Heiress to the Far North Kingdom, the Dark Princess Beatrice."

The crowd cheered wildly. Belle turned to Rumplestiltskin to collect the infant. She held Beatrice with one arm as she took Rumplestiltskin's hand with the other, stepping forward to the acclaim of the crowd.

Rumplestiltskin wished for nothing more than to get Beatrice away from it as she and Belle looked back at him with such bright trusting eyes.

Author's Notes: I stole "Every princess needs a waltz" from a conversation with Bomb-O-Maniac. Also, I have some stories from the Far North Kingdom that didn't quite make it in here so if there's an interest, maybe I'll publish them separately. I think they're good, I just ran out of time. Let me know what you think!
Chapter 65

Before

Joseph stared across the table.

Siger and Violet.

Mark and Lila.

It was definitely them. He had his eyes, he sipped his tea the same way as her.

"We lived near Edelweiss back in the Enchanted Forest," said Mark. "Do you remember it?"

"Of course I do."

"One day, the Blue Fairy came to visit us. She wanted us to leave the realm because she claimed you were destined to be the consort of the Dark Princess."

"Oh, is that what I am?," Joseph asked somewhat bemused.

"She seemed to think the girl was dangerous," said Lila.

"When she drives," said Mark.

"The last we knew, you and Mike-"

"Mycroft," Joseph said softly.

"Yes, of course, Mycroft," said Lila. "You two went into the forest which you had done a hundred times before and you fell into a portal. The Dark Curse came not long after. We didn't remember any of this until last night."

Joseph sipped his tea.

"So," said Mark, "I suppose we ought to ask where you have been."

"Well, let's see," said Joseph, "I fell through a portal to another world which happened to be Chiswick. I was in the back garden of the Watson-Gillettes. John was my age when he found me and hid me in his sister's playhouse. That ruse eventually failed when the family bull pup sold me out. The authorities took me in and I was placed in an institution because I claimed I was Sherlock Holmes. John didn't let up until his parents agreed to take me in. My father was an army captain, he died in the Balkans. My mother died in an automobile accident a few years ago. I've spent my time in various asylums, hospitals, rehabs and two years at uni. I also solve crimes."

"Yes, I suppose you do," said Lila.

"Yes," said Joseph. "You really ought to expect that sort of thing when you name your child Sherlock Holmes. Excuse me."

He walked over to Emma leaving Lila and Mark befuddled.
"Miss Swan."

"Oh, Joseph, hey," said Emma. "I can't talk long. I've got a lot to do."

"What are your plans for the witch?"

Emma took her to go cup from Ruby.

"We're still working that out."

"So you're saying you still don't have a plan."

"I guess," said Emma.

She began walking away.

"So you mean to give her a second chance," said Joseph.

Emma stopped and turned.

"What makes you say that?"

"Because as I understand it the woman who cursed you all for twenty-eight years eats Christmas dinner with you."

"That was Belle."

"So, is that your plan?"

"Everyone deserves a second chance."

"You can't be serious."

"Look, we gave Regina a second chance and it's mostly worked out."

"Zelena is not Regina."

"You barely know her."

"When Rumplestiltskin and Captain Hook tell me someone's not to be trusted, I listen."

"I have to go," said Emma. "We can talk about this later if you want."

Emma left.

"Sherlock?," asked Lila.

He turned.

"Joseph," she corrected herself. "We would still like to talk."

"I have to go," said Joseph, picking up his scarf and coat.

"And why is that?," asked Mark.

"Because psychopaths don't stop," he said as he walked out.
"Is it always like this?" Joseph asked Beatrice as he got up from her desk.

"What do you mean?"

"Witches. Dark Curses. People trying to get their hands on a magical infant."

"Yeah, pretty much."

The iPhone dinged and Beatrice picked it up.

"Witch fight?," she asked.

"Witch fight?," Joseph echoed.

"Dad!," Beatrice called. "Why does he keep walking off? Dad!"

Gold walked in, Belle at his heels.

Beatrice held up her phone. "Emma just texted. Witch fight? What does that mean?"

Belle's phone went off. She looked at it.

"It's from Mary Margaret. Zelena's challenged Regina."

Gold sighed. "Wonderful."

"Well, it's Regina," said Beatrice.

Gold didn't say anything.

"I mean, Maleficent's a dragon under the library. Regina didn't get here by sucking," said Beatrice. Her father didn't answer. "You trained her."

"I also trained Zelena."

Joseph turned back to Beatrice. "He thinks the Wicked Witch is better than the Evil Queen."

"Oh my God, Zelena is better than Regina?," asked Beatrice. "Why didn't you mention that to start with?!"

"Why don't you not worry about such matters?," asked Gold.

"We should go see if there's anything we can do to help," said Belle.

"Okay," said Beatrice.

"Not you," said Gold. He looked at Joseph. "Actually, not you, either."

Joseph narrowed his eyes. "To what do I owe this special treatment?"

"We have a lasagna in the freezer," said Belle. "You can make that. Joseph, you're more than welcome to stay."

Gold and Belle left.

Beatrice turned to Joseph. "They are being weird."
"Yes, I had noticed."

"I don't want lasagna," said Beatrice. "I could go for Greek food. You?"

"Oh, do you mean from that place slightly off Main?"

"I do," said Beatrice.

"So close to the obvious location for the witch fight?"

"I guess we'll just have to deal with it."

She smiled and Joseph smiled back.

"I suppose we will," said Joseph.

---

**Then**

Beatrice stared out the tiny back window of the pawn shop.

It had been a week since the night in the barn. Or fifty years since the night in the barn had started depending on how she looked at it.

She didn't like to look at it.

Martha nuzzled up against her as she sat on the cot. She had finally been pulled from the house which was just as well because she couldn't seem to find any joy in TV since she got back a sentiment that both saddened and frightened her. So she had been given her choice of library or pawn shop, she picked pawn shop. It was almost like being in her father's turret back in the Ice Palace...

Which had never happened.

"I mended this," Gold announced.

Beatrice looked up. Gold was holding her cloak, the one she'd been wearing when she got back. It was another lavender affair with a seal of snowflakes, embroidered in white with the special gold thread hidden in them.

"You what?"

"The hem had fallen. I mended it," said Gold. He set it down in her lap. "I also had the dress cleaned."

"Great, next time I need a cloak, I'll..." She glanced up and stopped, fearing her father's disappointment. "Thank you."

Gold frowned and sat next to her. "Beatrice, what can I do?"

"Nothing."

"Now there must be something. I'll do anything I can to make you happy, you know that."

"There is nothing anyone can do," said Beatrice, fingering the snowflakes on the cloak.
Gold heard the doorbell ring. He sighed and kissed Beatrice on the cheek.

"Let me scare off whoever this is," he said.

Gold walked out into the shop. Mary Margaret and David were there.

"Whatever it is, make it quick," said Gold.

Mary Margaret caught a glance at Beatrice as the curtains closed.

"How is she?"

"About as well as one might expect," said Gold. "Now what do you want?"

The couple glanced at each other which gave Gold the hint that he would not like whatever the request was.

"We need a way to take Cora's powers from her," said David.

"Death does that," Gold said without humor.

"We're not going to murder her," said Mary Margaret.

"Murder has such an ugly connotation," said Gold. He caught David's self-righteous glare. "One I'm willing to accept if necessary."

"We want to give her a second chance," Mary Margaret insisted.

"You're really taking this fairest of them all bit to an extreme, aren't you, dearie?"

"We gave Regina a second chance."

"Regina is different. Regina has Henry," Gold pointed out. "Cora has nothing, not even her own heart. If you value your lives, you'll keep her in the cage Merlin made for her."

"Well, Zelena-" Mary Margaret began and quickly stopped.

"Dearie, if the next words are anything but rotting in her grave..."

"We can't kill her, either," said David. "That's not what we do."

"Perhaps it's not what you do, but the second that witch gives my family so much as a sideways glance, she is dead."

"She's not like that," said Mary Margaret.

"Oh, here we go..." muttered Gold. "Her time travel spell worked. Do you get that? Time changed. The only reason you exist right now, Your Highness, is that Beatrice changed it back. Zelena knows that. Do you think one failed attempt is really enough to deter her?"

"She's powerless," said David. "Besides, Beatrice was the sacrifice for her spell and you won't let that happen again."

"Are you really that stupid?" Gold shook his head. "Beatrice had all the necessary elements for the spell within her. Her mother's heart and courage, my brain and her innocence. Do you not think
she can look for those ingredients somewhere else?"

"Then we'll stop her," Mary Margaret insisted.

"Let's just save ourselves the trouble!," sneered Gold.

"So you won't help us," said David.

"See? Now you're getting it, dearie," said Gold.

David and Mary Margaret left, passing Belle as she entered.

"I take it from the lack of a greeting they told you what they wanted to discuss with me," said Gold.

"They did," said Belle. She glanced towards the curtains. "How is she?"

Gold shook his head.

"We have to do something," said Belle.

Gold sighed.

"What?," asked Belle.

"I have an idea of something that might cheer her up."

"Mr. Gillette."

Joseph looked up. "Mr. Gold."

"You can pick Beatrice up at six o'clock."

Joseph frowned. "To do what precisely?"

"You may take her to dinner. Tony's, Mushu's or George's Taverna will do nicely. You might try getting dessert afterwards. I suppose Granny's will do as well, but I thought you might want to be more inventive."

The frown grew deeper. "I may take her to dinner?"

"Yes. You may have her back home at eleven. I trust she'll be in roughly the same condition as when she left."

"Why are you doing this?"

Gold stopped and turned back around.

"Mr. Gillette, my daughter is... well, whatever she is, I can't fix it. You're her True Love."

"I don't believe in True Love."

Gold smiled and walked back to the booth.

"That may sound clever to the people of this world, but as we both know you're not of this world. The kiss that broke the curse would not have worked if you did not believe. That's my proof."
"Rational thought, empirical evidence, isn't that what you like best?" He waved his hand in thought. "You lived in a village near the Dark Castle. You were sent away and you manage to find a girl who you ought to have met years ago. Do you think that's a coincidence?"

"The universe is rarely so lazy," Joseph said under his breath.

"My thoughts precisely," said Gold. "I'll see you at six."

Beatrice stared at her plate. She had never noticed quite how loud the diner could be. Ruby and Granny arguing. The kitchen. Plates dropping. It was all just too much.

Joseph stared at her.

"You don't like your meal."

"I can't stand my meal," said Beatrice.

"Perhaps we should try somewhere more to your liking."

"Nothing is to my liking."

"Right," said Joseph.

"Why are you still here?," asked Beatrice. She looked up at him. "The curse is gone. You can leave."

"I just found my family," said Joseph. "I just found out I'm not mad, well, at least not for the reason I thought I was."

Beatrice stared at him.

"Do you want me to leave?"

Carefully, Beatrice reached into her coat pocket and took out an envelope. Hesitantly, she handed it to Joseph.

"What is this?"

"It was a gift."

Joseph opened it and opened the paper. "This is my handwriting."

Beatrice didn't answer.

"I'm quite skilled in handwriting analysis. There might be some technical differences in the style, but I certainly know my own hand."

"It's Sherlock Holmes' handwriting."

"It's a waltz."

"So I'm told." She shrugged. "I don't do music."

"I wrote you a waltz."

"He wrote me a waltz."
"I am him."

"I just met you and we kissed and we broke a curse, but I haven't seen you in fifty years and I barely know who I am." She picked up her purse. "Don't feel obligated to drag yourself into that."

"Beatrice," Joseph protested as she walked out.

Now

Beatrice sat across from Joseph. She checked her watch and resumed scarfing her moussaka. Hopefully he wasn't the type of boy to care how girls ate.

Not that she cared.

"How will we know when it's begun?" asked Joseph.

"I don't know. I don't know the basic form of the witch fight, but if I had to guess, I would go with twenty minutes of banter followed by stuff flying."

"Is that typical among your people?"

"Yeah, I don't think they had a clock in the Enchanted Forest."

"What do you suppose happened in your encounter with the Wicked Witch?"

Beatrice shrugged. "How should I know?"

"What would happen if you found yourself in Oz?"

"I've never been to Oz."

"You know what you would do."

"Try to cast my own production of Wicked from the people who I met?" She frowned. "That makes Zelena Idina Menzel."

"You would try to go home." He glanced outside. "There's a crowd headed towards Main Street."

Beatrice turned back to the kitchen. "So, we'll take those kataifi to go."

Before

Beatrice came out of the diner and walked straight into Zelena.

"Beatrice," said Regina. "We didn't realize you were out and about yet."

Beatrice looked back at Zelena who had put on a visage of complete innocence.

"I am," said Beatrice. "I didn't realize she was or that she would ever be."

"I'm turning over a new leaf," said Zelena.

Beatrice glared.

"I just want to say how sorry I am for all the pain I've caused you," said Zelena. "Can you forgive
me?"

Joseph came out of the diner.

"No," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice-" said Mary Margaret.

Beatrice shot the princess a look. "You don't know her. I do."

"People change," said Mary Margaret.


"Well, how am I supposed to change if no one will believe in me?," Zelena asked tearfully which Mary Margaret seemed to be totally falling for.

"You might be able to fool them, but you will never fool me and if there's one thing that you should have learned from your little experiment in time travel." She stepped closer and looked up at the witch. "Whatever world you try to make, I will stop you."

"Is she just allowed to threaten me?," asked Zelena.

"I don't threaten," said Beatrice as she walked off.

Regina looked at Joseph. "And what do you want to say?"

Joseph smiled. "Beatrice covered the high points."

Now

The air in Main Street was electric as more people gathered to the spot where Zelena had challenged Regina. The Charmings were trying to control the situation as Gold, Belle and Merlin held down their own corner.

"Regina's going to show, isn't she?," asked Mary Margaret.

"Not like her to not show up for a fight."

"People could get hurt," said David. "We should start clearing the street."

Merlin turned to Belle and Gold. "How are the lovebirds?"

Emma frowned. "What?"

"Not your concern, Savior. I'm just trying to solve the problem." He looked back at Belle. "So?"

"We think Beatrice may have been in Oz," said Belle.

"Oz?," asked Merlin. "Do you think she met the witch there?"

"She had her slippers," said Gold. "I thought it best that she keep as wide a berth between her and Zelena as possible."

"How very, very wise of you, sunshine," said Merlin. "It's so good that you were able to come up with such an ingenious plan with absolutely no chance of failure."
Gold eyed Merlin suspiciously.

That was when Beatrice walked up with Joseph in tow.

"Did we miss the witch fight?," she asked.

"Beatrice, what are you doing here?," asked Gold.

She held up the bag from George's Taverna. "I am walking my dessert home."

"Did you get any of the baklava with the pistachio?," asked Merlin.

Belle shot him a look.

"I mean as long as she's here," said Merlin opening the paper bag.

"Go now," said Gold, gripping her by the shoulders.

"Oh, please, don't send her home on my account."

The crowd parted as Zelena walked through. Beatrice observed her outfit.

"You wore a pointy hat," said Beatrice. "That's kind of on the nose. Do you have red and white striped socks?"

"Such a rude little thing," said Zelena.

Gold pulled Beatrice aside. Belle held onto her daughter with a firm grip.

"Leave her alone," said Belle.

"Watch yourself, witchy," said Merlin. "You wouldn't want me to have to interfere."

Zelena scoffed. "Do you expect me to be scared of you?"

"No, fear would indicate intelligence," Merlin said as he bit off the corner of his pistachio baklava.

"Don't underestimate me, old man," said Zelena, leaning in.

"Would you mind getting your cleavage out of my face?," asked Merlin. "I'm trying to eat here. I thought this was meant to be a witch fight not a burlesque performance."

Zelena shot a glare and walked away.

"Where is she?," demanded Zelena. "She's a coward. If my sister isn't here in five minutes, I let my pretties fly."

Zelena waved her hand. Suddenly Main Street was covered by Flying Monkeys lining the roof of every building. The crowd of townspeople gasped.

She cast a glance at Beatrice. "And I wouldn't count on your Dark Princess to save you all."

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah, like anybody's counting on me to save them."

Emma stepped up. "If you want to fight someone, fight me."

"I don't deal with amateurs."
"I'm not an amateur. I'm the Savior."

"With a half day of magic lessons..." muttered Merlin.

"Merlin!" Belle hissed.

Soon enough Zelena had Emma flying back with a wave of her hand.

"What's wrong with her right arm?" asked Joseph.

"What?" asked Beatrice.

"It's stiff. Get her to move it again."

Beatrice turned to look at Joseph. "When she moves her arm, magic comes out."

"It's stiff. She hasn't bent it."

Beatrice watched.

"You know, I think he's right," said Merlin.

"Of course I'm right," said Joseph.

Gold turned. "And your point is what?"

"What if she's cursed or something?" asked Beatrice. She looked at her father. "If we knew what curse, we could use it against her."

"What are the rules of this witch fight?" asked Joseph.

"No one may interfere with magic," said Gold.

"Not a problem," said Joseph.

Gold furrowed his brow and before they realized what he was doing, Joseph had walked over to Zelena.

"Such lovely gloves," remarked Joseph, grabbing at the green leather. "Are they munchkin skin?"

"Back off, Great Detective."

"What?"

Before he could question it further, he was flying back. Beatrice rushed over.

"What was that?" she snapped.

"Her hand is ice cold."

"Anybody else want to give it a go?" asked Zelena.

"I do," a voice called.

"About bloody time," muttered Merlin as the crowd parted for Regina.

"Didn't anybody tell you black is my color?"
Joseph got up and walked back over as the crowd formed around Regina and Zelena.

"Ice cold," said Joseph. "What curse would make her hand ice cold?"

Belle and Gold frowned.

"I'll make this simple for you," said Joseph. "When I say ice cold, I don't mean cold, I mean as cold as ice. Add to that her arm is stiff. Is there an explanation for that?"

Eyes slowly turned to Beatrice.

"What?"

"The old ice princesses had legends..." said Belle.

"What? You think I did something and turned the Wicked Witch into a block of ice?"

"Are we boring you?," asked Zelena.

"Yes, actually," said Joseph.

"This is between us, sis," Regina said tersely. "Or are you afraid?"

"Rumplestiltskin should have chosen me!"

Regina scoffed. "You're jealous? Is that what this is all about?"

The two women started at each other. Joseph turned back.

"Could you have done something to her with ice?"

Beatrice looked at Merlin. At some point, they noticed a traffic light falling.

"Ice is the most dangerous of elements. If you have done something to her, only True Love will save her."

"Hardly likely," said Gold.

"Yes, but what about the damage she'll cause in the meantime?," asked Belle.

They heard a crash. Suddenly things got quiet and they looked to see the two witches gone as Emma, David and Mary Margaret ran into the library.

"What happened to the witch fight?," asked Beatrice.

"Zelena threw Regina into the clock tower while you guys were talking," Leroy offered.

"What?!," Belle shouted. She looked up to see the broken clock face over her beloved library.

Just then, the Wicked Witch flew out on her broom.

"Don't think you can hide!," Belle shouted.

Joseph leaned over to Beatrice. "Your mother is strange."

"No question."

Belle turned to Gold. "She broke my clock!"
"Well, if you care to find her, look to the western sky..." said Beatrice.

"I didn't see her bring a broom," said Joseph.

"Oh, that's not so hard," said Beatrice.

"Isn't it?," asked Joseph.

Beatrice held out her hand and a broom appeared.

"Beatrice..." said Merlin.

"What? Like it's hard?"

"What about the flying part?," asked Joseph.

"Oh, sure," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice," Merlin repeated.

Before Beatrice could process her grandfather's objections, she had the broom and consequently herself in the air.

"Then this would be the part where you go 'So if you care to find me, look to the western sky, as someone told me lately everyone deserves a chance to-''"

"Rumple, she's flying," said Belle.

"I noticed."

Beatrice then realized that she was looking down on her family, Joseph and the rest of the townspeople that had gathered to watch the witch fight. Regina and the Charmings came out of the library to share in the gawking.

"Okay, yeah," said Beatrice, "I just noticed that."

"Why is she flying?," asked Regina.

"Oh, come on, let me finish the song," said Beatrice.

"What did the witch want?," Gold asked Regina.

"My heart," said Regina. "Luckily I didn't bring it."

"A heart, David's courage. If there was a brain, that would almost sound like..." Emma looked at Beatrice in the air. "Well, I think you can guess what that would sound like."

"You forget the infant," said Joseph. "That must symbolize something."

"Lots of spells have baby parts as ingredients," said Regina.

"Yes, but she's using symbols as ingredients," said Joseph. "The hilt of a sword for courage. Your heart I would presume is love. A little on the nose, but why not? What's the infant?"

"Beatrice, get down," said Belle.

"I just really have an urge to sing," said Beatrice. She resumed singing. "And nobody in all of Oz,
no wizard that there is or was is ever going to bring me-"

Belle looked at Gold. He raised his hand, lowering both broom and daughter to the ground.

"Down..." Beatrice finished anti-climatically. "Can anyone else fly? We could have the best quidditch team ever. You know, in that we would actually be able to fly and not just be running around with brooms on a field."

"I think perhaps it's time we learn just what happened in Oz," said Merlin.

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**Before**

Gold and Belle leapt to their feet as they heard Beatrice's footsteps on the porch.

"It's too early," said Belle. "Have they even had time to finish dinner?"

The door opened. Beatrice walked in and shot her parents a knowing look.

"How was it?," asked Gold.

"Did you and Joseph have a good time?," asked Belle.

"No," said Beatrice. "I'll be in my room until I'm dead or you guys are dead, which for one of you will be a while," Beatrice said as she went up the staircase.

Belle exchanged a glance with Gold and followed her upstairs. She entered the room not bothering to knock.

"Tell me what's wrong."

"You don't get it."

"Try me," said Belle. She threw her arms up in exasperation. "Tell me anything, everything. What's wrong?"

"You really want to know?"

"Of course I do," Belle insisted.

"This house is hot."

"Okay."

"See my house was made of ice."

"Alright, we'll turn down the thermostat."

"I can't deal with the food here. Everything has a million flavors."

"We'll make porridge," said Belle. She stepped forward. "But I don't think that's what's bothering you."

"Nothing is right. I used to have people like me. Then again, maybe they didn't really like me. Maybe they liked the idea of me. And Joseph? I barely know him. I knew Sherlock Holmes since I was three."
"Well, I can tell you from experience that location changes nothing. True Love is True Love wherever you are."

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't think so."

"I do think so," said Belle, running her fingers through Beatrice's hair. "What I know for certain is that in any realm, any version of reality, I would love you. Always."

Belle was surprised as Beatrice fell into her arms.

"You smelled different there," Beatrice said muffled by Belle's sweater.

"I don't think I can change that," said Belle. She took a sniff of Beatrice's hair. "I wouldn't change your scent for anything."

"And I need to know what I was doing in Oz with Zelena."

Belle frowned. "Okay."

Beatrice broke off the hug. "I know she can't be trusted."

Belle nodded. "Then we'll stop her like we always do."
Chapter 66

Now...

Beatrice stood with Joseph at the town line. They had been there a couple of hours waiting for the mysterious Mahnaz to arrive. She had completed the awkward task of inviting the girl without actually remembering who she was.

She felt horrible about it.

"Well, try not to feel so bad. You are doing this to save an entire town."

"I am tricking someone into being cursed with us. I don't even know what's going to happen when she crosses over the line."

"Don't trust the Merry Men?"

"Their last guy became a Flying Monkey."

Joseph motioned over at Robin as he paced back and forth. "What do you make of the Prince of Thieves and the Evil Queen? That was unexpected."

Beatrice snorted. "Everything around here is unexpected. Aurora and Mulan?"

"That was much less unexpected."

"We should make a ship name for it."

"A ship name? What do you mean?"

Beatrice searched for an example. "Johnlock? That's a ship. People who think John Watson and Sherlock Holmes should get together."

Joseph frowned. "They think what?"

"You know, from Sherlock. Then there's Sherrlolly, my personal favorite."

"Is it?"

"I don't mind Johnlock, but you know, Molly Hooper, nerd. Me, nerd. Then there's Mystrade and there's Sheriarty which is a little weird-"

"What's Mystrade?"

"There's a car coming!," called Robin. He turned towards Beatrice. "This ought to be your friend, Your Highness."

"You know, you don't have to call me Your Highness," said Beatrice.

"Oh, let him," said Joseph. He leaned over. "Things are so much easier when everyone remembers his place."
Beatrice shook her head at him. She raised her hands as the red Kia came over the orange line. Flying Monkeys swooped in from nowhere and Robin and his men shot their arrows. Beatrice threw ice at them, landing the monkeys in blocks of ice. The car skidded towards the side of the road and a frazzled girl got out of the car.

"Hey, so you found it," said Beatrice.

Mahnaz shook her head. "What was that?"

Robin rushed over. "Are you alright, milady?"

Mahnaz turned to Beatrice. "Who's he?"

"Robin of Locksley, milady. At your service."

"Sorry, who?"

"This is all much better explained at my house," said Beatrice, taking Mahnaz by the arm. "By the way, this is Joseph."

Mahnaz entered the house to see the crowd of semi-strangers gathered in the living room. She seemed yet more unnerved when they all stood.

"Hello," Mahnaz said skeptically.

"Mahnaz, welcome back," Belle said with a smile. She gave her a quick hug.

"Thank you, Mrs. Gold." Mahnaz looked at Beatrice. "I think."

"Listen, sweetheart, I'm sorry to have to drag you here, but our options are somewhat limited," said Merlin.

"What's going on, Mr. Avalon?," asked Mahnaz.

"You might try calling him by his real name," said Regina.

"What happened to easing her into it?," asked Emma.

"I don't have time. My sister's on a rampage."

"Rampage?," asked Mahnaz.

"Mahnaz, did you ever read any fairy tales growing up?," asked Beatrice.

"Not really."

"Then this should be all new to you," muttered Regina.

"Seriously, Regina?," asked Beatrice.

"Mahnaz," said Merlin, "I suppose like Beatrice you believe there are worlds running parallel to this one, where the laws of physics could be different."

"Laws of physics?," asked David.
Merlin waved his hand dismissively towards the prince. "Ignore him."

Mahnaz nodded. "Well, it's a theory, but there's not really a way to know for certain."

"Ah, see, that's where you're wrong," said Merlin. "There is a way to know for certain because that is where we are from."

Mahnaz shook her head. "I'm not understanding."

"There is another realm, in fact there are many others, this one is called the Enchanted Forest—"

"The Enchanted Forest?" Mahnaz looked at Beatrice. "I don't get it."

"Stay with me," said Merlin. "The fairy tale characters you know exist there and now some of them exist here."

"Fairy tale characters?"

"You remember my mom's name?," asked Beatrice.

"Oh, come on," said Mahnaz. "Lots of people are named Belle."

"And have a library and are really pretty..." said Beatrice.

"And what? Your dad is the Beast?" Mahnaz motioned.

"Well... yeah."

Mahnaz motioned at Merlin. "And what? He's Maurice?"

"No, he's Merlin," said Beatrice.

Mahnaz frowned.

"Yeah," said Emma, "the fairy tales start getting twisted pretty quick."

"And what character are you?," Mahnaz asked Joseph.

Joseph opened his mouth.

Merlin beat him to an answer. "He is yet to be determined. Now, this is Regina who you may know as the Evil Queen, Snow White and Prince Charming."

Mahnaz still looked skeptical.

"I think it's about time we showed our friend that we mean what we say," said Gold. "Outside."

They led Mahnaz outside. Regina stood across from Beatrice.

Regina pulled her hand back to launch a fireball. Beatrice fired another one up at it and they collided together in an explosion. She looked at Mahnaz.

"What did you just do?," asked Mahnaz.

"It's magic," said Beatrice. "We do magic. See?"

Beatrice then waved her hand and brought down a snowfall.
"I don't know what's going on, but I'm leaving," said Mahnaz.

Gold shook his head. "The people of this world..."

"No, please don't," said Mary Margaret. "We really need your help."

"Besides that she'll turn into a Flying Monkey," said Regina.

"What?," asked Mahnaz.

Emma shook her head. "As usual, our conversation earlier was totally pointless, Regina."

Joseph turned to face Mahnaz. "You know the story of Rumplestiltskin, do you not?"

"Weird imp. Straw into gold?"

Gold glared as Belle patted him on the wrist.

Joseph spoke again. "What if I told you he was Rumplestiltskin and he spun straw into gold?"

Mahnaz frowned. "I thought he was the beast."

"He's a lot of people," said Joseph.

The magical parade continued as they all followed Gold into the cellar. Joseph made a show of handing the straw to Mahnaz to examine and then she carefully eyed Gold as he spun and touched it again once it became his gold thread.

"Okay, you can spin straw into gold," said Mahnaz.

"That she believes?," Regina huffed.

"It's so weird," said Mahnaz. She looked at Beatrice. "I can't believe my grandmother was right."

"About what?"

"Well, you. She thought you were a witch."

"Why did your grandma think I was a witch?," Beatrice shrieked.

"Um, hey," said Emma.

"Fine. I'll drop it," said Beatrice.

"What else can you do?," asked Mahnaz.

"The problem, Mahnaz," Belle softly interjected, "is that we need you to do something for us."

"Me? What can I do?"

"We've been cursed by the Wicked Witch of the West."

"Sorry," said Mahnaz. "Defying Gravity Wicked Witch?"

"She's nowhere near as cool," said Beatrice.
Belle continued. "She's taken away our memories of the past year. We think Beatrice met her in Oz when she was caught up in that storm in Boston and something happened there that we need to find out about, but none of us can even remember that day."

Mahnaz shrugged. "I don't know how I can help. It's not like Beatrice said anything, I wasn't even in the dorm."

"Yes, but conveniently this is where magic comes in," said Merlin.

They gathered in the dining room and sat at the table. Gold brought out a crystal ball the size of a globe and set it between Beatrice and Mahnaz.

"What is that going to do?," asked Beatrice.

"You're going to touch it and Mahnaz is going to think of the day you supposedly disappeared," said Merlin. "That should give us what we need."

"My trip to Oz," said Beatrice.

Merlin motioned for them both to touch it.

"What do I do?," asked Mahnaz.

Merlin knelt down next to her.

"Try to think of every detail you remember that day. What the weather was, what you wore, what the air smelled like..."

Beatrice watched as Mahnaz's eyes glazed over. Then she soon snapped back herself...

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**BOSTON - LAST SUMMER**

Beatrice giggled.

It had been sort of funny.

Girls did that, right? Laughed at jokes they didn't find hilarious? Her mom laughed at her dad all the time.

Actually, she was pretty sure her mom did find her dad hilarious. It was one of the many hundreds of reasons they were weirdos together.

Wyndham was the name of the boy. He was from Philadelphia, seriously old money and on paper, he was perfect. Perfect hair, perfect chin. He was in the same summer physics camp as Beatrice and they'd been paired up as lab partners the first day.

There wasn't True Love, but then again Beatrice knew she was never going to find True Love.

"Were you at the lecture last night?," asked Beatrice as she sipped her coffee. "I didn't see you."


Actually, Beatrice had been first in line for the lecture. She had even had her mother mail her the copy of the physicist's book she had at home so she could have it autographed. She had even gotten to talk with him after the lecture and might have fangirled slightly.
"It was good," Beatrice finally responded.

"Yeah, I'm just doing this camp to look well-rounded anyway. My college counselor said I needed to if I had any chance of getting into one of the Ivies."

"Oh," said Beatrice.

"What about you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Where do you want to go?"

"Oh, you know, the usual," said Beatrice. This had become a source of contention at home. Further than the town line seemed to make her father unhappy. She had to acknowledge it was problematic having parents who couldn't leave town. Belle had been steering her towards the little ivies. "Then uh, Bates, Bowdoin, Colby."

"Does your school send a lot of people there?"

"I used to go to New Amsterdam."

"Yeah, but some no name school in Maine? That's going to be hard to sell. You'll be lucky if you don't end up at a state school."

Not to mention her current high school had never actually sent a student anywhere.

"I'm going to get another smoothie," said Wyndham.

He got up and his phone started buzzing. Beatrice glanced up and back.

Wyndham sat down.

"Who's Cassandra?," asked Beatrice.

"You looked at my phone."

"You left it on the table."

"She's my girlfriend."

Beatrice scowled. "We're on a date."

"Well, that's school, this is summer."

Beatrice handed his phone back. "I am not a summer girl."

Wyndham scoffed. "What? You think you're regular girlfriend material? You're the hottest nerd here."

"I'm the what?"

"Come on, you're from nowhere. Your dad is a pawnbroker, your mom's a librarian. You're just lucky to be here."

Beatrice stood, not even noticing the clouds as they began to darken.
"What? Don't be like that."

"We're done," said Beatrice.

She walked out amid Wyndham's protests.

Beatrice tried to keep from crying as she walked down the street, the wind whipping her hair. She had been desperate to come to this camp, someplace where no one had ever heard of the Dark Princess, let alone the Dark One and they thought Beauty and the Beast and Rumplestiltskin were two completely unconnected fairy tales. Now she had the opposite of that. He thought she was no one.

The weather had been changing over the past few minutes Mahnaz observed. The sky had darkened and the wind was blowing. Beatrice stormed in the dorm room as rain began.

"That good, huh?" she asked as she looked up from her book.

"He has a girlfriend," said Beatrice.

"Jerk," said Mahnaz.

Beatrice sat on her bed and reached for her earbuds.

"Do you want to talk?" asked Mahnaz.

"Nope," said Beatrice, plugging the earbuds into her iPhone.

Mahnaz stood up. "I have to go to mosque. I promised my parents."

"Really? How will they know?"

"Well, I'll know," said Mahnaz. "Also, my mom makes me check in on Facebook. If I have any hope of going to Georgetown I can't screw this up."

Mahnaz picked up her purse and turned around as she was nearly out the door.

"Oh, your dad called on the room phone."

Beatrice groaned as Mahnaz left. She gathered up the strength to call home. She hadn't even mentioned the date so she hoped it wouldn't be too painful.

"Beatrice!" Belle said brightly.

"Hi, Mom," said Beatrice.

"Is something the matter?"

Why could she always tell?

"No, I'm just tired," she lied. "Dad called?"

"Oh, he's just changing. We're going out for dinner. We had Bae and Henry for dinner last night, but tonight is date night."

Beatrice shuddered. "Date night..."
"How was the lecture?," asked Belle. "Did you get to meet him? Did he sign your book?"

"Yeah, he was great."

"I wish you sounded a little more enthusiastic. Are you sure you're feeling alright?"

"Is that Beatrice?," she heard her father ask.

"Yes," Belle answered.

"What do you mean she's not feeling well? Is she ill?"

"I'm fine!," Beatrice said futilely.

"I'll make an elixir. I'll have Bae drive it there."

"I don't need an elixir!," Beatrice shouted.

"I'll put Papa on," said Belle.

There was a momentary pause as Belle handed the phone over.

"Hello, sweetheart," said Gold.

"Hi, Dad."

"You sound tired."

"Yeah, sure, I'm tired."

"Are you eating properly? Is the food alright?"

"The food is fine, Dad."

"Do you have enough money?"

"Yes," said Beatrice. Her father had again sent her off with a wad of bills worthy of a mafia don, not to mention her American Express.

"You should try to get some rest, sweetheart. You have the weekend off from classes, you ought to do something fun. You could go out for dinner with your roommate. My treat."

"Okay, Dad. Thanks, Dad."

Beatrice managed to get off the phone after ten minutes more of reassurances and suggestions, promising to call if she had the slightest sign of a cold. By then, the storm had grown and the rain was heavy.

She put her earbuds on and began her angry music.

_I'm through accepting limits, 'cause someone says they're so, some things I cannot change but till I try I'll never know! Too long I've been afraid of losing love I guess I've lost. Well, if that's love, it comes at much too high a cost!_

Suddenly, the room was pitch black as lightning and thunder cracked. The air began to swirl. Beatrice felt as if she was being pulled away and she couldn't see.
Wind swirled and Beatrice screamed against the vortex, as if no sound could come out.

It finally stopped and she was in a heap of wood.

"Are you kidding me?," Beatrice muttered struggling to her feet.

Rubble was pushed aside from the window. A white gloved hand reached into the room. Before Beatrice could question the Boston Fire Department, she found herself facing a kind looking blonde in an elaborate white gown. She was next to a tall redhead in a similar brown outfit.

"Are you alright?," asked the woman in white.

"I think so," said Beatrice looking around. Nothing looked familiar. How far did tornadoes go anyway? She looked up.

Trees.

No buildings.

"How could I have left Boston?," she asked.

"Boston. What world are you from?," asked the redhead.

If she was being asked a question like what world she was from, that was a bad sign.

She knew the answer.


"Well, then," said the blonde. "Welcome to Oz."

"Oz," said Beatrice. "Well, that's just great."

"What's your name?"

"Beatrice."

"You must be very strong to survive such a storm. You must be a very special girl," said the blonde.

Beatrice walked a short distance away as the two women followed her.

"I'm Glinda and this is Zelena," said the blonde.

"Glinda?," asked Beatrice, her interest finally piqued. "Do you have a friend called Elphaba?"

"No," said Glinda.

"Right," said Beatrice. "Did you used to be called Galinda?"

"No."

"Did you have a college professor that was a goat?"

"What are you looking for?," asked Glinda.

"The yellow brick road and some ruby slippers," said Beatrice. "The wizard ought to have them,
hopefully he doesn't turn out to be anyone's dad. Hopefully he doesn't turn out to be my dad though usually my dad is everyone."

"I'm sorry but the wizard is no more," said Glinda. "He can't help you."

"Ah, you guys figured out the guy behind the curtain thing, right," said Beatrice. "That is a setback, but it's manageable. My dad will come get me. Then he's never going to let me leave the house again. Which will be another setback, but again, manageable."

Glinda and Zelena exchanged glances.

"How can your father travel between realms?," asked Zelena. "I thought he was from a Land Without Magic."

"Well, Land Without Magic by way of the Enchanted Forest," said Beatrice. "He usually figures these things out."

"Come, you can stay with us in the meantime," said Glinda. "Our sisters will be so excited to meet you. Won't they, Zelena?"

Glinda and Zelena took Beatrice with them back to where they lived with their sister witches.

"None of you are Nessa, I'm guessing," said Beatrice.

Glinda smiled. "These are our sisters, Davina and Imara, the other witches of Oz."

The witches looked at each other.

"Does anybody even sing?", asked Beatrice.

"Sing?," asked Davina.

"Never mind."

"You're welcome to stay here as long as you need," said Glinda.

"Oh, cookies," said Beatrice, spotting a tray on a table. "Do you mind?"

Imara nodded.

"You said you come from a Land Without Magic," said Zelena. "But you mentioned the Enchanted Forest."

"Yeah, long story with a Dark Curse," said Beatrice. She pointed at the table. "What's up with this?"

"The four lands of Oz. Each of us is protector of one,"

"Right. North, south, east, west..." said Beatrice. "Oh, elements. The west is water. Interesting."

"Why is that interesting?," asked Zelena.

"Reasons," said Beatrice.

"You seem to know your way around magic," said Glinda.
"I get by."

"But you said you were from a land without magic," said Zelena.

"Yeah, there's no magic except when there is."

"You need to give us a better explanation than that," said Davina.

An idea then occurred to Beatrice and it seemed so much better than the truth.

"I am a Time Lord from the wonderful world of Gallifrey," said Beatrice.

"Gallifrey?," asked Zelena.

"Yes, you wouldn't have heard of it because of the time lock," said Beatrice. She shrugged. "That's why no one knows about it. It's the curse of the Time Lords."

Zelena seemed terribly interested all of a sudden. "Can you time travel?"

Right. That was one of those laws of magic things. One of those you weren't supposed to break.

"See, we used to all travel around in... enchanted blue boxes," Beatrice began. "Then there was a battle with a Dark Wizard called... Rassilon and you know, time lock. Now no one can. Like I said, it's the curse of the Time Lords."

Zelena seemed deflated by that.

"We should get you something to eat," Glinda cheerfully suggested.

"Beatrice," said Glinda. "I know you're lying."

Beatrice didn't answer.

"There's no Gallifrey."

"Well, not anymore. Time lock."

Glinda frowned at her. "You can tell the sisters anything. You're safe here."

"I just don't like to name drop," said Beatrice.

"What do you mean, child? Does it have to do with your knowledge of magic?"

"It's not just knowledge. I'm the... I'm the Dark Princess."

Glinda's eyes widened.

"Yeah, see, that's the look I was hoping to avoid..."

"Come, Beatrice," said Glinda.

Beatrice followed Glinda into her room, like the table room, it opened onto the night sky but was covered in white. She pulled out a book.

"This is the Book of Records, a record of all magical people who have visited Oz. The Dark Princess is in here, along with her family and the Great Detective."
Beatrice frowned. "The Great Detective? Do you mean Sherlock Holmes?"

"Why, yes, I-" Glinda stopped. "You haven't met him yet."

"Uh, haven't met Sherlock Holmes? No. Let me see the book."

Glinda held the book away from her. "Sometimes news from other lands comes to the book at the wrong time. I fear this may be one of those times. You may have been right. Zelena was until recently a pupil of a great and powerful sorcerer in the Enchanted Forest. She returned to Oz once he rejected her and has been trying to change her ways ever since."

"So she can travel between realms?"

"I would keep your true identity a secret from her. You can do what eludes her and she'll want to use that knowledge for revenge."

"Okay, I won't help her with the big revenge plan, but if she knows how to get between worlds, I need her help."

"Don't push her. She's delicate."

The next morning Beatrice set out to find Zelena. She found her in the main room, studying a book.

"Hey, El- Zelena."

Zelena scowled. "You're still here? Your father the sorcerer hasn't found a way here yet?"

"Apparently not."

Zelena went back to the book.

"So, Zelena..." said Beatrice, wondering how to start a conversation with the Witch of the West, "what's up?"

"I'm trying to learn about my new territory," said Zelena. "The West."

"We can go visit!," suggested Beatrice. "There's got to be some Animals and some Munchkins or something."

Zelena scowled. "You're new to this world, but you know so much about it."

"Well, in my world stuff from other realms gets through as fiction and I have seen-" She paused. It seemed rude to suggest the word "Wicked" at the moment. "I have seen a musical based on this world several times and read the novels and I've only seen the Wizard of Oz twice, once with a Pink Floyd album playing, but I think I got the gist of it."

"And why would I want to meet Munchkins?"

Beatrice frowned. "Because you're their protector. Come on. It'll be fun."

"Fun?"

"You have had fun before, right?"

"I have things to do."
"Can't even show me the Emerald City?," asked Beatrice. "One short day in the Emerald City, one short day..."

Zelena turned and scowled.

"Come with me to the Emerald City..." Beatrice sang. "One short day full of so much to do..."

"I'll go if you promise not to sing," said Zelena.

"Given my circumstances, I can't promise that," said Beatrice. "However, I will keep it to one song if you teach me one trick."

"Teach you?," Zelena sneered.

"This is awesome!," Beatrice screamed as she flew on her broom.

"You're a quick study," remarked Zelena on her neighboring broom.

Beatrice turned to Zelena. "How are you not more excited?! There's no fight we cannot win, Just you and I, defying gravity, with you and I defying gravity!"

"Where did you learn your magic?," asked Zelena.

"My dad, my grandfather a little and this Ice Princess..."

Zelena eyed her.

"Who was my great-grandmother."

"We both come from magical families then," said Zelena. "Where yours nurtured yours, I was cast aside and everything that should have been mine was taken by my sister."

"That sucks," said Beatrice.

"Do you have any siblings?"


"Consider yourself fortunate."

"You know, honestly, at some point you should probably let that go," said Beatrice.

Zelena nodded. "You're right. Thank you."

Beatrice turned back towards flying.

"This doesn't make you happy, though," said Zelena.

"Well, no," said Beatrice. "I want to go home."

"Your family really means that much to you?"

Zelena led Beatrice inside the wizard's palace.

"When you're with the wizard, your whole life will change..."
"Do you have to sing?"

"It is really hard not to given the circumstances."

Zelena waved her hand and the door to the throne room opened where they were confronted by a Flying Monkey.

"Beatrice, meet Walsh."

"Uh, hey, Walsh," said Beatrice.

"This is a way to view other realms," said Zelena. "The Wizard used it once to help me find my family. Perhaps you can use it to check in on yours."

Beatrice knelt down. "So what do I do? Just picture them?"

"Well, I thought I-"

Beatrice thought of her mother. She smiled as Belle appeared in the circle. She read a book on the sofa and patted Martha on the head as the Dalmatian laid next to her.

"Is that your mother?," asked Zelena. "She's beautiful."

Beatrice shook her head. "They ought to be looking for me."

"Perhaps they've given up," Zelena shrugged.

"No, my mother never gives up."

"How can you be so certain?"

"Because she's my mom."

"I wouldn't know. My mother left me in the woods."

Beatrice looked back up at Zelena. "Seriously, your family sucks."

The phone rang and Belle picked it up.

"Hello?" She paused. "Yes, this is Belle Gold. Of course I'm Beatrice Gold's mother. What is this about? Is she alright?"

"They don't know I'm gone yet," Beatrice mused.

"A storm? What do you mean you don't know?," Belle stammered. "Of course, I'll be there right away!"

"Time must run differently here," said Beatrice. She looked up at Zelena's doubting expression. "Big universe. Lots of different universes, anything's possible including the possibility that time is different here. Just like Pete's World."

"Is that something you learned on Gallifrey?"

"Yes," Beatrice answered with a smile, nodding definitively.

"Rumple!," Belle called.
Beatrice looked up at Zelena. Patches of green were on her neck and growing larger.

"Zelena?," asked Beatrice. "You're turning green."

"Rumplestiltskin," she sneered. "You're Rumplestiltskin's daughter."

"I..." She remembered Glinda's words.

Sorcerer.

Enchanted Forest.

Seriously, there only seemed to be two sorcerers in the Enchanted Forest and she was related to both.

"Oh, God, not again. Every time," said Beatrice.

"You tricked me," Zelena sneered. "Is there even a Gallifrey?!"

Zelena raised her hand to knock Beatrice back. Beatrice waved her hand to land a magical rain cloud over Zelena.

Which had no effect whatsoever.

"Oh, come on..." muttered Beatrice.

In her experiences with magic, no one had really given Beatrice a major butt kicking by magic.

She didn't like it.

She laid, dejected, in the dungeon of the wizard's palace, unable to do anything, unwilling to move. Every flinch caused untold pain.

Time ran differently here.

They didn't even know she was gone yet.

How long would it take them to find her?

"One long day in the Emerald City..." she sang to herself when the silence became unbearable.

"One long day in a lifetime of long days... Wish my dad would get here so I could leave here..."

The dungeon gate opened. Beatrice looked up to see a Flying Monkey screech at her.

Taking the invitation to follow, she found herself back in the Wizard's throne room. Zelena waited with the Book of Records in her hands.

Also, Beatrice noticed that like a froggy, ferny cabbage Zelena was unnaturally green.

"I've been reading up on you," said Zelena. "The Dark Princess. Descended from the longest line of True Love in the Enchanted Forest. The likes of Venus, Merlin, Rumplestiltskin, Peter Pan and those are just the ones you know about. Not to mention the Great Detective."

"The Great Detective?," asked Beatrice.

"Your True Love."
"My what?"

"Oh, didn't you know? Does that not fit into your Time Lord story?"

"I had to tell you something because if you had known..." Beatrice paused. "Well, yeah, here we are."

"If I had known you were Rumplestiltskin's daughter I would have cut your throat the minute I laid eyes on you!," Zelena spat.

"Like that's the first time I heard that," said Beatrice.

Zelena got in her face. "You have no idea what it's like! I was left for dead in the woods! My sister got everything that should have been mine! You've had a mother to protect you, a father who gives you anything you ask for and you don't have to work for any of it! A family who loves you!"

"If it's any consolation, I don't think my grandfather liked me that much," said Beatrice.

Zelena waved her hand and a wave of magic landed Beatrice back on the floor.

"No answers, Dark Princess? Do you want to try dumping a bucket of water on me again?!" Zelena waved her hand and the viewer materialized again. Zelena had called up a vision of her parents in the living room. It had grown dark. Belle was pacing with a cup of tea.

"This is all they've done," said Zelena. "Pathetic. Just sitting here and wondering where their Dark Princess is. Their poor lost little girl. They'll never know, will they? They'll just spend the rest of their lives, wondering. You'll never see them again."

Beatrice looked at her parents and her dog.

Never see them again.

They would never know.

They would never know.

Beatrice looked up at Zelena.

"As a plan for revenge, that's pretty limited, isn't it?," asked Beatrice.

"Excuse me."

"I mean, you'll know you killed me, but he'll never know." She pointed at her father. "He will never know and he's the one you need to prove yourself to."

Zelena shook her head. "You're insane."

"Look who's talking."

Zelena raised her hand slamming Beatrice back to the floor again.

"My point is," she said, struggling against the pain coursing through her, "is that if he never knows, he will never know he was wrong about you. He'll never realize his mistake."

"Do you think I'm that vain?"
"Oh, so you're not actually better than Regina is what you're telling me?"

"What do you want?," she sneered.

"I want to go home."

"Fine," said Zelena.

"What?"

Zelena walked up to her.

"You're right. When I kill you, I want Rumplestiltskin to watch and I want you to watch me kill your mother."

Beatrice twitched. "I will stop you."

"We'll be sure to sort that all out later."

Zelena waved her hand. Silver slippers appeared on Beatrice's feet.

"Enjoy the time I'm giving you, Dark Princess," Zelena sneered. "It won't last long."

"Beatrice..."

Beep.

Beeps.

Steady beeps.

"Beatrice."

Beatrice hazily opened her eyes to see Merlin standing over her bed.

"Well, look who decided to join us?," said a nurse in blue scrubs. She looked up at Merlin. "Vitals look good."

"Merlin?," asked Beatrice.

The nurse eyed Beatrice then Merlin.

Merlin shook his head. "She is obsessed with British television. Have you seen that show Merlin?"

"I don't even watch that..." muttered Beatrice.

"Poor thing. Obviously not recognizing your Grandpa Colin."

"I'll call the doctor," said the nurse. She left them alone.

Merlin leaned over. "How are you feeling?"

"Lousy. You watch Merlin?"

"People started telling me I was in love with Arthur which is certainly a frightening thought."
You've met that twit." He took a breath. "It looks as if you've had a beating."

"Then fix it."

"Land Without Magic, remember?," asked Merlin. "You're at Massachusetts General, the staff here is refreshingly competent unlike that soap opera set Regina calls a hospital back in Storybrooke complete with cad doctor."

"Mom and Dad couldn't come," Beatrice stated.

"No, afraid not. I think we'll have to rectify that at some point in the very near future."

"Can you call her?"

"Of course I can," said Merlin, getting out his phone.

Belle couldn't wait at the house. Gold acquiesced and they drove the Cadillac to just before the town line to wait for Merlin's ancient Land Rover to come across.

Merlin pulled over. As he got out his mockery began.

"Oh, I know, that town line we'll lose our memories if we cross, let's go drive out and stand really close to it..."

Belle shot him a look.

"She's in the back."

Belle hurried to open the door. Beatrice was slumped over, head on her pillow against the window. Belle climbed in next to her.

"Hey, baby," Belle said, gently rousing her. She smiled as Beatrice opened her eyes. "You're home."

For reasons Beatrice didn't understand, she looked at her mother with fresh eyes. As if she were a miracle. She threw her arms around her in a tight, almost desperate embrace.

"Hey, it's okay," said Belle. "You're here now."

Belle helped Beatrice out of the car and she hugged her father. He held her face gingerly in his hands.

"So many cuts..." said Gold.

"Yeah, more concerned with the fact that I still sort of feel like I got tossed around a building in a freak storm," said Beatrice. "That's right. I did."

Gold waved his hand. The cuts and bruises vanished.

"Better?," he asked.

"Much. Thank you."

"You needn't thank me, sweetheart," said Gold, kissing her on the forehead. He looked at her. "What's the matter? Did I miss something?"
"No... I'm forgetting to tell you something."

"I'm sure you'll think of it," Belle said reassuringly. "Let's go home. Martha can't wait to see you."

Beatrice snapped back to the present. She looked up to see the others around the table and Mahnaz had let go of the crystal ball.

"What? Did you all get that?," asked Beatrice.

"Oh, sweetheart," said Belle, getting up from her chair and coming over to squeeze her daughter. "We had no idea."

"Didn't you all get your day back?," asked Beatrice.

"Yours was the only interesting one," said Emma.

"I wish I could forget mine," said Regina.

Gold cast a glare at her. "The door was locked. The sign said closed. If you could take a hint, Your Majesty, we wouldn't have a problem."

"Why, what happened?," asked Beatrice. As soon as the words flew from her mouth, she realized it. "Oh, come on. Ew."

"The important thing is we know what happened in Oz," said Merlin. "Did you happen to catch the important part?"


"The table," said Joseph. "The virtues are the same things the Witch has been searching for. Courage, love..."

"Innocence," said Emma. She looked up at Merlin. "Is that what the baby is for?"

"There's something I'm still not remembering," said Beatrice.

"I think you've done enough, sweetheart," said Gold.

Beatrice looked up at Merlin. "Can we do it again?"

"Do what again?"

She motioned at the crystal ball. "That. We found out what happened in Oz, but we could just pick a random day or better yet, the day before we woke up without our memories."

"This magic is temperamental," said Merlin. He looked at Mahnaz. "If you are willing, I think it could be attempted."

"So, the Wicked Witch of the West is jealous of the Evil Queen because she was trained by Rumplestiltskin?," asked Mahnaz.

"Uh, I don't think we have time for that," said Mary Margaret.

"Mary Margaret?," asked David.

"The baby," said Mary Margaret. "It's coming."
"Now?," Emma said incredulously.

"Are you people serious?," asked Beatrice.

"Beatrice..." said Belle.

"We just got a clue! This was the closest we've come to figuring out this thing and she has to go have a baby! Why weren't you on bedrest?!," she shrieked.

"For starters, why don't we get her away from my dining room?," asked Gold.

"Rumple!," said Belle.

"Forgive me, but I don't see how this situation can be helped by Her Highness giving birth in my dining room," said Gold.

"I'll call Leigh," said Belle, shooting a glare over her shoulder as she left the room.

Gold followed her.

"I'll go get the truck," said David.

"I'll call Robin and have him meet us at the hospital," said Regina.

Soon it was just Beatrice, Joseph and Mahnaz.

"Don't you see what the witch needs?," asked Joseph. "It's pretty obvious if you just think about it a moment."

"A brain," said Mahnaz.

"Thank you. I've missed real people," said Joseph.

Beatrice frowned. "Whose brain?"

"Whose indeed?," asked Joseph.
It had been chaos leaving the house. Everyone had divided into their separate vehicles with calls to the dwarves, the Merry Men and Hook. That had led to Gold interrogating Emma until she screamed she didn't care and Belle told him that was enough. Merlin pushed his way into the Cadillac sending Beatrice in her car with Joseph and Mahnaz.

"We have a problem," said Merlin.

"Do we now?," asked Gold dryly. "I had no idea."

He leaned forward from the backseat. "Our young lovers are not quite where we need them to be and I would say we need them to be there by the time this child is born."

Belle looked at Merlin. "Zelena still doesn't have what she needs for her spell. Regina's kept her heart from her."

"Yes, how long do you think that's going to last?," asked Merlin. "These people give new meaning to the word incompetence. Every time I think they've reached bottom, they find a new low. We're going to be at the Earth's core soon."

"She still won't have a brain," said Belle.

"Until sunshine gives her one," said Merlin, casting a glance at Gold.

"I said no such-"

"You're thinking about it. I can see the wheels spinning in your head from here."

"You won't do it," said Belle.

Gold didn't answer.

"Rumple!"

He pulled up to the hospital without further comment.

"Rumple..." Belle said again.

"What am I supposed to do?"

"You can't give her what she needs, we still don't know what she wants! You saw what she did to Beatrice!"

"And what do you suppose she'll do to Bae?!," Gold shouted back.

Gold parked the car and marched in the hospital. Belle turned to Merlin.

"Who is he?"

"Who is who?"
"The boy. If you tell me who he is, maybe I can think of some other way for Beatrice to come to
terms with her feelings for him."

"I don't know that it will be helpful."

"Let me decide."

"Sherlock Holmes."

Belle froze.

"Really?," she asked.

"Yes, really."

Belle was incredulous. "Sherlock Holmes?!

"You fell in love with Rumplestiltskin and your father is Merlin. Did you think she was going to
fall for some boy called Chad?"

"Is there a reason we're all going to the hospital?," asked Mahnaz.

"Because these people are shockingly incompetent," said Joseph as they emerged from Beatrice's
car and right into an argument between Hook and Emma.

"You had no right to keep this from me!"

"The witch gave me no choice, Swan!"

"What's going on?," asked Beatrice.

"Who is she?," Hook asked motioning at Mahnaz.

"I'm Mahnaz," she answered cheerfully with a wave.

"Right, Mahnaz, Captain Hook, my dad's first wife's..." Beatrice shook her head. "I don't know.
Boyfriend? Sugar daddy?"

"What's a sugar daddy?," asked Hook.

"He's not entirely terrible," said Beatrice. "He likes Jane Austen."

"I do not!"

"He's a liar," said Emma. "He didn't tell me Zelena cursed his lips so if he kisses me he takes
away my powers."

They stood there for a moment.

"Yeah, this is weird, I'm going inside," said Beatrice.

They walked right inside and to the sentry point the Merry Men had set up. Robin was in deep
correspondence with Regina.

"This looks serious," said Sherlock.
Regina turned to them in exasperation. "Zelena took my heart. She threatened Roland."

"For which I apologize again," said Robin.

Beatrice gasped. "Not Roland!" She turned to Mahnaz. "You have to see this kid. He gives cuteness new levels."

"So, your point is that the witch now has two of the four ingredients for her spell?," asked Joseph.

"The witch won't get past my men and I," Robin promised.

"That remains to be seen," said Joseph.

"It's fine. We've still got Emma to do the pendant taking part," said Beatrice.

"Where is Emma?," asked Regina.

"Yelling at Hook in the parking lot."

"They pulled away as we went inside," said Mahnaz. "Sorry, what pendant?"

Belle walked in the reception room.

"Beatrice," said Belle, "would you come have a cup of tea?"

"I don't drink tea."

"You can watch me," said Belle, ushering her away.

---

**THEN**

Beatrice waved her hand and opened the cabinet. She gave a quick glance behind her and pulled a tome from the shelf. This particular book was black with a gilded heart on the front.

She flipped ahead to the page she was looking for and found illustrations among the Elvin writings.

A heart. A hand.

It seemed simple enough.

"Beatrice!," Gold called.

With a wave of magic she returned the book to the shelf as her parents joined her in the backroom. Gold was carrying a box.

"What's that?," asked Beatrice.

He put the box on the work table and opened up the box to reveal a glowing but very black heart.

"Cora's heart," explained Belle.

"And why do you have it?," asked Beatrice.

"It was part of our agreement with the Charmings," said Gold. "I promised not to crush it and we have control over her."
"Then there's Zelena."

"She's still powerless," said Belle.

"Your mother's right. Her pendant holds her magic, without it she can do nothing."

Beatrice looked up at them. "So, they're not going to do anything. They don't care what I think."

"That's another problem for another day, sweetheart," said Gold.

"Great. Let's just cheer on the Charmings and their parade of stupid," said Beatrice.

"That's the spirit," Gold quipped.

"Beatrice," said Belle, "I know this whole transition has been difficult, but you can't dwell on everything bad that's happened to you. That's what people like Zelena do."

"Well, there that's decided," said Beatrice, picking up her coat.

"I don't follow," said Gold.

"I'm not Snow White. I'm not Aurora. I'm not Ariel. I'm not even Belle. I am not a princess. Well, I was for a while. That's gone now and you are left with the cynical disappointment that I have always been and will always be."

Beatrice rushed towards the door.

"Beatrice, get back here!" shouted Belle. "Who ever said you were a disappointment?"

Beatrice let the door slam.

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**NOW**

Belle got her tea from the hospital cafeteria. Beatrice grabbed a soda, wondering what her mother was up to.

"Hey."

Beatrice frowned. "Hey."

"So, we haven't really had a chance to talk lately."

"Um, since a curse took away all of our memories? I guess not."

"How are you getting along with Sher- Joseph?" Beatrice eyed her and Belle shook her head. "Joseph. That's who I meant."

"I don't know. He's okay."

"Really? Just okay?"

"Mom, what are you doing?"

"I don't know. It's just we've lost a whole year, I get the feeling that there's more between you two."
Beatrice groaned.

"What?," Belle asked.

"In the one memory we managed to get back, we established no one is ever going to love me."

"I love you," said Belle.

"You know what I mean."

"Just because that wretch didn't love you does not mean no one can, but Beatrice you cannot live your life with the belief that no one can love you."

"Seriously, you want to do this right now? Wicked Witch coming this way any moment?"

"Beatrice," Belle said in her most stern voice, "tell me you know you can be loved."

Beatrice shook her head. "Right now?"

"Yes, this is the most important thing I will ever teach you and I need to know that I've done my job."

"Mom, my lonely future is in no way an indictment of you-"

"Yes, it is," Belle said desperately. "Someday I won't be around."

"Don't say that."

"Tell me."

Beatrice sighed. "I believe someone- someone who's probably nonexistent or fictional at the least- can love me. Okay? Can we get back to the witch fighting?"

While Beatrice absconded with Belle, Joseph remained in the reception area with Robin Hood and the Merry Men. Hook and Emma entered the hospital, looking stricken.

"What's wrong?," asked Robin.

"Nothing," muttered Emma.

"Swan lost her magic."

Joseph rolled his eyes.

"It was CPR! I did it to save your life!"

"Did you try the thirty chest compressions before the rescue breathing?," asked Joseph.

Emma stared at him in silence. Joseph's phone rang.

"Oh, finally someone with some sense," he said. "Hello, John."

His brother already sounded irate when he first spoke. "What exactly is this message supposed to mean, Joseph?"

"Really, John? You're just now deciding to ring me back?"
"I'm on maneuvers and I get back to my room to find a bizarre series of text messages which I assume must be jokes."

"What are they?"

John paused. "You don't remember the text messages?"

"No. What were they?"

"Joseph, have you been using again?"

"Not that I remember," said Joseph.

"What the hell does that mean?"

"It means I don't remember! What was the message?"

"I don't know, mostly rubbish about fairy tales, except the last one."

"What was the last one?"

"Play the waltz."

Joseph hung up the phone.

The waltz. For Beatrice. That was why he had approached her at the town meeting. He reached in his pocket for the paper.

It was gone.

He walked to Gold.

"Where is it?"

"Where is what, Mr. Gillette?"

"My waltz. Where is it?"

Belle joined them. "What is it?"

"He has my waltz. I need it."

"He took it, but he doesn't have it," said Belle.

"Oh?," asked Joseph.

Belle reached into her bag and handed him the piece of paper. Gold cringed. Joseph went to pull it away and Belle hung onto it.

"Zelena has Rumple's son, Beatrice's brother," said Belle. "That's why he took it."

"That still doesn't explain why he took it."

"You said you compose while you work," said Gold. "This is a symbol of your brain."

"She wants my brain?," asked Joseph. "Why?"

Belle looked squarely at him. "I think you know why she would want your brain."
Joseph eyed the paper and Belle's bracelet.

"Have you always had that?"

"Rumple made it for me." Belle closed his hand around the paper. "Whoever it is you think you are, you're probably right. Just please, we don't have much time."

"What is it you think I'm supposed to do?"

"I think you know," said Belle.

---

**THEN**

In all fairness, Beatrice was fairly certain that her mother didn't look upon her as a disappointment. She was delusional like that and Zelena knew it. Which was why she had to be dealt with.

Beatrice pulled her coat around her as she walked down the street.

"Ah, there you are."

She looked to her side to see Joseph walking beside her. She groaned.

"How did you find me? You tracked my footprints across town, followed my perfume?"

"No. I hacked into your iCloud account and used the 'Find My iPhone' function."

"You hacked into my account?"

"I guessed your password. It's not as if it was difficult."

"I don't have time for this, Joseph."

"Of course you do."

Joseph led Beatrice into the inn. The sitting room was empty except for a stand with a violin on it.

"Seriously?," asked Beatrice.

"I took a look at your waltz," said Joseph. "There are actually two versions, one meant for quite a large orchestra and a version for the violin. I've been rehearsing the violin version."

He took the violin and bow in hand.

As Joseph played, Beatrice could see and remember the man who composed it and how in love she had been.

And worst of all, she could even remember the girl she used to be, back before she was Zelena's sacrifice.

It ended.

"Why are you trying to win me?," asked Beatrice.
Joseph tilted his head. "Not quite the reaction I was hoping for."

"You're Sherlock Holmes. You don't need me. Nowhere in Sherlock Holmes does he have a girlfriend. You don't need me."

"And what about the Dark Princess' story?"

"Doesn't matter. Never has, never will and accepting that is the only thing I can do to stop myself from becoming a total psycho is to accept that."

Beatrice's phone rang. She looked at the text.

"Sorry, gotta go."

"Who was that?"

"No one," said Beatrice. "You don't need me."

She left in a flurry. Joseph followed her outside where she met Mulan.

"Did you get it?"

Mulan shook her head. "The sword didn't make it over in the curse. Are you certain it wasn't in your father's shop?"

"No, but I found something else. And Zelena?"

"As you suspected. Cora's traded the pendants."

"Yeah, I got that."

Beatrice put her phone up.

Mulan spoke. "You should let me do this. Zelena used me. I need to avenge Phillip."

"How? You don't have the sword, you don't have magic."

"And you think you have the magic to stop her?"

"I think I have to," said Beatrice.

Beatrice walked away.

"So, are you going to all just stay around here until this witch comes?," asked Mahnaz.

The different groups were stationed at various hospital corridors. Beatrice was currently hanging with the dwarves, the Merry Men were at another entrance, Regina and a powerless Emma elsewhere, then Gold and Merlin.

"You got a problem with our plan, sister?," asked Leroy.

Beatrice turned to her friend. "I wish I could say I have a better one, but I do not."

"I do."

She looked up as Joseph walked into the room and grabbed her by the arm.
"What's their problem?," Leroy asked Mahnaz.

"Um, hi," Beatrice said, struggling to keep pace with Joseph's long strides.

"We are running out of time," said Joseph.

"Yeah, I noticed."

"I do my best work when I'm under pressure. I think you share that. I probably like that about you."

"Good to know."

They reached a conservatory with plants and sunlight. Some of the elderly patients were sitting in their wheelchairs.

"Oh, good, an audience. Love a crowd, don't you?," he asked stepping towards a piano.

"Not really."

"No? Then I don't either." He turned to the patients. "Would you all mind terribly buggering off?"

None of them did and Joseph sat at the piano bench anyway.

"Okay, why are you at a piano?"

An old man pointed at Beatrice. "Your papa traded me for a mule."

"File a complaint!," snapped Joseph. He took out the paper and set it on the piano. "Human memory is divided into sensory memory, short term and long term memory. Long term memory encodes things semantically, making it into episodic memory which I think ought to be self-explanatory. You're clever, that's probably another thing I like about you. That's what the Witch's memory spell has taken."

Beatrice shook her head. "How do you know that?"

"You see but you do not observe," said Joseph. "When I awoke in this town without my memory, I didn't question the bed I slept in or the overwhelming stench of lasagna. I did question how I got there. The sensory memory is still there. The witch ought to strive to be more thorough."

"Still not explaining the piano."

"This is a waltz. I wrote it for you."

Beatrice frowned. "You wrote me a waltz?"

"I prefer the violin, but the piano will have to do. It was my second instrument in school, I did a term on the clarinet but there were creative differences." He stretched his fingers and went to the keys. "You're not so much trying to recall the time you heard this song as you are trying to recall an emotional connection with hearing it."

Joseph began playing.

"Is this a ball?," one old woman asked loudly.

"Do shut up," said Joseph.
The old people glared at him. Beatrice looked back at him.

"I don't see-"

"Normally, I would agree with you that this is a long shot, but this town seems to defy all logic. I suspect since the day I came to this place. Please play along. You seem better at improvisation."

Beatrice closed her eyes, trying to summon the magic around her. Joseph was right. There was something contained in the tune. Something she couldn't quite put a finger on, but it was... powerful.

"Witchcraft!," gasped one of the old men.

"Yes, that is in fact the point!," snapped Joseph. "still with me, Beatrice?"

She snapped her eyes open. The piano had stopped, but Beatrice could still hear strains of the violin. They swirled around her and she opened her eyes to see Joseph.

She kissed him.

A pulse of magic raced through the hospital.

They stared at each other.

---

**THEN**

There was a bang on the door of the pawn shop. Belle and Gold turned.

"It's Joseph," said Belle.

Gold walked and opened the door.

"Mr. Gillette-" Gold began as Joseph helped himself in.

Joseph walked in, eyes on Belle.

"She needs you."

"What? Is Beatrice alright?"

"She is now, but she rather unceremoniously left to go kill Zelena."

"Kill her?," asked Gold.

"She's meeting her and Cora. She's willing to do anything for you," said Joseph.

"Me?," asked Belle.

"Of course. You are what she loves more than anything."

Belle turned to Gold. "We have to stop her, Rumple. This isn't Beatrice."

"Let's go."

"Sorry. Am I to understand that you recently took possession of Cora's heart?"
"Is that important, dearie?"

"I have an idea."

NOW

"Beatrice..."

She stirred in Joseph's arms.

"Yeah, did I just swoon?," asked Beatrice, looking at the fact that her body was limp as Joseph held her.

"I think only technically."

"Oh, good, then I'm pathetic only technically," said Beatrice. She stood on her feet.

"To be fair, you are in fact a princess from a fairy tale," said Joseph.

"To be fair, I just did remember about fifty-one years worth of stuff," said Beatrice.

"The witch is here!," they heard Leroy shout.

"She's in here!," the old man shouted.

"Does that man have to shout everything?," asked Joseph.

"It's his thing," said Beatrice.

"Then why is he called Grumpy? He ought to be 'Shouty' or something."

"I know who can stop Zelena."

Joseph groaned. "Is this the part where you say it's you?"

"No, actually it's not."

"How refreshing."

"Mom!," called Beatrice.

"Mom?," Joseph echoed.

THEN

Beatrice entered the barn.

"Ah," said Zelena. "And here I thought you wouldn't join us."

"I'm not afraid of you," said Beatrice. She looked at Cora. "Though maybe I should have brought one of my parents along."

"That would have defeated the point," said Zelena. She held up her pendant. "I got it back and you're not getting your grubby little hands on it again."
"I will," said Beatrice.

"Then what's your plan?"

"She doesn't have one," said Cora.

Beatrice snapped her head towards Cora.

"Look at her, pacing around, she can't do what needs to be done." A satisfied smirk played at Cora's lips. "She has too much of her mother's weakness in her."

Beatrice shot the woman a glare.

"Rumplestiltskin's weakest pupil, how ironic."

"She's not weak," a voice spoke up.

Beatrice turned to see Joseph.

Zelena groaned. "Not this again. The Great Detective, are you going to tell us how you tracked her using bird migration paths or something?"

"A curious thought, but no, I'm here for Beatrice."

"You shouldn't be here."

"No, you shouldn't."

Cora sighed. "Enough with this endless carrying on."

"Oh, really, what are you going to do? Rip my heart out?"

Cora smiled. "Yes, I think I might."

"No-"

Cora plunged her hand into Joseph's chest and grinned as Beatrice's eyes grew wider. He gasped.

"No, no-"

Beatrice then realized something about the heart.

It was pretty black looking.

Cora did not notice, though, and she began squeezing it, only as dust began to fall to the ground did she look on it in shock.

"Oh, such a junior mistake to make, dearie."

Cora looked up at Gold and Belle.

"See, when you crush a heart, you should make sure it's not yours."

Cora collapsed in a heap on the floor as Belle ran to Beatrice. Zelena screamed in rage. Joseph straightened up.

"It's over, Zelena," said Gold.
"No, it's not," said Zelena. She turned towards Beatrice. "You took my mother, I take yours."

"I don't think so, dearie," said Gold, stepping forward.

"Rumple, she's not worth it," said Belle.

"Oh, I know."

Zelena disappeared into a plume of green smoke. She reappeared on the far side of the room with a cauldron.

"We're not done yet," Zelena pronounced.

"Really? Another Dark Curse? It's been done," said Gold.

"A memory spell will do," said Zelena. She waved her hands and the cauldron lit up. "We're going to do this all again. My time travel spell succeeded, I just needed better ingredients. This time I will rewrite fate."

Zelena vanished into her own cackle. Gold hurried towards the cauldron with the others following.

"Can you stop it?," asked Belle.

Gold waved his hand and shook his head as the cauldron continued to bubble.

"No," he said. "It'll spread throughout town in an hour."

"Well, it's a curse, there's a way to break it, right?," asked Beatrice.

Gold paused, looking from Joseph to Beatrice.

"Rumple, what is it?," asked Belle.

Gold turned to Joseph holding a heart.

"You're going to need this," said Gold. He then slammed his hand into Joseph's chest as he groaned.

"You might have warned me," said Joseph.

"True Love broke Zelena's curse once, it has to do it again." He simultaneously took hairs from Joseph's and Beatrice's heads.

"Ow!," said Beatrice.

"He just ripped my heart out, then shoved it back in," Joseph said pointedly.

"Zelena's going to cast her spell again so we're going to break it again, more specifically you are."

"But..." Beatrice glanced at Joseph, then stepped forward. "Dad, I'm not that girl anymore."

Gold took her face in his hands. "Beatrice, you are never going to be a dark sorceress. You came here to kill Zelena and you didn't. Do you know why?"

"I'm weak?," she offered.
"No," said Gold. "Zelena was right. You got your mother's heart and it is too full of light for dark magic. No matter what happens to you, you will always be that girl."

Gold tossed the hairs in the cauldron. The smoke began to billow.

"We have an hour to help ourselves," said Gold.

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**NOW**

Beatrice ran into the hallway. "Mom!"

Belle was already rushing towards them, apparently having had a similar idea.

"Beatrice," Belle gasped, throwing her arms around her daughter. "Oh, sweetie, you did it."

"Yeah, I know who needs to stop Zelena."

"Okay," said Belle.

"You."

Belle looked taken aback. "Me?"

"Yes, you."

Belle shook her head. "Beatrice, I don't know what you're thinking. I don't even have magic-"

"Okay, I think we know that's not true," said Beatrice. "You've won against the Blue Fairy and Peter Pan."

"Beatrice, I don't even know how I did that," said Belle.

"I do. You did it for me. You're the strongest purveyor of light magic because you have magic you don't even care about and you always try to make me better, you always try to make Dad better which, you know, anyway, but yeah, you're the one who's pure of heart. You have to be the one to take Zelena's pendant."

Belle took a breath. "Beatrice, you know I would help any way that I can, but I don't know how I did that."

"Well, I do," said Beatrice.

She ran off. Belle turned to follow.

"Beatrice, whatever you are thinking, don't you dare! Beatrice!"

Zelena strode down the hall, her heels clacking against the floor. Beatrice opened the door into the hallway.

"Your shoes are still ugly."

Zelena turned to see Beatrice.

"Ah, Dark Princess, do you want a turn as well?"

"It's the buckles, it's so pilgrim it reminds me of Thanksgiving and makes me want cranberry
sauce."

Zelena waved her hand, knocking Beatrice to the ground.

"Your move," said Zelena.


Zelena waved her hand again, sending another bolt of magic through Beatrice.

Zelena shook her head. "I don't understand. Fight me!"

As she screamed, Beatrice slammed back into the wall. Belle finally caught up and came out the same door Beatrice had.

"Beatrice," Belle gasped.

"Oh, look, it's mother dearest," said Zelena. "Who should I kill first? On the one hand, I did promise Beatrice that I would murder you in front of her. On the other hand, I would like to see you suffer."

Belle collected herself. "I know you haven't been loved, that you haven't had happiness, but I also know that there's hope for everyone, but you'll never find it if you keep down this path."

Zelena stared at Belle, then shook her head.

"Rumplestiltskin's taste in women has really gone downhill," said Zelena.

Beatrice snorted and winced as she did.

"What? Since your mom?"

Zelena sneered and turned back towards Beatrice. Belle stood in front of her.

"No, I'm not going to let you hurt her."

"Try and stop me," taunted Zelena.

She waved her hand and Belle stepped towards her.

The same pulse of white magic burst from Belle leaving Zelena with huge eyes.

"No, no, no!" Zelena screamed.

As the witch's mouth gaped, Belle grabbed the pendant and took it in her hand. Zelena fell to the ground.

Belle rushed to Beatrice and helped her up off the floor.

"Are you alright?"


Belle's eyes were furious. "Don't you dare do anything like that again!"

The doors opened. Emma, Hook and Regina hurried from the next checkpoint.
"Whoa," said Emma.

"I take it congratulations are in order for the Dark Princess," said Hook.

"Try again," said Beatrice.

"Belle?" asked Regina.

Belle handed her the pendant.

"Here, she's your sister. Do something with this and keep it from her this time. I don't want it."

Regina looked over at Zelena. "I'll deal with her."

Gold and Merlin followed in from the other side.

"We were expecting a witch through the door," said Merlin.

"What happened?," asked Gold.

"Your daughter is stubborn and manipulative," said Belle, clasping her arms around her daughter.

"Is Belle going to be magical all the time now?," asked Emma.

Leigh entered. "Emma, your mother is asking for you. She wants you to come meet your brother."

Emma hurried off.

After seeing Mahnaz off, Beatrice came back to the hospital where Neal had found Henry and Gold. She had exchanged a quick hug and gone to watch the various reunions from the side of the waiting room. She couldn't help but notice the way her father beamed when Neal was around.

"So..." said Joseph, suddenly appearing next to her.

"So..." said Beatrice, leaning up against the wall next to him.

Joseph motioned at the reunion. "Your brother is back."

"Yeah, he was a monkey," said Beatrice. Joseph gave her a bemused look. "I know it probably puts Hook ahead, but she was into Walsh for that day and a half he was around."

"Planning on killing Zelena?"

Beatrice turned to Joseph. "My dad's right. I am not going to be a heart crushing dark sorceress."

"Of course not. You're a princess. If there's a beast to be slain, you send out your knight."

"Are you volunteering?"

"Do you have a vacancy?"

Belle walked over. "Sorry to interrupt, but it is Beatrice's turn to meet the new prince."

Beatrice groaned. "Do I have to?"

"Yes," said Belle. She looked up at Joseph. "She'll see you tomorrow."
Belle walked away with Beatrice taking her hand as they walked down the hall.

"So," said Belle, "I hate to do this, but I am your mother."

"Do what?"

"If we count before and what you told me of the Far North Kingdom and this just now, that would be three times that True Love's kiss has broken a curse which would suggest that someone besides your mother loves you..."

Beatrice nodded. "Which makes you right..."

"Which means I told you so," said Belle. "I have never seen how you could have doubted it."

Belle beamed at Beatrice and she shook her head, forced to let out a shy smile.
Chapter 68

Manhattan 2002

It was the third day of Kindergarten and Beatrice was trying to settle in. For the first two days, her mommy had hung around as long as she could. On the third day, Beatrice realized that the first time she had turned her back was when Belle had left the first two days and resolved not to turn her back. She had made a mistake, though, and Belle had darted out when she went to get her orange slices from the snack table.

Kindergarten was different from preschool. There were tables and you had to sit at them and even when they did let you play you had to take turns and then you had to be done.

There was her table. She sat with three other children: a boy called Yang, a little girl with freckles called Riley and finally, Taylor Billingsley.

In a short three days, Taylor had already taken control of the Kindergarten. At recess all the other little girls, save Beatrice, flitted about after her and everyone wanted to know what Taylor did during their free time.

Taylor already realized that Beatrice was not under her control and she couldn't stand it.

They were sent back to their tables again and the teacher, a nice Indian lady called Miss Reddy, told them that they were each to draw a picture of their family and then they would share them with the class so they could all learn about each other. She even showed them a picture she drew of her family. She still lived with her two little brothers, her parents and her grandmother.

Beatrice was nervous. She just had herself and her mom to draw. A quick glance around the table revealed her classmates had bigger families. Riley seemed to have two moms and a brother, Yang had a mommy, daddy and four siblings and Taylor...

Taylor's drawing was about to go off the page.

"Oh, Taylor," said Miss Reddy, "this is very nice, but this is a lot of people."

"Yes," said Taylor. She pointed at the paper. "This is Daddy, Mommy, my brother, my sister, Shane, Mommy's trainer, the maid, the cook, the nanny, the butler."

"Oh, alright then," said Miss Reddy. She perused the rest of the table. "Beatrice, very nice."

"Thank you," she said quietly.

Miss Reddy walked away. Taylor looked over at Beatrice's paper.

"You haven't even drawn anything," said Taylor. "Where's your family?"

Beatrice looked down.

"That is my family."

Taylor sneered. "That's it? Where's your daddy?"
"I don't have one."

"What?," asked Taylor.

"Does he live somewhere else?," asked Yang.

"No..."

"Did he die?," asked Riley. "Sometimes daddies die."

"No..." said Beatrice. She stared her crayons on the table. "I just don't have one."

"Everyone has one," said Riley. "Mine's a donor."

"What's that?," asked Yang.

"I don't know."

"Everyone has one except Beatrice," said Taylor. "Beatrice doesn't have a daddy."

Beatrice felt tears stinging at her eyes and bit the inside of her cheek. She couldn't cry. The first tear fell and Taylor took to it like a shark to blood in water.

"Beatrice doesn't have a daddy," said Taylor. "And I know why."

Beatrice looked up, genuinely curious that Taylor might actually know.

"He doesn't love her."

"What?," asked Beatrice.

"He doesn't love you. If your daddy loved you, you would know him."

Beatrice looked to Yang and Riley. They weren't saying anything but they seemed to believe that was plausible.

"Sometimes it's because they don't love the mommies," added Riley.

No, that wasn't right, Beatrice thought. Her mommy was perfect, like a princess. No one could ever not love her mommy.

It had to be true, then.

She didn't have a daddy because he didn't love her. When had he decided? Was it while she was still in Mommy's tummy or after she came out? Had he seen her and decided he didn't love her?

He didn't love her.

---

**Now**

"Good morning, baby."

Beatrice looked up as she finished descending the stairs. "Venus? Am I dead again?"

"You were never dead, you just weren't alive," said the goddess, giving her a squeeze. She looked
askance at Beatrice's pajamas and t-shirt. "Wow. You got a man and really let yourself go."

"I'm having breakfast," said Beatrice, walking into the kitchen.

As she did, Neal's laughter cut through the air.

"Hey, Bea," said Neal.

"Hey," she said stiffly.

He was on her stool. Gold was giving him a plate of pancakes.

Chocolate chip.

"Have a seat, sweetheart," said Gold, finally seeming to notice that she was in the room.

Beatrice's eyes went to the stool again.

Her stool. He might have been older, but it had been her stool longer.

"You spent the night here?" she asked tightly.

Neal nodded, seemingly unaware of any tension. "My apartment had some Flying Monkey damage. It's gonna take some time for the repairs. Leroy's on it."

"Sweetheart, have a seat," said Gold. "Did you want pancakes?"

"Yes..."

Beatrice sat down on the other side of Venus, now two seats from her stool, feeling like she was in a foreign country. Martha padded around for handouts. Beatrice remained quiet as Neal and Venus spoke and she waited on her breakfast.

Which arrived without chocolate chips.

Beatrice looked up.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?"

"I'm sorry, I thought Neal had chocolate chips."

"Oh, well, I'm afraid that was the last of them."

Beatrice glanced over just as Neal finished his last bite of chocolate chip pancakes. Then his phone rang and he went in the other room.

Belle entered and smiled at Beatrice. "Your dress is in the hall closet. It was just cleaned."

Beatrice nodded and turned back to Venus as she ate some grapes out of the bowl on the counter, casting a sideways glance at her plain pancakes. "So, is that what you're here for? The coronation thing that's not really a coronation because I already went over this with Wikipedia?"

Venus scoffed. "As if I care about Snow White's baby. No, your mom asked me to come."

Beatrice shrugged.

"We wanted to speak to you first, but your great-grandmother was too quick for us," said Gold.
"Speak about what?," asked Beatrice.

Belle cast a look at Venus.

The goddess stood. "I am just going to go check my luggage."

Venus got up and left. Beatrice looked to her parents.

"Why is she here?"

"Well," said Belle, a smile playing at her lips, "your papa and I have been talking. We want to get married."

Beatrice paused.

"Like a vow renewal?"

"Uh, no," said Belle. "We were never quite married in the Enchanted Forest."

"Oh," said Beatrice.

"Not an overwhelming enthusiasm..." said Gold.

"I just..." Beatrice shook her head. "I just thought you were. I mean, you never said you weren't and you just started calling yourself Mrs. Gold."

"Well, French was the name that the curse gave me," explained. "My father- that is, Maurice- is the only one with that name and this was easier."

"Yeah, it's just French was my last name," said Beatrice.

Belle looked perplexed. "Did you want to be Beatrice French?"

"Well, I kind of thought I was. You didn't mention any of this."

"When we first arrived in Storybrooke, there was a lot going on," said Belle. She glanced over at Gold. "We didn't want to overwhelm you."

"Right, like when you didn't tell me I had a brother or Peter Pan was my grandfather..."

"Sweetheart," said Gold, "I am sorry we weren't more clear-"

"Really? That's a new one."

"The point is that we're a family now. Your brother is back with us. The witch is defeated. We just want to do this properly."

"Right," said Beatrice. She nodded. "Okay."

"Okay?," asked Belle.

"Yeah, okay."

"Because we don't have to do anything if you're not comfortable with it," Belle quickly added.

"No, I'm fine," said Beatrice.
"So, yeah, that's basically it," said Beatrice, sipping her coffee.

She and Joseph sat on the bench by the pond.

"You might have said something," he replied.

"What? I'm fine."

Joseph frowned at her. "Then why did we leave the party?"

"I am not the sort of person that being the illegitimate child of Beauty and the Beast bothers me. Okay?"

"Yes, you are."

"No, I mean, they can do what they want. I mean, they could have another kid and I-"

Joseph shot her a look.

"I would be fine with that," Beatrice said haltingly.

He continued sipping his tea in silent wait.

"I am seventeen, I would be pretty pathetic if I was jealous of some younger sibling who would probably be you know, just as magical as me and you know, probably cuter and more cuddly and they could have that ready to go by the time I go to college so that would keep them busy."

"Oh, you're obviously well-adjusted about this."

Emma suddenly arrived and plopped down next to them on the bench.

"So is he in our club now?," asked Emma.

"What club?," asked Joseph.

"The my parents are fairy tale characters club," said Beatrice. "Established 2012. Although, to be fair, your club should be more like 'I'm the Main Character In A Series of Victorian Crime Novels.'"

"Same difference," said Emma. She sighed. "Can we just sit here? It was getting too... weird in there."

"Swan!," shouted Hook.

"It's about to get weird out here," said Beatrice. She looked up. "Did you and Neal race to get here or-"

Emma rolled her eyes.

"He went left. I went right," said Hook.

"Seriously?," asked Emma.

"You guys should really include all the other people in town with a crush on Emma. Jefferson. Walsh isn't a monkey anymore. Merlin's made August not wood... I'm sure we could round up some more," said Beatrice.
"Not helpful," said Emma.

"Swan, why did you leave?," asked Hook.

"Because of that!," said Emma, taking Henry's storybook from Hook.

"What? Did you fight Neal for that?," asked Beatrice.

Hook glared. "It's your family, Swan."

"I don't see my family! I just see a bunch of fairy tales and I'm not a part of it!"

"To be fair, you burned the pages you were in," said Beatrice. "Now, who's really not a part of it? Me."

"Beatrice, I'm trying to have a crisis here."

"I'm having the same one, that's why we have a club." She looked at Joseph. "You're not in this part. You have books and two TV shows and movies and stuff. You're fine."

"Okay, but that's just the Savior thing," said Emma.

"Yes, but at least you're in the book! Do you know what I have, Emma? A movie on the Disney Channel and I'm a boy! A boy!"

"Might I point out something?," asked Joseph.

Hook sighed. "Maybe you can talk some sense into them."

"No, I only meant that Zelena's time portal appears to have reopened."

Beatrice, Emma and Hook followed Joseph's motion towards the pillar of fire that sprang forth into the sky.

"It looks like the 456," said Beatrice.

"Come on. We have to go check it out," said Emma.

They got up off the bench and began making their way towards the barn.

"If there is no TARDIS this time, I am going to be so ticked off," said Beatrice. "Which is incidentally what should have happened in Children of Earth. Maybe Ianto would be alive."

"Come on, Beatrice!," Emma called back with a note of irritation.

They had just arrived at the barn when Emma got a voice mail.

"It's David. He says Zelena killed herself, they think the magic in her pendant started this thing on its own," said Emma, still listening to the phone.

"She killed herself?," asked Beatrice. "How did she kill herself?"

"He doesn't say," said Emma.

"Either way, ladies, we shouldn't be near it," said Hook. "It would be better if we didn't mess about with time travel."
"Really?", Beatrice asked. "I had no idea that you shouldn't screw around with time travel! Thank God Captain Hook is here to tell me!"

"He has a point," said Joseph.

"Someone needs to stop it," said Emma.

"Do you have your powers back?," asked Hook.

"No, but she does," said Emma, motioning at Beatrice.

"Oh, really and what are you going to do?," asked Joseph.

Beatrice paused.

"I just assumed I would stare at it and move my hands around a while and something would happen," said Beatrice.

"Yeah, let's not," said Joseph.

The door to the barn blew open and Emma was dragged towards the vortex. Hook held onto her. Beatrice and Joseph tried to scramble to help but they were having trouble avoiding falling in the golden vortex themselves.

"Hook!"

"Swan!"

They both fell in.

Beatrice rolled her eyes and looked at Joseph.

She basically had one choice.

"Staying here or-" she began.

"I would guess I'm going," said Joseph.

"Well," said Beatrice, jumping slightly into the vortex, "Geronimo!"

Joseph jumped after her.

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A Long Time Ago...

They landed on forest floor not far from where Hook and Emma laid in heaps on the ground.

"You guys alright?," asked Emma.

"Fine," said Hook.

"Fine," said Joseph.

"Beatrice?," asked Emma.

"You know what kills me is that I make these epic Doctor Who references and nobody gets them and there is no way to put them on tumblr."
Emma stood up. "So, you're fine."

"Basically."

"We appear to have landed in the Enchanted Forest," said Hook.

"Oh, is that what it is?," asked Joseph. "However did you conclude that?"

"Guys, seriously?," asked Emma. She sighed. "Besides, it's what I was thinking about as I went in."

"So it must work like other portals," said Beatrice.

"And it also seems to share that the door doesn't stay open for a return trip," said Hook.

Joseph gasped. "Really? However did you guess that?"

Emma looked to Beatrice. "How did you get back last time?"

"The Black Fairy's wand," said Beatrice. "It can recast any spell."

"Great. Where do we get it?"

"Yeah, slight problem."

"What?," asked Emma.

Beatrice turned to Emma. "Well, most of the reason I jumped in after you was to make sure you didn't change the past."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," said Hook.

"Don't mention it," said Joseph.

"Yeah, but if I were to meet the person who has it, it would probably change the past. Or the future."

"Your father," said Joseph.

"That's the one," said Beatrice.

"Yeah, but the Dark Castle has blood magic," said Emma.

"Oh, so you want me to commit a heist," said Beatrice.

"It's your dad. It's practically not stealing at all," said Emma.

"And then my mom will be the only member of my family who hasn't stolen anything," said Beatrice.

"You burned my car!"

"Yeah, but I didn't steal it."

They heard horses galloping and a black carriage sped through the road.

"Hide! It's the Queen's Carriage!," warned Hook.
They hurried to the ditch on the side of the road and followed to where the carriage stopped. They looked and saw Regina stalking out of the carriage.

"It's Regina," said Emma.

"Not Regina. The Evil Queen," said Hook.

"She's even worse without the sensible pantsuits..."

Beatrice was distracted by something else.

"Is that Baby August?," asked Beatrice staring at the puppet boy. "It's like the Uncanny Valley run amok..."

"That is not the Uncanny Valley," said Joseph.

"It's like the Uncanny Valley of cuteness. It's trying so hard to be cute that I am freaking out."

"Stop looking," said Hook.

"How are people not having anxiety attacks?"

"We got by," said Joseph.

"You remember him?," asked Emma. "Weren't you like three?"

"He's a wooden puppet that's come to life. It made an impression."

The Evil Queen spoke. "If I find out, anyone in this village has helped the bandit Snow White, they will suffer dearly. Here's what helping Snow White looks like."

Regina gestured at her Black Knight and he removed a sack from a woman's head.

"Help me! She's gonna kill me!"

"Who wants to be next?," asked Regina.

"Please," the woman pled.

Emma started to move and Hook grabbed her wrist.

"What are you doing?," asked Hook.

"I'm helping that woman. She's just an innocent."

"Um, time travel rules?," said Beatrice. "I thought we went over this. You can't do anything."

"So I'm just supposed to let her rot or die?"

Beatrice sat back on her heels. "Let me tell you a story about a girl called Rose Tyler-"

Emma shook her head. "Enough with the TV-"

"Excuse me, we are in fact travelling through time and there's no handbook for that so I think a TV show that's been on fifty years and is all about time travel is as good a frame of reference as anything we could come up with."
"She makes a fair point," said Joseph.

Emma turned to Hook for support.

"Well, let's hear her out," said Hook.

"Thank you," said Beatrice. "Rose Tyler's father got hit by a car when she was a baby and the Doctor- Nine - took her back to the moment he died so that she could be with him. Only Rose got the bright idea to push him out of the way of the car and humanity was doomed and because the Time Lords weren't around to fix things, weird dragon-y things started flying from the sky and people disappeared and the TARDIS didn't work until Rose's dad got run over by that car like he was supposed to."

"Weird dragon-y thing are not going to fly from the sky," said Emma.

"You have no way of knowing that for sure," said Beatrice.

Emma sighed. "Fine. I get it."

"We need to find Rumplestiltskin," said Emma.

"Yes, we have to do something else first," said Hook.

Emma came out from behind the brush clad in the peasant clothes she had found.

"Oh, well, that's much better," said Hook.

Emma looked at Beatrice and her choice of a blue patterned dress and cape.

"Where did you get that?"

"I conjured it from my memory of my Far North Kingdom wardrobe."

"So you're just a princess wandering the woods?" Hook asked.

"Have you met my dad?"

Joseph wandered back still in his black suit.

"You were supposed to find a disguise," said Hook.

"I can't do it. These peasants are all too short and their taste is appalling. Not to mention the lice."

"Come on, Joseph," said Emma. "We're all suffering. At least you don't have to wear a corset. Right, Beatrice?"

Beatrice snorted. "Yeah, you think I conjured a corset under here?"

"Anyway..." said Hook.

Beatrice looked at Joseph. "Would you like some help?"

"Very much so."

Beatrice closed her eyes and waved her hand.
Emma burst out laughing.

"What?," asked Joseph.

Joseph was wearing a brown tweed cape coat with a coordinating suit complete with frock coat and vest. He reached to the top of his head and pulled off the deerstalker.

"It's a hat for the country, you're in the country," said Beatrice.

"Why has your hat got two fronts?," asked Hook.

Beatrice smirked and exchanged glances with Emma as she stood.

"Why has your shirt got three buckles and still your chest isn't covered?," asked Joseph.

"Guys, as much fun as it would be to do this all day, we've got to find Rumple," said Emma.

"Yeah, save the Fashion Police for when we're back in Storybrooke," Beatrice added.

"So am I to walk around the Enchanted Forest in some sort of Sherlock Holmes fancy dress costume?," asked Joseph.

"If we see a Ye Olde Navy we can stop," said Beatrice.

"What's that from?," asked Emma.

"Shrek Two."

"Beatrice..." said Joseph.

She turned back. "I'll switch the deerstalker for a fez if you want."

They found a road and began walking. After a while they again heard the sound of quickly approaching horses' hooves.

"It could be the Queen again," said Hook.

They jumped to the side of the road. A white carriage passed by. It stopped in front of a fallen tree and Prince Charming stepped out.

"Is that-" Emma asked.

"Can't recognize your own father?," hissed Joseph.

Emma smiled and looked up. Beatrice followed her gaze to what appeared to be Snow White hiding in a tree.

Then Emma broke a branch.

"This tree didn't fall, it was cut," said Charming. "It's an ambush."

"Oh, look who can deduce in his natural habitat..." Joseph whispered.

Beatrice glared at Emma with wide eyes and looked back up at the tree. Snow White watched the knights as they tried to move the log and then fled. Emma looked sheepishly back at Beatrice as her father left with the royal carriage.
Beatrice looked at Emma and shook her head.

"I-"


"I'm sorry-"

"Are you freaking kidding me?!," shouted Beatrice.

"I know, I-"

"One job! You had one job!"

"What's going on?," asked Hook.

"The bandit was Snow White! This was when they were supposed to meet and she was supposed to steal from him and he was supposed to go after her and there was the thing with the trolls except now there wasn't because...!" Beatrice screamed. "You had one job!"

"I screwed up, I know," said Emma.

"If you had accepted any of my Doctor Who marathon invitations this never would have happened," said Beatrice.

"We'll fix it."

"What are we going to do? Set them up on Jdate?!"

"What about Merlin?," asked Joseph.

Beatrice snorted. "No way is he going to go for that. Hey, would you get these two together so there can be this Dark Curse and hey, guess what happens to your Dark Princess?!"

"She's right," said Emma. She turned back to Beatrice. "That leaves one sorcerer who would probably help..."

"Yeah, that's just super..." said Beatrice.

They walked mostly in silence with occasional outbursts of "Are you kidding me?!", followed by Emma profusely apologizing. After a time, they found the Dark Castle.

"Oh, look, home sweet home," said Emma, looking at Beatrice.

Beatrice looked at Joseph. "It's the Dark Castle."

"I know it." He pointed down the mountain. "My house is just down there. I could see the castle from my bedroom window."

"Ah, fate then," said Hook.

Beatrice looked at Emma. "Okay, you go in."

"Me? Why do I have to go in alone?"

"I thought that would be obvious. He might have run into Babylock in the village already, he
wants Hook dead and I-"

"Well, now that you mention it!,’ a high-pitched voice cackled.

Emma gasped as Rumplestiltskin proceeded to magically choke Hook. Beatrice turned away and quickly pulled off her pendant, thrusting it in Joseph's hand. She turned back towards the full-on magical assault.

"Wait! Stop!,’ said Emma.

Rumplestiltskin was not distracted. "I can't tell you how long I've been looking forward to this!"

"You have to listen to me!,’ said Emma.

"I don't know who you three are, but why don't you just run along home?,’ Rumplestiltskin trilled.

Beatrice and Joseph glanced at their respective homes and shrugged at each other. Emma shook her head at their shared joke, not amused at the timing.

"You have to listen to me!"

"Why's that, dearie!"

"Because if you don't, you'll never find your son!,’ said Emma.

"Uh..."

"And what do you know of my son?,’ said Rumplestiltskin.

"His name is Baelfire and you're planning to enact a Dark Curse to find him," said Emma.

"So you're a witch then..."

"I'm the one who breaks the curse," said Emma. "I'm the product of True Love."

"That's all just speculation," said Rumplestiltskin. "And if that's true that means..."

"We're from the future, mate," said Hook.

"Yes, but time travel hasn't been done, mate," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Yeah, that code's been cracked," said Emma.

Rumplestiltskin now turned towards Joseph and Beatrice. "And who might you be?"

"Uh... Donna. Donna Noble."

"Joseph," he said frowning.

"No you're not," said Rumplestiltskin. "Names are sort of my area."

"Martha Jones?"

"No."

"Amelia Pond?"
"No."

"I am Spartacus."

"I don't have all day, dearie."


Beatrice sighed. "Beatrice."

"Was that so hard?"

Beatrice shrugged. "I suppose it depends on your definition of hard."

Rumplestiltskin used his magic to transport them to the front entry of the Dark Castle.

"Thank you, Mr. Go- Rumplestiltskin," said Emma. "I know time travel is hard to swallow."

"Rumple?," a voice called.

"Oh, God," said Beatrice.

"Rumple, why did you leave, we were just getting-

Belle appeared in front of them in a robe of turquoise velvet that she tightened around her upon seeing her visitors.

"It's like two in the afternoon, why are you-" Beatrice stopped. "Oh, my God."

"Yeah," said Joseph.

Beatrice looked at Emma. "Are you freaking kidding me?"

"I said I'm sorry. I don't know how many times I can apologize-"

"Rumple, you didn't say you were bringing visitors back," said Belle. She reached into the pocket of her robe for a handkerchief. "In fact, you didn't say anything."

"I can guess what he might have said..." Hook mused.

"Shut up," said Emma.

"Excuse me. I'll be right back," said Belle.

They followed Rumplestiltskin into the Great Hall. Emma began explaining their predicament and in no time Belle returned wearing an emerald gown, still carrying the handkerchief.

"Can I get your guests something, Rumple?"

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "They aren't staying-"

"We're fine," said Joseph.

"Are you sure?," asked Belle.

Beatrice tried to hide her face. That didn't distract Belle who seemed focused on her.

"You seem hungry," said Belle.
"She's fine," Rumplestiltskin said curtly.

She shot him a glare.

"Are you?," asked Belle.

Emma, Hook and Joseph stared at her.

"I ate some fruit but I was mostly distracted by this thing with my parents and I was at a party, but, seriously, why do we keep having pot luck at these things? Why? Nobody in town has heard of spices. So I was mostly holding out for cake, but I did have a Kind bar and four lattes."

"Four?!," exclaimed Emma. "No wonder you're so..."

"So what?," asked Beatrice.

"I can get you some cheese and bread," said Belle.

"Okay," said Beatrice.

Belle smiled and nodded as she left the room. Rumplestiltskin shook his head.

"Now, you were saying about this meeting?," he began.


Hook reached into his bag and pulled out the story book. Emma opened it to the right page for Rumplestiltskin and found that the pages were blank.

"They were here," said Emma.

"You changed the past," Joseph said tersely. "It's not in the book because it never happened."

"But we have to get them together..." said Emma. "She needs to steal my grandmother's ring and then he has to go after her."

"We know," said Joseph.

"The ripple effect," said Rumplestiltskin. "Once you change something in the past, anything from that point forward is uncertain. The future as you can see is a blank page."

"Time is in flux!," Beatrice added urgently.

The others stared at her.

Beatrice sighed. "Next year, I am going to get a badge for Comic Con and I may never come back. These are awesome references, people."

"We need to get her to steal that ring," said Emma. "We can get their story back on track."

"You're in luck," said Rumplestiltskin. "There's a ball tonight at King Midas' castle. Prince James will be there along with his ring."

"So we just need to get Snow there," said Emma.

"How? We don't even know where she is," said Hook.
"We could return to the site of the foiled robbery," said Joseph. "I could trace her. An experienced tracker like her probably knows how to cover her steps. I would say a five-mile per hour radius, but it's rough terrain and cleaning up after herself would slow her down. It's been three hours, twelve miles at the most-"

Rumplestiltskin cleared his throat loudly.

"As fascinating as that is, dearie, I believe I can help."

They followed Rumplestiltskin over to a crystal ball and he waved his hand. Snow White appeared in the ball.

"She's with Blackbeard," said Hook.

"Blackbeard?," asked Joseph. "Blackbeard's an actual person. Why is he here?"

"She's trying to secure passage," said Hook. "And failing it appears."

"Here you are," said Belle, arriving with a tray.

"Oh, thanks," said Beatrice. She picked up a piece of crusty bread and some brie. "Ooh, is this the kind with the vegetable ash running through it?"

Hook looked at Emma. "She's talking about cheese."

"You talked about rum for thirty minutes on the way here," said Beatrice.

"It comes from the village," said Belle. "I can't get enough of it lately."

"It's good," said Beatrice.

"I'm Belle," she said.

"Oh, Beatrice."

"Beatrice," said Belle. "That's a lovely name."

"This is getting weird..." Emma said quietly.

Belle smiled. "I was just reading this play with a woman called Beatrice in it and I had never heard the name before so I'm just surprised to meet someone with it."

"It sounds like there's an insect at the start of it," Rumplestiltskin huffed.

"Okay..." said Beatrice.

"Never mind him," said Belle. "I think it's lovely. Do you know what it means?"

"Blessing," Joseph offered. "It can also mean a voyager."

"Oh," said Belle. "I like that."

Rumplestiltskin seemed to be growing frustrated. "Look, I'll work on your portal, but only you know what you changed so you can be the ones to fix it."

"Do you need me to wrap this up for you?," Belle asked Beatrice, motioning at the cheese and bread.
"Okay."

Belle left as Rumplestiltskin followed her.

"What is your sudden obsession with feeding people?!," he asked when he thought they were out of earshot.

"She's got to steal that ring," said Emma.

"If she wishes to secure passage, I think I know a captain that might be able to help," said Hook.

"Who?," asked Joseph.

"Me," said Hook.

It was agreed that Emma and Hook should go to the docks alone. Joseph and Beatrice went ahead to the hill overlooking Midas' castle with nothing to do but wait.

"You're oddly quiet," said Joseph.

"Oh, you know, just waiting for Emma and Hook to come out from flirting with Hook and impersonating Hook."

"Something's preying on your mind."

"How can you tell?," asked Beatrice, snacking on some of the cheese Belle had sent along.

"When you think of something unpleasant, it shows on your face. Then you try to push it away and then you always return to it. You're biting the inside of your right cheek, trying not to cry."

"I'm not going to cry."

"Oh, well, then..."

Hook and Emma appeared out of the brush.

"Hey, guys," said Emma. "Did we miss much?"

"You know, it's a castle. It's gold," said Beatrice. "I sang Goldfinger and then some other James Bond theme songs."

Emma sat down. "We made contact with Snow so all we have to do is wait for her to take the ring."

"Oh, is that all?," asked Beatrice.

Emma sighed. "I know. I screwed up. Could you maybe stop harping on it?"

"Oh, by all means then, let's not harp on it."

"Everyone makes mistakes, Beatrice."

"It must be so great to make mistakes."

Emma shook her head. "What are you talking about?"
"I mean, you're the Savior, whatever you do they just keep having to take you back..."

"What is your problem?" Emma asked harshly.

"Problem? I don't have problems. I can't have problems. I can't have problems or make mistakes because some people get to have all the problems and make all the mistakes so there are none left for the rest of us! You see because it's okay to say your sister's the anti-Christ and steal the magic beans and bail on your family and frame your girlfriend and listen to an evil fairy because you're the favorite! Everything that ever happens is in some way about you!"

Emma was taken aback. Hook began to look scared.

"Are you jealous of Neal?," Emma asked carefully.

"Jealous? No, see, I don't get to be jealous. I have to be perfect!"

"Nobody's saying that-"

"And then when True Love Baby 2.0 Platinum Edition comes along, I'll have to be even more perfect so maybe I can still live in the house!"

Emma frowned. "Are your parents having another kid?"

"The writing's on the wall, people!"

"So they're not?"

"No," said Joseph.

"Oh, he can speak," said Hook.

"Hey, maybe my grandfather will want another shot at this, too, he'll take 2.0 under his wing and then I'll lose that gig."

"As fascinating as all of this is-"

They looked up to see Rumplestiltskin standing behind them.

"Oh, right, no time for me, let's keep the plan going..." said Beatrice.

"Quite right," said Rumplestiltskin.

Beatrice rolled her eyes with a glare.

"You didn't really think I was going to leave it all to chance, did you?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Of course not. What would that do to the plan?," asked Beatrice.

He didn't answer and instead a piece of paper appeared in his hand. "An invitation to the ball."

"So you'll be inside to look out for her?," asked Emma.

"Not me," said Rumplestiltskin. "I'll be far too busy working out a way to get you home."

"Like it's hard..." muttered Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin looked at her. "Didn't your father ever teach you not to interrupt, dearie?"
Hook covered his mouth to hide his smirk.

"Nope," said Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin turned back to Hook and Emma. "I think you two should go inside."

"Alone? No," said Emma, looking frantically at Beatrice and Joseph. "We can't just leave them out here."

"Sure you can," said Beatrice.

"Yes, leave the peasants out here and have fun playing princess," said Rumplestiltskin.

"Oh, I'm the peasant?," said Beatrice. "Yeah, sure, you go ahead and think that."

He ignored her and waved his hand. Hook and Emma appeared out of a cloud of garnet smoke. Emma appeared in a huge red ballgown and Hook was in a surprisingly not leather suit.


"But I'm not supposed to stick out," said Emma. "What if someone remembers me in the future?"

"Because what you had before was such an intricate disguise," said Rumplestiltskin. He materialized a mirror. "I've cast a glamor spell. This is how you'll appear to everyone inside. Now run along and make sure Snow White gets that ring. Once they're back on track, everything else will be, too."

Rumplestiltskin vanished. Emma and Hook went to the ball.

"We could go in," said Joseph. "Surely you could come up with something."

"I don't care."

"Surely they're better off with our help."

"Yeah, I think they've got this."

"There's something else," said Joseph.

"Fine," said Beatrice. She motioned towards the castle. "Emma gets to come and see her fairy tale parents in action and go to the ball which is great. It really is."

"You've seen plenty of your parents."

"Seeing my parents is like watching The Unicorn and the Wasp."

Joseph didn't answer.

"Okay, explain the reference."

"It's fun, I like watching it, but sometimes I just get to thinking about how they don't know that Forest of the Dead, Midnight, Turn Left and Journey's End are about to happen and there is nothing I can do to help them."

"Well, you could do something to help them," suggested Joseph.

"No."
"You could."

"I can't. I can't take Neal from him," Beatrice added quietly. "I didn't do that in the other world, I'm not going to start doing it here. I've been lecturing about time travel all day. I would like to at least keep my authority on that."

"You don't have to-"

"Yes, I do, but the more I have to help with this part of the plan, the more I am the architect of my mother's downfall and my crappy childhood so instead of going inside, I'm going to take a nap and wake up as less of a bitch. Okay?"

Joseph shrugged. "Okay."

"Thanks," said Beatrice, laying down and resting her head on her arm. She closed her eyes. "Let me know when we can go home."

Beatrice stirred awake to see Hook and Joseph.

"So, she stole it?" asked Beatrice, sitting up. "Where's Emma? Let's go."

"There's been a complication," said Hook.

"A complication?" asked Beatrice.

"Snow White doesn't have the ring," said Joseph. "Emma does."

"And the Evil Queen has Emma," added Hook.

Beatrice glared at them both.

"Really?" she asked.
"Whose wagon are we in?," asked Beatrice as they rode through the Enchanted Forest, a place she thought could really use road signs.

Hook didn't answer.

"It's just we aren't supposed to be changing the past and we seem to be pretty crappy at it and you just stole some guy's wagon," said Beatrice.

"We needed transportation, I procured it," said Hook.

"Okay, let's not have any more major moves without running it by me first."

"You may have him in your thrall but not me, Dark Princess," said Hook, motioning at Joseph.

"Yeah, you would pretty much be dead."

They heard a scream.

"That sounds like Snow White," said Joseph.

They came upon the pair. Snow White was tied up in some sort of trap, Charming was taunting her from below.

"Why do people find this romantic?," asked Beatrice.

"You seem to have forgotten who your father is, love."

"Not even if I tried," she muttered.

Charming continued to taunt Snow as her net swung in the air. "Relax. I'm not gonna turn you in. All I want is the ring you stole."

"Not the jewelry type."

"Indeed. I noticed."

"I don't have your ring."

"Then why don't I believe you?"

"You should. She's telling the truth, mate." He bowed. "Prince Charles."

Beatrice laughed. "Prince Charles? Seriously?"

Hook shot her a glare. "Lovely ball the other night. Mutton was a tad overcooked, but that happens. Snow White doesn't have your ring, my princess does."

"Oh, she's your princess now?," asked Beatrice. "I am so telling her that."

"And I need your help to get her back," Hook finished, ignoring Beatrice.
"She has my ring. That's two women who robbed me. Where is she?"

"He can count," said Joseph is mock astonishment.

Snow White laughed.

"That's the problem," said Hook. "The Queen's Castle."

"Actually, that's not a problem at all," said Snow White. "I know it well. It used to be mine. I can get us in there, but not from here. So you let me down, you get your princess, you get your ring and I never have to see your charming face again."

Charming swung his sword and cut down the rope to Snow’s net.

They piled back in the cart and began the trip to Regina's castle. Snow White sat across from Beatrice in the back.

"You look familiar."

Beatrice now recalled that her mother and Snow White had been very good friends growing up. Also, she looked like her mother.

"No, I don't," said Beatrice.

"You look like someone," said Snow. "I just can't think of who."

"I've just got one of those faces..."

Recognition dawned on Snow's face. "You know who you look like..."

Beatrice held her breath as she waited for her to finish.

"Belle of Avonlea. Do you know her?"

Beatrice then thought of a perfect explanation provided again by that leading time travel authority, Doctor Who.

"She's my cousin."

"Is she?"

"Yeah, we get that all the time. I'm Adeola from Padua," she said, adding on the name of her great-grandparents' province for a touch of plausibility.

"Adeola?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah, you're acting like you've never heard my name, Sherlock. Lady Adeola of Padua."

"I haven't heard much of old friends since I've been on the run from my stepmother," said Snow White. "How is Belle?"

"She's good," said Beatrice. "You know, she's got stuff going."

"I'm glad." Snow smiled fondly. "Is she still betrothed or has she married?"

"What? To Gaston?," Beatrice sneered. "That loser?"
"Did she meet someone else? Who is he?"

"As much as I hate to interrupt your female chatter..." said Charming.

"Oh, my God, that is going on the list..." said Beatrice.

"What list?"

Snow White answered for her. "The list of stupid comments made by charming princes."

The cart stopped.

"Is this it?," asked Hook.

Snow White looked up. "That it is. The Summer Palace."

"We'll move after the sun goes down," said Charming.

Beatrice looked up. Regina's palace.

Her mother would be locked in one of those towers.

"You know, Belle used to come here and stay with us every summer. Before my mother died."

"Oh," said Beatrice, trying not to betray her emotions.

"Belle used to love the library. I'm sure Regina's had it torn down."

"Right..."

"We're gonna need help to get in," said Snow. "I'll be back."

Snow White hurried off. Joseph walked to Beatrice.

"She was the Queen's prisoner here, wasn't she?"

"Yes."

He turned with her to look at the palace.

"How did it happen?," he asked.

"What?"

"How was she ever parted from your father? It doesn't seem as if it would be a simple thing to break into the Dark Castle."

"Her dad, Maurice, he was working with the Blue Fairy. They wrote and said he was dying."

"So she went to his side. Alone."

"Yes."

"Then what?"

Beatrice shrugged. "They tried to kill me. The clerics. They poisoned her, tortured her and when that didn't work, they put her under a sleeping curse."
"Yes, but how did she come to be Regina's prisoner?"

"Snow White makes the Blue Fairy release her, but my dad's already gone to prepare for the curse. Before they can be reunited, Blue takes her away and gives her to Regina for a tree."

"A tree?"

"An enchanted tree."

"And you still don't want to change anything?"

Beatrice shook her head. "I can't change anything."

"You won't consider the possibility you can."

"I'm not screwing over everyone else just for me," said Beatrice. "And even if it wouldn't-"

"Continue."

Beatrice sighed and shook her head again. "He wouldn't pick me."

"Beatrice, your father does love you."

"Yeah, I know and... he doesn't love me the way he loves Neal. He never will and if they have another kid, he won't love me like he'll love that kid. That's just what is. I will never have that."

She looked at Joseph. "I don't see you running to change your future."

"I may have suffered some identity crises, but I had a family to look after me," said Joseph. "I wouldn't give them up."

"Then you should understand."

Night fell over the Queen's Castle. They readied themselves for the incursion and suddenly Red appeared out of the woods.

"Hey! Who the hell are you?," said Charming.

"Name is Red. I'm a friend of Snow's. She sent me to help you get into the Queen's Castle."

"How?," asked Hook.

"Use your imagination," said Beatrice.

Red removed her cloak and transformed into a wolf before their eyes. She turned and stalked towards the palace.

"Right..." said Joseph.

"Well, allons-y," said Beatrice.

They followed Red inside to the dungeon where she took on one of the Queen's Black Knights. Charming knocked another down and Hook put the cloak back over Red, returning her to human form.

"Someone's coming," said Red.
They stood on guard again and were relieved to see Emma emerge from the darkness.

"Swan."

"Hook."

"What the hell are you doing? You're depriving me of a dashing rescue," said Hook.

"Yeah, because you're the only one here," said Beatrice.

"Sorry, the only one who saves me is me." Emma slid the ring off her finger. "Speaking of which. I won't be around much longer unless we find where this belongs."

Charming spoke. "I think that belongs to me."

"You guys have a way out of here?," asked Emma.

"Follow me," said Red. "Snow told me where to meet her."

It was then they noticed the woman Regina had taken prisoner next to Emma.

"Thank you, Leia."

They followed.

"Swan, you didn't," said Hook.

"She was to be executed in the morning. I couldn't just leave her there to die," said Emma.

"Actually, if she's to die, she pretty much has to," he responded.

Emma looked at Beatrice. "I suppose you think the same thing."

Beatrice shrugged. "You already busted her out. I'm not throwing her back in."

Charming returned. "I hate to break up a reunion but we have to keep moving. We have to find Snow White."

"Where is she?," asked Emma.

"Yes, slight problem," said Joseph, looking through a broken window.

Beatrice and Emma rushed over. Snow White was tied to a stake as Regina stalked across the room.

"We have to get down there before it's too late," said Emma.

"I don't think we can," said Charming.

Emma looked at Beatrice. "Beatrice?"

Regina conjured a fireball in her hand.

"Yeah, get ready for the timeline to be truly messed up," sighed Beatrice.

Beatrice held out her hand and a broom appeared. Before Regina could throw her fireball, she was on the broom and flying down towards the Evil Queen.
"What is she doing?" asked the woman.

"She's a witch," Charming said in astonishment.

"You seem so much smarter here," said Joseph.

Regina watched as the broom flew down and she had to dodge Beatrice's magical fireball which caused hers to fall impotently to the ground. Regina launched another, landing Beatrice off her broom and on the marble floor.

"Who are you and what are you doing in my castle?" Regina demanded.

"What does it look like," asked Beatrice, standing up.

"Guards! Get another stake!" Regina shouted.

The Black Knights came running towards her and Beatrice stamped her foot to the floor causing them to slip and slide on the ice.

Furious, Regina raised her hands again to launch another fireball. Regina took a deep breath and a wall of ice grew from the floor and across the room, blocking her view of snow. She conjured another fireball but it bounced off helplessly.

Beatrice ran over to the stake and waved her hand, releasing Snow from her bonds.

"Come on," said Beatrice.

"You did all that," Snow White said in astonishment. "You have magic."

"Meet us outside, guys!" Beatrice shouted at the others looking down on them.

"On it!" Emma shouted back.

The next morning at their campsite Beatrice found the gratitude a little hard to cope with.

"You're a sorceress," Snow White said in astonishment. "Belle never mentioned she was related to a sorceress."

"She doesn't quite know it yet," said Beatrice.

"Thank you again for saving me."

"Yeah, no problem."

"I feel like I should do something else to thank you," said Snow.

"That's okay."

"She wasn't alone," said Charming.

Snow White turned to Charming with an amused look. "Right because that was you on the broom and putting up the big ice wall and stopping the Black Knights..."

"I stopped a Black Knight."

"Yeah, that was real charming of you..."
Beatrice went and sat next to Emma, Hook and Joseph.

"They're warming up to each other," said Emma. "This could work."

"Now we just have the problem of the Evil Queen seeking revenge against Beatrice," said Joseph.

"Well, when she meets me she won't have magic for a few days so maybe she'll have time to cool off," said Beatrice.

"Or we could hope the identical cousin story holds," said Hook.

Emma looked at Beatrice. "You did look sort of different when you first came to Storybrooke."

"That's a problem for the future," said Hook. He cast a glance at the woman as she talked with Red. "We have another problem in the present, namely what do we do with her?"

"I had to save her," said Emma.

"Sure, you did the noble thing, but she's supposed to be dead. Her presence in the Enchanted Forest could have unforeseen consequences."

"She's just a sweet, innocent woman."

"What if she had a child who grows into a mass murderer?" asked Hook.

"The Dark Curse is barely two years away," said Joseph. "If she has a child he won't grow into anything for a long time."

"It could be something else," hook bit back. "We're best not finding out. She doesn't belong here."

Emma spoke. "I know exactly what we can do. Take her with us."

Hook looked at Beatrice. "Don't you have an anecdote to share about the time sorcerer?"

Emma looked at Beatrice. "Well?"

"Actually, Emma is proposing exactly what the Doctor would do and has done on several occasions."

"Really?", Emma asked, pleased at the surprise.

"Yeah, totally, we bring her back with us, she can't mess with the timeline here," said Beatrice.

They went over to the woman and put the idea to her.

"The future?", she asked skeptically.

"You can't stay here. You were supposed to die hours ago," said Emma.

She shook her head. "I don't understand. I just want to get back to my family."

"They need to believe you're dead," said Hook. "Because that's what they've always thought."

"Trust us," said Emma.

"With all due respect, I don't trust you or believe you."
Beatrice shook her head. "That's why he has the blue box..."

"What?," asked Hook.

"I just think we would be easier to believe with a big blue box that says police."

"Might we speak alone?," asked Joseph, surprising his companions.

"Alone?," asked the woman with equal surprise.

"Over there ought to do," said Joseph.

Joseph led the woman away.

"What's he doing?," asked Emma.

"Like I know," Beatrice answered.

Joseph turned the woman around and faced them both away from the others.

"Best you not make a lot of noise," said Joseph.

"Why? What are you going to do?"

"I only mean to tell you that I know who you are," said Joseph.

"You do?"

"I do. I also know that if you return with us, we can find your family."

"You do?"

"I do, but the others were telling the truth. We can't leave you here. So please, just come with us and don't tell them why you've changed your mind. It will be easier if they don't know until we get there."

"You promise my family will be there?"

"I promise."

"Then I'll go."

They turned around and returned to the group.

"She's agreed to come with us," said Joseph.

"Quite a change of heart," said Hook.

"I'm very persuasive," said Joseph.

"Well, now we just have to make sure my parents are back on track," said Emma.

"What?," asked the woman.

"Have any of you seen Snow? She went to the stream but she hasn't-" Charming patted down his pockets. "The ring. She took it."

"Really?," asked Emma. "Do you know where she might be headed?"
"She was seeking passage on a pirate ship. There's only one way to get to the harbor from here. The Troll Bridge."

Charming ran off.

Beatrice looked at Emma. "The book?"

Hook gave Emma the storybook. She anxiously flipped the pages and illustrations and lettering appeared on the pages.

"We did it!," said Emma. "Now all we have to do is go back to the Dark Castle and go home!"

"The Dark Castle?," asked the woman. She looked at Joseph.

"Save the questions for later," said Joseph.

At the bridge towards the Dark Castle, Joseph stopped walking.

"Beatrice?"

"What?"

He motioned at the tweed greatcoat. "I'm not wearing this back to the future."

Beatrice sighed and waved her hands. There was a puff of smoke, Joseph was returned to his black suit, Hook to his leathers, Emma to her red jacket and Beatrice to her party dress. The woman stared at them in amazement.

"Is that what they wear there?," she asked.

"Yeah and actually you've been in Regina's dungeon which didn't look all that clean so..."

Beatrice waved her hand and the woman appeared a rose-colored shirtdress, brown leather boots and a wool coat. "If that's not okay, I'll give you some money when we get there."

"It's fine," said the woman.

The front doors magically opened. Emma, Hook, Beatrice and the woman followed the open doors to the Great Hall. Joseph paused as he heard Belle hum not far off. She had another handkerchief out, dabbing at her chin.

Something seemed amiss and he reached inside his breast pocket and pulled out a piece of paper next to Beatrice's pendant.

He walked towards Belle.

"Belle."

"Sherlock," said Belle. "Shouldn't you be in the Great Hall? Rumple is waiting and you need to get home."

He held out Beatrice's pendant.

Belle was astonished. "How did you get that? That's my mother's pendant?"

"I got it from your daughter," said Joseph.
Belle was dumbstruck.

"I, I-"

"You need to go get Rumplestiltskin out of the Great Hall and he needs to freeze the others so they won't know what we're discussing."

"Why?"

"Please, Belle. For her."

Rumplestiltskin stood behind a table and put together a potion. "Is it done?"

"We're ready," said Emma. "Everything's done. My parents are back on track."

Rumplestiltskin motioned at the woman. "And you've brought some luggage."

The woman stiffened.

"Yeah, it's a long story," said Emma. "What about the portal? Can you reopen it?"

"Yes, there was a problem. It would seem that only one who's traveled through the portal can reopen it, so unless you can wield magic..."

"Yes," said Beatrice.

Rumplestiltskin frowned at her. "What?"

"Yes."

"You wield magic?," he sneered.

"Yes, I can wield magic and I traveled through the portal so we can just get this thing started and we will be out of your way..."

"Where's the other one?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

Beatrice turned around. "He was right behind me."

"Where did he go?," asked Hook.

The door to the Great Hall opened. Belle stuck her head in.

"Rumple?"

"A few minutes. I'm almost through with them."

"No," said Belle.

Her tone made the others look up in surprise.

"No?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"No," said Belle, attempting to soften her tone with a smile. "I need to speak with you right now in the other room."
Rumplestiltskin grimaced as he set aside the potion.

"Wait here," he said curtly to his guests as he walked over to the door.

Before he could inquire about Belle's strange behavior, she made yet another request.

"And you need to freeze them now," she whispered.

Rumplestiltskin didn't understand but he sensed Belle's urgency. A snap of his hand had the guests stunned in place. Belle grabbed him by the wrist and dragged him into the grand foyer. Joseph leaned up against the table.

"What now?," asked Rumplestiltskin. "I suppose you changed something and you don't want the others to know."

"Not quite yet," said Joseph. "But I don't want the others to know."

"What was your name again?"

"Sherlock," said Joseph. "We met the other day in the village."

"I didn't meet anyone in the village-"

"Think harder."

Rumplestiltskin frowned.

"Alright, I'll give you a hint: my uncle is the librarian." He lifted Belle's wrist. "I asked about this bracelet."

Belle's eyes widened. "But you..."

"Yeah."

"I'm still not seeing the point, dearie," said Rumplestiltskin.

"I just thought since you were about to take a forgetting potion anyway you might want to know her future."

"No," said Rumplestiltskin.

"No? Too bad really. Spoiler one, she is going to get a letter that her father is dying," said Joseph.

"Papa?," asked Belle. "He's dying?"

"No, he's not," said Joseph. "Also, spoiler two, not your father."

Belle was incredulous. "What do you mean he's not my father? Of course he is my father. And why would he say he's dying if he's not?"

"To lure you home," said Joseph.

Belle shook her head. "Why would he do that?"

"Because they know."

"Know what?," asked Rumplestiltskin.
"You know," said Joseph staring at the wizard, "you always purport yourself as being so clever but all the evidence is right here in front of you and you can't see the forest for the trees."

"See what?"

"I would have thought it would have been useful in your trade."

"What?!," he shouted.

"Well, let's start with the excess saliva."

"The what?"

"She's carrying a handkerchief with her to deal with it. Changes in taste, sudden cravings-"

"What?"

"Increased libido is another, but it's difficult to tell what would count as an increase with you two, but I thought the obvious would have been the increased breast size-"

"The what?," demanded Rumplestiltskin.

"Her gowns are too tight! How did you miss that?!"

With a wave of his hand, Joseph was slammed against the wall. ]

"Rumple, stop!," Belle shouted.

"Did you just hear him?!"

"He's right!"

"Right? About what?," he asked staring her in complete confusion.

"I'm... I'm..."

"Pregnant!," Joseph spat from the floor.

"She is not-"

"Rumple, yes, I am," said Belle.

Rumplestiltskin finally turned to her. "You're what?"

Her face broke out in a smile. "I'm pregnant."

"Oh, Belle..."

"You're not upset?"

"No, sweetheart, of course not. Here." He embraced her. "I had no idea."

Joseph brought himself to his feet. He leaned over a table, still recovering from the magical blow. "Might I continue?"

Belle turned back, holding Joseph's hand. "You said they know. They know I'm pregnant?"

"Yes."
"Why would they care?"

Joseph paused.

This was the difficult part.

"I'm going to assume that there are three possible pasts for me. The first is the one where we never came here. Alas, that's gone. Second, I don't tell you what I'm about to tell you and events play out as they always have. Third, I tell you what I am about to tell you and you take the memory potion, maybe thinking you can stop it anyway and events play out as they always have. I know it's unlikely, but I invite you to contemplate the fourth option. I tell you what I am about to tell you and you make some changes."

"And why would we do that?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Maurice sends the letter because it's the only way to get you home and it is the only chance they have of murdering your daughter."

"Murdering?," asked Belle, pulling closer to Rumplestiltskin.

"They're going to take away your voice and tie you up and pour poison down your throat," said Joseph. He looked at Rumplestiltskin. "The child will live. Just maimed. Would you care to know what happens next?"

"Yes," Belle answered while Rumple's mouth was still hanging open.

"The Blue Fairy who is behind all of this will realize she can't kill the child so she will put Belle under a sleeping curse and just let you think she's dead."

"A sleeping curse?"

"Yes, by the way, your daughter will always be afraid of the dark. Anyway, Belle awakens from the sleeping curse just in time to be traded to the Evil Queen," said Joseph.

"I would never let that happen," seethed Rumplestiltskin.

"Oh, see, you won't have a choice because you won't know because you'll be awaiting the arrival of the Dark Curse."

"The Dark Curse?," asked Belle.

Joseph caught the glint in Rumplestiltskin's eye.

"Yes, the one the Evil Queen is plotting," said Joseph. "It's meant to take everyone in this realm away and forget their true identities, to separate you all from what you love. And it works. You will be a patient in an asylum."

"An asylum?," asked Belle.

"A place for mad people. Not very nice. I've never cared for them. You'll stay there until one day your daughter begins to grow and Regina will send you away and you will stay away."

"Away?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Yes, far away from you, with no memory of who she really is or who she loved and for fifteen years, your daughter will believe that you didn't care or worse and then even when you manage to
find each other, after you find your son, would you like to know what happens then?"

"What?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Your daughter realizes she is second place."

"What?," asked Belle.

"What's worse than realizing she's in second place is that she think she belongs there," said Joseph. "She accepts it. Right now, she thinks you two are considering having another child and she's trying to talk herself into third. Am I the only one who sees something wrong with this?"

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "No..."

"She would and has given up worlds for you. I had to talk to you alone because she didn't want to put the choice to you and it was not about wanting to ensure the future, it was that she was certain you wouldn't pick her."

They were silent.

"What do we do?," asked Belle.

"I recognize that keeping this knowledge will change your possible future and therefore, I would like to make a deal."

"A deal?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"If you choose her now, I will give you the name Baelfire has taken in the Land Without Magic and how to find him on enchanted parchment to be opened after the Dark Curse breaks." He waved the paper in the air, then fished through his pockets for a pen. As he wrote he continued to speak. "Also, she needs to be fifteen when that happens."

"But the Dark Curse-" Rumplestiltskin protested.

"I'm not interested in excuses," said Joseph. "I'm interested in a deal. Isn't that what you do?"

They were quiet.

"Or you don't and I am perfectly happy to carry on how we were. You won't know the difference."

"Fifteen?," asked Belle. She was clearly more interested, but Joseph thought that it was rather she was more willing to demonstrate her interest. Rumplestiltskin was trying to play it cool, but even with reptilian eyes, Joseph could read the man.

"Yes, there are other conditions," said Joseph.

"Of course there are," said Rumplestiltskin.

"For her. She has to be introduced to coffee at a young age, when Doctor Who comes back from its hiatus, she needs to watch it. An iPhone would probably be good." He looked at Belle. "You'll need to be fingerprinted at some point."

"Why would you do this?," asked Rumplestiltskin.

"Because he loves her," said Belle.
"What?"

"She's right in there," said Joseph, motioning at the door to the Great Hall.

"Beatrice," Belle said with a smile.

"Beatrice." He looked at Rumplestiltskin. "Aren't you glad it wasn't the one flirting with the pirate?"

Rumplestiltskin was silent.

"Do we have a deal?," asked Joseph holding out his hand. He motioned at the paper. "I've written it on the outside. Fifteen. Coffee. Doctor Who. Belle needs to get fingerprinted. You might try to get a Starbucks in Storybrooke, there really is nowhere to sit when you just want to have a cup of tea and not have a werewolf flirting with you, but I won't make that a part of the deal."

Rumplestiltskin took his hand.

"Also, you might find that Regina is looking for a girl who can conjure ice..." Joseph added.

Rumplestiltskin glared.

Rumplestiltskin snapped his fingers. Belle and Joseph followed behind him as the others sprang to life.

"Where did you go?," asked Emma.

"I had to use the bathroom," said Joseph.

"Okay..." said Beatrice. "Could I have the wand?"

Rumplestiltskin waved his hand and the wand appeared in Beatrice's palm.

"Thanks," said Beatrice.

"Have a safe journey," said Belle.

"Thank you," said Beatrice.

Belle stepped back with Rumplestiltskin as Beatrice waved the wand. Belle gasped as the vortex appeared and the visitors from the future jumped in.

The vortex dissipated and the Black Fairy's wand clattered to the ground.

"Gods..." breathed Belle. "She just did-"

Before Belle could finish her sentence, Rumplestiltskin was on his knees, his eyes closed as he pressed his hands to Belle's abdomen.

"Rumple?," Belle asked. "What are you doing?"

"How could I have not seen it?"

"Rumple?"

Rumplestiltskin looked up. "She's powerful, Belle. So powerful."
Belle stared down at him, unsure how to respond to such a comment.

He saved her the trouble.

"And loved," he whispered against her stomach. "So loved."

Belle smiled and ran her fingers through Rumplestiltskin's curls, content to let him nuzzle there as long as he wanted.

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2002

Beatrice sat in the coat closet and sobbed. She was curled up against herself and had been since she ran in here.

He didn't love her. He didn't love her.

The door opened. Beatrice didn't look up until she heard the tap of a cane against the hardwood.

"Daddy?"

Mr. Gold looked down at the pitiful heap on the floor.

"It's only the third day, sweetheart and I dare say you aren't going to learn anything inside the coat closet..."

"Where's Pamela?"

"She has a dentist appointment and your mother is at work. Now, why are you in the coat closet?"

She mumbled.

"I'm sorry?," asked Gold.

"They said you didn't love me."

"Who said that?"

"The other kids. They said you were the meanest man in town and you didn't love me."

Gold grimaced as he got on his knees. His leg would throb, but he needed to look into her eyes.

"Now, they were partially right. I am the meanest man in town, but there is nothing I love quite as much as you, Beatrice and I have for a long time."

"Since I came out of Mommy?"

Gold smiled. Beatrice had just learned the broad strokes of that particular aspect of life and she seemed to be incredibly curious about it.

"Since I knew you were inside Mommy," said Gold. "Come here."

He pulled her close for a hug and she reciprocated by squeezing his neck.

"Come on," said Gold standing up, brushing himself off. "You can come with me to the shop."

"I have school..."
"The day's almost over and I think you'll be alright to miss this once," said Gold.

She took his hand and followed him out of the coat closet.

"Mr. Gold," said the teacher, "I am-"

"Miss Wales," said Gold, cutting her off, "is bullying something you allow in Kindergarten?"

"No, Mr. Gold, of course not-"

"Then do you have difficulty controlling a group of five and six-year olds?"

"No, I-"

"See because the next time I find out my daughter has been made to cry, that's when we're actually going to find out how mean I am."

"Yes, Mr. Gold," said Miss Wales.

"Good." He took Beatrice by the shoulder as she returned with her princess backpack. "Come along, sweetheart."

As they walked out and almost made it to the Cadillac, they were intercepted by Mayor Mills, pushing her son along in a grey stroller. Beatrice immediately made for Henry much to Regina’s chagrin. She made a game of waving at the baby as Regina was forced to watch. Henry made goofy smiles and drooled while Beatrice covered her eyes to play peekaboo.

"Mr. Gold."

"Madame Mayor."

She turned to look at Beatrice. "Are you feeling unwell, Miss Gold?"

Beatrice fell silent. Regina intimidated most adults in town to say nothing of a shy five-year-old.

"Dismissal's not for another two hours," Regina added, looking at Gold. "I would hate to see you get in trouble for truancy."

Gold smiled. "That is if Sheriff Humbert's patrol car ever gets repaired."

"I'm sorry?," said Regina.

"Well, I noticed his car's been parked outside your house for hours at a time each night," said Gold. "I just assumed it had broken down there. This is why it's so important to make capital investments. Perhaps we could discuss it at the next council meeting."

"I don't think that will be necessary, Mr. Gold."

"No? Perhaps Sidney Glass could write an article about it."

"Good day, Mr. Gold," said Regina, pushing the stroller quickly away. "Come on, Henry."

Gold smiled. Of course he could have just said please, but it was so much more satisfying to needle Regina in other ways. He put Beatrice in the backseat and began to drive.

"Henry's adopted, right?," asked Beatrice.
"Right."

"But he grew in some mommy’s tummy, not Regina’s..."

"That’s right."

"Then where is she?"

"Where’s who?"

"Henry’s other mommy."

"I don’t know, sweetheart," said Gold. He cast a glance in the rearview mirror. "I suspect we’ll find out someday."

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**Storybrooke, Present**

The party for the new prince continued into the night. Belle watched the door, catching the suspicious glances of both of her grandmothers. Catherine and Venus had been in a flurry of conversation since they first sat down hours ago. Neal was with Henry. David and Mary Margaret beamed as friends came one by one to meet their son. Belle wished she could enjoy the party more, but right now she was worried about her baby.

The doorbell dinged and Belle looked up. It was only Pamela, she stood with her umbrella in one hand, pressing her slight weight into it. She was a waifish thing with stern eyes that belied her true personality.

"I didn't find her," said Pamela. "I didn't find him, either."

"Did you try looking?," asked Merlin.

Pamela smiled tightly. "Well, I didn't see any elderly wizards doing anything-"

"Elderly?," asked Merlin.

"Yes, elderly, it's a small wonder you can even walk with all the creaking in your bones..."

"Creaking in my bones? Yeah, why don’t we see how much my bones creak when I crack that umbrella over your skull?"

"I would love to see you try."

"Oh, you bet you would."

"Thank you, Miss Lyndon," said Gold, cutting them off. They could have gone on all day. "I appreciate your looking."

"So the Wicked Witch really did herself in?," asked Pamela.

"Yes," Gold answered without hesitation.

"Very well then," said Pamela. "If I had to hear one more wicked pun, I might have done her in myself."

Pamela walked off towards Venus and Catherine.
Belle checked her watch and looked up at Gold.

"Should it have taken this long?"

"Sweetheart, she'll be fine."

"But we don't know that," Belle argued. "We've never known anything past today."

Merlin looked at Belle. "You saw her leave did you not?"

Belle frowned. "We ought to go to the barn."

Just then, the bell to the door dinged and Emma rushed in towards David, Mary Margaret and Henry. Beatrice was behind her before the door shut.

Belle let out a huge breath.

"And what sort of time do you call this?," asked Pamela.

"Sorry."

Pamela gave her a squeeze. "Wandering around unescorted with a young suitor?"

"You'll get a reputation," Venus teased.

Beatrice went to give both great-grandmothers their own hug.

"Where's your pendant?," asked Catherine.

"Joseph has it. I had to take it off." She looked back at Pamela before the woman could get a word out. "Not like that. Emma was there."

"She is not a suitable chaperone," Pamela added quietly.

"So, you're not going to feel better if I say Hook was there?"

"No."

Beatrice walked over to her parents. "Hey. Guess where I was?"

"Well, wherever you were, you didn't answer my calls," said Gold.

Beatrice slid in the booth next to him.

"Oh, I don't know," said Emma, walking over with Henry's book. "Does the Enchanted Forest sound like it's outside your coverage zone?"

"What are you talking about?," asked David.

She flipped open the book. "Remember Princess Leia?"

"Or Lady Adeola of Padua?," asked Beatrice.

"What are you talking about?," asked Henry.

"Adeola?," asked Neal.

Mary Margaret stared at Beatrice as she held the newborn prince. "I knew it!"
"Wait, so Belle doesn't have an identical cousin that looks just like Beatrice?,” asked David.

"Wow, you guys actually believed that story," said Beatrice.

The door opened again. This time it was Joseph and Hook escorting the woman in. Gold got up and walked over to Joseph.

"Mr. Gillette."

"Mr. Gold."

He followed Joseph's gaze over to the table where both families had crowded around as Emma and Beatrice told their tale.

"You don't recognize someone," said Gold.

"I met Venus this morning," said Joseph. "The older woman..."

"Belle's other grandmother. Catherine." Joseph looked at him. "She came to the Dark Castle to help Belle with her pregnancy."

"You took my deal."

"We shook hands."

"I didn't think anything had changed..." He looked over at Beatrice. "I remember things how they were."

"You changed them. The price you pay may well be remembering them the way they were."

"You put the parchment in my pocket. It was your hand," said Joseph.

"You may get your memories back, you may not," said Gold. "Anyone else?"

"The woman with the umbrella."

"Pamela Lyndon, Beatrice's nanny."

"She's seventeen."

"During the Dark Curse, good help was difficult to find and even more difficult to dismiss. Would you like to know her true identity?"

"She has an umbrella and Jiminy Cricket is taken..."

Beatrice caught sight of Joseph and excused herself from the table.

"You have my necklace," she said to Joseph.

"Oh, right," said Joseph, reaching into his breast pocket and pulling it out.

Beatrice turned around and pulled her hair to the side. Joseph felt nervous under Gold's watchful eye as he fastened the pendant.

"Thanks," said Beatrice, excusing herself as Catherine called her back.

"There is one thing I have been curious about for some time," said Gold.
"Oh?"

He motioned at the woman they had returned with. Hook was getting her a beer.

"You were in a unique position during your visit," said Gold. "Did you know who she was?"

"You knew?"

"Belle and I had seen her before."

"I knew," said Joseph.

"Well," said Gold, "a brave choice."

"There is something I do need to know," said Joseph. "Regarding Zelena..."

"Don't worry about it," said Gold.

"What?"

"Don't worry about it," said Gold.

He walked back to Belle and Beatrice.

"Sweetheart," he said, putting his hand on Beatrice's shoulder, "Mom and I need to speak to you."

"What did I do?," she asked, getting up with Belle.

"Other than travelling back in time?," asked Merlin.

Gold and Belle brought Beatrice outside.

"We need to talk about the wedding," said Belle.

"Oh," said Beatrice. "I'm fine. You guys can do what you want."

"Beatrice," said Gold, "we got the impression you thought we were trying to replace you."

"I, uh-" She shrugged. "I don't know."

"Beatrice," said Belle, "other than finding your brother, you are the only baby we have ever wanted."

"Really?"

"Yes, really," said Belle. "Ever since I was a little girl, all I wanted was a little girl of my own. I wanted you."

"Okay," said Beatrice.

"Besides, I have no desire to be up all night with a squalling infant," said Gold. "We did have fourteen years with a one-year old."

"That's not to say that if we were blindsided by another child we wouldn't love him or her just as much," said Belle.
"And we'd be perfectly happy to stay up all night with a squalling infant," Gold added.

"This is a lot of qualifications..." said Beatrice.

Belle smiled. "Because sometimes you get news and your whole life changes in an instant and it can be the most wonderful thing that's ever happened to you. So, if you think this wedding is a precursor to replacing you, we won't do it."

Beatrice shook her head. "I wouldn't ask that."

"I know," said Belle. She hugged her daughter. "You are so good and so sweet, but you've been through a lot lately and we just want to know you're okay."

"I'm okay."

"For now..." said Gold.

Beatrice looked up and followed her father's gaze. Regina was walking down the street with Robin and Roland.

"Gold, Belle," said Regina, walking inside.

Beatrice looked at her parents. "What's going on?"

"Nothing. Why don't we leave? We could get frozen yogurt or perhaps Starbucks is still open..."

Belle looked at Gold. "We have to go back inside, Rumple. My grandmothers are in there."

Her parents walked back in.

"Seriously, what's going on?," Beatrice asked as she followed.

Nothing had happened yet, but Merlin was already standing and putting on his coat.

"Merlin, where are you going?," asked Mary Margaret. "We haven't even named the baby yet, we were waiting on Regina."

"Yeah, put it on Twitter." He looked to Pamela. "You. What are you standing here for?"

Joseph looked between the woman and Regina. Emma was reassuring the former. She approached Regina and Beatrice went to Joseph.

"Do you know what's going on?"

"I made a deduction..."

"So, what is it?," asked Beatrice.

"Marian?," gasped Robin.

"Oh, my God," hissed Beatrice.

"Robin?"

"I thought you were dead, I thought I would never see you again."

As they embraced, Regina's eyes widened and her jaw dropped.
"Mama?"

"Oh, Roland, oh, my baby..."

By this time, all eyes in the diner were on the spectacle. Regina turned to Emma.

"You. You did this?"

Emma looked like a deer in headlights. "I just wanted to save her life."

"From you..." said Beatrice.

Emma froze.

Regina turned to Beatrice. "And you."

Gold had sided up to Beatrice and had one hand on her arm. Belle was next to him. "Come on."

Regina was still seething. "Troublemakers just like your parents."

"Watch yourself, dearie," Gold said in a low voice.

"I'm sorry, Regina. I didn't know," said Emma.

She looked to Beatrice.

"What? I'm not apologizing," said Beatrice.

Regina seethed. Emma looked at her desperately.

"Look, you want an apology? I'm sorry I had to break into your stupid castle because you took
Emma to your dungeon, I'm sorry I didn't have the heart to let you execute someone, I'm sorry I
had to save Snow White and ice over... what room was that? Your stake room? It didn't have
furniture."

Regina turned to Belle. "Do you even have a Cousin Adeola?!"

Mary Margaret walked over. "Hey. Let's all just calm down."

"Luckily for you all, I've changed," said Regina.

"Regina..." said Robin.

"Are you two together?," asked Marian.

As Marian began to express her serious misgivings about that, Regina disappeared into a plume of
smoke.

Emma looked at Beatrice. "Did you have to phrase it quite like that?"

"Did she have to try to kill everyone in town multiple times?"

"I've got to go talk to her." Emma marched off after Regina.

Beatrice looked at her parents and Joseph.

"Okay, all I'm saying is a heads up would have been good..."
A Long Time Ago In The Enchanted Forest...

Regina seethed at her ice wall.

"Well, it's a bold interior decorating choice!," a sing-song voice taunted.

Regina turned towards Rumplestiltskin.

"Do you know who did this?"

He gasped in mock shock. "What would make you think I know?"

"She was powerful," said Regina. "More powerful than any witch I've ever seen. I assumed she was one of your pupils like Tish and we all remember what happened to Tish."

"Not one of mine," said Rumplestiltskin. "Stymied by a little ice wall?"

Regina crossed her arms and stared back at it.

"You really don't know her?," asked Regina.

"I'm afraid I can't help you, dearie."

"Whoever she is she stole my vengeance," said Regina. "I will find her and I will take what she loves."

"Don't want to lose focus, dearie. You wouldn't want to miss your chance at revenge upon Snow White."

"If you ever bother to complete my curse."

"These things take time," Rumplestiltskin said tightly. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves."

Rumplestiltskin transported himself back to the hall of the Dark Castle. He could hear Belle reading from the room she had already chosen for the nursery next to her bedroom.

"Why, he is the prince's jester, a very dull fool, only his gift is devising impossible slanders, none but libertines delight in him and the commendation is not in his wit, but in his villainy, for he both pleases men and angers them, and then they laugh at him and beat him. I am sure he is in the fleet, I would he had boarded me!"

Belle turned from the window. She smiled at him.

"Rumple, you're back," she said. She rushed over and gave him a hug.

"How are you feeling?," he asked.

"Better after you tell me what happened with Regina."

"I cast a spell, I managed to push all thoughts of revenge upon the girl to the back of her mind."

Belle scoffed. "It's too bad someone couldn't do that for Snow White." She shook her head.

"It will work out for her. Eventually. You saw her daughter."
They sat together on a cushioned stool, Belle laid her head on his shoulder.

"This Dark Curse the Queen's plotting... are we going to be alright? Our child? You said it was for revenge and you're not exactly her favorite person..."

"I'll make a deal with the Queen, one she can't refuse," said Rumplestiltskin.

"You're good at that, sunshine."

Rumplestiltskin looked up, perturbed to see Merlin casually sitting across from them in a chair. Belle gasped.

"It's you..." she said.

"You know him?"

Belle looked up at Rumplestiltskin. "When I returned to you, he helped me. He saved me from some terrible knights." She paused and turned towards Rumple. "You know him?"

"He's plagued me as long as I can remember..."

Merlin was nonplussed. "Well, now that we've established that we all know each other," said Merlin, "let's talk about Beatrice."
Chapter 70

The Enchanted Forest, Long Ago

The Dark Curse cloud unfurled through the Enchanted Forest. Merlin had brought Belle to the dwarf mines where Rumple was being kept. She held Beatrice against her and carried a satchel containing the few possessions she wanted to be sure didn't get lost. Beatrice's blanket and lamb, her mother's pendant and journal, a couple books and the chipped cup.

"I shall leave you here," said Merlin.

"What?," asked Belle.

He nodded towards the tunnel. "Snow White's guards have abandoned their posts. I must be away to this new land before the cloud comes."

Belle knew this was coming and that ought to have made it easier.

It didn't.

"When will I see you again?"

"I will see you when you wake up tomorrow." He caressed Beatrice's cheek. "You too, sweetheart."

"But we won't see you again for such a long time."

Merlin smiled. "Do the brave thing..."

Belle smiled. "And bravery will follow."

Merlin kissed her goodbye and Belle watched as he disappeared. She clutched Beatrice closer and turned back to the tunnel.

The dwarf mine. A suitable prison for the Dark One. Belle felt colder just being in the place. She heard voices and stopped in her tracks.

One was Rumple's. The other was Regina. She pushed herself against the wall and pulled her own cloak over Beatrice.

"What took you so long, dearie?!"

"You know what took me so long."

"Oh, right. The Curse. You did it."

"I did it and I wanted you to know it before you, like all the pathetic denizens of this wretched land, forgets everything."

Rumple then asked a question Belle hadn't expected.

"How did it feel?"
"Watching the Curse cloud fall? It felt like victory."

Rumplestiltskin's laugh filled the mine. Belle felt Beatrice squirm and he'd her tighter in hopes she would stay quiet.

"No! How did it feel to kill the thing you love most? Ripping out the heart of your father. How did that feel?"

"It was the price of the Curse. How it felt didn't matter. He would have understood. I took my life back. I had to. I won."

"And yet, here you are, feeling the need to gloat. Something's missing isn't it, dearie?"

"Not at all. I have everything I want. Nothing can stop me now."

Rumplestiltskin giggled. "Not quite."

"What does that mean?"

"The Savior. The child of Snow White and Prince Charming. She can stop you. She can break the Curse."

"Of course it did, but even if you succeed with that, you have a bigger problem. There's a hole in your heart and someday, you'll come to me to fill it."

"You overestimate your powers of foresight."

"And you underestimate the price of what you've done!" He sang. "You shall see, you will come to me. There is more you need. Oh!"

"Your taunts will get you nowhere! I know you too well. You want to make another deal. Well, I won't."

"A deal? I've already gotten everything I wanted in this new land. What more can I want from you?"

"Oh, to be let out of this cage. To be let out of our last deal? To escape the Curse?"

"But why would I desire that, dearie? I'm exactly where I want to be."

Regina vanished and Belle continued down the path.

"Back already, dearie-"

Rumplestiltskin stopped as he saw Belle's face.

"Belle..." He was in shock. "I didn't think you'd come."

"Of course I came," said Belle. She looked at Beatrice. "Where else would we be?"

"One moment."

Belle frowned as Rumple went digging in his cell for something. He pulled out a parchment and she watched as he blew on it. The bars to his cell vanished.

"The Blue Fairy's magic," said Rumplestiltskin.
She fell into his arms, Beatrice between them. Rumplestiltskin took the baby from her.

"My sweet Beatrice."

She reached up to touch his face. It was never fear or revulsion, just as some point she had deciphered her papa's skin was different from all the others.

"She missed you," said Belle. She then corrected herself. "We missed you."

"And I you."

"I wanted to see you, but-"

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "No matter now. We're together."

Belle nodded.

She hoped they would be.

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**Storybrooke, Now**

Beatrice rolled over.

At least she attempted to roll over. It was hard to share a bed with a cocker spaniel and a dalmatian, especially when Lady and Martha were both bed hogs.

With a flick of her wrist, Pamela turned on the light.

"Up!," she said simply.

"It's Saturday," groaned Beatrice.

"Yes and it's wasting away."

"I was at a wedding in the middle of the woods until three in the morning after I traveled through time."

"We need to get you back on a normal schedule," said Pamela. "You've been out of school too long and you start back on Monday."

"They're just going to review," said Beatrice.

"You need to be back in a normal routine. I don't know quite how long your parents intend this honeymoon to last, but I can't imagine they'll go through Monday dinner and they asked me to help you get back to normal."

Beatrice sat up. "Yeah, how's that ever going to happen?"

"You have SATs to study for, you need to have that draft of your college admissions essay ready for the consultant to read. I actually managed to reschedule with her after having to put her off for ages." Pamela motioned. "Get up."

Beatrice got up and dressed before Pamela could use her magic to cast off the blankets and have her levitating from the bed. When she got to the kitchen and took her stool, Pamela was already making breakfast. Her choices were far less indulgent than Gold's. She had a yogurt parfait waiting and Beatrice could see she was making yet another egg white omelet.
"I'm just saying could we keep one egg yolk?," asked Beatrice.

"It's a power omelet."

"Pinterest?"

"Yes." She nodded towards the stack of papers on the counter. "The consultant's name is Ms. Stein. She sent a packet of things. Sample resumes. Example applications. She looked over what I sent and she sees one problem. Extracurricular."

Beatrice dropped her jaw. "Are you kidding me? I read at the library. I organized a food drive. This is why I went to Boston last summer which was such a good idea..."

"She doesn't think it's enough."

"I broke two curses."

Pamela frowned as she put the omelet before Beatrice. "You think Harvard should admit you because you kissed a boy twice?"

"I also time travel and the boy is Sherlock Holmes so that should be bonus points or something..."

"What about a sport?"

"A sport? Are you kidding?"

"You run with your mother sometimes."

"Not that fast and we get coffee and sometimes look through abandoned houses." She paused. "Hey, let's get that quidditch team going."

"Oh, Beatrice..."

"I can fly with a broom, you could use the umbrella."

"Do try to take this seriously."

Just then Neal appeared. He walked in and sat down next to Beatrice.

"So, what's for breakfast?"

"I beg your pardon," said Pamela.

"Aren't you cooking?"

"Mr. Cassidy, you appear to have misunderstood my position. I am the nanny. My responsibilities to housekeeping and cooking extend as far as the needs of my charge. Mr. and Mrs. Gold are my employers, they are the ones to change my duties as circumstances necessitate. He made no such request before he left as regards you."

Neal shook his head. "What does that mean?"

"She means you're cooking for yourself," said Beatrice.

"Finish your coffee and we'll do a practice test."
Mr. Gold's leg hurt.

It had been building up all day. It was a rent day so more walking than usual. He was just hoping to make it to closing time with no customers.

The doorbell rang and instead of being greeted by a customer or tenant he saw Mayor Mills striding in.

"Madame Mayor."

"Mr. Gold, I've been meaning to talk to you about a matter of some delicacy."

He scowled. He might have guessed at the delicate matter before the mayor entered.

"Moe French came to see me. He was concerned about his stepdaughter."

"Mr. French needn't worry."

"I asked around and it seems as if no one has seen Isabelle outside your house in months."

"Mrs. Gold is absolutely fine. Thank you for your concern."

"Well, it's not just her. It's also his grandchild."

"I don't know where you get your information, dearie, but my daughter is most certainly not his granddaughter and she is fine."

"You understand I have to take these allegations seriously."

"Allegations? What exactly am I being accused of?"

"There's no need to be so defensive, Mr. Gold. As mayor, I take an interest in the lives of all Storybrooke's citizens."

"Your interest in unnecessary in this circumstance."

Finally ridding himself of the pesky mayor, Gold walked to his car and blissfully drove home, happy to be off his leg at last.

Moe French had never been happy with him. Isabelle's mother, Rachel, had died when she was sixteen leaving custody to her second husband instead of the girl's father. Colin Avalon was a physics teacher at Storybrooke High School and had a reputation for being eccentric, something of a dyed in the wool hippie. Most of the town thought Rachel had made the right call. Gold wasn't so certain. It was more like Isabelle had custody of him the way he carried on which was especially disconcerting given her reckless ways. She looked for a way out.

Mr. Gold was her way out.

It had scandalized the town. Isabelle was very young still and Mr. Gold was... himself. Someone might have tried to talk her out of the relationship if they weren't terrified of their landlord. Mr. Gold was pleased with the arrangement. He never had much luck with women, he'd had to fight for everything he had and it was gratifying to take the most beautiful woman in town on his arm. Storybrooke's simpletons could think what they wanted.

Then came the baby.
Of course he was thrilled. The whole town had to watch as Isabelle carried around the proof of their coupling. It was the birth. The idiot doctor and Isabelle's idiot stepfather and his idiot employee who nearly killed her. Isabelle became afraid to leave the house.

So she hadn't. Her life became entirely focused on the baby and staying inside. The child was trying his patience these past couple weeks. She was teething and prone to crying. She seemed especially displeased with him for some reason.

He walked into the house, already waiting for the moment when he could get a Scotch and excuse himself from an evening at the family hearth.

"Mr. Gold."

"Miss Lyndon."

"I'm going to take Beatrice for her bath."

"We're not quite finished yet," said Isabelle, feeding Beatrice a spoon of rice which the toddler seemed to be resisting.

"She seems to be done,' said Gold.

Isabelle frowned. Pamela lifted the baby from her high chair and as she did Beatrice waved pudgy little arms.

"I'll see you later," Isabelle promised.

Beatrice looked at Gold with a glare and mumbled some baby talk at him.

Pamela carried the toddler off. "Now, now, enough of that," she chided.

Isabelle looked at Gold.

With a look that could mean no good was going to come of anything he said.

"What?"

"You could at least acknowledge her."

"Isabelle, I've had a long day, culminating with having to deal with your idiot stepfather."

"Well, repossess his van and close the damn shop if it means you'll spend some time with your daughter."

"I do spend time with her."

"Colin spends more time with her than you do."

He paused. "Your father was here?"

"He comes all the time in the afternoons. I've told you before, but I suppose you don't listen to me, either."

"She's fine-"

Before he could finish, Isabelle was out of her chair and off in a huff.
Scotch would be early tonight.

Now

Beatrice got her mocha from the counter and returned to her corner of Starbucks. It had been ever since Merlin brought her in when she was four and she got her first taste of espresso.

There had been no looking back.

Pamela had brought her in the afternoons during the Curse and she did her homework. After the Curse broke, she had done the same thing, but there was an even wider berth for Rumplestiltskin's daughter than Mr. Gold's daughter. It was even wider for the Dark Princess, except for friends who dropped in looking for her and lately, Joseph.

She sat down on her sofa. "How are those essays coming, Joseph?"

"Well, they all look to be rather promising. For example, 'Recount an incident or time when you experienced failure. How did it affect you and what lessons did you learn?'

"Oh, well, easy the time I tried to dump water on the Wicked Witch of the West and failed, I learned you should try ice first."

"Excellent," said Joseph.

"How could they not accept me?"

"Discuss an accomplishment or event, formal or informal, that marked your transition from childhood to adulthood within your culture, community or family."

"Oh, what about the time I called Peter Pan a loser and set an ice monster loose on Neverland?"

"They'll have to accept you then." He turned back to the paper. "This is one is my personal favorite of the set. 'Some students have a background or story that is so central to their identity that they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story."

"What? It says that?"

Joseph nodded as Beatrice snatched the paper back.

"So many angles you could use, your father is Rumplestiltskin, a Dark Curse brought you to this world..."

Beatrice shook her head. "I'm never going to be able to write one of these."

"Of course you can. Make something up."

"I'm sick of making stuff up," said Beatrice. "I'm sick of having to be two different people at once. They just don't get it."

"Yeah, well the idea that Beauty and the Beast are real and in Maine is rather difficult to believe."

"No, not people, my parents. I get that the Enchanted Forest was screwed up at times and I don't need to depend on magic here, great. Really."
"But?"

"Every time I leave Storybrooke, I have to lie. I had to lie from the day I realized I was the only one at school actually moving up grades to the day the curse broke and I am sick of it. When I go to college, four more years of lying."

"I suppose I never really understood it as lying," Joseph mused.

"What's that?," asked Beatrice.

Joseph turned. "That appears to be a ship heading towards the dock. An old ship at that..."

Some of the fog cleared.

"That's the Jolly Roger," she pronounced.

"How can that be? Hook said he had to leave it in the Enchanted Forest when Zelena cast her curse."

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**Then**

Mr. Gold made a point to go to bed after Isabelle was asleep.

The door to the nursery was cracked open. He could hear sobbing inside.

Damn.

Miss Lyndon had the rest of the evening off. He could wake Isabelle, but that meant talking to Isabelle and potentially continuing the earlier argument about the baby.

Deal with the baby or deal with Isabelle.

He walked in the room hoping it wasn't anything too complicated.

The room was fit for a Victorian princess, all pinks and whites, nursery rhymes on the wall, a shelf of storybooks, two chests of toys and a dollhouse Beatrice was too young for. She stood in her crib and Gold walked over, resting his cane against the rails.

Beatrice had two favorite possessions. Oddly enough Gold couldn't recall where they came from. A soft white blanket with gold thread and a lamb. She sobbed as she held the lamb and sucked its ear.

"That won't do, dearie."

"Papa..."

She sobbed the word like he wasn't standing in front of her.

He sighed.

"Alright, dearie..."

Gold reluctantly picked her up and she grabbed onto him. He had to keep her from choking him with his tie. He let her nuzzle against him and then he spotted something else in the crib.

A red leather book with gilded letters. It certainly looked too valuable to be in Beatrice's crib.
What had she gotten into? He reached in to pick it up.

Then it all came back.

Now

Beatrice and Joseph watched as the ship pulled up to the dock and walked out towards it.

"This is not feeling like a great idea," said Beatrice.

The ship dropped anchor and the plank was extended to the dock.

A woman stepped off it.

"Where am I?"

"This sounds promising..." muttered Joseph.

"Storybrooke," Beatrice answered. "I'm Beatrice. This is Joseph."

"Milah."

Beatrice's eyes widened.

"Milah... from the Jolly Roger. Right..."

"Problem?," asked Joseph.

"Yeah."

Then

Gold turned slowly to face her. The girl beamed back at him.

"Beatrice." He kissed her on the cheek until she squirmed. He had never dared do that in the Enchanted Forest. "Oh, my sweet girl."

His leg throbbed but he didn't care.

"Belle!" He shook his head. "Isabelle!"

She was in the room like a flash. Anything that might remotely have to do with Beatrice had her immediate attention.

"Yes. What is it?"

Gold held the book out. "Do you know how this book got into her bed?"

"I don't know, I've never seen it before."

"Are you sure, dearie?"

Isabelle finally took it and as soon as she did Gold saw the same flash of magic. She held it for a moment looking gobsmacked.
"Rumple?" She approached closer. "Rumple?"

"Yes, sweetheart."

She took his face in her hands and kissed him deeply. Beatrice squirmed as she was caught between them.

"Oh, Beatrice." Belle squeezed her. "Beatrice, we're back."

"Who are you calling?" asked Belle.

"Who do you think?" he muttered.

Now

Pamela entered Tony's. She found Richard Alden waiting for her and the man gave her a slight wave.

"I didn't think you were coming," he admitted sheepishly as he sat. "You've broken off our last five dates."

"I take great offense to that," said Pamela. "I came to the first."

"You left."

"Beatrice had been taken by the Wicked Witch of the West. The second she needed me. The third I forgot because of a memory curse."

"The fourth?"

"Mary Margaret went into labor."

"And last night?"

"How was I to know Mr. and Mrs. Gold would decide to get properly married after forever? What was I supposed to do? Leave Beatrice alone?"

"She is seventeen."

"Yes, and she's just met her True Love. It's not a great combination. I've got to get her back to school on Monday and I spent all afternoon getting her back on track with her SAT studying. Then there's subject exams. I don't know which would be best. Obviously, Physics and Mathematics are her strong suits, but she could do well on the Literature one and the Japanese one might persuade them she's well rounded."

"You always do this," said Richard.

Pamela shook her head. "Do what?"

"Go on about Beatrice."

Pamela shrugged. "I was just talking about my day."

"Don't you think you've been with them long enough?"

"Oh, fancy running into you here..."
Richard looked up. Pamela rolled her eyes as Merlin pulled up a chair.

"See what I mean?," said Richard.

"Mr. Avalon, this is my evening off."

"And where might my granddaughter be?"

"She is brainstorming college admissions essay topics at Starbucks. Perhaps you could go harass her."

"No, no, why interrupt her when she's obviously meeting with Joseph?"

"She didn't say she was," Pamela countered.

"Did she say she wasn't?"

"Uh, Mr. Avalon, we're trying to have dinner here-" said Richard.

"Oh, don't let me interrupt."

The waiter came over and Merlin didn't move.

"What can I get everyone?," he asked.

"A glass of iced tea and the zucchini fries, please," said Merlin. He looked at Pamela and Richard. "Didn't you two want anything?"

---

**Then**

Gold opened the door for Merlin.

"Oh, Mr. Gold, I just came to let you know that I'm not paying rent anymore," said Merlin.

Gold rolled his eyes as he let the man in the house.

"It's not really that I can't afford it, it's that I would rather buy other things."

"Merlin..." Belle said, rushing towards him for a hug.

"I was here this afternoon, you know."

"I wasn't," said Belle.

They sat in the living room. Beatrice was falling asleep in Belle's arms, but her mother was in no rush to put her in her bed.

"How long since you awakened her?," asked Gold.

"On schedule, that was three weeks ago on her birthday."

"Three weeks?," Belle asked in disbelief.

"Yeah, thanks for taking three weeks to pick up something that was in your baby's crib."

Gold tried to steer his attention back to the topic at hand. "Does Regina know?"
"No, Regina does not know. She doesn't spend all of her time making certain that everything is just the same, but she has begun to notice ripples."

"Ripples?," asked Belle.

"The nature of this curse is that everything must remain the same. Any changes weaken the curse. Like a stone in a pond. Ripples."

"She came to see me today," said Gold. "She said Moe was worried about Belle."

"Ah, yes, the local florist. I see him once a week. He calls me a drunk. I call him a waste of skin."

Belle scowled.

"Isabelle never scowled at me when I said things like that," Merlin countered.

"Has Beatrice caused any ripples?," asked Gold.

"Yes, there always there no matter the size of the stone. No matter the size of the stone." Merlin leaned back. "Frankly, I find it a miracle that Regina's not bored to death. I want to take my own life just thinking about it. Everyday the werewolves have the same argument, Geppetto can't fix one bloody sign and that winged tart has been showing up at every school board meeting to make my life miserable."

"Does Regina realize you've been awake?," asked Belle.

"No, she's too busy with her boy toy and keeping Snow White on her toes."

"Snow White's here?" Belle shook her head. "I don't understand. There was the tree. Is her daughter here, too?"

Merlin looked to Gold.

"Perhaps Charming went with her..." said Gold.

Merlin shook his head. "He is in a coma in the hospital. I found him when I went for a flu shot about ten years ago."

"You told me Snow White would be with her daughter," Belle accused Gold. She turned to Merlin. "You told me that tree had enough magic for two."

"It did," said Merlin. "Whatever the problem was, it happened on their end."

Belle was livid. "So my oldest friend's baby is out alone somewhere! In this world?!"

Merlin shook his head. "She's got to be fourteen by now..."

Belle stood and readjusted Beatrice in her arms.

"This changes nothing, Belle," said Gold. "She will still return, she will break this curse and be reunited with her family."

Belle didn't answer.

They ushered Milah back to the house having no better place to put a dead woman, though
Beatrice put Lady and Martha upstairs. She knew Milah wasn't crazy about her dad, probably not a great mom since she ditched Neal to be a pirate wenches, but she wasn't sure if she was legitimately crazy.

Pamela wasn't home. She had a date. Merlin wasn't answering. She didn't call Neal or Hook. She suspected Milah wasn't staying and it seemed like a mean thing to have a loved one come back from the dead and have them leave again. She texted Henry to do something with Neal. She even tried Mary Margaret, but all she heard was screaming baby.

Beatrice frowned at her iPhone.

"No one is answering."

"Well, your parents are on their honeymoon..."

Beatrice shuddered.

"Have you phoned them?"

"What am I supposed to do? Phone and say 'Hi, Dad, your ex-wife that you killed is back?'"

"He killed her?"

Beatrice shook her head. "It's a whole long thing."

Joseph held his hand out. "Give me your mobile."

Beatrice handed it to him. He quickly redialed.

"Yeah, hi, Rumplestiltskin. How's the honeymoon? Anyway, Milah, not dead."

He hung up and placed the iPhone back in her hand.

"That ought to elicit a response."

"Milah not dead?," asked Beatrice.

"I thought concise was best under the circumstances."

"And you swear you've never seen BBC Sherlock?"

"Shall we call Regina?"

"Why would we-"

"You and Emma bring back Robin Hood's seemingly dead wife and suddenly your father's dead wife and Hook's dead lover arrives in town on a ship we all thought to be lost in the Enchanted Forest. Does that seem suspicious to you?"

"Okay, yeah, I see your point, but I am so not calling her. I'm not exactly her favorite person right now... or ever."

"Do you think you're going to be her favorite person?," Joseph asked, nodding his head towards Milah as she perused the dining room. "Excuse me one moment."

Beatrice watched as Joseph walked in the dining room. He held his palm out.
"The silver, if you please."

"What? I didn't."

"Don't insult my intelligence. I find it very trying and you're already dead."

"What?"

"The silver."

Milah reached into her top and pulled out a selection of dessert spoons. Joseph took them with a curt smile and placed them on the table.

"I would clean those," said Joseph. "I'm going to wash my hands now."

Joseph walked over to the kitchen sink.

"So, Milah," said Beatrice, "what do you remember last?"

"My cowardly husband," said Milah.

"Yeah..." She glanced over at Joseph.

"He had just found Killian and I. The fool."

"Yeah, well..."

"Once I find him, I'm going to have my revenge. Then I can find Killian and we can get back to our lives."

Beatrice nodded. "Oh, yay, good for you..."

Beatrice walked back in the living room.

Joseph turned to Milah. "Excuse us."

He followed Beatrice.

"We need a plan," said Joseph.

"At the moment, I'm leaning towards getting my dogs and going to stay at Ariel and Aurora's until I can reach my parents. I should call ahead, though. Mulan's been staying over."

---

"I've heard good things about the polenta," said Merlin. "It's a difficult dish to get right."

Pamela and Richard hid behind their menus, hoping that not engaging with the wizard would make him go away.

"You're not still gluten-free, are you?" Merlin asked Pamela.

"I'm afraid not."

"Good. It was one of your more idiotic notions."

"Excuse me?"

Merlin's phone rang. "One moment." He picked it up. "Hello?"
Beatrice responded. "Seriously, does no one answer the phone?"

"What do you need?"

"A wizard."

"Why are you phoning me? You're already there."

Beatrice sighed. "Ghost Milah in my house. What do I do?"

Merlin groaned. "Will this woman ever be happy?"

"You know if there's something else you need to do, don't feel as if you have to stay," said Pamela.

"Are you coming over?," asked Beatrice.

"No, this is simple. Look on the mantle."

Beatrice walked over to the fireplace. "Yeah?"

"There's a music box with a green stone on top..."

"I'm not crazy about green stones."

"This one's fine. Play the music, it will lure her in and shut the lid. Keep it locked and I'll have my mother return it to Hades."

"That's all?"

"Yeah. Easy."

"Why does my dad keep a ghost trap on the mantle?"

"Why does he do any of the things he does?"

Merlin hung up. "All done. Where were we on entrees?"

Beatrice walked into the kitchen holding the music box. Joseph looked up from the table.

"Hey." He motioned at Milah. "Milah was just regaling me with the story of her cowardly husband while she drank your father's port."

"Yeah, well, I just thought we'd listen to this music box."

"Oh, really?"

"Really."

Beatrice put the box on the table and for a moment it looked as if it was working. Milah was being sucked into the box as the music played and then there was a burst of light. It enveloped the whole of the room. Joseph and Beatrice ran upstairs.

"What did you do that for?!"
"That was my plan!"

Martha sat on the landing.

"Okay, Martha, my room," said Beatrice. "Where's Lady?"

"What lady?," asked Joseph.

"Lady. My dog?" She shook her head. "Check my parents' room."

Joseph pondered the information that Beatrice had another dog. It must have happened with the alternate timeline he had found himself in. He looked in the doorway of the Master Bedroom and spotted a brown and tan spaniel with nearly red ears.

Lady.

"Really?," he asked the dog.

"Joseph!"

"Found her!" He picked up the dog and she growled. "Behave or I'll ring up some Siamese cats."

He walked into the bedroom. Beatrice had opened the window.

"Escape plan?," he asked.

"Ice powers."

Beatrice held her hands out and absolutely nothing happened.

"Well, crap."

---

_Belle_

Belle was humming.

Gold watched as she flitted about the kitchen as she once had in his castle. Beatrice watched with rapt attention in her high chair. Pamela, for her part, watched in bewilderment, surely wondering what might have brought about this change of mood in her employer.

"I can get Beatrice's breakfast, Mrs. Gold," said Pamela.

"No, no, I want to," said Belle.

"Good morning, Mr. Gold. I was going to get Beatrice's breakfast-"

"It's alright, Pamela. I have it. I said so," said Belle.

"May I speak with you?," Gold asked.

He led Belle into the laundry room and shut the door.

"What?," asked Belle.

"You heard what your father said, Belle. Any ripples may alert Regina."
"I was making my daughter breakfast."

"Any changes to our routine."

"I've been trapped in this house by my own fear," said Belle. "Half the time, I've been unable to care for myself, let alone her. I will not continue."

"You don't have a choice."

"Are you just going to go on being Mr. Gold?"

"The whole town sees me. I don't have a choice."

"I meant in here. The man who sees his wife and child as his possessions? The man who barely sees his baby?"

"Of course not," said Gold. "We have to be cautious, though."

"Beatrice is going to keep growing because that's the deal we made. I never made a deal to not care for her and I doubt that was Sherlock's intent."

"We made the deal we made to spare her and Sherlock is not here to protect her. We are and that's what we're going to do."

"You're giving orders now?"

Gold scoffed. "Would that get you to actually do what I ask?"

Belle lowered her eyes at him and returned to Beatrice.

Gold carried on his routine, trying to maintain his absolute best facade of routine. He had thought Merlin to be exaggerating but he feared he wasn't.

His errands in the early afternoon took him past the playground. Pamela had taken Beatrice, as she always did. Pamela was lost in conversation with some of the women who brought their children to the park. Beatrice was in the sandbox.

And she spotted him.

"Da!"

He continued walking.

Rumplestiltskin would have walked over. If Mr. Gold ignored his child as she called for him, well, that would merely be another addition to the litany of reasons Storybrooke's townspeople thought he was a bastard.

"Da!"

"Beatrice, no!," Pamela shouted.

His facade was unable to win out over his parental instincts and he turned just in time to see Beatrice toddling out of the sandbox and presumably towards the sidewalk and closer to him. Before he had time to ponder just when she had taken steps or if this was indeed the first time, she fell, her skull smacking against the pavement as Pamela was too late to catch her.
"Oh, God..." said Pamela.

Beatrice screamed and her forehead gushed blood. If the people of Storybrooke were scared before, it got worse as they watched Gold rush towards her on that damn leg and towards Beatrice.

He scooped her up from Pamela.

As usual, the nanny was afraid of the wrath of her employer. "Mr. Gold, I'm so sorry. I-"

He cut her off. "Get the car."

"Right."

Pamela rushed off. Gold rocked Beatrice as she screamed.


Now

"And this is what I mean," said Richard. "You can't even go out for dinner without these people interrupting."

"Oh, was this a date?," asked Merlin.

"Of course it was a date," said Pamela. "You knew it was a date."

"No, see, my mother happens to be the goddess of love and I created the longest line of True Love known to the Enchanted Forest so I know a date when I see it. What I saw was two people who looked annoyed with one another and happened to be sitting in a restaurant."

"Only because she can't get a night away from you people!," said Richard.

"I am not having this discussion in front of him," said Pamela.

"Oh, please, don't spare my feelings," said Merlin.

She turned to him in a huff. "I have very little regard for your feelings."

"You know, Joseph had a deduction he mentioned to me."

"And now there's another one," muttered Richard. "Are you going to be cooking his breakfast, too?"

"He mentioned that you never phoned to break your dates, you texted and you never waited for a response," said Merlin.

Richard stood up. "I spent the whole curse waiting around for you and I've had about enough. Beatrice Gold has a mum and it's not you. I can't compete anymore."

"Richard," said Pamela. "Don't be ridiculous."

He walked out.

"That went well," said Merlin.
Gold took Belle's hand as he rolled over to face her. The house was quite for a honeymoon and Gold thought too quiet for two parents.

"You want to call her, don't you?," asked Belle.

"I said no such thing and I don't know if you realized, but I was very content to be here with you."

Belle smirked. "I had noticed."

"Did you want to call her?"

"Rumple!"

"It's hard to be away from her."

"I know," said Belle. She adjusted herself to be closer to Gold. "She's going to go off into the world at some point."

"Why should she?"

"Because she's a young lady and if she wants to explore the world that's what you as her loving papa is going to help her do. I think she might be a little capable than even I've given her credit for."

He nodded, taking on the new information. He knew it. Beatrice was Belle. She was capable of nearly anything. Some things he hadn't dreamed of. Still, letting go of his children had never helped him in the past."

"I'm just going to check my phone."

"Rumple..."

Objections aside, he fished for his phones in the pile of clothes on the floor. Turning it on, it buzzed with some voice mails.

"She did call," he said to Belle.

"Was that an accusation?"

He listened and handed the phone to Belle. She replayed the message.

"Milah not dead?," asked Belle. "What does that mean?"

"I expect we'll find out and I expect our illustrious mayor is behind it."

Poltergeist Milah raged downstairs. Beatrice laid on the left of her bed, Joseph on the right, the dogs in between.

"Ideas?," asked Beatrice.

"I don't know how to work this into your college essays."

"Ideas about what to do?"

"Well, we called everyone, all that's left is to wait for your parents to get bored of their honeymoon."
Beatrice nodded. "Yeah, we're going to die here."

"Oh, I found out what the shredded paper was in my room at the inn."

"Yeah, because that's what I was worried about on my deathbed."

"It was a book. A library book."

"Okay, so if we don't die here, my mom will kill you."

"Beauty and the Beast."

"So dead."

"Apparently in this version, the Beast and Belle can't be bothered to rule their own kingdom because they're too busy enjoying their honeymoon."

Beatrice was silent, letting the sound of Martha's tail wagging against the bedspread be the only noise in the room.

"Well, in retrospect, I wish you had mentioned this before this evening began."

"Yeah, to be fair there was no mention of the teenager that got left home alone."

"That's because she was killed by the ghost of Beast's first wife."

Joseph nodded. "Probably."

"Your Highness!"

Beatrice jumped up as Joseph followed her to the window. Robin, Marian and Roland were standing in the garden.

"Oh, thank God, someone," said Beatrice.

"Hi, Beatrice!," Roland called out and then returned to his ice cream cone.

"We were walking back to our camp when we saw..." Robin hesitated as he motioned at the windows. "Whatever that is."

"We're thinking poltergeist," said Beatrice.

"Are you alright?," asked Marian.

"Yeah, fine," said Beatrice. "Could you guys possibly go find Merlin and tell him the music box didn't work?"

"I have ice cream!," said Roland.

"That's good," said Joseph.

"Why haven't you conjured something to help you down?," asked Marian.

"Yeah, there's a network error on that," said Beatrice.

"What?"
"Just go get Merlin! Please!"

Robin nodded. "I'll get you down. Does your father keep a ladder or a rope in the garage?"

"He's a sorcerer!," Joseph shot back.

"Please don't shout at Robin Hood when he's trying to help us."

"Where are your parents?," asked Marian.

"Honeymoon!"

"Oh..."

Beatrice turned to Joseph. "Is there someone in the Enchanted Forest who doesn't know about my parents?"

"I highly doubt it."

Gold waited. Pamela was a mess next to him, the usually careful nanny waiting for her employer to explode. He stared at the tiles of the waiting room, cursing the Land Without Magic, cursing himself for bringing her here. Back home, he would have waved his hand and Beatrice would have been back to them. He would have made her a playground of marshmallow fluff or something.

His thoughts were interrupted by the appearance of black heels. He didn't need to look up to know whose they were.

He looked up. "Madame Mayor."

"Mr. Gold. I heard what happened at the park and I wanted to come over here and see if there was anything I could do."

Gold pondered whether this was an appropriate time to use one of his pleases. She must have noticed Beatrice. This whole thing was more of an exploratory operation than anything else. Did she know he was awake? Mr. Gold probably would have shouted at his nanny by now.

"No, Madame Mayor, I don't think there's any need for you here."

"Mrs. Gold," Pamela gasped.

They turned as Belle stalked in. She seemed to have caught the attention of the other people in the waiting room.

"Well, this is quite a day," said Regina.

Belle ignored Regina. She focused on Gold. "Where is she?"

"They said they had to do an MRI."

"Poor thing."

Belle turned to Regina. She didn't take her gaze from the woman.

"Pamela, would you mind getting us some coffee? None for Mayor Mills. I'm sure she won't be staying."
"Yes, of course."

Pamela quickly hurried off.

"I didn't think you were leaving the house these days, dear," said Regina.

"My daughter is in the hospital and it's really none of your business."

"Your stepfather simply expressed his concern to me, that's all. Regina checked Gold. "No one has seen you lately."

"I am fine as you can see. Now excuse us."

"It just strikes me that little Beatrice may not be getting the care and attention she needs," said Regina. "Perhaps a social worker could help you-"

Belle turned back to Regina.

Gold took her by the arm in fear that some of the wild Isabelle hadn't left and would claw at Regina's throat any moment.

Or that might have been Belle.

"Are you threatening us, dearie?" asked Gold.

"I'm just trying to help."

"Your efforts, while commendable, are wasted, I'm afraid. Perhaps you ought to find someone else in Storybrooke to make your project."

"I seem to have struck a nerve," said Regina.

"Yes," Belle answered back.

Doctor Whale appeared, looking bewildered at the scene before him.

"Mr. and Mrs. Gold?"

Regina stalked off.

"How is she?"

"No fracture, no internal bleeds, just one very unhappy little girl with a big bump on her head and some stitches."

Belle broke out into a grin with tears of happiness.

"Excellent. Thank you, Doctor Whale."

"Can we see her?" asked Belle.

"Of course."

Belle barely waited for permission as she dashed into the hospital room. She stopped as soon as she saw whole was holding her.

Gold saw it.
"Miss Blanchard," said Gold.

Mary Margaret turned. "Isabelle! I didn't think you left-" She shook her head. "Never mind. Of course you did."

"Uh, Mary Margaret," said Belle, "what are you doing here?"

"Oh. I volunteer at the hospital. I guess you didn't know that since you're usually busy with much more interesting things. I was just helping hold her while Doctor Whale did her stitches."

"Oh, poor baby," Belle cooed.

"Yeah, look, pretty girl, it's Mommy," Mary Margaret joined in cooing as she handed her to Belle. "Doctor Whale gave her a little something for the pain while he did the stitches so she is feeling pretty good right now."

Gold reached over to examine the stitches.

"Thank you for taking care of her, Mary Margaret."

She smiled. "It was my pleasure. I love babies and she was so sweet."

Belle nodded.

"Thank you, Miss Blanchard."

"You're welcome, Mr. Gold. I'll see you on Tuesday."

Gold frowned. "Why?"

"Rent day?" the woman asked timidly.

"Yes, of course, dearie."

Belle continued to rock Beatrice.

"You were right," said Gold.

She looked up at him.

"I have been too cold for too long. It has to stop. For her sake."

Belle leaned up and kissed him. "I'm glad."

"You're not going to respond to his ultimatum, are you?" asked Merlin as they walked down the street.

Pamela shook her head. "Richard is all bluster. He won't hold to it."

"Does he really expect you to pop off and have babies or something?"

She shot him a glare. "And why not? I need to have my own life sometime."

Merlin shook his head. "That's not what people like us do."

"People like us?"
"You and I, we're kingmakers. Though we occasionally touch glory in our own right, we exist to propel others to greatness."

They finally arrived at the Gold house just in time to see Mulan, Aurora and Ariel rushing into the backyard.

"What is this?," Pamela mused.

"No idea..."

Beatrice looked down.

"We have the rope!," said Mulan.

"How am I supposed to get a Dalmatian down a rope?," asked Beatrice.

Pamela strode in. "What are you all doing out here? It's past Beatrice's bedtime."

"Oh, Pamela, umbrella!" Beatrice looked down. "Oh, Merlin, anything!"

"What's going on?," asked Merlin.

"Milah not dead, possible poltergeist..." said Joseph.

"Did you try the music box?"

"Of course I tried the music box!," hissed Beatrice.

Merlin shook his head at the flashing lights from the windows. "I knew I hated that woman."

"Well, do something," said Beatrice.

Lights shone on the house as the Cadillac pulled into the driveway.

"Oh, now you all show up..."

"Beatrice, are you alright?!," Belle called.

"I'm fine!"

Gold looked from the house to Belle. "This is what comes of leaving."

"Also, magic, not working," said Joseph.

"What?," asked Gold.

"Okay, forget the music box," said Merlin.

"Yeah, I pretty much had."

"Pamela, I am going to need use of your umbrella," said Merlin.

Pamela stepped in the doorway and opened her umbrella as Merlin got the door. He followed behind her as the umbrella pushed against the magic flying in the house.

"If Beatrice's magic doesn't work, why should yours?"
"Because Beatrice has not yet learned to tap in to the powers on my side of the family."

Merlin closed his eyes and pulled back his hands back. The colors of the vortex swirled and closed, falling into the music box as it snapped shut.

"The coast is clear!," Merlin called.

Beatrice and Joseph carefully descended the stairs. Belle and Gold rushed in the house, quick to hug their daughter.

Merlin turned to Beatrice. "Try your magic."

She held out her hand and formed an ice ball, then made it vanish.

"What was that?," asked Pamela.

Merlin knelt down and picked up the box. "Someone just tore between worlds. Not too big a hole, but powerful they didn't care what they took along the way. Was Milah the only unusual thing?"


"I bet if you go around town you might spot some things that don't belong," said Merlin.

"What does that mean?," asked Belle.

"It means someone wanted to get here," said Gold.

"And the magical outage?," asked Beatrice.

"It's been known to happen with this particular realm. They have been known to pluck souls from death. Death can just be another realm."

"And what realm would that be?"

Merlin turned to Gold. "Those who rule call it the Dark Forest. I myself have only been once."

"Well, I've never heard of it," said Gold.

"That's because this realm is kept locked from all. It's impossible to get in and nearly impossible to leave."

"What do they want with this world?," asked Pamela.

"I'll let you know."
Chapter 71

Now

School.

School...

It had to be said that the people of the Enchanted Forest didn't exactly take education that seriously. Beatrice could only assume that this was because when they had a problem they just went to a sorcerer, asked for a magical solution and didn't bother to read the contract.

The Wicked Witch's machinations had led to quite a bit of disruption in the school schedule, Beatrice's more than most.

"Okay, class," said Mrs. Edwards, "it's time to revisit 'The Great Gatsby.'"

Beatrice stopped short of banging her head on the desk. She could swear they had been reading this book since January.

"What are the themes?"

The class began shooting answers out, half of them right. Not that Mrs. Edwards would ever stop them from spouting out stupid ideas.

She put her iPad on its case to hold it up so she could safely open Tumblr and instead was confronted by iMessage.

Where are you? - JG

School.

What are you there for?

Education supposedly.

Cut out.

No chance.

Emma called me for a thing.

Go do the thing then.

Then

Mayor Regina Mills stared at the Storybrooke Library as the banner went up.

STORYBROOKE PUBLIC LIBRARY. FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. OPEN SOON.
Regina had never given the library much thought. She had never been one for books and stories. Cora's brand of child rearing did not involve false hope and so Regina had never acquired a taste for tales of knights and fair maidens. Storybrooke's Library was a perfect statement on hope. Dusty, decaying, locked with a dragon at the bottom.

Then someone had tossed a brick through the window. Graham had been too preoccupied to catch the culprit. Regina tried to placate the peasants' rabble at the town meeting, but Isabelle Gold had stood and suggested that perhaps no one would feel the need to throw a brick through the library window if it were actually open.

Damn that bookworm.

Regina had hoped to dissuade the townspeople with talk of budget and no one to run it. She had thought Isabelle would do what all people did in this town when they had a spark of an idea: give up, never start or get into a car accident on the way out of town. That was not to be. Isabelle Gold had shown up at the next town meeting with a plan of action, a budget based on donations and proceeds from renting some of the space out and she herself would work for a pittance. No one wanted to risk offending Mr. Gold by rejecting his wife's plan. Regina looked cruel and petty if she didn't agree. Not even one of Sidney's hatchet jobs against Mrs. Gold could change public opinion.

Then there was the girl.

She was growing. When she first noticed, Regina had assumed it was a fluke or something Rumplestiltskin snuck into the Curse under her nose. No matter. She had all the time in the world to find out.

Then the library.

She was awake. If she was awake, Gold was awake and that could not mean anything good.

And the girl. Regina had to watch as Rumplestiltskin and his harlot raised their girl.

This morning the girl was at the library with her mother. Regina walked in upon the scene. Belle was standing behind a new counter as her daughter sat on the floor with a pile of story books.

"Beatrice," said Belle, "I was hoping you'd take those books into the other room for me."

"So careless with town property?," Regina asked, cutting through the sweet mother-daughter atmosphere.

"Madame Mayor," said Belle. "I wasn't expecting you, but I wouldn't say she's careless. She's still training, but she's the best employee I can get with the library's budget."

"You wanted the job, dear."

"Yes, I did," said Belle. She picked up the day's paper off the circulation desk. "Another nice article on me by Sidney."

"You're in the public eye. It comes with the territory."

"My hospital records?"

"Do you have something to say, dear?"

"Yes. The opening party is on Saturday." Belle turned to Beatrice with outstretched arms. "Come
on. We're meeting Daddy for lunch at Granny's.

Regina left and watched as mother and daughter met Gold outside Granny's.

If Gold was awake, he hadn't tried anything. What was that imp playing at? He must have a plan.

Then the impossible occurred to Regina.

Maybe he was happy. Maybe he hadn't done anything because he didn't need to. Maybe his love and their little brat actually made him happy. It certainly seemed that way as he greeted them. Hugs and kisses. If only the little brat knew what her father for the imp he really was.

Maybe she could be happy.

She watched as Beatrice took Gold's free hand, all love and admiration in her face.

She would be happy.

---

**Now**

The thing was at the hospital and the thing was actually a woman nobody knew. The dwarfs had phone her in the forest on their morning patrol and brought her in. Emma and David had called Joseph.

He wasn't getting anything from his examination of her hands or red hair. He looked up at Whale. "Where are her belongings?"

"In that bag."

Joseph picked up the plastic bag and dumped it out on the empty bed. He looked through the curious clothing and found nothing else. No money. No jewelry. Nothing to say who this woman was or what her plans were. He fished through them, picking them up to even smell them.

David and Emma exchanged wary looks, then looked back at Joseph.

"Are you getting something from smelling that woman's clothes?," asked Emma. "Because if you're not, it's weird."

"She's not from here."

"Yeah, nobody recognizes her," said David. "She must be from out of town."

"Very out of town, I should think."

They looked at him inquisitively.

"Did you suppose this was a costume? That she got lost running home from the Renaissance Fair?" He held up the dress. "Pre-industrial fabrics. Natural dyes. Hand stitched, but good stitching, meaning it was done by a professional. She paid someone, which means she must have money wherever she's from."

Emma crossed her arms. "How do you know she didn't sew them?"

Joseph smiled. "Her hands. No calluses, manicured nails, hands that aren't used. The smell is from a natural remedy. A mixture of lavender water, beeswax and hog's lard."
Emma scrunched up her nose. "Ew."

"No burns on her arms or wrists which suggests she wasn't the one to make the lotion, suggesting again she paid someone. Wherever she's from, she is a woman of significance. Her shoes. Her hair. Should I keep going?"

"No. Thanks, Joseph." Emma began to turn away.

"You couldn't possibly be done with me."

Emma and David turned back.

"Well, we know she wandered into town and passed out... Maybe someone saw something."

"Sadly I don't have much faith in your potential witness list, all of whom failed to notify anyone when they saw a pillar of fire or a witch flying away on a broom."

"I get that you want to help, but David and I have this thing covered."

"Yes, with a one-handed pirate as backup. Not impressed. Besides, isn't most of your investigative technique going to Gold or Regina and accusing them?"

"Joseph, we've got this."

"Emma, can I talk to you?"

Emma looked at David in shock.

"I'll wait," said Joseph.

David took Emma in the hall.

"Dad, we've got this."

"Look, I hate to admit it, but he's right. He's better at this than us. Mary Margaret says he picked out Zelena the minute he saw her."

"You cannot be serious! I'm Sheriff."

"And you can still be sheriff, but Emma, even David Nolan knew who Sherlock Holmes was. It seems stupid to not have him help us."

Emma nodded. She and David walked back in the room.

"I'll take the case. Afternoon."

Joseph walked out leaving Emma in a state of confusion.

"What the hell just happened?"

---

Then

Regina entered the library carrying the cupcakes. She took a quick look around the room. It was a small crowd, but about as good as could be expected. Gold wasn't there. Belle was talking to Mary Margaret and Archie. Colin Avalon was in the corner desperately trying to ward off Mother Superior. Regina couldn't exactly blame him for that. Another glance revealed the nanny was in a
corner talking to her boyfriend.

Beatrice was sitting alone behind the circulation desk, spinning in a chair.

"Hello, Miss Gold."

Beatrice stopped spinning and looked up at Regina.

"Hi..."

Regina put her dessert down on the desk next to the rest of the offerings.

"Do you like cupcakes?"

A quick glance confirmed Regina definitely had Beatrice's attention. She pulled the special one from the frosted confections and held it in front of Beatrice.

"Caramel apple..." Regina teased.

Beatrice held her hands out. "Please?"

"Why of course, Miss Gold," said Regina placing it in her outstretched palms.

"Thank you." Beatrice waited only a second before putting her mouth on the frosting.

Regina turned away. Children could be rather disgusting. She would have to teach hers better manners.

Now

The consultant would be arriving any moment. Beatrice rushed to get in a quick call to Joseph as she stood in the living room.

"You have a case?," asked Beatrice. "How did you get a case? Did a serial killer come to Storybrooke?"

"What a cheery thought, but no. I'm doing a bit of work for the sheriff."

"You're working for Emma? Doing what?"

"Consulting Detective."

"Right, did Emma say that or did you make that up because you've never bothered reading your own book?"

Beatrice turned around. Her parents appeared to be over thinking the living room. Belle was rearranging throw pillows and Gold was placing the tea service.

"How's your consulting admissions woman?"

"Hasn't shown up yet..." She watched her parents fuss another minute. "I'm going to call you back."

Beatrice hung up the phone. "Guys, what are we doing here?"

"We just want to make a good impression, sweetheart," said Belle.
"She's an admissions consultant. I don't think she cares about tea."

Belle looked at Gold. "What if she wants coffee?"

"I'll start a pot," said Gold.

The doorbell rang.

"Okay, well, last call to be normal, guys," said Beatrice.

---

**Then**

"Well," said Belle, "I'd say that was a success."

Gold smiled as she took off her robe and crawled under the covers to rest against him. Getting anything done in Storybrooke was never easy, Regina's Curse made it to crush dreams, but Belle had succeeded.

"I don't think Regina looked pleased," Belle admitted.

"That's due to me, sweetheart. She wanted something, I wouldn't get it for her."

Belle frowned. "What?"

"A child."

"What?"

"Yes, my response was much the same."

Belle eyed him. "She wanted you to..."

"Arrange an adoption. Don't worry, sweetheart. That's the one complex Regina has never had."

"And you wouldn't do it?"

"I insinuated there was nothing I could do. It wouldn't look very good for Mr. Gold to be uninterested in a deal." He looked at her and began to run his on her shoulder to under the strap of her nightgown. "I wonder if I might make a deal with you, Mrs. Gold."

"Oh, what sort of deal did you have in mind, Mr. Gold?"

The door creaked open. Gold sighed as they turned towards the door.

"Beatrice," said Belle. "What's is it?"

The girl walked in, her dark hair a mess from restless sleep. "My head hurts."

"It does?," asked Belle. Beatrice nodded. "Well, come get in bed with Mommy and Daddy."

Beatrice climbed up. Gold fleetingly thought she looked a little unsteady on her feet. She crawled between them.

"You're not hot," said Belle. "Does anything else feel bad?"

"No."
"No?" Belle cuddled Beatrice and looked up at Gold. "I think we have some children's Tylenol in the medicine cabinet."

"Of course."

Gold quickly got the medicine, gave it to Beatrice and laid back down with his family.

Now

Beatrice had at least enough knowledge of the outside world to know that she and her family didn't look right from the outside. She had confirmed this in Boston where showing a random shot on her phone of her family had people going, "Your sister's so pretty." Years of the Curse had meant Belle hadn't aged, but Beatrice had and it was impossible to believe she was her mother. Beatrice saw it on Ms. Stein's face the minute she came in the pink Victorian, but she didn't say anything which Beatrice guessed had something to do with her fee.

It had started out simply enough. Ms. Stein asked her parents some background questions and they told their cursed stories. Then it had turned to Beatrice and she had talked for a while about school and her eventual college interest, theoretical physics. Gold made some offhand comment about how his Beatrice understood things he didn't have a hope of comprehending and led Belle into a discussion of the summer nights when the three of them would go up to the cabin because Beatrice loved stargazing.

Then Belle didn't stop. As convinced as her father was that Beatrice was the greatest-on equal ground with Bae, really, though the reasons were entirely different-Belle was more convinced. Ms. Stein was forced to sit politely as Belle went on about Beatrice and her accomplishments and how proud they were of her.

"Mom," said Beatrice. "No one cares if I could read when I was three."

Belle looked across the coffee table apologetically at the woman.

"I'm sorry. We're just a bit anxious about this whole process." Belle squeezed Beatrice's hand. "We just want to make sure we're doing everything right."

"Well, this is a very ambitious list of schools," Stein mused. "Did you have in mind any safety schools?"

"Safety schools?" asked Gold.

"Just in case. It never fails to have a backup plan. Some of these schools value pedigree and I can't seem to find anything about Storybrooke High School. There wasn't even a website."

"Yeah, their IT guys are practically from the middle ages," said Beatrice.

"I'm sure this can all be dealt with if you could just tell me what your special talent is."

Many things went through Beatrice's mind. Ice palaces. Broom flying. Time travel. Doctor Who references. Musical references. Kissing Sherlock Holmes. Of course they all died on her tongue as she realized in no way would these be acceptable.

"What do you mean special talent?" Gold finished the question with a mocking hand wave, signalling to Belle and Beatrice that he was about finished with this whole process.

"Well, I have some students I've worked with that have written novels, built schools, won the Intel
science prize, a couple of probably Olympians. It doesn't have to be so grand, but showing a long-term interest in a hobby or community project would be a start. Do you have anything like that, Beatrice?"

"Not so much..."

"I'm sure you'll think of something," said Ms. Stein. "In the meantime, work on those essays and buy those SAT II study guides."

She stood. Belle led her to the door, thanking her for her time as Beatrice leaned back on the couch.

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Then

When Gold awoke the next morning, Beatrice was still snuggled between he and Belle. As he stirred, there was a knock on the door.

"Mr. and Mrs. Gold?"

Belle stirred. "It's alright, Pamela. Beatrice is with us."

The nanny tentatively opened the door. "I'm so sorry she disturbed you."

"We were hardly disturbed," said Gold. Years later and the nanny still seemed to fear her employer's wrath.

Belle smiled. "Beatrice had a bit of a headache."

Just then, the topic in question stirred with a groan.

"Oh, what's wrong, baby? Does your head still hurt?," asked Belle.

Beatrice nodded.

"Would you like Miss Lyndon to make you some breakfast?," asked Gold. "I think it might help."

Beatrice shook her head as Belle felt her forehead again. "My eyes are fuzzy..." she moaned.

"Fuzzy?," asked Belle.

"You're all blurry," said Beatrice.

Belle looked at Gold in alarm.

"We'll take her to the doctor," said Gold.

---

Now

Belle gathered up the tea things. Gold waited until Ms. Stein was securely in her car and driving away.

"Who the hell hired her?," asked Gold, looking at Pamela.

"She came highly recommended," said Pamela.
"Yes, well, perhaps we should employ someone who will actually do what we want."

"She's paid to help, Rumple," said Belle.

"She said our daughter wasn't special enough," he seethed.

Beatrice laid her head back on the couch. "Sort of right."

"Rumple, she didn't say it was impossible. Beatrice just needs something to distinguish herself if she really wants to go to that school," said Belle. "Seven point eight percent acceptance rate."

"And I can't put time-traveling sorceress on the application."

Belle spoke again. "This is what everyone in this world goes through. We're just going to have to deal with it." She looked back at Beatrice. "And in no way are you not special enough. Any school would be lucky to have you."

Beatrice grumbled. Belle ignored her and looked at Gold.

"Dinner?"

"Too late to start the lamb I think," he remarked. "Mushu's?"

Beatrice nodded. Gold leaned down to kiss her on the cheek.

---

Then

Gold and Belle watched anxiously as Doctor Whale looked at Beatrice. Pamela stood a respectful distance on the other side of the exam room.

On the one hand, Gold missed magic at times like this. With a wave of his hand, the Dark One could have taken care of anything that befell his princess. On the other hand, he could still remember being the spinner all those years ago and when Bae would get a cough in the winters, he would nurse him for nights on end and pray to any god who would hear him that this wasn't the end of his son. Beatrice's coughs merely involved a trip to the Dark Star Pharmacy and at worst a trip to the pediatrician. The Land Without Magic had the Enchanted Forest beat on that count. Still, it pained him to see his daughter ill, that would never change.

"Ow..." Beatrice cried as Doctor Whale shone a light in her eye again.

"Is that enough?," asked Belle.

Whale put the light down. "I'd like to admit her and run a series of tests."

Gold gripped his cane. "What sort of tests?"

"A series of vision tests, an MRI to rule out any tumors-"

"What do you mean tumors?"

Beatrice looked up at Belle pitifully. "I want to go home..."

"I know, baby," said Belle, taking her up in her arms.

"It could just be an optic neuritis," Whale offered. "We need to rule out other more serious conditions."
Gold was scared. Seriously scared. Whale was tossing out words like "tumor" and "condition."

"How long will she have to stay?," asked Belle.

"At least overnight, Mrs. Gold. Better safe than sorry. I'll send a nurse to begin admitting Beatrice to the ward."

Whale walking out, a deep-seated uncertainty in his wake.

Belle cut through the tension first. "Pamela, would you mind making a quick run home to get Beatrice's jammies and maybe some books? You know what she likes."

"Yes, Mrs. Gold."

"I want to go home!," Beatrice cried. Gold knew Beatrice wasn't much of a tantrum thrower, but she was anxious and she was clever. A night in a strange place was the last thing she wanted.

"Mommy will stay with you, okay?"

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"Spare a buck?"

Beatrice looked down. There was a homeless man with a ragged beard sitting on the sidewalk.

"Uh..."

"It's me," he whispered.

She leaned in. "Joseph? What are you doing?"

"Testing out disguises."

Beatrice frowned. "Is this what Emma asked you to do?"

"Not exactly. I needed it to follow Regina."

"Why did you need to follow Regina?"

"Isn't it obvious? She's the only one in town who's both this angry and this powerful, perhaps she was responsible for the Milah incident."

"You don't think she brought over the woman in the hospital, do you?"

"If she did, it was collateral damage. I have learned two things. First, when Regina's depressed, her dress sense goes out the window."

"Says the guy dressed like a homeless person."

"This is a disguise. Second, she and Henry are plotting something called Operation Mongoose. Third-"

"Operation Mongoose?," asked Beatrice.

"Yes, is that of some significance?"
"Henry's plan to break the Curse was called Operation Cobra."

"Well, yes, that is interesting."

"What was the third thing?"

"She is spending a great deal of time in her vault. I take it that's not good."

"No, it's usually not. Seriously, though, this isn't what Emma asked you to do."

"I'm getting quite a portrait of the town. Robin and Marian's relationship is rather strained at present. Doctor Whale has three sexual partners that I've seen and I think Granny is freezing lasagna and calling it a special days later."

"Okay, well, you keep doing your thing and I'll see you at Starbucks later?"

"No kiss?"

She wrinkled her nose at his disheveled appearance. "Not like that."

"Your mother kissed a beast."

"He started out as a beast. He didn't dress up as one." She waved her hand. "Bye."

Beatrice walked into the pawn shop where Henry was sweeping.

"Henry?," asked Beatrice.

"Oh, sweetheart, there you are," said Gold, closing the ledger he had been working on. "Henry is going to help out around the shop. Afterschool and weekends."

Beatrice walked over to the counter. "What am I doing them?"

"Well, you can still assist Tiny. Besides, you have your studies and your magic to hone."

"Okay..." said Beatrice.

"In fact," said Gold, holding his hand out to have a spell book materialize in his hand, "you can start with this."

Beatrice took it. "Merlin said spell books were cheating."

"For a beginner, perhaps. You've become an accomplished young sorceress now. Learning some new spells wouldn't hinder your growth, just to expand the range of your powers. This is mostly agricultural."

"Because farming will come in handy."

Gold smiled. "Always helpful when meeting with peasants."

"I can do weather."

"Ah, but making soil fertile, making crops grow, making animals mate-"

"I don't want to make animals mate."
"Read it over."

Beatrice sat in the backroom and read for a while. Henry and his lackluster sweeping eventually made it in there.

"Anything good in there?," he asked.

There was something.

"Actually, there's a section about getting rid of snakes," said Beatrice. "Not sure why I can't conjure a mongoose or something."

Henry nodded.

Beatrice had known Henry forever. Sneaky was not his specialty. She had to watch as Operation Cobra went down. There had been nothing secret about that. Regina knew Emma was her doom. Emma kept butting heads with Regina. Her dad did... whatever.

The point was she was not going to go through this crap again.

---

Then

Gold entered Beatrice's room. Beatrice had been in the hospital a week and in that time, he had to tear himself away. There was rent to be collected and things to do at the shop. He had to sleep alone, once Belle insisted he couldn't possibly spend all night in a hospital chair with his leg after three nights of agony. So he left after Beatrice fell asleep and tried to be back before she awoke.

Instead of Belle, he found Beatrice curled up with Merlin, reading a book.

"'Indeed, apart from the nature of the investigation which my friend had on hand, there was something in his masterly grip of a situation and his keen, incisive reasoning, which made it a pleasure to me to study his system of work, and to follow the quick, subtle methods by which he disentangled the most inextricable mysteries. So accustomed was I to his invariable success that the very possibility of his failing has ceased to enter my head.'"

Gold frowned. This world's stories for children were about anthropomorphic animals or princesses who got happy endings for no apparent reason. He thought it rather coddled children, but was happy to trade an extended innocence for electricity and running water.

Still, what was this? "What is that?"

"Oh, this is called 'A Scandal in Bohemia.'"

Beatrice was only too happy to give a plot summary. It was in fact, her favorite thing to do. "There's a king and he's going to get married to a princess but this mean woman has a photograph of her with the king."

Gold thought this seemed a plausible predicament for a king. Royals in the Enchanted Forest had done far stupider things. Beatrice was waiting for him to acknowledge this. "Alright."

"So, he goes to the detective with the funny hat and his friend."

"The detective with the funny hat?"

Beatrice looked up at Merlin. "What was his name again?"
"Sherlock Holmes and I really think it's a name you ought to memorize."

Gold glared at the elder wizard. "Really?"


"It was a dog," said Beatrice.

"Well, now you've ruined the whole thing..."

Whale entered. "Mr. Gold, I didn't realize you were back. Is Mrs. Gold here?"

Merlin spoke up. "Belle went home for a change of clothes."

"I was hoping to talk to you both."

"You can speak with me," said Gold, leading Whale back into the hallway.

"It's not bad news," Whale began. "It's just not good news, either. We still don't know what caused this sudden vision loss. It might be simple inflammation."

"And otherwise?"

"Storybrooke General has its limits," said Whale. "I think you and Mrs. Gold might consider taking her to Boston."

"Excuse me?"

"Boston Children's would be the best place. They have specialists I've already spoken to one."

Leaving Storybrooke was not the best place, of course, Whale didn't know that. None of them knew that.

"I'll consider it," Gold said tightly.

He finished with Whale and walked back in the room.

"Daddy?" asked Beatrice.

"Sweetheart." Gold kissed her on the forehead. "Is there anything I can get you? Anything in the world?"

"A cupcake?"

"A cupcake? I think I can manage that. What kind?"

"I like the kind the mayor made."

Gold's heart stopped.

"The kind the mayor made?," asked Gold. "You ate a cupcake that the mayor gave you?"

"Yes."

Gold exchanged glances with Merlin.
"Beatrice, you are never to eat anything that the mayor gives you again," said Gold.

"Why?"

"Never mind why." He kissed her again. "I'll be back. I have something I must do."

Now

Beatrice's phone rang as she entered the cemetery.

"Hello."

"Quick question. Are you the only one in town with ice powers?"

"Yeah. Why?"

"I was just at this place, Any Given Sundae-"

"Never heard of it."

"It's an ice cream shop. How have you never heard of it? There's not that many places to go in this town."

"I don't know. Curse thing?"

"I have to go see where they found the woman. I'm missing something."

"Yeah, I've got a thing to do."

Beatrice slid her phone in her pocket and looked at the Mills mausoleum. Raising her hands, she cast a wall of ice around it.

Regina was just going to have to deal with her.

Then

The bell to the shop rang. Regina strode in.

"Mr. Gold, I was surprised to hear from you."

"Yes, I recalled our earlier conversation and made some inquiries."

"You did."

"Yes. Fate has smiled upon you. I spoke with an agency that placed a baby boy from Phoenix with a family nearby."

"How does that help?"

"Because at the last-minute, the adoption fell through."

"So, he still needs a home?"

Gold held up an envelope. "The information is in here."
Regina stepped forward.

"Not so fast, dearie."

"What?"

"I want the antidote."

"Antidote?" She shook her head. "I don't know what you mean."

"Did you think I wouldn't find out, Regina? Do you really think I'm that stupid, dearie? A cupcake."

"So, that answers that question," said Regina.

"Yes, now as for this, you can only get what you want when I get what I want."

"It's a simple blinding potion. I'm sure you've hidden the ingredients for the antidote somewhere and you would rather make it yourself," said Regina. "Dragon's blood, moondew, rose thorn. Just like you taught me."

Gold handed her the envelope. Regina put her hand on it and he kept it in his grip.

"If anything like this happens again, I will not be nearly so magnanimous."

Regina scoffed. "Magnanimous? You're making a deal."

"No. A fair bargain would be that you die for what you've done, but alas, this is an unfair world."

Regina took the envelope and walked out.

Now

Joseph found the trail of footprints from the woman where the dwarves had found her. It was only a little damp so he didn't have very much to go on.

Then he found something curious. Other footprints. Tall, with a long gait. All the steps were the same. He, definitely he, was used to walking with precision. He followed those steps back into town and then again to the forest.

The trail led him to August's trailer where he Martha had led him to Beatrice months ago, assuming that still happened.

The place had been rifled through, the last remnants of food and coffee having been used.

"Don't move a muscle," a voice said.

Joseph turned slowly. It was the tall man. He was slightly tanned, intense little eyes and his clothes weren't quite right. A quick glance around had Joseph spotting the same sort of garments that the woman had so he must have been wearing items August had left behind. He also appeared to be pointing some sort of bejeweled dagger at him.

"You don't want to hurt me."

"No?"
"If you wanted to hurt me, you would have done so when you first came in. Also, you would have gone into town. You're after a woman? The redhead."

"How the hell did you know that?"

"Simple matter of tracking your footsteps. Would you care to lower the knife?"

He did. "And who are you?"

"My name's Joseph Gillette. I'm with the Storybrooke Sheriff's Department."

The man shook his head. "I don't think so. I know coppers and you're no copper."

"Indeed not. Thank you for the compliment."

"I'm a copper."

"I'm so sorry." He paused. "So you're here after the woman? What's she done?"

"I can't say."

"I'm afraid I'll have to take you in. That is, unless you enjoy staying out here in Maine in March during an unprecedented artic vortex. Also, you appear to have eaten all of the food here."

"I suppose you've got it all figured out then."

"Yes."

"That wasn't a compliment."

"Come with me."

The man followed Joseph out and back to the road.

"I'm Lestrade by the way," he said.

Joseph stopped and turned. "You're Lestrade?"

"Yeah. What about it?"

"I'll let you know," Joseph said cautiously.

---

Now

Beatrice sat at Starbucks. The door swung open and Regina stormed in.

"What did you do to my vault?"

Beatrice looked up. "Do you not know a big ice wall when you see it?"

Regina edged closer. "Bring it down."

"I'll make a deal."

"No! No deals. I want my vault back."

"You can call off your spy and I will give you back your vault."
"I don't know what you mean."

"Oh, yes, you do. By the way, new low for you."

"You have ruined my plans for too long."

"Yeah, you've told me that."

"Just because Merlin thinks you're important does not make you ready to face me."

"Is that how you want to do this? Because so far I've got a pretty good record."

"I will get my happy ending and and no one will stop me."

Beatrice sighed. "I'm not trying to stop you. I just couldn't leave Marian there to die and I'm not going to let you screw around with my dad and Henry." She shrugged and picked up her mocha as she grabbed her messenger bag. "Spy goes out, wall goes down. Excuse me, I have to find a way to work this into a college essay."

---

**Then**

Belle was glad to be back in the library after the unplanned time off. It was a blow to her plans to be gone for weeks, but now she could get back to work. She was even more glad to have Beatrice back with her and on the mend. She was now sitting on the floor, reading another book.

"What's a fusil- fusili-"

Belle walked over to the book and the word Beatrice pointed at.

"Fusilier," said Belle. "I think it's a kind of soldier."

She checked the cover. "A Study in Scarlet." She sighed and looked at Beatrice. "Grandpa gave you this, didn't he?"

"Yes."

Belle nodded and took the book. "You have plenty of time for this and you're still healing. Your eyes still need rest."

Beatrice whined.

"Come on. None of that," said Belle. She patted the couch and Beatrice crawled next to her. She picked up one of the books off the corner table. "You'll close your eyes and Mommy will read."

Beatrice did as she was told and Belle started. Her eyes fleetingly strayed from the page and out the window as she read. That's when she saw Regina stalking down the street with a baby carrier. And she was furious.

Belle walked into the pawnshop. She had stormed over from the library, dragging Beatrice along. The girl was confused at first, but elated when they turned the corner to go to the pawn shop.

"Daddy!," said Beatrice, running over.

"Hello, sweetheart." Gold squeezed her as she hugged his legs. He then looked up at Belle.
"Belle?"

"Beatrice, why don't you play in the back?," said Belle.

She looked up inquisitively.

"Go on. Listen to your mother," said Gold.

Beatrice hurried off. Belle shot daggers at Gold.

"Tell me you didn't."

"I won't insult your intelligence."

"You helped her get a baby. You've never helped anyone like her get a baby before. Why would you-"

"She poisoned Beatrice. That's the reason she was ill."

"What?"

"The child was the price I paid for the antidote and Beatrice's future safety, which I think is more than a fair bargain. Regina won't make a move like that again because now she has something to lose."

"I thought there was no magic here."

"Yes, well, potions seem to work just fine."

"This poor boy. You're just going to use him as a chess piece?"

"Regina won't hurt him. In fact, I'm fairly certain she's already chosen to forget who he is. She had quite the fit, saying she was going to take him back, but she hasn't. Your father found the ingredients for a forgetting potion used in her vault."

Belle shook her head. "Who is he?"

"The child of the Savior."

"Snow White's grandson?"

"That boy is the key to breaking the Curse," said Gold. "Belle, I can't protect her here as I would in our land. I won't let anything happen to her."

Belle pondered this new information. She didn't like using people, especially the poor boy who would be saddled with Regina as a mother. She didn't like how things already hadn't gone according to plan, but she disliked the idea that Beatrice was in danger even more. Rumple was right. They needed to protect their daughter and their options were limited.

"We'll keep an eye on him," Belle said, not waiting for an alternative.

"Of course," said Gold.

Now

Regina walked into Any Given Sundae.
"Ms. Fisher."

"Mayor Mills, what can I do for you?"

She walked over to the case. "I believe you once wanted to acquire something."

The blonde put down her scoop. "I believe you were unable to follow through on that. You made another deal."

"What's to stop you from taking her now?"

Sara narrowed her eyes. "No objections?"

"You would be doing me a favor, taking a thorn out of my side."
Chapter 72

**Then**

The weeks since Beatrice's birth had been a time of upheaval for Rumplestiltskin. The castle was no longer quiet, its new princess' cries echoed in the halls. He had a curse to prepare which seemed incongruous with the new life upstairs.

He ventured up to the nursery. The midwife had just arrived for a visit and he wanted to make certain everything was alright. Belle had been strong through her delivery, but he wanted to be certain he hadn't missed anything.

"Baby mine, don't you cry. Baby mine, dry your eyes..."

Rumplestiltskin entered the nursery. It was a well-appointed room, full of opulent fabrics and toys. Nothing quite interested the Dark One as the beauty in the center of the room as she held her newborn, swaying to a song meant only for them.

"Rest your head close to my heart, never to part, baby of mine..."

She glanced up at him, eyes shining and smiled, then stared back at the baby.

"You shouldn't be up," said Rumplestiltskin.

"I'm fine." Belle turned to her midwife. "Tell him I'm fine."

Leigh smiled. "Belle is fine. Besides, I've known mothers that give birth and have to go work the fields the next day."

"Then why have you graced us with your presence?"

"I believe our arrangement was to ensure the little one's good health," said Leigh, glancing again at her charge. "I was just doing that. She's quite lively and she's got a good mother. You know where I am if you need me before you get a nanny."

"A nanny?," asked Belle. She turned to Rumple.

"Merlin mentioned someone," said Leigh.

"I'll be sure to mention it to Merlin," Rumple muttered.

Leigh left.

Belle looked to Rumple.

"I was going to put her down for a little while, but if you wanted to hold her..."

"No, I have work to do," said Rumple. "Carry on with your plans."

**Now**
"And what can we tell about Gatsby?"

Beatrice thought she was going to scream. She couldn't listen to one more conversation about The Great Gatsby. She was going to go home, figure out how to hold a séance and tell F. Scott Fitzgerald what a crappy novel he had written. She didn't care if it was shorter than the other choices and that's why the rest of the class had picked it. Give her War & Peace, give her anything but this stupid book.

"Miss Gold, is there a problem?," asked Mrs. Edwards. "Are we boring you?"

Beatrice searched her memory for why Mrs. Edwards had a problem with her. Had her dad turned her husband into something? No, wait, family friend of Cinderella's.

"I can't talk about this book anymore," said Beatrice. "I just can't, okay?"

"Is that so?"

"Yeah, that's so. I'm so tired of it. I'm sick of the random third person narrator. I'm sick of Daisy. I'm sick of Gatsby being stupid. And how am I supposed to write an essay about religion in The Great Gatsby? There isn't any! You might as well have me write an essay about technology in The Canterbury Tales!"

Someone cleared her throat. Beatrice looked up to see Belle standing in the doorway.

"Mrs. Gold," said Mrs. Edwards. "Can I help you?"

"I'm taking Beatrice out for the rest of the day. She has a very important appointment."

Beatrice was slightly mortified by her mom being there, but if it got her out of another discussion of what Daisy represented, her mom could start calling her pet names and pinching her cheeks.

"I'll still expect that essay on time, Miss Gold."

Beatrice could write that essay now. "There is no religion in The Great Gatsby. They're all jerks. The end."

"I see I came at about the right time," said Belle, wrapping her arm around Beatrice's shoulder.

"Yeah, thanks. What appointment?"

"Mary Margaret's first meeting as mayor?"

"What? Why am I going?"

Belle narrowed her eyes. "Do you remember when we were at her apartment?"

Beatrice vaguely recalled an incident a few days before. She, her mom and Pamela had been in the Nolans apartment. Pamela had been attempting to give some pointers on dealing with the new prince, but was hindered by Mary Margaret refusing to let go of him. Also, Regina had just given up her post as mayor.

"I mean, I don't even know what I'm supposed to do! Who am I supposed to invite?"

"Well, you can't have Regina's lackeys back," said Belle.

"You could always have the Quorum of Twelve..." Beatrice had mused, looking at her phone.
"What?" asked Mary Margaret.

"Oh, the Twelve Colonies when they were destroyed, there was a representative from each in the Quorum of Twelve," said Beatrice.

Belle spoke now. "Mary Margaret really liked the idea."

"That wasn't an idea, that was a Battlestar Galactica reference!," Beatrice protested.

Belle frowned. "It wasn't the thirteen colonies?"

"No, it was the Twelve Colonies! Of Kobol!"

"Well, let's just not mention that to her, she's frazzled enough as it is."

"It is scary that she was my fourth grade teacher," said Beatrice. "Wait, why am I coming?"

"Mary Margaret's idea was to invite representatives from each kingdom in the Enchanted Forest and you are..."

"Heiress to the Far North Kingdom," Beatrice sighed.

"Oh, and you're also representing Edelweiss because your father made it clear he wanted nothing to do with it and appointed you."

"What? Come on!"

They finally reached outside. "In the car," said Belle.

"Couldn't stick Neal with something..."

---

Then

"Rumplestiltskin?"

He looked up from his wheel to see Catherine. She had just walked in.

"I was just off to bed. Belle is sleeping. I just thought I'd let you know."

"Yes. Thank you."

Catherine walked closer. "Is something troubling you? Forgive me for saying, you don't look like a man with a new baby."

"Don't I?"

"No. In my experience, you men prefer to strut around like peacocks as if you did the hard work."

Rumplestiltskin narrowed his eyes. "Your husband must have been a peculiar man."

"Very."

Rumplestiltskin motioned for Catherine to sit near him, conjuring a chair near his wheel. She sat.

"So, what troubles you?"
"Beatrice's magic."

"The Dark One is bothered by a little baby's magic?"

"The ice."

"Ah."

"Ice is beyond me. I can destroy it, but I have no idea how it works."

"It's like all magic, governed by emotion."

"Light or dark?"

"Ice doesn't work like that. It's elemental, neither light nor dark. Good or bad rests entirely in the heart of the practitioner."

"And in your family, the hearts of those practitioners?"

"My sister practiced dark magic and I would hazard that her heart was darker than most, but she had no ice. Of the Ice Princesses, there have been no dark hearts and I don't think Beatrice will be the first."

"My curse. The nature of it is that it corrupts everything."

Catherine sighed. "There is one thing. Do you know a land called Arendelle?"

He grimaced. "I've heard of the place."

"They are distant relations and occasionally one of them possesses the ability to control ice. Well, control might be overstating it. She calls herself the Snow Queen."

"I've heard of them."

"And the Snow Queen?"

"If you want to see what happens when ice corrupts, look no further than her."

Now

Beatrice followed Belle into City Hall. Mary Margaret waited by the entrance to Regina's office with papers.

"Belle, Beatrice, you made it," said Mary Margaret. "I hope you didn't have to leave anything too important."

"Great Gatsby? Wealth corrupts. I've got it."

"What?," asked David.

"Your grandmother is already here," said Mary Margaret.

"Great." Belle motioned at the baby. "You know, I could have Pamela watch him during the meeting. I'm sure she'd love a change of pace from administering SAT practice exams."

"No, I'm fine," said Mary Margaret.
They went in and found Catherine on one of the sofas. The women exchanged greetings and sat.

"Your mother thought I could shepherd you through the first few meetings," said Catherine. She motioned around the room. "Clearly, you know Robin Hood."

"Yeah, not sure if he's mad at me..."

"Grumpy is representing the dwarves. I believe you know Ashley's father-in-law, Mitchell Herman."

"This place just gets better and better..."

Mr, Connolly, King of Dunbroch. Mr. Primm. You know Eric. Mr. Aziz, Sultan of Agrabah.

"Why's Granny here?"

Catherine and Belle looked at each other in confusion.

"I have no idea," Catherine finally conceded.

"Who's scowling next to her?"

"Oh, that's Mrs. Jin."

"Mulan's mother," Belle supplied.

"What did I do? Did I force her daughter to make out in the restroom at Mushu's? No."

"So interesting what you young people get up to."

"Just to clarify, I wasn't the one making out in the bathroom."

Mary Margaret brought the meeting to order.

"Okay, let's start with the agenda from Item One-"

"What about the ghost of Gold's dead wife coming back?," asked Leroy.

"Well, that's item five-" said Mary Margaret. "Now, the school bus stop situation-"

"I vote we skip items one through four," said Leroy.

"Honestly, Leroy," said Belle, "I've been waiting to talk about the bus stop situation for years."

"Fine," the dwarf relented.

"We have one bus stop on Main Street," said Belle. "It's a ridiculous system. You have to walk your child to a bus stop that is nowhere near anyone's house! In Maine? We really expect Kindergarteners to stand in the dark and snow blocks from home all winter?"

The assembled group murmured in agreement.

"Belle makes a very good point and that's why I've asked her to head the committee on school bus routes," said Mary Margaret. "Item two-"

"Can we go to Item Five?," asked Leroy.
"We have to discuss the recycling plant first,' said Mary Margaret. "Then there's the Spring Equinox Festival to plan."

"What about Gold's dead wife?"

Beatrice groaned. "Really, Leroy?"

"Fine, I can be flexible," said Mary Margaret. "Beatrice, maybe you could answer any questions."

Beatrice gave Belle a glance and sighed. "Milah came back from the dead. Merlin put her in a box, but he thinks it was part of someone trying to break through from another realm and brought random pieces with them. There's already some random woman in the hospital-"

"Who is she?," asked Mrs. Jin.

"Did I not just say random? Don't worry. Joseph's on it."

"Your boyfriend," Mitchell pointed out.

"Um, my boyfriend, the greatest detective in literature, yeah," said Beatrice. "Okay, so he'll have that figured out at some point."

"And we're sure Gold doesn't know anything?," asked Mitchell.

Some rabble joined him.

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Okay, why don't you just run down to the pawn shop and ask him?"

"She has a bit of a point," said Catherine.

---

**Then**

"Well, it's a bit chilly, don't you think?"

The Snow Queen turned to face Rumplestiltskin.

"You're sitting in my chair."

"Am I? Forgive me." He jumped up and gave a courtly bow. "The Dark One."

"And what do you want?"

"I'm having a bit of difficulty with some rather pernicious ogres..." Rumplestiltskin rubbed his fingers together. "I thought a bit of icing might take care of them."

"What do I care for ogres?"

"I could make it worth your while, dearie."

"You don't have anything I want."

"Well, use your imagination, dearie, I bet I could find something."

"Nothing you could give me."

"Try again, dearie."
The Snow Queen raised her hands and lobbed bolts of ice at Rumplestiltskin. One landed straight at his abdomen.

"Oh, look at that. I've been impaled."

He pulled the icicle from himself and examined the object.

The Snow Queen stared at him in frustration.

"I think I have what I need, dearie."

Rumplestiltskin vanished in a puff of garnet smoke.

---

Now

"What are we doing?," asked Lestrade.

"Stopping for ice cream," said Joseph.

"Pardon?," asked Lestrade.

Lestrade followed Joseph into the shop.

"You've never held a prisoner before, have you?"

"No. Why? Is there something you wanted me to improve upon?"

They stood at the case as Sara walked over to them.

"You're back, Mr. Gillette," she said. "And you brought a friend."

"I did. How are things?"

"Things?," asked Sara.

"Things. You know, whatever it is that people talk about."

"I wouldn't know."

"Neither would I. I would like a carton of the Salted Caramel to go, please and whatever Lestrade would like."

"I don't know what it is."

"Make a guess."

Sara began scooping. "Sharing this with your girlfriend?"

"Doubtful." He glanced at Lestrade. "Pick one."

"What's the red one?"

"It's something I'm trying," said Sara. "Red Velvet Cupcake."

Lestrade shook his head. "Red velvet?"
"It's a faint hint of chocolate with overwhelming artificial coloring. Beatrice loves it." Joseph looked up at Sara. "He'll have one of those."

Sara handed off the cone and the carton. Joseph paid.

"It's cold," said Lestrade

"Yes, it's cold. Odd, don't you think?"

"This whole thing is odd. Why is this so sweet?"

"Putting the desserts aside for a moment, that place is cold, but there's no running machinery in there."

"So what? It's magic."

"Ah."

"Ah, what?"

"You come from somewhere that has to do with magic. I'm guessing the ginger in the hospital has something to do with magic."

Lestrade held out the ice cream. "It's good this."

"So, a woman of magic and influence."

"What makes you think she has influence?"

"Well, you refuse to speak about your mission and the way you just tried to question my reasoning."

"Ice magic is tricky. It's one of the elemental magics, that's what makes it so dangerous."

"Can anyone do it?"

"No, you've got to be born to it."

"Is that so?"

"Always that way with elemental magics. I thought you were supposed to be clever."

"I am."

"Don't you know anything about magic then?"

"I'm new."

"There's magic that comes from within- dark or light - and then there's elemental magic. Magic that's drawn from the world. The air, the earth, the water."

"Ice."

"For an example, yeah."

"Beatrice didn't seem to know her."
"Does Beatrice know everyone?"

"Yeah, usually and I would think she would know the only other ice magician in town-"

"Sorry. Who is Beatrice? She's an ice witch?"

"My... girlfriend. She has many talents."

"Word of advice, you can't trust an ice witch."

Joseph's phone rang.

"Ah. One moment." He picked it up as Lestrade stared at him in confusion. "John."

"Were you ever going to ring me back?!"

"Sorry?"

"You said you would call me. It's been days. You haven't."

"Call you about what?"

"Your never-ending fountain of weird texts! Beauty and the Beast? Merlin? A waltz?"

"Oh, right, that was for a thing."

"Well?!"

"What?"

"Are you going to explain what that was?!"

"It was a thing."

John let out a breath. "Joseph, seriously, now, have you been using?"

"No. Well, there was this one incident with... well, given the circumstances. I'm not quite sure what that was. I would assume magic-based absinthe." He looked at Lestrade. "Is that a thing?"

Lestrade nodded as he licked his cone.

"That is not a thing! Joseph, if you had a relapse, you ought to come home and see the doctor-"

Joseph grunted. "I do not need to go back to rehab. It was a waste of my time the first time."

"And the other two? Waste of your time then?"

"I am doing fine. I will have you know I have a case."

"Oh, so you've finally sorted Adil Rahim flying out the window?"

"Yes, I have solved that case in its entirety. I had another case and I sorted that. Now I have a different case and possibly another one I just happened upon."

"So what? You're just going to go on solving crimes in- where the hell are you even?"

"Storybrooke, Maine."
"Where the hell is that?"

"John, I have to get back to you. I need to do some lab tests on my ice cream before it melts."

"What? Joseph, don't you hang up on me-

---

*Then*

"You know, sunshine, I think you're overreacting."

Rumplestiltskin didn't bother looking up as he bored holes into his work table where the icicle sat.

"And of course, wasting your time," Merlin added. "After all, we're going to a Land Without Magic, I thought."

He was silent.

"Unless, of course, you propose to bring magic."

Rumplestiltskin finally looked up at him.

"Well, this plan gets more and more elaborate with each passing day. I don't mind. I appreciate attention to detail, I would just like someone to clue me in."

"I needn't share my plans with you, dearie."

"Except our interests have finally aligned," Merlin pointed out. "I don't know what you're worried about, though, I do have a suggestion. A nanny."

Rumplestiltskin snorted. "A nanny?"

"A very specific sort of nanny. When you hear an east wind she'll have arrived."

---

*Now*

Belle hung up her phone and turned to Gold and Neal.

"The Foleys cancelled on me."

"Did they give a reason?," asked Gold.

"Lila just said something came up," said Belle.

"Maybe you scared them off," said Neal.

"I did not scare them off."

"Come on. This whole 'My kid is your kid's True Love, let's have dinner' thing... It's kind of a lot."

Belle turned to her husband. "Rumple."

"Sorry, son. I agree with Belle. There's no sense wasting our time and besides that, the Foleys don't come barging in my shop for every little problem and their rent is always on time."
Then

Belle shook her head. She held Beatrice closer to her even as the woman put on a friendly smile. She had appeared almost out of nowhere in a prim black outfit with only a bag and umbrella.

Mary Poppins.
"Rumple, I don't need a nanny," she insisted. "I want to take care of Beatrice myself."
"I wouldn't dream of it," she said. "I think that it's critically important for parents to be involved."
"I'm sorry. I'm sure you're very good at what you do, but I don't need a nanny."
"Well, you have one," said Rumple with growing irritation.

Belle walked over to Mary Poppins. "What deal did he strike with you?"
"A deal?" She frowned. "Do you mean the terms of my compensation?"
"Yes. What are you getting?"
"Gold."
"That's it? Just gold?"
"Just?"
"Belle-" Rumple started.
"Tell me what your bargain was," said Belle.
"It's certainly not whatever you're thinking of."

Now

"What's this?," asked Lestrade, staring up at the pink house.
"The Ice Witch's house."
"I was just telling you what I know."
The door opened. Beatrice smiled and then turned her gaze to Lestrade. "Hi."
"Beatrice, Lestrade. Lestrade, Beatrice."
"Lestrade? Really?"
Lestrade frowned. "Yeah, really."
"Okay. What's he doing here?"
"Sort of my prisoner."

Beatrice let Joseph and Lestrade into the house.
"Shouldn't you maybe like keep him somewhere?"
"Well, if I kept him somewhere I couldn't learn anything from that and besides, no one ever actually seems to stay imprisoned here."

Belle entered.

"Joseph!" Before he realized what was happening, he was getting a hug. She turned to Lestrade. "And who is this?"

"This is Lestrade."

"Really?"

Gold and Neal entered.

"Joseph is here and he brought a friend," said Belle. "This is Lestrade."

"Really?" asked Gold.

"I don't get it," said Neal.

"Seriously, Neal, read," said Beatrice.

"Lestrade, why don't you follow Beatrice's parents wherever they're going to take you? Beatrice, I think you probably have a book you want to show me."

Beatrice entered the library. She knew what shelf she wanted.

"Sherlock Holmes, right here."

Joseph eyed the shelves. "Why are they here? I thought your mother did everything by call numbers."

"I don't know, Sherlock Holmes shelf." Beatrice picked up 'A Study in Scarlet.' "I thought you read this one."

"A psychiatrist once suggested it so I could see how dissimilar I was and free myself of the illusion that I was Sherlock Holmes."

"How did that go?"

"I am in Maine in a town full of storybook characters."

Beatrice finished thumbing through the book. "Gregson is the smartest of the Scotland Yarders, my friend remarked he and Lestrade are the pick of a bad lot. They are both quick and energetic, but conventional, shockingly so. They have their knives into one another, too. They are as jealous as a pair of professional beauties. There will be some fun over this case if they are both put upon the scent."

"I just found the one." His gaze went to another item on a shelf. A photograph in a silver frame. Beatrice looked to be six or seven, she was trick or treating in a gold Belle costume. He held it up for her. "Really?"

"I was Belle- well, Disney Belle- every Halloween for about seven years," said Beatrice. "Then I was a Dalek."

"You don't remember her?," Joseph asked, pointing at a blonde.
Beatrice shook her head. "No. She's just some random stranger."

Belle poked her head in. "Come on, you two. Dinner is done."

Beatrice left.

"Belle, do you know this woman?" Joseph handed her the frame.

Belle looked.

It was her.

The Snow Queen.

"No."

"Belle, why are you lying to me?"

Belle realized she was shaking.

Joseph nodded. "Alright, if you can't tell me the truth, you ought to know that she has an ice cream shop."

"Here in Storybrooke?"

"And Beatrice doesn't seem to know her."

"Belle?," Gold called.

"Coming!"

"My lady?"

Belle stopped and turned. Mary Poppins was as usual a few feet behind her.

"Are you going somewhere?"

"If you must know, I am going to take a turn in the garden for some air."

"Shall I accompany you?"

"No, I am perfectly fine."

She turned away, but the woman spoke again.

"It's a bit chilly."

"It's autumn. Soon we won't be physically able to leave the castle. I just want her to get some fresh air."

"She does seem to be bundled up."

Belle grew hot under the woman's examination. She may have only been a mother for a short time but she wasn't an imbecile. "I am her mother. I don't need your permission."

"I never said you did."
Belle walked out into the garden. Autumn had definitely come, the trees were picked clean and their contents were stored in the cellar.

"See, Beatrice, we don't need a nanny..." she cooed. "We're just fine out here, getting some fresh air, looking at all the pretty things. You can see the village down there. We'll go when you're older."

"Such a pretty baby."

Belle spun around to face a blonde in a long white dress.

"Yes," said Belle. She held Beatrice closer to her. Rumple had said he was going out, but he hadn't mentioned anyone coming to the Dark Castle. "How did you get past the gate?"

She was already backing away.

"May I hold her?"

"You just showed up here. I'm not going to let you hold my baby."

The woman tilted her head. "Belle, do you even know what you're holding?"

"How do you know my name? Who are you?"

The woman held out her hands. Swirls of magic came out and Belle's arms began to tingle, like they were coming from Beatrice. The infant began to scream and Belle stumbled, just able to keep from dropping her.

"What? What have you done?" She was out of breath both from the reverberations of magic and the pressure of the suddenly cold air.

"That's her. The power within her."

Belle gasped for breath. She thought she might come apart.

Suddenly an umbrella appeared before her eyes. As it came into focus Mary Poppins wielded it at the woman. Belle suddenly felt put back together and Beatrice's screams calmed to sobs.

Now

"It's just a shame that your family couldn't make it, Joseph."

"What?" He looked up at Belle. She was doing her best trying to act normally, but he knew he had shaken her. "Oh yes. You meant the Foleys."

"That's right," said Gold, perhaps not so subtly. "You have the family that raised you. You haven't told us much of them."

"You have a brother, don't you?," asked Belle.

"Yes. John. And a sister, Harriet. Our parents died in a car accident and we stayed with my aunt and her husband..."

"I'm so sorry to hear about your parents," said Belle.
Joseph’s phone began buzzing.

"It's doing that again," said Lestrade.

"Well, ignore it," said Joseph.

"You know, I sort of lived in London for a while," said Neal.

The phone stopped buzzing, then quickly resumed.

"Maybe you should take that," said Beatrice.

Joseph got up from the table and walked into the living room.

"Aunt."

"Do you have any idea how long I've been trying to call you?!"

"Presumably since John spoke with you."

"You had a relapse and what the hell does magic-based absinthe actually mean?"

"Mostly what it sounds like."

He heard his uncle groaning. "Nellie, it's quarter past one. I have work in the morning."

"It's not my fault he didn't pick up! Now, seriously, what is going on?"

"I am fine. I am, in fact, gainfully employed."

"You're what?!"

"And I was in fact having dinner with a girl and her family."

"Alright, Joseph, that was one lie too many. You expect me to believe there's actually a girl whose family would invite you to dinner?"

"You'd have to know her father."

The doorbell rang. Joseph walked over, wondering who would possibly wish to bother the Golds at this hour. He held Martha back by her collar as he opened the door.

Where he saw approximately half the town.

"Is Beatrice home?," asked Leroy.

"Sorry, Aunt. Must go. Peasant revolt."

"What?"

He hung up the phone.

"Might I inquire as to what you wish to discuss?," asked Joseph.

"Uh, the giant ice wall she put up around the town."

Gold was already behind him. "Who is it?"
"Peasant rabble," said Joseph, stepping aside from the door.

"What's this?" asked Gold.

"Well..." Archie began.

"Yeah, didn't think this through, did you?" asked Joseph.

"You have exactly one minute to tell me what you're all doing here," said Gold.

"Or what?" asked Leroy.

"Fifty-five seconds."

"Come on, Gold! You can't turn us all into snails!"

"I can't?"

"Make Beatrice take down the ice wall!" said Granny.

Some of the crowd cheered in agreement.

Belle, Beatrice and Neal joined them.

"What's going on?"

"Rumple, who is it?"

"The town. They have thirty seconds to get off my lawn."

The others caught sight of the large crowd.

"We had a minute!" Leroy complained.

"You had a minute thirty seconds, ago, dearie."

Archie tried again. "Beatrice, could you just take down the ice wall?"

"What ice wall?" asked Beatrice.

"Come on. You're the only one with ice powers."

"Yeah, but I didn't put up an ice wall."

"Nobody's mad, Beatrice-" said Archie.

"Speak for yourself!" someone shouted from the back.

"Hey, back off!"

They looked down the steps to see Emma and David making their way through the crowd.

"Okay, everyone, go back to your homes!" said David. "The situation is under control!"

"I don't need your help," said Gold.

"Nobody wants any trouble."
"And yet they're here."

"Everybody go home now!," shouted Emma.

Emma and David followed the others inside.

"But, seriously, what is with the ice wall?"

Beatrice turned to Emma. "What ice wall?! I didn't put up an ice wall!"

"It surrounds the whole town," said David. "People are upset."

"Why? Because they can't leave? They couldn't leave anyway?"

"Well, come with us," said Emma. "Maybe you can take this thing down."

"I'm eating dinner."

"Beatrice, the whole town is in a panic and we need your help," David pled.

Beatrice turned to her father. "Oh, my God, you're right. This is really irritating."

Gold nodded.

Lestrade entered. "What did I miss?"

"Who are you?," asked Emma.

"He's my prisoner," said Joseph.

"Your what?!," David exclaimed.

"I found him in the course of my investigation."

Emma looked at Joseph. "If he's a prisoner, why isn't he in a cell?"

"Because as I understand it no one ever actually stays in one so why bother?"

"I hired you, you work for me."

"I don't think so."

"No, Joseph, that's actually what it means."

Lestrade motioned at Emma. "Who's she?"

"The sheriff."

"She doesn't look like a sheriff."

"Who is he?," Emma demanded.

"He's Lestrade."

Emma shook her head. She looked squarely at Joseph, then Beatrice. "Okay, you, come in tomorrow and you get the ice wall down."

"I didn't put up an ice wall!"
"Emma, she was with me all afternoon," said Belle. "I think I would have noticed."

"Oh, and the one around Regina's vault," said David.

The two left.

"What? Now there's one around Regina's vault I'm in charge of?," asked Beatrice.

---

**Then**

Belle fussed over Beatrice on the changing table.

"My lady, you can leave this to me," said Mary.

Belle still shook from her experience outside.

"She's right, Belle. Come drink some tea," said Catherine.

"I don't want tea," said Belle. "I want to know what happened. You're the Ice Princess. You ought to know."

"Fine. Describe her then."

Belle picked Beatrice up and shrugged. Mary wordlessly handed her a blanket for the infant.

"Blonde. With a white gown. No shoes."

"And did she have a pendant?"

Belle shook her head.

"Clear," said Mary. "A snowflake."


"Arendelle?," asked Belle.

"A distant relation, but we are the only two ice families left in the realm. She's called Ingrid, the Snow Queen. A treacherous sort."

"Well, what did she want with Beatrice?"

"I haven't the foggiest."

"I wish I understood something!," said Belle, sitting down in the chair with her daughter. "I still don't know what happened out there!"

Mary spoke. "It's a simple but nasty spell, drawing out the powers of one to use against another."

Belle frowned. "So that was Beatrice's magic?"

"Untapped potential. She has no magic yet. You heard her scream, she knew you were in pain and wanted to resist."

Belle snuggled closer to the baby.
She had resisted. She wanted to protect her. She loved her.

Now

Beatrice stared at the giant ice wall.

"It is impressive," said Pamela, unable to crack it with her umbrella.

"Yeah, see, you got your standard ice wall here," said Lestrade. He knocked on it with his fist. "Solid through."

"Well, I didn't do it," said Beatrice. She looked back at her family and Joseph. "Come on. If I had made an ice wall, I probably would have ordered an Elsa dress off Etsy then run around singing."

"Point taken," said Joseph.

Gold walked over to the wall and drew his dagger. He used it to break off a piece of the ice.

"What are you doing?," asked Belle.

"I'm going to find out who did this."

Then

Regina grimaced as the ice wall appeared.

"It's you..." she seethed, pulling her hand back. "Well, if you want a fight, I won't play with snowballs."

The Snow Queen materialized before her.

"Is there more than one of you?," she sneered.

"I heard rumors of a Curse. I came to make a deal."

Regina scoffed. "And why would I deal with some two-bit ice witch?"

"Because what I want resides in the Dark Castle. She's called Beatrice."

Now

Belle hurried into the master bedroom behind Gold and shut the door.

"You know who it is, don't you?," asked Belle.

"Sweetheart."

Belle handed him the framed picture "Joseph pointed this out. He said she runs an ice cream shop. She's here. In Storybrooke."

Gold looked at it. "She's been here the whole time?"

"You told me she wasn't coming to this land, that she would never get near Beatrice again."
Gold shook his head. "I don't understand this at all. Even if she did get through, how is it we never noticed her?"

"Why is she framing Beatrice? What does she want with her?"

"It doesn't matter. Merlin and I will deal with her."

"How?"

"Don't concern yourself."

Belle shook her head. She hated when he said that.

She hated Beatrice getting hurt more.

Belle walked into Beatrice's bedroom. She was already in her pajamas and was getting under the covers.

"Hey," said Belle.

"Hey."

Belle sat on the edge of the bed. "You did really well today. At the meeting."

"Then I had an angry mob come after me."

"Well, I don't know about angry-"

"Mom. They don't like me. They never liked me. I got like a week of defeating the Wicked Witch goodwill, but we're back to normal now and-"

"Stop it," said Belle. She edged closer to curl Beatrice up to her. "Stop."

"Mom, you're not seriously doing this, I'm not six-" she said as Belle shushed her.

"If they knew all about you, they'd end up loving you too, all those same people who scold you, what they'd give for the right to hold you..."

"I'm not a flying elephant."

"From your head down to your toes, you're not much, goodness knows, but you're so precious to me, sweet as can be, baby of mine..."

Now

"I'm sorry, Belle."

Belle held Beatrice closer to her and looked up to glare at Rumplestiltskin again. She was furious. He admitted he had gone to see the Snow Queen and she must have followed him somehow.

"You were frightened of her magic?," Belle asked.

"It's always such a shame when learned sorcerers fear innate magic," Catherine added.

"Grandmother."
"Well, am I wrong, Rumplestiltskin?"

"No," he admitted, looking down.

"What about it was frightening?," demanded Belle.

"The storm when she was born."

Belle shook her head. "So what? It was a storm."

"It was a tempest."

"I've seen you conjure a tempest."

"Yes, conjure, not call upon one."

Belle looked at her grandmother.

Catherine shook her head. "Not uncommon. I had a blizzard. Your mother didn't have anything special, but she always was defiant. You... you had an unseasonably warm and pleasant day in the middle of three weeks of rain. Maurice went hunting."

"Why does this woman want Beatrice?"

Rumplestiltskin shook his head. "I really don't know."

"This new land and this curse," said Belle. "You said Regina could tear apart who she wanted. What if she takes Beatrice from us?"

"I won't let that happen. Before the Curse comes, there will be a chance to make a deal with Regina."

"A deal? Why would she give you anything?"

"Because I have something she needs."

"Milady?"

Belle looked over to see Mary.

"I was thinking it was about time for the young princess to settle in her bed, if you agree, milady."

"I'll come with you," said Belle.

---

Now

Lestrade took a piece of ice off the wall currently blocking access to Regina's vault with his encrusted dagger. He handed it up to Sherlock and then dusted himself off as he stood.

"So, do you examine it or take it to a lab?"

"You can, but you don't have to. Two different kinds of ice, not made by the same witch. You're clever."

Joseph looked at the other piece. "The one from the wall around town is denser."
"Suggesting?"

"It's colder?"

"Try again."

"The ice witch is left-handed?"

Lestrade scowled. "See, magic is emotion. No two emotions are the same, even when they are, so no magic can be the same even if it's the same technique."

"Modus operandi versus signature..." Joseph nodded.

Lestrade knocked on the ice wall behind him. "This is the work of a young sorceress. Talented but not angry."

Joseph held up the one from around the town. "Talented and angry."

"I would say your girlfriend made this one."

"Meaning someone else made the one around town. Someone no one knew was here, someone like the proprietress of the ice cream shop, but what does she want with Beatrice and why did Beatrice say she didn't remember doing this?"

"Maybe she didn't want to get in trouble."

Joseph shook his head. "Trouble doesn't scare her. Why would she do this to Regina... Operation Mongoose."

"What's that then?"

"I'm not certain, but I intend to find out."

---

Then

Rumplestiltskin walked into the nursery. Belle was with Beatrice again.

"Baby mine, don't you cry, baby mine, dry your eyes, rest your head close to my heart, never to part, baby of mine..."

She didn't look up when she began talking to Rumplestiltskin.

"You haven't held her since she was born. Is that because you're afraid?"

"Yes."

"Of her power?"

He scoffed. "No."

"It's not a stupid question. You just led a Snow Queen to us because you were afraid of not understanding ice."

"It's Bae."

"Bae?"
"I had almost forgotten what it felt like to hold your child. She made me remember."

Belle shook her head. "But it's the most wonderful feeling in the world."

"And I let it go."

Belle picked up the baby and walked over to Rumple. She put her into his very surprised arms. He shook his head. "Belle, I can't, I'll-"

"Don't let go," Belle said softly with a smile.
Belle held Beatrice close to her. She closed her eyes as she heard the sounds of the dungeon below the castle.

Mostly the screaming.

Mary snapped her fingers. A music box sprung to life, a tune being the only sound in the nursery.

Belle looked to her grandmother. "I need to know what's going on."

Catherine shook her head. "No, you don't."

"This is my fault!"

"Dear Belle, how is it your fault? Your fault for what? Falling in love, bearing the child of your True Love, loving that child?"

Belle shook her head and handed the baby off to Catherine.

"Belle..."

"I can't let him do it."

As soon as Belle left the nursery, Maurice's screams filled the castle. She hurried down to the dungeon. She took a breath as she opened the door.

"Rumple..."

Rumplestiltskin stopped and turned.

"Please, Rumple, stop."

"Please, Belle..." Maurice gasped.

Rumplestiltskin took the man's chin.

"Two hours ago you stood in my Great Hall and tried to poison her baby! The child of the Dark One!" If some saliva was landing in Maurice's face, Rumplestiltskin didn't care. "And you dare beg for her mercy!"

"He doesn't have to beg for it," said Belle. "Please. He's my father."

"But he's not," said Rumplestiltskin.

"I know and that's a mystery I would like solved some time, but he was the man who raised me. I can't change how I feel about him."

"He is unworthy of such mercy."
Belle dragged him to the corner as Maurice looked on.

"Please..." she whispered.

"What is it you expect will happen if others hear someone took on the Dark One and lived?"

"You spared Robin Hood."

"I didn't know him." He pointed at Maurice. "I know him and I don't like him."

"Don't tell me you can't think of some other solution." She glanced at Maurice and leaned in closer. "You said we'll all be leaving soon anyway, he won't even remember us. Surely you can bind him or something."

"He called you my whore. He said our sweet daughter was-"

Belle placed her hands on either side of Rumple's face.

"I don't care what he says because it's not true. You're a good papa but there's got to be a way other than killing him."

Rumplestiltskin walked back over to Maurice.

"She is so much better than you deserve but she's saved your sorry skin. I will bind you so you never return to this castle, but should you ever manage to break through those binds and hurt so much as the tiniest hair on my daughter's head, I will take your life."

Now

Belle followed Beatrice towards the door. She watched as she said goodbye to the dogs.

They still hadn't told her about the Snow Queen. She hoped they wouldn't have to, but there was still the matter of the townspeople blaming Beatrice for the ice wall. She had even had to send Pamela to take some of Beatrice's town council related appointments, but the Snow Queen was partially the reason behind that.

"Just be careful. Please," said Belle.

"Mom, I've been the town pariah before. Actually, it'll be better to be back to normal. The whole people being grateful to me thing was starting to get weird."

"You know you can call us if you need anything. One of us will come get you."

"It's just school, Mom. I'll be fine."

Beatrice gave her mother a kiss on the cheek. She then gave Gold another one as he came in. She picked up her messenger bag and left.

"Don't worry, sweetheart," said Gold. "Your father and I will have dealt with this before lunch."

"I'm coming with you," said Belle.

"That's really not necessary."

"I don't care. I'm going."
Joseph had hardly slept, pondering what the woman's motivation was, then probing the strategic weaknesses of the ice cream shop while Lestrade slept. Unfortunately, the strategic weakness seemed to be that Sara Fisher was still there.

"Sherlock?," asked Lila.

Joseph turned. His mother was standing behind him. He wasn't sure what to call her. Mummy seemed an age ago. Mrs. Foley was too impersonal and Lila was just weird.

"Lila," he said with no better option.

Affronted, she looked at Lestrade. "We haven't met before."

"Lestrade, Lila. Lila, Lestrade. I'm on a case."

"Yes, I know," said Lila. "I was hoping to speak to you about a personal matter."

"Oh," said Lestrade. "In that case, I'll be over there."

Lestrade walked to the counter and Joseph was left with his biological mother.

"I wanted to ask you over to the house. We could have dinner."

"What about last night?"

"What about it?"

"Mrs. Gold said she invited you to dinner at her house."

"We were busy."

He shook his head. "Blast."

"What?"

"Mycroft once told me he could tell when you were lying. I just realized how simple it was."

"Are you serious about Beatrice Gold?"

"Serious in that we seemed to have shared True Love's Kiss two or three times? Yeah... pretty serious."

"Surely you can appreciate how irrational that is."

"Yes."

"Then why pursue it?"

"Because I want to. Why don't you want me to?"

"I have no problem with the Golds."

"Sounds like you do."

"Bad things happen to everyone who ends up around that girl. Do you know her grandmother was killed by the Blue Fairy? The same one that sent you through a portal to another realm."
"That's not Beatrice's fault."

"But perhaps it's enough reason to stay away. I don't want you to get hurt."

"I'll be back to my case."

"Sherlock-"

He stopped and turned back around. "I am not three."

"Don't you think I realize that?"

"You had no intention of abandoning me, I recognize that, but the end result was the same. You did not raise me. We are strangers and I don't seriously see how I can be expected to give up Beatrice based on the opinion of someone I just met."

"I know you better than that. You think yourself a knight and what they never mention in fairy tales is that knights get killed."

Joseph walked away. "Lestrade, we're going."

Lestrade followed with a to go cup, acknowledging Lila with a nod of his head.

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**Storybrooke, 2012**

"Happy Valentine's Day!"

Beatrice awoke as her dog, Lady, growled. "Mom..."

"Don't argue with me, I just wanted to make my favorite girl know how special she was."

Beatrice looked over. There were balloons. Belle held a bag and handed it over.

"Cards. Reese's hearts and Valentine's M&Ms."

"Thanks, Mom."

"That's not all."

Beatrice looked inside the bag. Her mom had gotten her a sweater. A Valentine's Day sweater. It could have been worse. Belle had chosen black with a red heart. On a normal day, Beatrice might have even liked it, but today was Valentine's Day and it might give the impression that she wanted to be included in the holiday which she definitely did not.

"Mrs. Gold?"

"Yes, Pamela?"

"Mr. French is on the phone."

Belle grimaced. "I'll be right there. Sorry, sweetheart. I have to take this, but Dad is making you a special breakfast and I can't wait to see how that sweater looks on you!"

---

Seeing no way out of leaving the house in the sweater, she paired it with her gray jeans and black boots. Maybe she could just hide the heart under a scarf.
"Pa- Moe..." Belle was exasperated. "I can't interfere in this for you. He's my husband. If there's business to be discussed, you need to discuss it with him."

Beatrice waited. Word had spread throughout town about Mr. Gold taking Moe French's van the day before. Add that in with the whole arson thing and it was getting harder and harder to be the daughter of Storybrooke's most hated citizen. Beatrice hardly knew her step-grandfather, she only saw him when something went wrong and he needed money from her mom.

"Beatrice, go get breakfast."

She walked towards the kitchen, but could hear her mom continue.

"No, I can't. I won't get into an argument with my husband over that much money, I can't just give it to you."

Beatrice walked into the kitchen and towards the counter. She took her usual spot as her dad finished making pancakes.

"Almost done," he said, placing them on a plate and topping them with a little whipped cream. He put them in front of her. "Happy Valentine's Day, sweetheart."

"Thanks."

"Is something the matter?"

*Yes. I live in a weird town, probably some government experiment, better than Henry's crackhead theory. You, for some reason, decided it was a great idea to burn down City Hall because you really wanted Emma Swan to get elected.*

"No."

Belle came in.

"Did you tell him?" Gold asked.

"I told him, but you could at least let him get the flowers-"

Gold looked up at her. "After what he's done, Belle?"

"This is petty."

"He knew the terms when he asked for the loan."

"You don't even care about the money!"

"You don't?," asked Beatrice.

Belle and Gold then remembered the audience.

"Never mind," Gold said abruptly. "What have you got planned for the day, Beatrice?"

Beatrice shrugged. "Algebra quiz, handing in my essay."

"Nothing special?"

Belle chimed in. "They're having a dance at the school this evening..."
"A dance?," asked Gold. "Who are you going with?"

"She won't go without a date," said Belle.

That wasn't entirely true. Not having a date didn't bother Beatrice. Not having anyone in the whole school who cared to see her did bother her. Storybrooke High was an especially harsh place, but she didn't want to tell her parents that. Every time something went wrong for Beatrice they seemed to take it so personally. Her mom cried. She hid it, but Beatrice knew.

She really couldn't stand to see her mom cry.

"Actually," said Beatrice, "some girls from class are going as a group thing. They asked me to come, but I think they just felt sorry for me because I was sitting right there."

In a moment, their countenances had changed. Belle's face lit up.

"No, of course you should go," said Belle. She looked hopefully at Gold. "That would be great."

"Yes, of course."

Now

Merlin glared as Gold and Belle emerged from the Cadillac.

"Sunshine..."

"Don't blame Rumple. He tried to talk me out of coming."

"Was Catherine able to shed any light on the Snow Queen?," asked Gold.

"Nothing more than we knew."

Belle stood outside the door to Any Given Sundae.

"What do we do?"

"She does not appear to be in..." said Merlin.

"Not a problem," said Gold. He took a small toolkit out of his pocket and worked at the locks.

"Why don't you just use your magic?"

"Because the Snow Queen would sense that." Gold paused. "Someone is in here."

They tiptoed inside.

"Is it her?," Belle whispered.

"We would sense her magic."

Joseph came out of the backroom. "Oh, good, it's just you."

"What are you doing here, dearie?," Gold asked.

"Obviously I wanted to investigate Ms. Fisher further," said Joseph.
Lestrade emerged from the backroom.

"Hello."

"Lestrade, you remember Mr. and Mrs. Gold. This is Beatrice's grandfather, Merlin."

It was Lestrade's turn this time. "Really?"

"I see my reputation precedes me."

"You might say that, yeah."

"Right," said Joseph. He held up a round piece of clay with a small handprint in it. "Anyone recognize this?"

Belle hurried over and took it from him. "Beatrice made that for me in nursery school."

"There's more in the back," said Lestrade. "Drawings. School papers."

Belle turned to Gold. "How did she get in our house?"

"Like this."

They looked up to see the Snow Queen. Before Belle knew what had happened, the handprint was out of her hand and back in the Snow Queen's.

"Give that back!," Belle shouted. "That was a gift from my daughter!"

"Never get between a mother and her arts and crafts projects," warned Merlin.

"The daughter you don't understand," said the Snow Queen, moving towards Belle. "People like you always turn against people like us and you're the worst because you actually have the potential to be so much more than you are, but you choose not to."

"Watch yourself," Merlin growled. "Belle needn't lower herself to impress you and perhaps you ought to be afraid of those who surround her."

"Is that a challenge?"

"No challenge. You couldn't possibly take me on."

Gold sneered. "Check again, dearie."

Lestrade looked at Joseph. "You might want to get out of the way."

"What? Why?"

"Sorcerer fight."

Joseph looked. Lestrade was correct. The Snow Queen had something in her hand while Gold and Merlin had something sort of fire ball things in theirs.

Joseph stood back shooting confused looks at Gold and Merlin. The Snow Queen made some sort of motion as a small storm cloud appeared. Gold and Merlin lobbed fireballs as the room became a total white out.

Joseph and Lestrade fled out the backdoor.
"What now?"

Then the storefront of the ice cream shop blew off, knocking them back. Belle landed on her rear on the ground in front of Joseph.

"See, this is why you don't trust ice witches!," said Lestrade.

Joseph hurried to Belle's side.

"Belle?"

"I'm fine," she said, dusting herself off.

Merlin and Gold emerged from the building.

"I admit that's not gone well," said Merlin.

"Where is she? What happened?," asked Belle.

Gold shook his head. "She vanished."

"What does she want with Beatrice?," asked Joseph.

"She tried to take her from us once," said Belle.

"And now you don't remember her being in Storybrooke. It sounds as if she's still at it," said Joseph. "This all would have been good to know."

"Call her," Gold said to Belle.

It was then that the sheriff's patrol car arrived. Emma and David leapt out.

"Seriously?!," asked Emma. She turned to Joseph. "And you! You were supposed to come to the station and tell me what you know!"

"I know the woman who runs the ice cream shop has ice powers. Also, Beatrice did do the ice wall around Regina's vault, but not the one around town, though I am fairly convinced she doesn't remember it."

"What?," asked David.

"She's called the Snow Queen," said Belle. "She's wanted Beatrice since back in our land, but we don't know why."

"Well, what does putting up a giant ice wall have to do with it?," asked Emma.

"I am sure it has something to do with the townsfolk. After all, they've always had such a welcoming and loving attitude towards her," said Merlin.

"We've got to do something before people panic," said David.

Now

Beatrice came home that afternoon to find a garment bag sitting on her bed. It seemed Belle had decided at some point during the day it was unacceptable for Beatrice to go to her first school dance without a new dress. At least it didn't scream Valentine's Day, a silver sequined bodice with
a pale pink skirt, it actually went nicely with Beatrice' pendant.

Belle lent her a pair of shoes and Beatrice struggled to get down the stairs. All she had to do was wait for her parents to go off on their date.

"Oh, you look beautiful," said Belle. "Doesn't she look beautiful?"

"She always looks beautiful," said Gold.

Beatrice smiled. "Right, well, you'll be wanting to get to dinner."

"We want to wait for your friends to arrive," said Gold.

"You said they were meeting you here."

Beatrice blanked. There had been a flaw in her plan. Of course. They would want to see these fictional friends.

Time for more lies.

"Actually, we were just going to meet at the school. I can walk."

"Nonsense," said Gold. "A princess can't walk to a ball."

"We'll drive you," said Belle.

Okay, so now she was stuck in the car while they drove her to school. All she had to do was walk home and then she could just say somebody's mom had given her a ride.

Easy.

She walked into the school. She could hear the music from the door. She looked through the window and watched the Cadillac as it left.

The music started toying with her.

Maybe she could just take a peek at the dance. After all, who would notice?

Beatrice tiptoed to the door of the gym. People seemed to be dancing and talking and laughing.

"Oh, look at the dork."

Beatrice looked up to see Artie. His sister, Morgan, was there as usual.

Morgan snickered. "Have you come to see what normal people do?"

Beatrice bailed.

It was a long walk back to the Gold house. Beatrice tightened her coat around her and seriously regretted accepting her mom's offer to borrow shoes. How did she walk in these things?

She looked up to see Moe French had stopped next to her.

"Need a ride?"

On the one hand, they were really tall shoes. On the other hand, her grandfather had warned her
not to trust the man.

Moe was out of his car, though and suddenly Beatrice had the sense that something very bad was about to happen.

"I'm fine, thank you."

Beatrice decided to start walking. Moe grabbed her arm.

"Moe, what are you doing? Let go of me." She struggled against him. "Let go of me!"

Now

Mrs. Edwards stopped at Beatrice's desk.

"Miss Gold."

Beatrice stiffened.

"Are you on the internet? You're supposed to be writing your essay."

"I am researching the Great Gatsby."

"She's looking at that stupid British show again," Artie offered.

Beatrice shot him a glare then looked back up at her teacher.

"I am drawing parallels between Carey Mulligan's portrayal of Daisy and her portrayal of Sally Sparrow in Blink."

"Such as?"

"I was researching that."

The woman glared.

"Okay," said Beatrice, "let's just level here. What do I have to do to not read this stupid book any more?"

She snorted. "Are you trying to make a deal, Miss Gold?"

"Yeah, I thought that would be obvious."

Mrs. Edwards straightened herself. "Miss Gold, you are not special."

"Okay, I think you might be wrong just on empirical evidence alone..."

"You are a student in this class and while you are a student you will do the assignment or fail. Write the essay on the topic I assigned and turn it in on time or else."

"Or else what?," asked Beatrice.

The ground began to shake. The students looked up in alarm.

"Miss Gold, your magic tricks do not amuse or frighten me."
"I'm not doing that."

"Don't toy with me, Miss Gold."

Artie spoke. "Mrs. Edwards, there's a snow monster in the parking lot."

All eyes turned to Beatrice. She got up and walked to the window.

Looking out, she saw a huge ice monster that towered over the trees. He held a shield that he banged with a club.

Beatrice looked back at her scowling teacher and classmates.

"Just to clarify, that is not my snow monster."

"Really?" asked Artie.

"Yes, really. Mine is called Marshmallow and he just throws things."

The ice monster roared.

"Please excuse me," said Beatrice.

---

Then

Emma walked into the apartment she shared with Mary Margaret.

"Hey," said Emma. "How was girls' night?"

Mary Margaret held up a wine cooler. "Still going."

Emma snorted. "That fun, huh?"

"Care to join me?"

Emma was about to answer when there was a knock at the door.

"Who could that be?"

Emma walked over, ready to tell whoever it was to buzz off, but was somewhat surprised to see Mr. Gold and the pretty brunette with him.

"Mr. Gold."

"Sheriff Swan, I'm afraid I have some rather urgent business. My daughter is missing."

"Missing?"

Mary Margaret stood and walked over. "Isabelle? What's going on?"

"Beatrice," said Belle. "We dropped her off at the school dance. She's not there. Pamela says she's not at home. My father's looking everywhere in between."

"Who's Pamela?," asked Emma.

"Beatrice's nanny," said Gold.
"Sorry. Beatrice. Dark hair, brown eyes, red leather bag, Beatrice?"

"Yes," said Gold.

"She still has a nanny?"

"She still had a nanny, because I want someone to look after her when her mother and I cannot which I think is illustrated by our present circumstances."

"Have you tried her phone?," asked Emma.

"Really, Sheriff?"

Belle squeezed Gold's wrist. "We tried it. She didn't answer."

"Boyfriend? Maybe her mom?"

"Her mom?," asked Belle, now being the one to sound irritated.

Emma looked Belle over again. She also caught Mary Margaret's expression of sheer disbelief.

"Right... Does she have a computer?"

"A Mac and an iPad in her room," said Belle.

"Okay. I'll meet you back at your place. We'll go from there," said Emma.

The Golds left. Mary Margaret quickly invited herself and changed clothes joining Emma in the patrol car.

"Her mom?," asked Mary Margaret. "What was that about?"

"Sorry. I just didn't think Isabelle Gold was her birth mom. Was she ten when she had her?"

"Emma!"

"Seriously, what products is she using?"

"Maybe you could focus on the missing teenager."

"Do you know them?"

"Beatrice was in my class. I used to be friends with Isabelle."

"Anything you can tell me about the family? I mean, how are they? The kid's fifteen and she still has a nanny? That seems kind of weird."

Mary Margaret nodded. "I know Mr. Gold can be a little... scary, okay, terrifying, but I know he loves Isabelle and they both adore Beatrice. They were the most involved parents in my class."

"And what about her? Do you think she'd run away?"

"Not a chance. She's quiet. Smart."

The Golds were waiting and Emma met the nanny, Pamela. The house was staid, dominated by books and antiques until they led her to Beatrice's room.
There was a white bed with a teal ruffled bedspread. The walls were covered in posters from British TV shows. The shelves were lined with what seemed to be action figures and toys. Some sort of robot with a whisk and a plunger? Whatever it was, Beatrice seemed to share her parents' hoarder mentality.

"Her desk is over here," said Belle, leading Emma over to a white wood thing facing the window. Emma sat awkwardly in the faux fur chair. Emma looked at the Macbook.

"Oh, here," said Belle, quickly typing in a password.

"You know her password?," asked Emma.

"Yes."

Emma started looking through the web browser. There weren't any chat sites or anything, just a lot of stuff about TV shows.

"Does Beatrice have any friends?" she asked. "Anyone she might be with? Boyfriend?"

Gold scoffed. "Beatrice does not have a boyfriend."

"Dads aren't always the first to know."

"Sheriff Swan, I know what's going on in my daughter's life. She is not the type to run off."

"It doesn't seem like she gets much of a chance."

"Is that a criticism I'm hearing?"

"Look, if kids don't get any freedom sometimes they have to break loose."

"Is that why you had such a rebellious childhood? Because your parents didn't give you any freedom?"

Belle glared at him now. He made no verbal acknowledgment to Emma, but seemed to acknowledge her reproach.

"My husband is being rude, but he's right. Beatrice would never run away."

Emma looked back at the computer. "What friends was she meeting? I can't find any contacts on here."

Emma got up. "Okay. I'll start asking around town between here and the school."

"I'll help," said Mary Margaret.

Now

Beatrice walked out to the school parking lot where the Ice Monster was making quite a mess. The kids from the PE class were ran away, narrowly escaping the creature's swath of destruction.

"Hey!," she shouted. "Hey!"

The monster stopped and looked down at Beatrice. It bent over and she could feel the cold coming off its face as it was inches from her.
"Hi..."

She hadn't really thought through this part of the plan.

"Could you possibly stop?"

The creature roared, blowing Beatrice on her back. She looked up just as it began walking towards Main Street.

"Not good."

"No, it's not."

Beatrice grimaced as she looked to see Moe French and the rest of the Knights of the Round Table.

"Hey, guys..."

Then

Emma spent all of Valentine's night out in the cold looking for anywhere that a fifteen year old girl could be hiding.

She walked into Granny's surprised to find Mary Margaret.

"Shouldn't you be at school?"

Mary Margaret shook her head. "I decided to take a sick day. You need all the help you can get."

"Thanks."

Ruby poured Emma a cup of coffee. "Beatrice Gold finally ran off, huh? Good for her."

"Ruby!," exclaimed Mary Margaret.

"What?"

"Why do you say that?," asked Emma. "Is there something I don't know about Gold?"


"And she's weird," added Ashley. "Just like Isabelle. Of course we all know what she did."

Emma shook her head. "Somebody is going to have to connect the dots for me."

"Everyone knows she only married Gold for the money."

"Of course she didn't," said Mary Margaret.

Ashley snorted. "Why else?"

"They're in love."

"That bastard doesn't love anyone."

Emma shifted uncomfortably. "Ashley, don't you think you're maybe letting your own feelings
cloud your judgment?"
"She's right. Shut up."

Emma looked up to see a tall man had joined them.

Ashley looked at him. "You know I'm not in your class anymore. You can't tell me what to do."
He frowned. "Of course I can. Shut up."

Ashley walked away. Mary Margaret turned to Emma.

"Emma, this is Colin Avalon. Isabelle's father. He teaches Physics at the high school."

Emma shook hands. "I'm still looking for Beatrice. So far no one's seen her-"

"Moe French."

"Excuse me?"

"Two days ago, my son-in-law repossessed his van and this morning he is not at his shop or his house. Perhaps you ought to look there or perhaps I ought to."

Emma looked at Mary Margaret.

"He didn't take it well when Isabelle married Mr. Gold," she said.

"Listen, I thought I would just tell you and try to save my daughter and granddaughter the trouble of jailhouse visits."

"Jailhouse visits?"

"Because my son-in-law will kill him."

It was a pretty quick matter to locate Moe French's car. It was poorly disguised in the carport in front of a house with a giant foreclosure sign on it. Colin had followed them over in his Land Rover.

"Hey," said Emma. "I'll handle this."

"You and what backup exactly?"

"I get that you have issues with the guy."

"Issues is a term that does not begin to appropriately cover what has transpired between that man and myself."

Emma left Mary Margaret and Colin behind, then headed for the front door. She drew her gun.

"Moe? Moe, are you in there?"

Emma heard some rustling in the house and moved to kick the door down. As she did, the engine revved from the car. Moe backed out of the driveway, nearly running over Colin and Mary Margaret in the process.

Lying to her parents was looking like less and less of a good idea.
Beatrice had spent the night tied up and blindfolded in a car trunk. She was scared of the dark, she always had been, she just never knew why.

At one point she did get the blindfold off enough to discover that Moe did not have the kind of car with the handy trunk popping thing in it.

This had been a bad idea. Why hadn't she fought harder? Why hadn't she stayed home and just told her parents she was a friendless loser? They already knew it.

Better yet, why hadn't she been the sort of girl who had friends? Or the kind of girl who boys actually asked out?

Tears threatened for not the first time when they were halted by the sound of an engine revving. The car was driving somewhere. Fast.

Out of town? How far did Moe expect to get with this? Worst off, he wasn't exactly driving carefully and Beatrice got bounced on every bump in the road. She tried to use her bound hands to buffer between the metal of the trunk and her skull, but it was useless.

Then it spun, her head smacked against the car and everything went really, really black.

Belle and Gold hurried into the emergency room.

"Mr. and Mrs. Gold, you can't go back there!"

They didn't bother waiting for further reproach, instead Belle swung the doors open.

"Isabelle," said Mary Margaret.

"Where is she?"

Her father had her by the arm. "Belle..."

"Where is she? I need to see her."

Her attention immediately went to the door Emma was standing in front of. She pushed past the sheriff and went inside.

Beatrice lay on the bed with the machines beeping. Belle gasped and covered her mouth.

"Beatrice?"

Colin had her. "Come away. They have her."

Gold seethed. "How is she?"

"A concussion, a broken wrist, a lot of bruises. She'll get through it." He looked at Belle. "She's strong."

Belle crumbled.

Gold turned to Emma. "Where is he?"

"Who?"

"You know who. Moe French."
"He's in another room. He only got a little banged up during the accident. He'll be under arrest as soon as he's discharged."

Gold tore past her. Emma turned around to see Moe being wheeled along. That's when Gold moved faster than any man with a cane had a right to. She had just gotten going when the first blow of the cane landed on Moe's skull.

Moe was a pretty bloody mess by the time Emma and two of the orderlies were able to pull Gold off of him. Everyone in sight stared at Gold in terror. Emma didn't. While she couldn't let him beat Moe French to death with his cane, her time with Henry had certainly helped her to understand the instinct.

"Come on, Gold. Just walk away. Your daughter needs you."

That seemed to snap him out of the trance he was in.

"Sheriff Swan."

Emma looked up to see Regina.

"Aren't you going to arrest Mr. Gold?"

Gold smirked. "Just in time, aren't you, dearie?"

"Sheriff, do your job."

It wasn't a straight waking up. Beatrice first became aware she was out of the car trunk, but she wasn't warm.

"Cold," she muttered.

"Okay, okay." She was suddenly aware of her mother at her side. Belle kissed her on the forehead. "I'll get you another blanket."

The next time she heard her mother and grandfather speaking in hushed whispers.

He was first. "Well, Her Majesty seems to take a perverse pleasure in having him locked up."

"Why did Rumple have to do this?"

"You know why. His bargain to save his life-"

"Which he doesn't remember."

"Like he cares."

"Mom?" Beatrice tried. It hurt to move.

Conversation ceased. Belle rushed to her side.

"Hey, baby. I'm here."

It seemed to be a while later when Beatrice fully rejoined the conscious world. She could now fully appreciate her situation: she was in a hospital room and her mother was at her side.

"Oh, baby," said Belle. She squeezed as much of her daughter as she could around the tubes and
wires. "I'm so glad you're awake."

"Where's Dad?," she asked weakly.

Belle bit her lip. "Dad is not here."

"Where is he?"

"He's fine."

"Mom."

Belle combed her fingers through Beatrice's hair. "Dad is currently in jail."

"What? Why?"

"He assaulted my stepfather. It's fine. He'll get out."

"How is that fine?"

"He'll take care of it."

"How's he going to take care of it? He's the one in jail."

"He has his ways."

Now

Running was not Beatrice's favorite thing. It was something she did to appease her mom.

Running in her ankle boots was also not a favorite thing. Moe and his knights really weren't allowing her a chance to text someone to come help her.

She finally arrived at the junction onto Main Street out of breath.

"Okay, guys, guys, really..."

"Enough, demon!," shouted Moe.

She threw her hands up.

Then something unexpected happened. A bolt of ice landed in front of them.

Beatrice looked to her hand. She hadn't even felt it.

It just...

Another one flew out.

"Monster!"

The men joined in Moe's shouts and held up their bats and such.

"Honestly, guys, time out! I don't even know why I'm doing that!"

Another. Another. Bolts of ice landing on the ground.
"Everyone just get back!"

Beatrice threw her arms out. Bolts of jagged ice landed in the road.

"Just get away from me! Please!"

Belle hurried towards them. Joseph darted towards Beatrice, a piece of the ice landing just ahead of his feet. He stopped quickly.

"Beatrice, it's alright, we're here!," said Joseph.

"Stay back if you value your lives!," warned one of Moe's cronies.

"Shut up!," snapped Joseph.

"Beatrice-" said Belle.

"Mom, stay back! I can't control it! I-"

Another bolt of ice landed in the road just in front of Belle.

"Beatrice," Belle said softly, toeing around the ice, "it's alright."

As she did, Moe made a lunge for her. Bolts of ice shot from Beatrice's hands. As Belle stepped in front of Beatrice, the ice pierced her heart.

Joseph was the one to catch Belle as she fell. He looked up at Beatrice whose eyes were wide with horror.

"Look at the monster! Look what she did to her own mother!"

Beatrice wasn't sure who had said that, but she couldn't disagree as she watched her mother clutch at her chest.

"I'm sorry."

"Sweetheart-"

As Joseph looked up, Beatrice was gone. It was about this time Merlin and Gold reappeared with Lestrade. Wordlessly, he handed her off to Gold and hurried after Beatrice.

"Belle..." Gold breathed in a panic.

"Where was it?," asked Merlin.

Belle didn't answer. She looked at Gold. "Go get her."

"What about you?"

"Rumple, go get our baby. Now."

"I've got this," said Merlin.

Gold kissed Belle and hurried down the icy path Joseph had followed.

---

Then
Beatrice was looking at two weeks at home, not that she was that upset about missing school. It wasn't like anyone would miss her. Pamela was just putting down a glass of water when her parents walked in.

"Mr. Gold, welcome home," said Pamela. "Can I get you anything?"

"No, thank you, Miss Lyndon. We were just hoping to speak to Beatrice alone."

"Yes, of course. I'll be downstairs washing up."

Pamela left and Belle shut the door.

Gold kissed Beatrice on the forehead. "How do you feel, sweetheart?"

"Sore."

Belle looked at her watch. "It's time for your next pill. Do you think you could hang on a little so we could talk?"

Belle sat on the other side of the bed. Beatrice got the sense that whatever was about to be discussed was not great.

She looked at her dad. "Are you going to jail?"

"No, of course not, sweetheart. I'll get this sorted in no time. This is about something else entirely."

"What?"

He looked to Belle and back to Beatrice. "Do you remember when you were seven and you realized that none of your friends had changed classes at the beginning of the school year?"

"Do I remember how no one in this town seems to be aging except me and Henry? Yeah, kind of."

"And we told you that you were right, but there was nothing that we could do about it," said Belle. "That it was for the best."

"Uh-huh..."

"Sweetheart, you were young and we didn't want to burden you with the knowledge of things we weren't in a position to change and now we are. You need to know what's happening."

Beatrice frowned. "Is it a government experiment?"

"What?"

"For a while, I thought maybe this was like The Island. Or Lost. Neither of those really panned out."

Belle shook her head. "It's not a government experiment and it's not like Lost."

"Henry Mills has a theory, does he not?," asked Gold.

"Well, yeah, that his mom is the Evil Queen and Mary Margaret is Snow White and Doctor Hopper is Jiminy Cricket, but that's..."
"Correct," said Gold.

"I'm sorry?," said Beatrice.

"We're from a land called the Enchanted Forest. Regina was a pupil of mine. She blamed Snow White for taking her happiness and cast the curse to come to this land where we would be locked in time, where she would be the only one to have happiness."

Beatrice was silent.

"Sweetheart?," asked Belle.

"I don't get it."

"Don't get what?"

"The joke."

"Sweetheart, there's no joke," said Belle.

Beatrice continued her silent staring again.

"I don't get it. I was thinking it was a Doctor Who thing, like there was a break in the time space continuum or hey, we're inside CAL. Wait, maybe we are in CAL. Maybe this is the Library."

"This is not a Doctor Who thing," said Gold. "We are from the Enchanted Forest."

"Fine. My fourth grade teacher is Snow White and you people are who?"

"Rumplestiltskin."

"Oh and I guess you're the miller's daughter? Grandpa doesn't really strike me as a boasting miller."

"Your mother is certainly not the miller's daughter," said Gold.

"I'm Belle."

"Yeah?"

"Beauty and the Beast, Belle."

"Then Grandpa's a hopeless inventor?"

"No, your grandfather is Merlin and he is the only one besides Regina who has been awake this whole time," said Gold.

She motioned at the cocker spaniel on her bed. "Right and I suppose my dog is actually Lady from Lady and the Tramp? And Merlin is Beauty's father now? How many crossovers are there supposed to be?"

Belle looked to Gold. He seemed equally stymied.

"Beatrice, we only wanted to tell you the truth," said Belle.

"Oh, yeah, that's the truth," Beatrice said. "We're all fairy tale characters. Why did you even bother if that's what you were going to tell me?"
"It's all true, though."

"Could I please have the drugs now?"

Belle frowned. "Yes, of course."

"I'm going to make you dinner, sweetheart. Eggplant?"

Beatrice nodded. Even if her parents were terrible liars, she was still going to get hungry. Gold kissed her forehead.

He followed Belle back to their bedroom.

"She doesn't believe us," said Belle.

Gold shrugged. "I admit that I never considered that as a possibility."

"What if we told her about Bae?"

"Do you remember what Sherlock said? That she was convinced she was second place? I'm not going to invite that yet and certainly not while she doesn't feel well."

Belle nodded. She so wanted more of the truth, but maybe now wasn't the time.

"You're right."

"The only way to deal with this is for her to believe."

Now

"Beatrice!"

She got the feeling that Joseph had been following her a while. She finally stopped, holding her hands behind her back as she turned to face him.

"Why are you running?"

"I can't control the ice, you saw."

"It was an accident."

"What? So I can hurt you, too?!"

"Come back. We'll sort it out."

He stepped forward.

"Don't come closer!"

"Beatrice, we both saw the film. You run off into the woods, leaving a path of ice in your wake-"

"What? What path of ice?"

Beatrice looked down. Sure enough there was a long path of ice.

"I am so not coming back. I didn't even know I did that."
Out of habit, she pointed and another bolt of ice landed near Joseph.

"Why won't this stop?!" A wave of her hands in the air had an ice bolt knocking down a tree branch.

"Beatrice, you and I both know you are not about to spend a night in the forest!"

"No, I'm going to go build an ice palace and sleep in that."

"Right, the film," said Joseph.

"Just go back and tell my mom I'm sorry. Don't follow me!"

"Beatrice-"

"Do not follow me!"

Concentrating, she waved her hands. Chains of ice appeared on Joseph's wrists, tied to stakes in the ground.

"Beatrice..."

"You're not following me."

"You can't just leave me out here alone."

"No."

Beatrice left.

"Beatrice!," called Joseph. "Beatrice!"

He heard footsteps behind him and then a snowman appeared in front of him.

"Why did you chain yourself to the ground?," he asked.

"You can't be serious."

"What do you mean? You have chains right there and there." Joseph closed his eyes. "What's your name?"

"Oh, right. You don't remember me. My name's Olaf and I like warm hugs."
Then

It was always dark.

It had been dark as long as she could remember.

The dream always remained the same. Light vanished from the sky, darkness blotting out everything.

It was always cold where she was. Cold and damp.

She could see her mother's face lit by the torch fires.

"You can feel it, can't you?"

Beatrice could in fact feel it, but her mother wasn't speaking to her. She was talking to whoever was holding her. She never saw the face but when she looked down an oddly colored hand with black talons held her.

"Yes." She didn't know the voice. "It won't be long now."

The air was tense between them. Something rippled around them. She squirmed, trying to get loose but the hand gripped her tighter.

There was a rumbling. The air began to swirl around them, blowing out the torches.

It was completely black. She couldn't see her mother, but she felt her edge closer.

"Is this-"

"Yes."

There was a great crack that made it seem like the earth itself had cracked.

She felt her mother's hand on her face.

"I love you."

The ground disappeared from beneath her and she screamed.

And she always woke up screaming.

"Beatrice?"

Belle flipped on the lamp and sat on the edge of the bed.

"Baby? Hey..."

Beatrice sat up, catching her breath.
"What's wrong? What was it?" Belle ran her fingers through Beatrice's hair.

Beatrice shook her head as Gold finally made it in the room.

"Nothing."

"Was it about Moe? He won't hurt you again."

"No," said Beatrice. "Just the same nightmare."

Belle nodded and hugged Beatrice.

Now

It was strange for Mr. Gold to raise a daughter knowing who her True Love would eventually be.

On some level it was annoying. He wondered at the man he was in the time line that had never existed, where he had let Belle and their child slip through his fingers and Beatrice grew up without him. The thought of his sweet girl thinking she was nothing to him made his blood run cold.

Then the other aspect of annoying was that he always knew that there was another man who thought he was capable of being his daughter's protector. The thought had bothered him when she was a baby. When he awoke in Storybrooke, Belle had been the one to discover that Sherlock Holmes wasn't some random person. He was in fact the Great Detective, one of this world's most famous heroes with stories, novels, plays, films and television adaptations to his name. Worse yet, Beatrice actually like the stories and the television show. Every time Gold walked past the Sherlock poster in her room it was as if a bomb was ticking. When Joseph had actually appeared in Storybrooke, the bomb finally went off. His girl had her True Love. It made him long for the days of simply listening to Beatrice's Reichenbach Fall theories.

So if he took too much pleasure in seeing Joseph chained up in the woods trapped in conversation with a talking snowman, that was why. He continued on following the path the ice had created in search of his daughter.

Then

Belle let her father in the house and got the tea ready. They were supposed to discuss Beatrice, but it seemed he was distracted by more general news of Storybrooke.

"Did you hear?," Colin began. "About Mary Margaret Blanchard and the wife of her charming friend."

"What happened?," asked Gold.

"Rumple, we're not here to gossip," Belle objected.

"Oh, but see, he has to know. It's all part of his elaborate plan."

"What happened?"

Belle sighed. "Fine. Get it out of your systems."

"Excuse me, but nothing happened in this town for twenty-eight years and now that things have
actually started to happen, I want to talk about them."

"What happened?," Gold pressed again.

"Kathryn Nolan slapped her in the middle of the elementary school. The entire town's turned against Mary Margaret. They are a fickle sort..."

"And now could we discuss Beatrice?," Belle asked. She gave reprimanding looks to both men.

"Discuss away," said her father.

"She doesn't believe."

Colin, or Merlin as he had been known, eyed Gold and Belle with derision.

Gold readied himself for whatever his father-in-law's response would be.

"Of course she doesn't believe you. You raise a smart girl in a Land Without Magic, of course she's not going to believe in magic."

"She doesn't even believe we are who we are!," Belle protested.

"Of course she's not going to believe you're Belle from Beauty and the Beast. She already met the real Belle at Disney World."

"Do you have any solutions or not, dearie?"

"Why? Too busy with your brilliant plan to get the Savior to believe? What step of the plan are we on now, exactly? One thousand four hundred and fifty-two?"

"We have tried."

"Yes, there is a step you're missing," he said. "I can see that now."

"Will you help her?," asked Belle.

"Of course I will, sweetheart."

He was quiet a moment.

"I don't remember you?," asked Joseph.

"No."

"We've never met."

"Yeah, we did."

"I think I would remember a talking snowman."

"No, see, Beatrice created me so I have Beatrice's memories."
"Snow that remembers. Excellent. Now, anywhere in those memories do you have how to get these chains off?"

Olaf stared back at Joseph blankly.

"You didn't put them on?"

Joseph hung his head in exasperation.

---

**Then**

Being stuck in her room ought to have seemed like a shame to Beatrice, but if anything, it was a relief. She didn't have to go out, she didn't have to face the hushed whispers and outright ridicule her very presence seemed to invite.

She hated her life. She hated Storybrooke.

She hated herself more for not fitting in. There was nothing she could do about that, though and she had tried. The best she could so was hide in her room with British television and a well-stocked TARDIS fridge.

Beatrice looked up at her grandfather. He held up a shopping bag.

"The Dark Star pharmacy had a sale on Reese's hearts," he said.

"Thanks," said Beatrice.

Colin pulled the velvet armchair by the bookcase to Beatrice's bed. "How are you feeling?"

"Lousy."

"What are you watching?"

"Sherlock."

He frowned. "Again?"

"I'm working on my Reichenbach theory."

"I don't know if that's the best possible use of your time."

"Did they send you?"

"You mean your parents? They don't send me anywhere, but they did tell me about your little chat."

"Are you going to try to sell me on this fairy tale theory?"

"I don't have to sell you on it," said Colin. "It's the truth."

"And you're Merlin," she said dryly.

"If you're expecting a hat and a beard I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you."

"What's my fairy tale name?"
"Beatrice."

"You couldn't even come up with a convincing name."

"I don't have to. It was one of the conditions of the deal your mother made with the Evil Queen."

He opened a Reese's heart. "Ask me anything. I'll tell you the answer."

"My mom made a deal with the Evil Queen?"

"She had to. For your safety and so you wouldn't be separated from your father. He has never been one of her favorites." He paused. "You still don't believe me."

"Not at all."

"I could show you something. Something that will change your mind."

Now

Emma and David arrived to quell the crowd, dispersing Moe and the others. Merlin took Belle to the library where Catherine and Venus were.

"What happened?," asked Venus as Merlin helped his daughter to a sofa.

"Something's happened to Beatrice," said Merlin. "She's been made to lose control of her powers. She hit Belle in the heart."

"Gods," said Catherine.

"True Love's Kiss?," asked Venus.

Belle shook her head. "True Love's Kiss has never seemed to have had the same effect here as it did in our land."

"That's stupid," said Venus.

"Where's Beatrice now?," asked Catherine.

"She got frightened and ran off. Joseph and Rumple went after her."

It was now that Pamela rushed in, joining the group.

"I came as soon as I heard."

Belle's teeth chattered. "I'm freezing."

"Of course you aren't," said Catherine.

"Well, she's convincing if she's not," said Pamela.

"Grandmother..."

"You are my descendant. You do not die from a frozen heart."

"I don't have any powers-"

"That's not quite true," said Venus.
"Belle, just because you've never learned to control your powers doesn't mean you don't have them," said Catherine.

Belle looked at Merlin.

"Your grandmother makes an interesting point."

"I don't think I have time for this."

"Possibly, I think you might benefit from her instruction." He looked up at Venus. "You stay with her."

"And where are you going?" asked Venus.

"Pamela and I have a heist to conduct."

---

**Then**

Beatrice ate her cupcake. She and Colin had been sitting in the Land Rover for twenty minutes now, parked a block down from the Storybrooke Cemetery.

"Why are we here?"

"It's Wednesday night."

"So?"

"Regina visits her father's grave on Wednesday nights." He turned to Beatrice. "Incidentally, she was the one to kill him."

He turned back to looking out the windshield.

"Why did she kill him?"

"Because to cast the Dark Curse you must sacrifice the thing you love the most."

"That's twisted."

"Indeed."

They watched as Regina came out of the cemetery, got in her Mercedes and drove away.

"Let's go," said Colin.

"What?," asked Beatrice.

"That's why we're here tonight. The only time I can almost be entirely certain that Regina won't return is when she's just been. Come on."

Colin got out and walked towards the cemetery. Beatrice hesitated and then followed.

---

**Now**

Beatrice wasn't sure how she had found the ice cave or why she decided it was a good idea to go inside, but it had happened.
"Beatrice..."

Beatrice looked to her left. A white cloth was draped over something. She pulled it revealing a mirror.

Where she saw herself.

"There you are. It's about time. Figures you would take forever."

"What?"

"Oh, no clever comeback? Really? Or have you just used them all? Or maybe you're not as smart as you think. Seeing as oh yeah, you shot your mother with ice."

"It was an accident..." she stammered.

The mirror Beatrice chuckled. "Yeah, welcome to your whole life. You are an accident. Why would anyone want you?"

"My parents love me."

"Your parents would be so much better off without you. God, think about it. The Blue Fairy never would have sent your brother off and your mom's mom would be alive, not to mention the hundreds of other bad things that have happened because you are you. Not the least of which is your mom's heart is frozen!"

"I..."

"You what? You're useless. You are as terrible as all they say."

"No, no I'm not."

"Then why has your mom got a frozen heart? Why did you go to kill Zelena?"

"I didn't, though."

"Then why is your True Love chained up in the woods? God, how stupid are you? If you loved him at all, you would send him far, far away from you because everyone that loves you gets hurt."

---

Then

"This is weird," said Beatrice as they walked into the Mills family mausoleum.

"Wait for it."

"What are you doing?"

Colin pushed aside the coffin in the center revealing a staircase that descended below. He looked up at Beatrice.

"Is that supposed to be there?"

"Come on."

"I really don't want to."
Colin sighed. "Suppose you're right and the fairy tale theory isn't true. Then all that's under here is just a room possibly full of Mills ancestors."

"And what if you're right?"

"Then this is where the Evil Queen hordes the last of her magic. It's been dying in the twenty-eight years since she came to this realm and I want to show it to you."

"I don't think I want to go either way."

"Beatrice, get down the stairs."

Now

Things had not progressed back at the library.

"Only an act of True Love can thaw a frozen heart," Belle said, teeth chattering. "That's what you always told me."

"Yes."

Venus piped in. "But you have my heart. It's nothing but love. This should be no problem for you."

Belle felt her inner Beatrice coming out. "It really seems like a problem."

"You're fighting it," said Catherine.

"What?"

"That humming you've always felt. The one that's brimming on the edge of life? You've always fought it. Perhaps it was Maurice or your nursemaid, but it's always been inside you. Perhaps you tried to change it in Beatrice."

Belle was aghast. "What? No! I would never change a hair on her head!"

"Perhaps it's resentment for your current condition."

"No! It was an accident! She lost control, Moe and the knights, they frightened her."

Belle stood.

"Where are you going?," asked Venus.

"I have to go find Beatrice, to let her know I understand."

"But you're freezing to death," said Catherine.

"I'll be fine."

Belle stopped suddenly, clutching at her chest. Venus and Catherine came to follow.

Belle grabbed at something. She didn't know what it was but she grimaced as she pulled it. When it was done, she looked down in amazement to see that she had pulled shards of ice from inside herself.
She looked up at Catherine.

"See? You're fine," said Catherine.

Belle was stunned. "I don't understand."

"It's magic. No one understands it."

Belle rushed out.

Venus looked at her watch. "We can still make our mani-pedi appointments if we hurry."

"Excellent notion."

Then

Beatrice followed Colin down.

"So, where's this magic?"

"As I said, it's dwindling," he said, opening a cabinet. "Just your standard potions in there."

"Did she learn them from Professor Snape?"

Colin didn't answer. "She's got some baubles..."

"Why do you know what she has? Is this like a regular thing breaking into here?"

"Well, I had to know what she had. Feel any different yet?"

"What?"

"Do you feel any different?"

Beatrice thought about it. Her heart beat ever so slightly faster and she was focused.

"I guess."

"It's like a hum. It's just there where you can feel it on your fingertips."

That was as apt a description as anything.

"Yeah."

"That's magic."

"You said this was a Land Without Magic."

"Except when it isn't."

"What does that mean?"

"It means there are places in this realm that bleed through to our realm and you can see it through magic, through tales of other realms."

"Fairy tales."
"Stories don't just come out of someone's head."

"What about Doctor Who?"

"Get closer. You'll not feel anything from over there."

"It's dark," said Beatrice.

"The dark doesn't bite, sweetheart," said Colin. "Though there is an Agrabah viper somewhere in here so don't open anything too quickly."

"Are you for real?"

"Come over here."

"I don't want to."

"Alright."

"Alright?"

He shrugged. "Well, I'm not going to drag you over here against your will, now am I? What would the point in that be? I would just hope that you would consider the possibility that I brought you down below a mausoleum in the night for a reason and that there is something I think you should see over here."

Beatrice frowned. She crossed her arms and walked over.

"Good girl. Thank you."

"I'm over here. What's over here?"

"Well, for starters..." He placed a leather case on the pedestal in front of him. He opened it as Beatrice watched closely and pulled out a hat.

"Your magic trick is pulling out a hat?," asked Beatrice. She looked up at him. "You're supposed to have a rabbit come out or something."

"This is the Mad Hatter's hat."

"Oh, now we know the Mad Hatter."

"He ran errands for your father from time to time. Also, he's gone completely insane."

Colin walked further down the line, picking up various wands, goblets and trinkets.

"Most of these are unable to retain their magic in Storybrooke. Even my powers are limited under this Curse. I'm not quite what I used to be. Her Majesty's made it to where magic is drained here, a consequence I'm uncertain she ever fully intended."

"Right..."

"There is in fact only one type of magic that is capable of traveling between realms, the strongest of all magics, True Love."

"That's your story. True Love is the most powerful magic of all? Why not clapping or something?"
Colin turned and tossed something at her. "Quick! Catch!"

Off balance, Beatrice caught the object. She then opened her hands to see what it was.

A ring. A small golden ring with a young man's picture projected inside it.

"How's it doing that? Is it a hologram?"

"Magic. It was almost dead. You just recharged it."

"What?"

"Beatrice, you are the end result of the longest line of True Love ever created in the Enchanted Forest. Powerful magic upon powerful magic is inside you."

"There's not magic here."

"No, not here. Inside you, yes. The Queen's Curse may have transported you to this realm, but it did not decide your fate here."

As Beatrice considered this and what her grandfather's motives could possibly be, she became aware of something else. More humming. Loud feeling humming. She edged towards the doorway Colin stood in front of.

"What's that?"

He didn't answer. Instead he let Beatrice walk in. The walls were covered in boxes that reminded Beatrice of a big card catalog. She looked back at her grandfather.

"Nothing in there will hurt you."

Beatrice opened one of the little cabinets in front of her.

Inside it was a glowing heart.

"What's that?"

"What does it look like?"

Beatrice opened another.

And another.

"I promise you they're all the same thing."

"These are hearts. Why are they hearts? Why does Regina have a room full of hearts?!"

"These are the hearts she took. When one takes a heart, it becomes enchanted. You can control the person who it belonged to."

Beatrice turned to him. "Graham."

He didn't speak.

"Graham didn't think he had his heart."

"He was quite right."
"How do you-" She paused, dots connecting. "He had a heart attack."

"I'm sure that's what they would say happened."

"What did happen?"

"I'm fairly confident Regina crushed his heart."

Beatrice pushed the drawers shut. "I want to go home."

"Beatrice."

"I want to go home!"

---

**Now**

Gold continued to follow the path of ice and when he looked up to see that it led into some kind of ice cave, his heart quickened. He hurried inside fearing the worst at what sort of trap the Snow Queen must have laid for her.

When he arrived, he was relieved to see that Beatrice was in one piece. That feeling was quickly quashed as she saw the mirror Beatrice was staring at.

"Beatrice."

Gold looked at the mirror and back at her.

"Sweetheart, come away from there."

He pulled on her arm and she shrieked.

"No, no, don't make me go back! Please! I don't want to hurt you!"

"Alright, I won't make you go back."

"What?"

"Sweetheart, you can't hurt me. Remember?"

Beatrice caught her breath.

"Remember?," asked Gold. "Only one thing can hurt me and it's certainly not ice."

With tears, Beatrice collapsed into her father.

She couldn't hurt him.

"I left Joseph chained up in the woods."

"I locked your mother in my dungeon. These things work out."

"Hello, Beatrice."

Beatrice turned to see who had said that and saw a blonde walking towards her. She felt her father's hand immediately clasping around her almost too tight.
"Hi," said Beatrice. "Who are you?"

"Never mind that," said Gold.

"I'm Ingrid. Your parents have been trying to keep us from meeting."

"Dad?"

"If by keeping you from meeting you mean keeping her from being kidnapped then yes, dearie, you're right."

"They don't understand you, Beatrice. How could they?"

Beatrice turned her head up to face Gold. "Okay, she's kind of weird..." she whispered.

"You know you don't really belong."

"Enough," said Gold.

"You would have left long ago if you could have, isn't that right, Beatrice?," she asked.

"Stop it." Gold clasped his arm around Beatrice.

"Because no one can understand you."

"Okay, so we should be going..." said Beatrice.

Ingrid frowned.

"It's that boy, isn't it?"

"What?"

Ingrid motioned at the mirror.

"I've seen inside your soul. You think that boy understands you, don't you?"

"What are you-"

"Well, I can put a stop to that."

The Snow Queen disappeared. Beatrice turned to her father.

"We need to get back to Joseph."

"Of course."

"A talking snowman. How cute."

Joseph looked up.

"Ms. Fisher."

"Ingrid, if you will."

"I doubt I will."
"Beatrice left you out here, did she?"

"Obviously."

The woman was suspiciously silent as she circled around Joseph.

"Who's she?," asked Olaf.

"Oh, what, now you don't know?," he shot back.

"I am so sorry, Joseph, but I think you have to go," said the Snow Queen.

"What?," asked Joseph.

"What?," echoed Olaf.

"You're just not very good for Beatrice and she won't be needing you."

"Someone recently told me the same thing about her."

"What a relief this will be then."

Ingrid held up her hands. Before the ice could hit him, his chains disappeared leaving enough time for him to bolt out of the way. He looked up to see Gold and Beatrice standing a few feet away.

"Leave him alone!," shouted Beatrice, lobbing another bolt of ice the Snow Queen's way.

Gold carefully took a step next to Beatrice.

"Enough, dearie," said Gold.

The Snow Queen looked at Beatrice.

"He came to me, you know. He wanted to know how ice worked. He was afraid of you."

"I was no such thing," seethed Gold.

"He wanted to take away your power. People like him always do." She cast a glance toward Joseph. "He'll be just the same."

"Stay away from both of them."

"Beatrice..." the Snow Queen shook her head, her laughter silent. "You can't take me on."

"Want to try?"

"Why don't we all just take a moment to catch our breaths?," asked Gold.

"See that, Beatrice? That's fear. He knows he can't defeat me."

Gold smiled. "Oh, dearie, don't test me because if you do, there is no place in any realm that can hide you."

Joseph and Olaf exchanged glances.

Olaf looked up at the other three.

"What were we talking about?"
The Snow Queen shrugged. "That's the problem with snowmen."

Beatrice shrugged back. "Yeah, well, at least he's not eating anyone so really I think we're doing pretty good."

Ingrid smiled and raised her hand at Joseph. Beatrice raised hers back.

From the side, an ice bolt came, landing on the Snow Queen's wrist, powerful enough to knock her over.

Beatrice, Gold and Joseph stared dumbfounded.

Beatrice glanced at her hands.

"Hi, Belle," said Olaf.

Belle frowned at the snowman.

"Belle..." said the Snow Queen gasping for breath.

"You're going to stay away from her," said Belle. "And him. And my family. She is my daughter and no one gets between us so don't you dare try."

Ingrid smiled. "So, you finally learned to use your powers. Good for you."

"Stay away from her."

"We're not done yet."

The Snow Queen vanished.

Belle turned to her family.

"Are you alright?"

Beatrice eyed Belle. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine. I promise," said Belle, taking her daughter in a fierce embrace. "Never run off again."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't worry about it." Belle didn't let go of Beatrice as she turned to Gold. "What happened?"

"The Snow Queen lured Beatrice to her lair and she had a mirror."

"Yeah, what was the deal with the mirror?"

"It attempts to make you believe the worst of yourself."

"And what's the point of that?," asked Joseph.

"I don't know, but I'd like to find out," said Gold.

"Fine, she wants Beatrice. I get that. Isolate her from the town, do something to distract them, ice wall so there's no escape, but why did Beatrice put the ice wall around Regina's vault?"

Beatrice shrugged. "I didn't."
"We've been over this. You did," said Joseph. "The last I told you about Regina was her involving your nephew in something called Operation Mongoose."

"Mongoose?," asked Belle.

"What's a mongoose?," asked Olaf.

"Yes, that seemed to mean something to her because of cobra."

"Guys, what's a cobra?"

"Henry's plan to break the Dark Curse?," asked Gold.

"You told me about that?," asked Beatrice.

"Who's Henry?"

Gold motioned at Olaf. "Is that all he does?"

"Sometimes," said Beatrice.

"And I take it you're attached to him?"

"Yes!"

"Rumple," said Belle, "focus."

"Regina is undoubtedly up to something. Beatrice was on the edges of it and it is all tied to the Snow Queen," said Gold. "And whatever it is she's involved my grandson. She is going to answer for this."

Then

"Hey," said Belle.

Gold looked up as he put his keys on the hall table. "Hey."

"I tried to call. Where were you?"

"Errands," he said quickly. "Why? Is something the matter?"

"No, my father just took Beatrice out for the evening to try and cheer her up. I thought we might have dinner."

"Well, I'm sorry I missed it."

"We'll have other chances. Did you hear from Mr. Spencer?"

"Nothing new I'm afraid."

Lady seemed to stand to attention as she edged past Gold to the front door. Seconds later, Beatrice entered followed by her grandfather.

"Beatrice-" said Colin.

Belle smiled. "Sweetheart, how was dinner?"
Beatrice was in no mood for pleasantries. 
"You said you taught her," said Beatrice. 
"To whom are you referring?"
"Regina."

Colin looked at Gold. His eyes seemed to convey a warning he couldn't decipher. 
"Yes, I did teach her back in our land."
"To rip people's hearts out?"

Gold's blood ran cold. He looked up at his father-in-law. 
"Where did you take her?"
"Okay, that's a yes," said Beatrice.
"I taught Regina because I had to."
"Why?"

She looked up at him.

Gold didn't answer. He froze.

He'd been delaying this day for years. When she knew, knew what he really was, everything would change.

He couldn't let go of her yet.

"Rumple-"

Beatrice rushed past them, Lady following her. Belle looked at Gold.
"Tell her," she urged.
"There is no possible point in her knowing yet," he said curtly.

Belle glared at him and turned towards the stairs. "Beatrice?"

Gold was left alone with the elder sorcerer.
"Where did you take her?"
"Her Majesty's vault."

Gold shot him a glare and he shrugged.
"She was never going to believe you without seeing some magic. My other choices were a collapsed dwarf mine and a dragon's lair."
"You didn't need to show her anything."
"It worked by the way."
He frowned. "What did?"

"Her magic. It works. She revitalized the Queen's old ring, she could feel the hearts."

"She could?"

"Quite a powerful daughter. It's too bad you don't trust her with the truth."

Beatrice didn't know what to do. Magic. Hearts. Freaking hearts! What kind of a psychopath had a room full of hearts?! A Dark Curse? Was her dog actually Lady and the Tramp Lady?

Belle entered, Lady following. The dog curled up at the foot of her bed.

"Sweetheart-"

"Who are you people?!," Beatrice screamed.

Belle knelt down in front of Beatrice. "We're your parents and we love you more than anything."

Beatrice shook her head as tears began to fall. Belle sat on the bed next to Beatrice, took her into her arms and rocked her.

"It's okay, baby. This will all make sense, I promise."
Chapter 75

Then

It was almost Miner's Day for all that meant to Beatrice. She used to look forward to it when she was little, when she didn't realize that time was stopped, when she could just go and enjoy cotton candy and carnival games. It had lost some of its luster and now nearly all since she realized how little she was wanted by anyone in Storybrooke.

She was looking for Henry, though. As crazy as it was, apparently he was right and there was something to that storybook he carried around. He wasn't at the library so that left Granny's.

He was inside having a hot cocoa as he looked at the book. Beatrice sat down and he looked up.

"I want in."

"Want in what?"

"Operation Cobra. Whatever. I just need to see the book."

"You believe me?"

"Okay, granted, my this is like Lost theory didn't work out and neither did my rip in the time space continuum theory, I'm not entirely ruling out secret government experiment, but yeah, the fairy tale thing is real."

Henry closed the book. "I don't think I should let you."

"What? Why?"

"How do I know you're not working for your dad?"

Beatrice shook her head. "Are you kidding me, Henry? No one, no one believes you including Emma. You are really not in a position to refuse people."

"Your dad is the worst of them."

Beatrice felt her face redden. He thought his mom was the Evil Queen and her dad was worse? "Really? Might want to check under your grandpa's grave!"

"Is she bothering you, Henry?"

Beatrice looked up to see Ashley Boyd. Oh good. Another person who hated her.

"No," said Henry.

"We were just talking," added Beatrice.

"Just because your father can intimidate people doesn't mean you can do it to Henry."

"Guys." Emma had joined them. "What's going on?"
"Nothing," said Beatrice, grabbing her bag and getting up. She brushed past a confused Emma and a self-satisfied Ashley. "Absolutely nothing. Why do I even bother?"

Beatrice hurried out of Granny's biting back tears.

Now

The family had made their way out of the woods to see the mob had dispersed and headed back to the pink house with the snowman in tow.

"And this is the television," Beatrice said, motioning to the flat screen in the living room.

"Okay..." said Olaf, staring uncertainly at the black screen. "It's very nice."

"Watch."

Beatrice picked up the remote control and turned the TV on. It was on BBC America.

Olaf gasped in amazement. "It's beautiful! Is it a looking glass?"

"No, it's a television."

There was an explosion on the television.

Olaf gasped again. "What just happened?"

"Oh, this is Top Gear. They were trying to make a space shuttle out of a Reliant Robin."

"You watch Top Gear?," asked Joseph.

"Look, when you start watching this channel they play the same commercials at every break and eventually you have to watch whatever the show they advertise is." She looked up at Joseph. "What do you do with your time?"

"Walk the streets of London, build up my homeless network, visit the local morgue..."

"What's a morgue?," asked Olaf.

"Don't talk about morgues in front of my snowman," Beatrice hissed.

"Beatrice," said Gold.

Beatrice walked back to the doorway to the kitchen.

"Yeah, Dad?"

"Is the snowman staying here?"

"Well, yeah."

Gold watched as "You said he was conjured from your memories of the Far North Kingdom?"

"Yeah." Beatrice gasped. "We have to show him Frozen!"

"Where does he sleep?"
"I just realized I don't know if he sleeps. He's snow."

"Beatrice."

"We have bedrooms."

Belle walked over. "Rumple, Neal and Emma are going to be here any moment."

The door opened. Merlin entered, followed by Pamela.

"I don't understand why we couldn't leave the mines when you knew we didn't need fairy dust," said Pamela.

"I sort of figured we were almost done, we really ought to just finish." He turned to see Olaf. "And you are?"

"Merlin!," the snowman cried, bobbing to hug the wizard.

Merlin looked at Gold and Beatrice. "What the hell happened out there?"

The door opened again and Emma knocked.

"Guys, it's unlocked."

"Come on in, Emma."

Emma walked in to see the gathering and the snowman.

"Olaf, this is Emma. Emma, Olaf," said Beatrice.

"You named your snowman Olaf?"

"It's kind of the name he came with."

"Did you want something to drink, Emma?," asked Belle.

I'm okay. Look, I got Moe. We're still rounding up the rest of the knights. It's not like they can get far."

"So you have Moe," said Gold.

Emma eyed him. "Okay. I know that look by now. I'm not going to let you kill him."

"And I still find it interesting that you still think you can stop me."

"Rumple..."

"It must come from your father's side," mused Gold.

The door opened and Neal walked in, immediately noting that Gold and Emma were shooting daggers at each other.

"So how far in are we?," asked Neal.

"Emma's only just arrived," said Belle.

"And it's going great as usual."
Belle motioned towards the other room. "Come on. Let's go to the dining room."

Emma sat at the dinner table. She looked up to see Merlin and Joseph joining them.

"What are they doing here?," asked Emma.

"What am I doing here? What are we discussing?," asked Merlin.

"Regina," said Joseph.

"Why does he know?," asked Neal.

"He actually brought it to us," said Belle. She looked at Joseph. "It's alright if you want to go in the other room."

Joseph glanced at the snowman rejoicing in another exploding car.

"I'm fine here." He turned to the table. "In the course of my investigation, I found myself undercover."

"Undercover?," asked Neal.

"From time to time in the course of criminal investigation, I find it useful to assume a disguise. The nature of my last such undertaking didn't leave much opportunity to do so and so I sought to hone my skills here in Storybrooke-"

Neal looked at his father. "You're seriously letting Bea date this guy?"

Gold shrugged.

"Okay," said Emma. "About your investigation, where is your prisoner?"

"Mulan has him."

"And are you any closer to finding out who the woman in the hospital is?"

"What woman?," asked Merlin.

"The one that came over along with Lestrade and the other items," said Joseph. He turned back to Emma. "I'm sorry. I was slightly distracted by the ice wall and the band of vigilantes attacking my girlfriend."

"Guys, this is really interesting," said Neal, "but is there a point coming?"

"Regina and Henry are working together on something called Operation Mongoose."

"Mongoose?," Emma asked.

"That's what they named it."

Emma and Neal looked at each other.

"Okay, we'll go ask Regina about it," said Neal.

"Oh, yeah, brilliant plan," said Merlin.

"The trouble is the Snow Queen somehow figures into this," said Gold.
"Whoa, you think Regina's working with her? That's a big leap," said Emma.

"The ice around the vault and the ice around the town came from two different people," said Joseph. "Beatrice doesn't remember icing the vault. So unless there's a third ice sorceress in town—well, other than Belle... and her grandmother."

"Whoa, Belle, you do ice now?" asked Emma. "When did that happen?"

"About two hours ago."

"The point is someone went to a great deal of trouble to erase Beatrice's memory of those events. Why would the Snow Queen want it erased?" Gold added.

"There could easily be another explanation," said Emma. "Regina's changed."

"Yes, her True Love really changed her, didn't he?" said Gold. "Until his wife came back."

"I could easily go back to the convent for some squid ink," offered Merlin.

"What were you doing at the convent?" asked Emma.

"I have my reasons."

Beatrice poked her head in. "Two questions. One, should I order dinner? Two, what about the freaky mirror?"

"What mirror?" asked Belle.

Beatrice looked at her father. "The freaky one."

Gold sighed. "It's powerful dark magic. It makes the beholder believe what is worst about themselves."

"And did you think to mention it?" Merlin asked Gold pointedly.

"I thought about it."

"Okay, so it's a mirror..." said Emma.

"A mirror for a Spell of Shattered Sight," said Pamela. "To make everyone in the town turn on one another."

Emma looked at Beatrice. "And you mentioned dinner first?"

"Yeah..."

"Sorry," said Joseph. "Just a question, is there a book I can get with these things in it? Because you all seem to be on the same page."

---

**Then**

Beatrice sat back in the alley. She was deep into the Wicked soundtrack when she turned to the sound of cans rattling. She barely bit back a little scream before she took off her earbuds.

"Toby, sorry, I didn't see you."
The unkempt man continued foraging through the cans. "Hi, Beatrice."

Storybrooke seemed to have more homeless than it ought to. They lived on the edge of town and were usually foraging. Regina had a series of ordinances that made it illegal to camp out in town or beg. Most of the town wanted nothing to do with them which Beatrice knew something about.

Beatrice looked at the foraging.

"You don't have to do that."

Beatrice walked into the diner and to the counter.

"Look who's back," muttered Ashley.

Beatrice tried just looking at Ruby. "Cheeseburger, extra fries, coffee, to go, please."

Ruby nodded and went off.

"Why do you even come here?"

Beatrice shifted her weight, trying not to make eye contact with Ashley.

"You just go around and nobody dares to touch you because of your father."

"I'm just trying to order a cheeseburger."

"You don't scare me."

"Maybe I should."

Ashley scoffed.

"No, really, think about it. I should. My dad may be a jerk and I don't even know what else which is a whole other story, but he loves me. He would do anything for me and he owns the whole town. Why do you think it's a good idea to sit here and mock me?"

Ashley was speechless. The whole diner, Emma and Henry included, stared at her. Ruby handed her the bag and the coffee. Beatrice put cash down.

Beatrice went back out to the alley. Toby waited eagerly. In a moment though, his countenance changed, his eyes widened and he bolted before he even got the bag.

"Toby, hey. What?"

Beatrice spun around to see Emma had followed her.

"Who was that?," Emma asked.

"He's just this guy I get food for sometimes so he doesn't have to dig through the dumpster."

Emma frowned. "Does your dad know?"

Beatrice scowled. "I'm going."

"Beatrice!," Emma called after her.
Now

Olaf gasped again.

"Finally! Pancakes!"

The snowman took a huge sniff of the plate as Gold placed it in front of Beatrice.

"They smell delicious!," said Olaf. He looked up at Gold. "I would eat them but I don't have a stomach. Or a gastrointestinal tract."

Gold looked to Belle for help. She unsuccessfully tried to stifle her giggle.

"Are we really doing this?" asked Gold.

"Rumple..."

"What happens when she's at school?"

"I figured he'd watch TV," said Beatrice.

"Olaf can come with me," Belle offered brightly. She looked to the snowman. "You can come to the library."

Joseph walked out to the merry men's camp. The one called Little John pointed his crossbow at him. Joseph froze.

"Stop!"

Joseph rolled his eyes. "Even if I thought you could actually hit me, I don't have anything for you to steal. Marian?"

The woman appeared from the camp, Roland trailing behind her.

"Hello, Sherlock. Little John, what do you think you're doing?"

"He looks rich."

"Go get the firewood." Marian turned to Joseph. "Sherlock, what brings you out here?"

"Is Robin here?"

"No, I think he went hunting."

Joseph nodded and glanced at Roland. "Could we talk?"

Marian nodded. "Roland, why don't you go help Little John?"

Roland nodded and hurried off.

Marian looked back at Joseph. "You know, I think I remember you from our land. You have a brother who really likes cake, don't you?"

"That would be Mycroft. Or 'Mike' as he's called here."

"How can I help?"
"I need some surveillance done and it seems that my options are somewhat limited in regards to this particular target. Everyone's either afraid of her or doesn't possess the skill set I need."

Marian frowned. "Regina."

"That's right."

"I am trying to work things out with my husband. Stalking his- whatever she is, doesn't seem like the best foundation for that."

"Regina's working with the Snow Queen."

Marian's eyes widened. "How could she get away with that?"

"I'm working it out. It has something to do with Beatrice and I will not fail her."

"I don't have anybody to watch Roland. Don't get me wrong, the merry men are very well-intentioned but..."

Joseph watched as Little John walked into a tree branch.

"He was a flying monkey two weeks ago," remarked Joseph. "If it's of any consequence, I've talked to Beatrice's nanny-

"She still has a nanny?"

"I don't know, anyway, if you would like, Pamela says she can look after Roland."

"At the Dark One's house?"

"He doesn't mind children, it's people that he can't stand. I can't say that I disagree, really."

Marian nodded. "Alright. I'll help you."

---

*Then*

Every time Beatrice went to the convent she had to fight the feeling that the nuns were just waiting to throw holy water on her. Today was no different even as it was a flurry of activity for Miner's Day.

Sister Astrid was different. Beatrice helped with the homeless outreach work- actually, she was just about the only one to help out- and basically ran the food drive. She found the nun alone in one of the Sunday School classrooms with a whole lot of helium tanks.

She eyed the nun. "How many balloons were you planning on?"

"I made a mistake," said Astrid. "I was supposed to order twelve, I ordered twelve dozen."

"Well, at least you're set on helium..."

"I spent the whole stipend, we'll be-" Astrid shook her head.

"What?"

"I shouldn't bring it up to you."
Beatrice paused.

"You don't have the money for the rent."

"It's fine," Astride said quickly. "Leroy and Mary Margaret are selling candles. We'll find a way... or be forced into leaving town. Whatever it is, I'm sure God has a plan. What brings you here?"

"Oh," said Beatrice. She put the bag of groceries on the table. "I saw Toby today but he got scared off before I could give him anything so I was wondering if you could give this when you see him at the soup kitchen?"

"Of course I can."

"Miss Gold."

Beatrice turned around to see Mother Superior.

"What are you doing here?"

"I was just leaving," said Beatrice.

"Good."

---

**Now**

Olaf was a big hit with the preschool group that came to the library in the mornings. Lunch rolled around and Belle took him with her to the pawn shop, much to her husband's consternation. Mr. Gold's shop had many wonderful things and the snowman seemed determined that none of them would pass him by.

"Don't touch that," Gold warned.

"It's so shiny..." Olaf said, staring at the case of jewels his hands pressed against the glass.

Gold looked at Belle. "Now he's scratching the case."

"What do you suppose they're going to do about Regina?," asked Belle.

Gold snorted. "What can they do?"

"I know she's Henry's mother-"

"You tend to give her a lot of credit on that count."

Belle frowned at him. "Whatever she may do, I know she loves her son and I know you understand that, but we have to worry about Beatrice. We need to find out what she is planning with the Snow Queen."

"It seems as if we won't have to wait," said Gold.

"Why?," Belle asked warily.

Gold just kept his quiet smirk. A quick glance behind her confirmed Regina was heading towards them. The bell on the shop door rang out as she strode in.

"I want my vault back," she said. She gave the snowman a double take. "What the hell's that?"
"Regina, this is Olaf," said Gold, seeming pleased that the creature irked her.

"I like warm hugs," the snowman said.

She sneered.

"Don't get your hopes up, dearie," Gold cautioned, eyes still on Regina.

"I want my vault back. Now maybe she didn't freeze in the whole town, but I hear Beatrice definitely froze my vault and my patience has worn thin."

"Is that so?" asked Gold.

"You know what I mean," said Regina. "How can I help with this Snow Queen if I can't even get to my vault?"

Belle scoffed. "You seriously expect us to believe that's what you're after?"

Regina shook her head. "What are you talking about?"

"You know what. You've been working with the Snow Queen."

"That's insane. Why would I be working with the Snow Queen?"

"Honestly? I don't care," said Belle. "What I do care about is my daughter. We made a deal back in our land-"

"A deal you tried to double cross me on," Regina bit back.

Belle stood a little closer. "You got what you wanted from that deal, didn't you? The way to cast your curse, your revenge."

"Yes and that curse was broken thanks in no small part to your own machinations," Regina said casting a glare at Gold. "Once that was done, I no longer needed to uphold our deal."

"Regardless of any deal, dearie, should anything happen to Beatrice, I will hold you responsible."

"Try me," said Regina.

"Gladly."

Regina turned and stalked out.

"Bye, Regina!," called Olaf.

"And keep Frosty the hell away!," shouted Regina.

"My name's Olaf!," the snowman called after. "It's O-L-"

Regina slammed the shop door.

Olaf looked up at Belle and Gold.

"So... she seems...

"Insane?," Gold offered.
"Totally," said Olaf.

"You know, you may not be as irritating as I initially thought."

"Thanks."

Gold turned to Belle. "I think there's another way to go about this."

"And that is?"

"We should speak to your grandmother."

---

Then

Gold put down the rack of lamb in front of Beatrice. It was the latest in her father going through a list of her favorite recipes since she found out he had trained a witch with a room full of hearts. Things were just not great between them.

He started. "How was your day, sweetheart?"

"Fine."

Belle looked to Gold and back to her.

She knew she was lying.

"Sheriff Swan came to see me at the library. She mentioned there was some unpleasantness with Ashley."

"Oh, yeah, that was fine."

"Was it really?," asked Gold.

"Yeah, fine."

Beatrice looked down to her plate as she avoided eye contact with her parents.

"Are those candles new?," asked Gold.

Belle nodded. "Yes."

Gold paused and closed his eyes. "Tell me you didn't."

"What was I supposed to do? She's my oldest friend."

"Not buy them," he said tightly.

"She and Leroy had been out all day, no one had bought one, everyone's turned on her because they think she's an adulteress which you know isn't true."

Gold looked up at her questioningly.

"Well, not technically."

"You could give them an extension," Beatrice suggested.
Gold turned to Beatrice. She knew immediately that this had been the wrong strategy.

He seemed to turn towards her in slow motion. "I could do what?," he practically snarled.

"Well, it's just someone was explaining to me that the nuns just need an extension on the rent until their next stipend check comes in."

"Who put you up to this?," asked Gold.

"No one."

Belle put her hand over Gold's wrist. "She doesn't mean anything by it-"

He moved his wrist, shaking off Belle's hand in the process. "Which one of those interfering cows was it? Was it Sister Astrid?"

"What would it hurt?," asked Beatrice.

"Do not presume to tell me what my business is."

"I was just asking."

"And since you're just asking they can all rot and die in the street before I lift a finger to help them."

"Rumple, stop," said Belle.

He didn't. He stared right at Beatrice. "Have I ever asked anything of you? Have you ever wanted for anything? Why is that not enough?"

"I'm sorry-" Beatrice stammered, desperately glancing to Belle.

"All I ask is that you stay out of things that you know absolutely nothing about!

"Rumple. Other room. Now," said Belle, standing up. He didn't immediately follow. "Now!"

He finally stood, glaring at Beatrice as he sourly followed Belle to the library.

She turned to Gold. "You are acting disgracefully."

"You heard her. She sided with them against her own father."

"Sided? What sides? There are no sides for her! She doesn't know who they are or what you blame them for!"

"She has no right to interfere in my business!"

"Well, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize your business here in Storybrooke was so fragile that a fifteen year old asking for a rent extension would cause it to collapse!"

"And now you're siding with her."

"You're pushing her away. Why?"

"I am doing no such thing. She is."

"She's the age he was when you lost him."
Gold stopped and looked up at her.

"You can't tell me there's no significance to that."

"You don't know him."

"Neither does she. We need to talk to her, to tell her, to help her understand. You need to apologize. Don't you see this secret is driving a wedge between you two?"

"Tell her whatever you like," he snapped.

Belle shook her head.

"You need to think about the path you're taking and decide if you're willing to lose one child to reclaim another."

"I am not losing her."

"Yes, you are and you need to remember I will always choose her."

Now

"Catherine!"

Belle's grandmother made it a habit not to be shocked. In the case of Olaf appearing at the door with Belle and Gold she had to make an exception.

"Olaf?"

Belle motioned downwards. "Beatrice conjured him."

"Isn't this great?! It's like we're all back together!," Olaf said. "Where's Alec?"

"Why don't we go in?," suggested Gold.

They walked into the house. Catherine's living room in her Storybrooke house was very reminiscent of her sitting room back in the cottage. Books, chairs, tea. Her wedding portrait was one of the items Gold had managed to transport with other treasures during the Curse and had stayed wrapped in the backroom of the pawnshop until it broke.

Catherine sat.

"I don't get it, guys," said Olaf. "Where's Alec?"

"I lost him, Olaf," said Catherine. "Many years ago."

Belle reached across the chairs to hold her grandmother's hand.

"I suspect you didn't come here for that, though," said Catherine.

"I'm afraid not," said Gold. "The Snow Queen lured Beatrice to her outpost in the forest. Whatever it is she's planning, she wants her."

"Grandmother, you said our families were connected somehow," said Belle.

"Our connection is distant but potent. As I have said before, we were the only families with ice
"And do you know the Snow Queen?"

"Arendelle was different from the Far North Kingdom. They didn't embrace our magic."
Catherine scoffed. "My aunt visited once. She said if you wanted any magic done there you had to go to rock trolls. Can you imagine? Why would I want to go to rock trolls for advice?"

"Grandmother..."

"Did you know her?"

"I met her twice, with her sisters once..."

"Her sisters?," asked Belle. She looked to Gold and back. "What sisters? Maybe we could find them."

"Both deceased. Helga by ice. Gerda in a shipwreck. I wasn't a fan of hers."

"And why is that?," asked Gold.

"Because she told me to stay out of her kingdom and then came begging for my counsel," said Catherine. "I take it you can sympathize?"
Gold nodded.

"About what?," asked Belle.

"Her daughter was born with ice powers. She wanted to rid her of them."
Belle shook her head. "I still don't understand what this has to do with Beatrice."
Catherine looked at Belle's wrist. "I think I do."
Belle looked down to see a yellow ribbon.

"I didn't put this on." She looked over at her husband. "I've never even seen it before."
Gold rose from his chair to examine it.

"It's some sort of talisman..." he mused.

"And it just appears?," asked Belle.

"I've seen this before," said Catherine. "They were worn by Ingrid and her sisters. You might try calling Beatrice."

Now

Things did not improve with sleep and today Beatrice found that her dad wasn't even making breakfast. Pamela fixed eggs and gave her some fruit, but it wasn't the same. She went to school, distracted and then hid herself in the library.

"I found your story."
Beatrice looked up to see Henry. "You what?"
"Your story. In the book. Do you want to see it?"

Before Beatrice could answer, Henry sat down. He opened the page to gilded letters.

"The Dark Princess," she read.

"See, Beauty and the Beast are in love, but they don't know they're going to have a baby. That's you."

"Good to know..."

He flipped to an illustration. It featured two people who looked like somewhat like her parents, though she wondered why the paint was so off on her dad. Seriously, who was illustrating this? Well, he wasn't hairy. That was something. They stood in a huge imposing room across from a man shown mostly in shadow.

"This guy comes. He and his friends help Snow White and Prince Charming in another story. He's called the Master."

"Oh, hell no..." said Beatrice.

Henry looked up at her. "What?"

"Is he plagued by the sound of drums? You know..." Beatrice tried to demonstrate by tapping on the table four times in quick succession.

"The book doesn't say." He tells them that they have to save their baby from a terrible curse."

"The Dark Curse?"

"No, it looks like a different one. I don't see him anywhere else in the book and I haven't seen anyone in town with a weird hat."

Beatrice eyed it closer. "It's a deerstalker."

"A what?"

"It's not important. What else?"

He flipped the pages, more text. Some illustrations with an angry-looking fairy and a big storm. Then there was a full-page picture of mostly looking like Belle holding a baby and weird colored Gold sitting next to her, looking on.

"What else?," asked Beatrice.

Henry closed the book. "You're not ready yet."

"I'm not ready?"

Henry got up. "I'll tell you more when I can. Cobra stuff."

"What?"

"Bye!"

Before Beatrice could come up with an argument, Henry was gone. She looked back down before she would have been able to see him meeting with the motorcycle riding writer who had recently
come to town.
When Beatrice looked down and noticed a yellow ribbon, she was unnerved.

When it didn't come off, that was a little more unnerving.

She quickly excused herself from Algebra II and made her way down the hall to the physics lab.

"No, you see, Mr. Smith, you are wrong yet again which is not at all unusual for you-" Merlin looked up. "Beatrice. Is something the matter?"

Beatrice held up her wrist to display the yellow ribbon.

"Alright, class dismissed. Do whatever it is you do when you think I'm not looking."

"What about our homework assignment?"

"Are you stupid? Don't ask me for bloody homework!"

Merlin walked over to Beatrice amid the class' murmurs. They stepped into the hall and he looked at the ribbon.

"Try to do something."

"What?"

"It doesn't matter. Anything."

Beatrice held her hand out to make an ice ball.

Nothing happened.

She stamped her foot to freeze the floor.

Again. Nothing.

She looked up at Merlin.

"I think we'll find this has to do with the Snow Queen," said Merlin.

Beatrice's phone buzzed. Before she could answer it, Merlin took it from her.

"Yes, sunshine, I'm with her. We'll meet you at the shop." He hung up the phone and handed it back to Beatrice.

"So?," asked Beatrice.

"It has to do with the Snow Queen."

"Of course."
For some reason, Catherine had thought being a duchess would be less of an occupation than being the Ice Princess.

She had been wrong.

When one kept an eternal winter over her kingdom, it didn't make her subjects want to keep her company. Granted, her parting had gone well and they had explained Beatrice's concept of parliamentary democracy to much confusion, but ultimately acceptance. The Far North Kingdom would not have a princess for now. Her wedding to Alec had been the final act of her reign.

Then she had come to Padua. Alec was right in that it was a beautiful land, even if there was too much sunshine. The servants and the peasants bowed before her and there was a fete to celebrate the marriage and welcome her.

Then they didn't leave her alone. Every bloody minute, it was something else. "What should be on the dinner menu, Your Grace?" "What flowers for the ball?" "What about the East Wing window treatments?"

She really didn't care and it would not have been nearly so annoying if she wasn't certain each one of them already knew the answer they wanted to hear. Why didn't they just do it themselves and she could just read?

"Catherine! My love?"

Catherine rolled her eyes and put her book down. He heard Alec come up the stairs of the turret.

He frowned at the surroundings. "What are you doing up here?"

"I was just having a look around, you know." She motioned at the various dusty crates and wardrobes.

"Mmmm... well, uh, Mrs. Carson was looking for you. You have guests."

"Guests?," asked Catherine. "I have guests?"

She really was not in the mood to sit with the ladies of the village.

"Yes, three princesses from a land called Arendelle."

Catherine bolted up, surprising Alec with her enthusiasm.

"Arendelle? You're sure they said Arendelle?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Never mind that. I must go to them."

"So this Snow Queen wants to cast a curse on Storybrooke?," asked Emma. She looked at Belle and Beatrice. "And she wants you two to be spared so you can be her new sisters?"

Catherine shrugged from her place on the sofa. "The story was that Ingrid froze Helga in some sort of accident. Gerda erased their memories from Arendelle."
"How do you erase memories from a whole kingdom?," asked Mary Margaret as she bounced Neal. The infant had been squalling off and on as Pamela kept casting sideways glances at the royals she directed Roland in a quiet project.

"Rock trolls," explained Merlin.

"Do they sing?," asked Beatrice.

"And the curse is the same as the mirror?," asked David.

"Everyone will be condemned to be their worst selves," said Gold.

"Yeah, not good," said Beatrice.

"We need to take precautions then," said Snow. "We need to get away from our loved ones so we don't hurt them."

Beatrice looked to Gold.

"No, you're right," said Gold.

Mary Margaret frowned. "She's right about what?"

"That's between us, dearie."

"You know we hate when you guys do that, right?," asked Emma.

Venus spoke up. "May I make a suggestion?"

Merlin groaned. The others looked at Venus curiously.

"And I might remind you before you answer that, I am a goddess."

"Okay..." said Emma.

"You can't fight hate with hate. You can only fight hate with love. If you all have any hope of fighting this curse, it's going to be through love."

"Yeah, that's good," said Emma, "but what about stopping the Snow Queen?"

"Because it's that easy..." said Merlin.

"Well, maybe she needs love," said Venus.

"Bit late for that," said Catherine.

"Well, we keep giving Regina chances," said Beatrice.

The others stared at her. Gold made no secret of hiding his smirk brought on by paternal pride.

"I'm just saying, Regina cursed us all for almost thirty years, everybody wanted to give her a second chance. Maybe the Snow Queen deserves a second chance."

"Yeah, the only difference is Ingrid is the one trying to kill us all," said Emma.

"And Regina's changed," said Mary Margaret.
"Right, I just remembered I need to text Joseph," said Beatrice getting out her iPhone.

"She's been plotting with the Snow Queen about Beatrice," Belle said pointedly.

"Oh," said Beatrice. "He's across the street."

"What do you mean across the street?," asked David.

"He took the annex in the sheriff's office," said Beatrice.

"What?!," exclaimed Emma spinning around to look out the window.

"Oh, he also says that he can tell you had a reuben for lunch," said Beatrice.

Emma burst into the annex surprised to see Joseph, Mulan and Ariel.

One wall appeared to be covered in papers looking like something out of an insane asylum. Mulan appeared to be staring at a laptop, Ariel was going through her phone.

Joseph sat on top of a desk with his hands steepled as he stared at the crazy wall.

"What's going on?," asked Emma.

"I hired Mulan, Ariel and Marian," said Joseph.

"You can't hire people."

"You seem to have Hook loitering about the place. He's even gotten a new outfit. What can we infer from that?"

"I can hire people, I'm the sheriff."

"You hired a pirate. That's not very responsible. The man is essentially a career criminal."

"He has a point," said Ariel.

Emma motioned at the two women. "And what are they doing?"

"Ariel is processing the surveillance coming in from the field."

"What surveillance?," asked Emma.

"The surveillance Marian's doing of Regina."

Emma's jaw dropped. "How is that even a good idea?! And I asked you to find out who the woman in the hospital was!"

"We're working on that as well," said Joseph.

"Hey, Joseph," said Ariel bringing the phone over, "Marian just took this picture of Regina going in the inn."

Joseph took the phone. "Through the restaurant entrance?"

"No, through the back."

The phone buzzed.
"Oh, that is interesting," said Joseph.

"What?," asked Emma.

"Lestrade says Robin just came into Granny's."

"So what?," asked Emma.

"Well, they're obviously having an affair."

"You don't know that!"

"Meeting at a hotel in the middle of the afternoon? Yeah, I kind of do and I find myself oddly disillusioned by the whole thing."

Emma silently considered. "Look, whatever Regina and Robin are up to, that's their business."

"Well, Marian's going to figure it out since she's following Regina," said Ariel.

"Well, call her off," said Emma.

Mulan frowned. "Whose side are you on?"

"I'm not on anyone's side-"

"Because it sounds like you're on the side of the guy cheating on his wife," said Ariel.

"There's no sides!," Emma said plaintively as Mulan and Ariel stared at her.

"Though somebody should get over there and do something before Regina and or Marian blows up the place," Joseph suggested.

"You don't want to?," asked Emma.

Joseph shook his head. "That's not really what I do."

---

A Long Time Ago...

Catherine entered the parlor as the maid finished serving tea to the three princesses. Alec followed closely behind.

"Your Highnesses," Alec began, "my wife, Catherine. The Duchess of Padua."

The young woman stood. There was a tall blonde, her younger sister and a redhead.

The not so tall blonde spoke first. "Your Grace, I am Helga. These are my sisters Ingrid and Gerda."

"Ingrid," said Catherine. "You're the heiress to Arendelle, are you not?"

"Yes," she said softly. "You've heard of me."

"I know a very little," said Catherine, motioning for them all to sit down.

They did.
Helga seemed to be the conversationalist in the bunch. "We traveled to the Far North first, but your ice palace was empty."

"Except for the snowman," muttered Gerda.

"Right," said Helga. "Olaf explained that you had married and moved here."

"You gave up your powers?" Ingrid asked, ever so tenuously.

"Well, a certain fairy had designed a so-called blessing to make certain that I couldn't keep my powers after my marriage," said Catherine. "I didn't so much give them up as put them in trust, so that they may be used again someday."

"He mentioned someone called Beatrice," said Helga.

"Of course he did," Catherine said with a sigh.

"Your highnesses, if it's not too much trouble, if you could keep the existence of someone called Beatrice to yourselves, we would be in your debt," said Alec.

"Who is she?" asked Gerda.

Catherine exchanged glances with Alec, then looked back at the princesses.

"She is a powerful sorceress whom I hope to meet again," said Catherine.

"But if she helped you get rid of your powers, we need her-" said Gerda.

"No, she-" Catherine paused. "Why have you come?"

There was silence.

Ingrid began softly. "I have the power of the ice. I can't control it. It's getting worse."

"Show me," said Catherine.

Ingrid shook her head. "I don't want to hurt anyone."

"You won't." Catherine motioned for her to try.

Ingrid concentrated and a small flurry appeared in the room.

"See, it's not the ice itself that harms, it's the heart," said Catherine. She glanced at Alec. "I'd like to invite you to stay here with us. I could teach you to control your powers."

"But we need her back in Arendelle," said Gerda.

"Gerda," said Helga, "if this is something Ingrid needs we have to find a way to make it work."

"Surely you two can account for her absence," said Alec. "I'd be happy to escort Princess Ingrid home myself when she's learned all she can from my wife."

"No." Ingrid stood. She shook her head. "I can't be separated from my sisters."

"Ingrid..." said Helga.

She stood and began to leave.
"Ingrid," said Catherine rising, "if you don't learn to control your powers, they will control you."

Ingrid left and her sisters followed suit.

Now

Beatrice had her hand on the doorknob as the foyer light flicked on.

"Where do you think you're going?," Belle demanded.

Beatrice turned around as Belle marched towards her.

"I was just going..."

Belle raised an eyebrow.

"To see the Snow Queen..."

"Beatrice. We went through this with Zelena. You need to let your father and grandfather handle this-"

"Yeah," said Beatrice. "We did go over this with Zelena and I know I tried to kill her, but in the end, she killed herself, didn't she?"

"What are you saying?"

"Look, I know I had my little homicidal thing, but-"

"But nothing," said Belle.

"But I didn't even know her then."

"Beatrice, what are you saying?"

"Yeah, she did a lot of crappy things, but then again, I know a few people who have done crappy things. She never really had a chance, though."

"That doesn't excuse her actions-"

"Her mom left her in the woods, okay? Do you think if you had left me in the woods I would have turned out like this?"

"I would never have done such a thing-"

"Yeah and not everyone's so lucky. We got to be friends right before everything went horribly wrong and you know what happened in the end? She killed herself."

"That's not your fault."

"She killed herself because she didn't think anyone cared and you know what? She was right and I have to live with that."

"Beatrice, you can't blame yourself for her actions."

"Ingrid wants two sisters. You only come up with a stupid plan like this if you don't have a better way to get friends. Frankly, it's something I understand."
"And what is your plan?"

"I'm going to be her friend."

"Beatrice, she's too dangerous and you don't have your powers."

"Right, because it would be a mistake to go deal with an all powerful magical being without having any magical powers myself."

---

_A Long Time Ago_

"Reinette," said Catherine as her daughter came into the parlor.

"Mama." She curtsied and gave her mother a kiss on the cheek.

"You slept late," said Catherine.

"She did only arrive late in the evening," Alec pointed out. "How is Princess Eva? I trust the marriage is back on track."

"Indeed. King Leopold wishes to fix a date for next summer," said Reinette.

"Gods help him..." said Catherine.

"Mama..."

"And what of your entanglements?," asked Alec. "Ought I expect to hear from any suitors?"

"I was thinking of paying a visit to Avonlea."


"Yes."

"But I thought you didn't like him."

"Well, sort of."

"Well, sort of? What does that mean?"

The door opened. The butler bowed.

"Your Grace."

"Yes, what is it, Rosings?"

"There are visitors in the front hall who wish to see Her Grace. Their Majesties, the King and Queen of Arendelle."

"Oh, do they now?," asked Catherine.

"Catherine..."

"Oh, no, let's send them in, shall we?"

"Who are these people?," Reinette asked after Rosings left.
Catherine and Alec stood. Reinette followed suit as the King and Queen entered.

Their majesties waited. Reinette looked curiously to her parents wondering why they had not yet given the king and queen the respect of a bow and curtsy.

"If you're waiting for me to show you any favor, you may as well stop," said Catherine.

"Catherine, I-

"How dare you think you can speak to me in such a familiar tone."

Gerda sighed. "This is my husband, Agthar."

"Ah, so what did you get out of it?," asked Catherine.

"Excuse me?," asked the man.

"It's not what you think happened," said Gerda.

"Well, let me see if it's what I think," Catherine began. "Two elder sisters vanished, the youngest ascends to the throne and a memory spell is cast by rock trolls to make certain no one in the land can remember either of them. It sounds like a coup d'état, it looks like a coup d'état. I It must be a coup d'état. can't imagine why you've come to the person who can expose you."

"It wasn't like that," said Gerda.

"Really? Then what was it like?"

Gerda swallowed. "Ingrid killed Gerda-"

"Oh, isn't that convenient?"

"She didn't mean it. It was an accident. She couldn't control her powers. I locked her away in an urn that we got from a fairy."

"Let me guess, the Blue Fairy?," asked Catherine.

"Yes."

"The one I said not to deal with?"

Gerda was silent.

"And what is it you want now?"

Agthar spoke. "Our daughter. Elsa. She has the power of the ice."

"Maybe you should just trap her in an urn..."

"We hope it won't come to that," said Gerda.

Alec shook his head in disgust. "That's your daughter you're speaking of."

Agthar continued. "We've hidden her powers from our people, kept her isolated, but it's getting worse."

"I can't think why that would be," said Catherine.
"This isn't funny," said Gerda.

"I agree. You locking your daughter away from the rest of the world is not funny in the slightest."

Gerda stiffened. "Can you help us?"

Catherine sighed. "I'll make you the same deal I wanted to make before. Send her to me and I can teach her to control her powers."

"So far away-"

"It's the only choice," said Catherine. "And it's yours to make. You may leave now."

Gerda and Agthar looked at each other, then made their way out.

Now

Belle walked behind Beatrice as they went into the Snow Queen's lair carrying some tote bags.

"Be careful," Belle said for the hundredth time.

"I've got this."

"Stop."

They looked up to see Ingrid standing in front of them.

"Whatever magic you have with you, it can't stop my plan," said Ingrid.

"I wouldn't be so sure," said Beatrice, rifling through the bag.

Ingrid raised her hands again. Belle looked nervously between her daughter and the sorceress, stepping ever so slightly forward as Beatrice pulled out a bag of chocolates.

"Godiva truffles," said Beatrice. "Mom was thinking ice cream, but then we thought it might be dumb since you have an ice cream shop. Also, I know you and my dad and grandfather kind of got in a fight there and it's a little blown up, but I think we could get estimates or something. We usually get Leroy for stuff like that and putting up our Christmas lights."

"You brought me chocolate?," asked Ingrid.

"Yeah, also chips. Popcorn. Soda. Starbucks was already closed when we left so, sorry."

"Why?"

"Because we thought you could use some company," said Belle.

"You thought I could use company?," Ingrid said skeptically.

"My grandmother, Catherine," Belle began, "she mentioned you had two sisters. You were close once."

"Gerda locked me away," said Ingrid bitterly.

"Well, that sucks," said Beatrice.
"I'm sure she felt bad."

"I don't have a sister," said Beatrice. Ingrid looked up at her. "I have a half brother. He's sort of a jerk sometimes."

"Oh, you mean Henry's father?"

"Yeah."

"He never leaves anything in the tip jar."

"Seriously?," asked Beatrice. "Lame."

"Beatrice..." said Belle.

"I'm just saying." She looked back at Ingrid. "So, basically, here's what usually happens, somebody comes up with an evil plan and they get defeated and life sucks for them when I think all you're looking for is someone to hang out with and like we're really good at hanging out."

Ingrid looked skeptical.

"Also," Belle added, "my husband thinks he'll be immune to your curse and if you plan for us to just hang out for eternity, he will most likely have a problem with that."

"Well, then," said Ingrid, "what kind of chips?"

---

_A Long Time Ago_

Alec entered the parlor and shut the door.

"I have news, my dear. From Sir Maurice."

"Who was under attack from ogres last I checked so why do you look excited?," Catherine asked as she put down her book.

"Ah, yes, the ogres are vanquished."

"How was such a feat accomplished?"

"Belle made a deal with the Dark One."

"Oh, did she indeed?"

"Her people were to be saved and she has gone to serve as the Dark One's caretaker."

"Caretaker?," asked Catherine. She scoffed. "Is that what they're calling it these days?"

"Maurice writes to beg my assistance to free Belle from such an arrangement."

"And will you?"

"Somehow I think the whole matter may slip my mind..."

Catherine stood and embraced her husband, giving him a peck on the lips.

"And what was that for?," asked Alec.
"I only wish that our granddaughter will be as happy as I have been with you."

"It wasn't all plain sailing."

"Well, that would have been boring," Catherine said with contempt.

The door opened and the footman entered.

"Sorry to disturb, Your Graces, visitors from Arendelle."

Alec groaned. "This never goes well."

Catherine sighed. "Do we even let them in?"

Alec nodded towards the footman. "Send them in."

A few seconds passed and the visitors arrived.

"Hi," said the young woman. "Your Graces..."

"Who are you?," asked Catherine.

"I'm Princess Anna and this is my fiance, Kristoff. We heard you could help us, not heard, read, found out-"

"Help you with what?"

"Right. See, my sister, Elsa has some ice powers and-"

"Your sister, Elsa?," asked Alec. "I don't understand. Your parents were here years ago about Elsa."

"Right, that's because my aunt sort of froze us for decades..."

"And what is it you wish to know?," asked Catherine.

"Right, so, my aunt sort of cursed me and I sort of put my sister in an urn..."

Catherine shook her head. "Why did we even let you in?"

"Now I can't find the urn, though."

"Well, I don't have it," Catherine snapped.

Anna looked to Kristoff. "Do you maybe want to help me here?"

"I think you're doing fine on your own."

"I don't know if your mother happened to mention me, but I don't look upon it kindly when sisters imprison other sisters because they have ice powers," said Catherine.

"Bit of a pet peeve of hers, really," said Alec.

"But I didn't mean it-"

"But you did. Just as your mother did."

"Wow, you're kind of mean," said Anna, taken aback.
"Wow, you're kind of grating my patience."

Anna looked at her fiance. "Come on, Kristoff. Let's go."

The pair from Arendelle left. Alec turned to Catherine.

"You're really just going to let them leave?"

"I've tried to help before and been refused before," said Catherine. "I'll be sitting here in another twenty years and they'll come back because her daughter has uncontrollable ice powers and honestly, I'm thinking of letting Beatrice deal with it."

Alec raised an eyebrow. "You're pawning off something on our unborn great-granddaughter?"

"She'll be the Ice Princess then. She can deal with it. Or let her father do whatever it is he does with people."

"Catherine, you don't really want to turn anyone into a snail."

"Don't tell me what I want."

"Right, my love, your temper is matched only by your beauty and your wit-"

"Don't flatter me."

He began to walk out.

"And where are you going?," Catherine demanded.

"To get those two back here so we can work out something. Did you see what he was wearing? That and the blond hair, he's just asking to get robbed."

"Alec..."

He opened the door. "I shall return shortly. Bowen, prepare my horse."

---

Now

Emma was surprised to get the call from Gold and Merlin, then even more surprised when she suggested she be the one to go in and talk to the Snow Queen but she figured it couldn't be that mad after she had spent the afternoon with the mess Regina and Robin had made of their personal lives.

Anything would actually be better.

"Guys?"

"We're in here, Emma!," Beatrice called.

Emma came in holding her hands up. She was surprised to see what appeared to be Belle, Beatrice and the Snow Queen sitting on a sofa watching a Macbook.

"What's going on?," asked Emma.

"We're just getting to know Ingrid better," said Belle.
Emma frowned. "Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, we're just watching TV, eating junk food," said Beatrice. "Girl time."

"Girl time?," asked Emma.

"Yes, Beatrice told me all about her boyfriend," said Ingrid.

"Didn't you try to kill him?," asked Emma.

"Emma, seriously, if we held it against everybody when they tried to kill anyone, well..." said Beatrice. "We'd run out of people to talk to pretty quick."

"You can join us," Belle offered.

Emma walked over and took a chair. "You're sure you guys aren't under some kind of spell?"

"I'm not going to cast my curse if that's what you're worried about," said Ingrid. "And I'll take down the ice wall and the other curse."

"What other curse?," asked Beatrice.

"The one where if you left town you couldn't return."

Beatrice shook her head. "Why would you do something like that?"

Ingrid shrugged. "It seemed right at the time."

"The important thing is she's going to take it down," said Belle. "Which we really ought to do soon."

"Oh, we can do it now," said Ingrid.

After they left the Snow Queen's lair, they were reunited with Gold and Merlin. They began the walk to the town line with Belle and Gold trailing behind Merlin, Emma, Ingrid and Beatrice.

"I don't understand why you agreed to this plan in the first place," said Gold. "I would have found a way to deal with the Snow Queen. You don't need to play nice with her."

"I didn't do it for her," Belle said sternly. "I did it for our daughter."

"Now I really don't understand," said Gold.

"She's upset about Zelena."

"Why would she be upset about Zelena?"

Belle sighed. "You have to admit, Rumple, she didn't have an easy life and it had a tragic end."

"She was insane. She hurt Bae, she hurt Beatrice, in fact, killed her-"

"You think I don't know that? Do you think I wasn't furious with her? We know what happened in Oz, she was Zelena's friend once, but she died friendless and without hope. Beatrice thinks that's why she took her own life and in part, blames herself for it."

"She shouldn't blame herself," he said quietly.
"That's our daughter, Rumple. She wants to help the friendless and the helpless."

Gold looked ahead of them as Beatrice walked with the Snow Queen.

"She takes on too much," said Gold.

---

**A Long Time Ago**

Alec rode Mandrake IV hoping to catch up with them. He got off when he saw a blinding white light.

As he pondered what sort of magic he was looking at, he felt himself pulled towards it with nothing to hang on to and no control of his limbs. He flew until he stopped on a slab of stone.

He looked around. Across the empty room were two young women who seemed to be using the wall on the far end to hold themselves up. One shorter, one taller. The shorter one had brown eyes and dark brown hair. The taller one had longer hair in a lighter shade and blue eyes. They both wore strange clothes.

"Don't say it," said the short one.

"I didn't say anything."

"Yeah, but you were thinking it."

"I wasn't thinking anything, either!"

"Don't say anything, I feel bad enough already."

"Why would you assume I'm going to blame you?"

"Oh, my God," said the shorter one when she set eyes on Alec.

Alec sat up.

"Oh, my God," said the taller one.

Alec coughed. "Ladies, forgive me, I'll be with you in a moment."

"We're fine. Take all the time you need..." the short one said quickly.

Alec noticed something on the ground next to him. Some sort of peasant child's toy, a straw doll with a blue coat. He picked it up as he helped himself to his feet.

"Does this belong to either of you?," he asked.

"No, never seen it."

Alec frowned. "Apologies, ladies. I'm being rude. I am Alec, the Duke of Padua."

The tall one opened her mouth to speak.

"I'm Jenna and this is my sister, Louise," the short one said, beating her to it.

"Louise?," the tall one snapped.
Alec eyed her.
"Right. Of course. The name my parents gave me," she said. "Apologies. Louise."
Alec decided to let that one go. The sisters seemed to cling to each other and the wall.
"Do you ladies happen to know where we are?"
"No idea," said Jenna, stepping forward.
"It's definitely a different realm," said Louise.
"How can you tell?," asked Alec.
"Just feels different. It's not the Enchanted Forest, though," said Jenna.
"You're not from the Enchanted Forest?," asked Alec.
The sisters looked at each other again.
"No, we're from someplace different," said Jenna.
"Where?"
Before they could answer, a stone door slid to the side and a redhead stepped inside. She wore a fine gown that with embroidery.
"Not quite what I was expecting..." she began.
"To be honest, this isn't quite what I expected, either," said Jenna.
"Hush it, dearie," she snapped. "Now, do any of you know where I can find Rumplestiltskin?"
Alec froze. Certainly whatever this witch wanted, she wasn't a friend of his. In fact, he very much doubted the Dark One had many of those.
"Literally no idea," said Jenna.
"Never heard of him," said Louise.
The redhead turned to Alec.
"I don't think I've heard of anyone called Rumplestiltskin."
"And I think you're all liars," said the witch. "Because I cast that spell to help me find him and I got you which means you know him. So start telling me the truth."

Now
Joseph walked into the sheriff's station annex. He was surprised to see Lila waiting in a chair.
"Lila."
"We need to speak."
She put a book down on the table. It was one he recognized as looking like Henry's storybook.
"Yes?"

"Robin Hood came to the library. It seems her majesty has some notion that events are controlled by some mysterious Author."

"Oh, I am well aware," said Joseph.

"After he left, this book appeared," said Lila. She opened the book.

Joseph walked over. She had opened the book to a story called "The Death of Sherlock."

"Oh, please," said Joseph. "You're not actually buying into this?"

"I find it alarming. You continue to ignore the danger that girl presents to you."

"What danger? There is no danger."

"Oh, sorry."

They looked up to see Beatrice standing in the doorway holding two cups.

"I'll come back," said Beatrice. "I was just going to bring you tea."

"Actually, she was just leaving," said Joseph.

Lila scowled as she walked out.

"What did you do?," Beatrice asked.

Joseph shut the book behind him as he took the cup from Beatrice. "Nothing."

"Yeah, I have a mom. You did something."

Joseph shrugged. "Who can tell really? So, the Snow Queen is defeated?"

"More like amicably surrendered. It is going to be so cool having a friend with an ice cream shop."

"Cheers," said Joseph holding out his cup.

"Cheers," said Beatrice.
Then

Beatrice awoke alone. The cabin only had one bedroom which her parents took, she and Lady slept in the sprawling living room when they came up here.

She threw on jeans, boots and a sweater and headed outside.

"Mom? Dad?"

She could hear their voices in the distance.

"Why can't we mark it?," her mother asked.

"Don't you think someone would spot it? Don't you think Regina can take a hint?"

"It would depend on what the hint was."

"This is not funny, Belle."

"I don't know why we have to bury it."

Beatrice came around the trees to see a sight that was almost comical. Her dad was wearing his suit with black Wellies, Belle had on one of her trademark short skirt and blouse outfits with red ones.

"Beatrice," said Belle. "We didn't think you were awake."

They heard some rustling in the brush and turned to see Graham.

"Mr. and Mrs. Gold. Beatrice. What are you doing up here?"

"Gardening," said Gold. "What are you doing out here?"

"I saw... a wolf."

Beatrice turned to Belle trying to silently ask if the sheriff was crazy.

Gold spoke. "To the best of my knowledge there are no wolves in Storybrooke. Why are you looking?"

"You'll think I'm crazy."

"Try me."

"I saw one in my dreams and then I saw one in real life. Did you see anything unusual?"

"I'm afraid not," said Gold. He looked over at Belle, then walked towards Graham. "You know they say dreams are memories. Memories of another life."

"And what do you think?,?," asked Graham.
"I never rule out anything."

"Graham," said Belle, "you really look like you ought to get to bed."

"I'm fine, Belle. Really. Sorry to bother you."

Graham hurried back off into the woods.

"What just happened?," Beatrice asked quietly.

"There's nothing to worry about," Belle said in a way that led Beatrice to believe that there was most definitely something to worry about.

She looked at her dad.

"It's nothing."

"What were you guys doing out here?"

"Nothing to worry about, sweetheart. Go get your telescope so we can go back into town."

---

**Now**

Beatrice was nervous.

Extremely nervous.

Leaving town on her own was one thing. She had done that plenty of times since she got her car. The problem was her parents and the real world.

She had made the unfortunate mistake of letting her mom see her mail. There were tons of college prospectuses heaped on her after the ice wall came down. It seemed Belle couldn't resist them with their glossy portraits and noble-sounding mission statements. Then of course, there were pictures of the libraries.

Then again, she hadn't expected Colby College to offer an information session for high school juniors and their parents.

Then she hadn't expected them to want to come.

Of course, she could never have counted on Ingrid undoing her curse undoing all the other curses on the town line, but at this point, who could possibly keep track? It turned out Dopey had wandered off past the line and forgotten to mention it to anyone until he heard Belle mentioning this information session to Mary Margaret.

Still, she figured it was better to let them screw up the Colby visit and aim for MIT.

It was a one hour drive from Storybrooke. Waterville was the nearest town over, but of course Belle and Gold acted like it was an arctic expedition. They left extremely early and Beatrice was chagrined to see that they were the first people to arrive at check-in. The student volunteers were still taping the banner up.

"Come on, let's walk."

Belle pointed. "But that's check-in-"
"We can't be the first to check in!," Beatrice hissed, trying to lure her parents further away by simply moving in the opposite direction.

"Why not?," asked Gold.

"Then we're the goody two-shoes who showed up first."

"I don't understand. Logically, someone has to be first."

"Look, I know you guys come from a world where you just show up at the witch's castle when you get there, but this world runs off of schedules. Trust me. Just walk away. Now."

Belle looked longingly at the check-in desk. "But it's right there-"

"Mom, back away."

"Hello, Regina."

Regina looked up at Joseph as he walked into the vault. She glared.

"What are you doing in my vault? Have you brought anyone else back from the dead, Mr. Gillette?"

"Sadly, no, I wanted to speak to you about this."

He placed the book Lila had given him in front of her.

"It looks like my son's book."

"Wrong. This one appeared before my mother."

Regina began flipping pages. "I don't understand."

She ended up on "The Death of Sherlock" and looked up at him.

"My then," said Regina, her lip curling. "Haven't things changed?"

"I want to know what you know about the Author."

"Very little."

"Now, here's what I find curious, Beatrice is in this book very little and I know for a fact she has her own book-"

"Her own book?," Regina interrupted. "How did she get that?"

"Merlin gave it to her."

Regina stood up. "Then guess where we're going."

Then

Beatrice was hiding out in the library when she heard someone behind her.

"Psst..."
She looked around.

"Psst..."

Beatrice turned around to see Henry. He came from around the stacks and to the table she was set up at.

He plopped down his book.

"What? You want my help now?"

"It's about your dad."

Henry flipped open the book.

"He's the Dark One."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "Seriously, Henry? The Dark One? Who makes this stuff up?"

"He's controlled by a magical dagger."

Henry flipped open to a page with a dagger with "Rumplestiltskin" written on it.

Beatrice took the book and flipped the pages herself.

"Okay, see, what is this? This is a mess."

"What?," asked Henry.

"Um, the other kid my dad supposedly has? Seriously, if I have a half-brother, where is he?"

"He fell through the portal to this world," Henry explained. "Your dad let him go."

"Henry, I am fifteen and I have a nanny. Does that sound like the same guy who would let his kid go to another dimension? This book could at least be consistent in its characterization."

"So you haven't seen him bury anything?"

Beatrice remembered the morning in the woods the last day Graham had been alive. Her dad with a shovel and wellies.

Worried about Regina finding something.

"No," said Beatrice. "I haven't seen him hide anything."

Now

After finding a coffee shop just outside the campus and nursing their beverages over an appropriate time period, the Golds returned to the admissions building. Other parents and children had already arrived to check in.

"Okay," said the chipper volunteer, "Beatrice Gold. I've got you right here. Here is your packet and t-shirt. Let me get your name tags."

Beatrice took the articles stuffing her shirt away. Belle was right over her shoulder.
"Sorry, are you two friends?," asked the volunteer looking at Belle.

"Friends?," asked Belle.

"Sisters? I only have an Avrum Gold."

"I'm not her sister, I'm her mother," said Belle.

"Wow. Really?"

Beatrice bit her tongue. "Could we just got our nametags?"

"Right, one for you, Beatrice. And you are?"

"Belle."

"And it says here you have one more in your party?"

"Yeah, my dad."

"His first name."

"Seriously you can just put Mr. Gold."

"Oh, I don't mind you spelling it out."

"No, really, just put Mr. Gold."

"Okie dokie... Mr. Gold..."

They returned to where Gold waited on a bench just off to the side.

"All checked in?," he asked.

"Everyone keeps thinking I'm a student," said Belle. "It's ridiculous."

"I'm not even touching that..." muttered Beatrice. She handed Gold his nametag. "You have to put that on."

"Why?"

"Guys, really just work with me."

Gold scowled as he put his nametag on.

"What's first on the itinerary?"

Belle had the schedule out. "It says there's a welcome speech from the Dean of Admissions, then we break into tour groups."

They sat through the speech and then got paired with another chipper young woman called Autumn to be their tour guide. There were about a dozen other students and parents in the group. Belle was determined to be next to Autumn to Beatrice's dismay.

It got worse when Belle brought out a pad and pen.

"Mom, seriously," Beatrice hissed.
"I just want to be sure I'm getting all the information."

"They have a website."

"Okay," said Autumn, "we're going to start out by going into one of our dorms. We have thirty-one on campus and ninety-four percent of our students live on campus."

"Ninety-four percent..." Belle mumbled as she scribbled.

"We have different kinds of halls. Substance free, quiet and our green hall located right by our organic garden that provides three thousand pounds of produce to our dining hall. All of our dorms are coed-"

"What?," asked Gold.

"Oh, God," said Beatrice.

"I'm sorry," said Autumn. "Did we have a question?"

"We certainly did, dearie," said Gold. "Did you say all of the dormitories are coed?"

"Well, the aim is to create a close-knit campus, but there's no coed rooms where students of the opposite sex would share a room."

"But some pig could be living in the next room?"

"I guess..." Autumn said nervously. "We're going to be going in Hillside now."

"Dad, please stop," whispered Beatrice.

"Do you think I am going to let you go unprotected into a building that you share with young men and gods only know who they are?"

Belle stopped as the tour group filtered into the building behind Autumn.

"Rumple, Beatrice can handle herself. We're going to miss the tour."

"It's not Beatrice that I'm worried about."

"I don't believe this is happening..." mumbled Beatrice. "We have been here half an hour."

Belle attempted reason. "Rumple, I was the same age Beatrice will be when I went to live with you."

"Yes and look how that turned out!" Gold motioned at his daughter.

Autumn had doubled-back. "Hey, guys, I thought I lost you. We're just taking a look inside a room now!"

"Autumn, I have a question about the firearms policy on campus," said Gold.

"They're not allowed," Autumn said with a worried look.

"We can just leave now," said Gold.

"Come on," said Belle.
They went up and looked at the room.

Gold was not impressed with the size or collection of Avengers posters.

He leaned over to Belle.

"I had more room in the cell that the Charmings put me in," he whispered.

"I definitely had more room in your dungeon."

Beatrice looked up in horror to see that two of the other parents had been listening.

"They're kidding," said Beatrice.

Belle walked into the house.

"Beatrice? You disappeared from the library!"

Pamela emerged. "Beatrice is at the cabin."

"The cabin?"

"She said she had to work on her astronomy project. I thought you would be there."

Belle's eyes widened as Gold entered.

"I'm going out."

"You're not with Beatrice?"

"I'd say given the current state of affairs that's an unlikely scenario."

"Pamela says she went to the cabin."

"She's probably working on her project."

"I don't like the idea of her up there one her own. We should go get her."

"Well, I have something I must do. I told you about Mr. Booth."

Belle glared. They had been over this already.

"It's not him."

"Well, he's not your son, is he?"

"Fine," said Belle, her face growing red. "If that's what we're going to do, divide into yours and mine..."

"That's not what I meant."

Belle got in his face. "Do you think I came here because I wanted to?! Because I didn't and if you can't appreciate that. You make me so angry!"

Belle stalked off.

Gold opened the hall closet to get his coat.
He immediately spotted the steel case for the telescope.

Something was wrong.

Beatrice wondered if it was this whole Curse thing that made Pamela a little bit incompetent. Because she'd bought the whole school project at the cabin thing pretty easily and didn't bat an eye as Beatrice got on her bike.

It was a few miles up to the cabin and it was getting dark quick.

Beatrice went in the cabin and got out the shovel. She made her way with the flashlight to where her parents had been.

She looked around. Her mother wanted to make a mark. Had she?

She had. A mark at the base of a tree.

Beatrice dug.

And hit something.

She knelt down on the ground and brushed the dirt off something that was looking really dagger-like in the canvas.

She untied and sure enough, a gleaming wavy knife that bore the name Rumplestiltskin.

And she didn't know what to do with it.

Okay, magical dagger that controlled him? Maybe he wanted to get away from it? Couldn't he have just tossed it in the ocean or something?

Something was not right with this. Her parents were smart and if they buried something in the woods there had to be a reason for it.

Because they were hiding it from someone else.

"You can hand that over now."

Beatrice looked up to see August Booth.

Not good.

Slowly she took the handle of the dagger. This freaking thing was heavy. She stood and began backing away, trying to think of an escape plan, but that would have to involve her bike and that didn't seem great.

"Beatrice," said August. "Just hand it over."

"Sorry, this is my wavy knife."

"You're Rumplestiltskin?"

"I know you're not."

"And how would you know that?"
She was still pitching escape plans to herself and wondered if August was a fast runner.

"I have the big knife so..."

She chose running.

Her brief moment of escape was subsequently ruined by August tackling her.

Beatrice screamed. Somehow she managed to keep grip of the dagger and tried to elbow August.

They struggled for the knife and in the course of that it ended up in August's leg.

Like just sticking straight up out of his leg. No blood.

As she pondered that latest development, August pulled out the dagger and a cane landed up the side of his head. As August fell groaning to the ground, she looked up to see her dad.

"Are you alright?"

What the hell had just happened?

Gold knelt down on the ground in front of her. He pulled her to face him.

"Beatrice, are you alright? Did he hurt you in any way?"

"I'm..."

He helped her to her feet. He pulled the dagger out of August's leg.

"It's over, Booth," said Gold. "Or I ought call you Pinocchio?"

Beatrice looked over. "What?"

She then noticed the rip in August's jeans revealed wood. He coughed as he sat up.

"You know who I am so you must know your chances of living through this little encounter are very slim."

"Um, living?", asked Beatrice.

Gold ignored her. "Why should I let you live?"

"Because I'm dead already. I'm dying and I need magic."

"Is that so?"

"I tried to get the Savior to believe, but that woman? I don't know if I have that long."

Gold paused. "Fine. You can live. For now."

"What?", asked August.

"Well, if I kill you or you die later the result is the same. You get the Savior to believe and maybe we can talk." Gold grabbed August and put the dagger to his neck. "However, if you ever approach my daughter or my wife again, magic or not, wood or flesh, I will kill you. Understood?"
"Yes," August said through gritted teeth.

Gold stood. "You can lay there until we're gone. Beatrice."

Gold silently led Beatrice to the car and put her in the front seat. He didn't say a word as he put her bike in the trunk and handed her messenger bag to her.

Beatrice and her father rode in awkward silence, the dagger sitting between them on the seat. Gold finally pulled over.

"Why did you want the dagger?"

"I didn't."

"You came out here for it."

"I... Henry's book said you had a dagger that controls you. I didn't believe it because of a lot of other crackheaded things in the book, but he wanted to know if you had hidden anything."

Gold smiled grimly. "Under the direction of Mr. Booth no doubt."

"Does it control you?"

"Not exactly. Whoever controls the dagger, controls me, but not now in a Land Without Magic."

"Oh," said Beatrice. "Did you make a witch mad or something?"

"Why would you ask that?"

"Because that's how Beauty and the Beast starts."

"These stories in Henry's book about me. What did they say?"

"Um, well, the first one was that some guy called the Master told you to save me from a curse? He had a deerstalker on. You know, the Sherlock Holmes hat?"

"What else?"

"Stupid stuff."

"What stupid stuff?"

"That you had another kid."

Gold's heart dropped as he turned to Beatrice.

"Which I knew was crazy because it said you let him fall through a portal to another world and you would never ever do that."

"What makes you think I would never do that?"

"Because... you're my dad."

He could let this pass. He could continue to let her believe in him.

He couldn't.
"It's true."

Beatrice turned. "What's true?"

"I had a son. His name is Baelfire. He did come here to this world because I let go of him. I have spent centuries searching for a way to get here and I found my answer: the Dark Curse. I needed someone to cast it and that person was Regina."

He started the engine of the car.

"That's all," he said and with that, he resumed driving home.

---

**Now**

"And here we have the observatory," said Autumn. "If we have anyone interested in the physics or astronomy departments..."

Belle practically shoved Beatrice forward.

Autumn started showing them the building and gave a passing reference to the telescope.

Beatrice wandered up the winding staircase to where the massive telescope sat. She walked around it and came back to a table next to it. Atop it sat what seemed to be some kind of thesis paper, "Dynamics of an Asteroid." She picked it up.

"Oh, you can just ignore that."

A young man came around the side. Beatrice jumped.

"Sorry," he said. "Didn't mean to startle you."

"Oh, no, sorry, I sort of wandered off from the tour. I was stuck with a bunch of English majors." She frowned. "Have we met?"

She looked down at the paper. Andrew Newcomb.

"Did you go to MIT Physics camp last summer?"

"Yeah, I did," said Beatrice. "You?"

"I was a lab assistant for the summer. I know you. You're the girl who got sucked up in the freak tornado."

Beatrice shrugged. "Yeah, that is pretty much me."

"You're thinking of coming to Colby?"

"Well, it's close to home and my parents wanted to have a look."

"You really want MIT, though?"

"Yeah. Four hours away, harder sell."

"Your parents can't stand to have you four hours away?"

"They sort of have some issues... To be fair, I did get caught up in a tornado the one time I was
"Beatrice?," she heard Gold call.

She shrugged.

"This is what I mean."

"Well, here let me give you my number," he said, scribbling on a post it. "You can text me if you have any questions about Colby."

"Oh, thanks," said Beatrice.

"Or if you want to get a bite sometime."

Beatrice cringed. This had never actually happened, she had actually never considered the possibility of this happening.

"Oh, sorry. I have a boyfriend."

"Oh." Andrew laughed nervously. "Sorry."

"No, you're fine."

"Well, you can still text me if you have any questions."

"Thanks. Well, bye."

"Bye."

Beatrice descended the stairs. Gold was waiting at the bottom.

"So? Better than the one I got you?," he asked.

"It's pretty big, Dad."

"Hurry along. The next stop is the library, if we don't follow her in, we may never see your mother again."

Regina and Joseph waited at the diner. Merlin walked in briskly and sat down.

"Alright," said Merlin, "you two had better have a good reason for summoning me and it had better not be sampling the overpriced lasagna."

"Of course not. She froze last week's lasagna and calls it a special," said Joseph.

"Mine is better," said Regina.

Merlin waved his hands. "Focus. What did you two want?"

Regina looked at Joseph and back at Merlin. "I've been wondering about Henry's book. Whatever happens in it seems to be immutable. That's why I can't get my happy ending. I want to find the Author and get his or her help in changing the story."

Merlin paused. "That explains why you're here but not you."
Regina eyed the sorcerer. "What? You're not going to mock me?"

"Joseph."

"Slightly concerned about dying." He opened his book. "This story appeared to my mother."

"Well, look here, a plot twist," said Merlin.

"You're taking this awfully lightly," said Regina.

"Beatrice mentioned to me that she has a book of her own," said Joseph. "For her story."

"And what more did she tell you?"

"Level with us, Merlin," said Regina. "If Beatrice has her own book that she can write, does that mean we all do? How do we find them?"

"You don't."

"Well, what the hell does that mean?," Regina snapped.

"Is there actually an Author?," asked Joseph.

"Yes," said Merlin.

Regina leaned in. "Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"I don't think you're ready for that," said Merlin. "And you're not going to find him here."

"It's not you, is it?," Regina sneered.

"If it was me, do you think I would give Beatrice the ability to write her own story?"

"This Author wants to control us?," asked Joseph.

"Control might be an overreach. The Author is not a puppet master. He does not pull your strings, but if you are to walk through a door, he makes damn sure that you have no choice but to walk through it although it was your choice. I once pondered this injustice and discovered the path that would lead me to the Dark Princess. I secured a book that had been hidden in the depths of the dark sea. A book of fate the Author could not bend to his will."

"So you're saying there's no hope for the rest of us," said Regina.

"I wouldn't say that," said Merlin. "If the Author can be found and defeated, what has been written would remain, but the future would be a blank slate."

"But you just said the Author manipulates everything, how can there be any possible hope of defeating him?"

Joseph beat Merlin to an answer. "In the one book he can't write."

"Precisely."
"Alright, if Beatrice's book is the only place where the Author can be defeated, how do we bring it about?" asked Regina.

"How could I possibly know what's in a book whose pages are unwritten?"

Then

Belle impatiently ran to the garage. Gold had disappeared, then sent a cryptic text about going to the cabin. She was about to head up herself when she saw the lights of the Cadillac.

"Beatrice! What were you thinking?!"

Gold silently got out of the car.

"Rumple?"

"Don't forget your bike, sweetheart."

Gold left the garage. Belle turned back to her daughter.

"Sweetheart, what happened?"

"He..."

"Baby?"

"He told me about his other kid. Weird B name?"

Belle nodded. "Baelfire."

"I don't get it."

"We didn't want to tell you when you were little. We already asked so much of you. Regina's never known the real reason behind the Dark Curse. She can be dangerous if she thinks she's been crossed."

"That doesn't seem like him."

"It was centuries ago. He made a mistake. He's tried to correct it ever since."

Belle and Beatrice ended up sitting on the back steps.

"Is this why everything's been so weird? And the burning City Hall thing?"

"He's been trying to keep the Savior here so she can break the curse and we can finally find Baelfire."

"Why's he being so weird?"

Belle wrapped her arm around Beatrice.

"Somewhere inside him, your father thinks he can't be loved and once, he sent me away because of that."

"I'm guessing you came back."
"And I have spent almost every day since trying to persuade him I'm not going anywhere. Everyone's left him, even his parents."

"Not us, though."

"No," Belle said, threading her fingers through Beatrice's hair, "not us."

Now

The Golds had just barely made it through the tour, going for another round at the library. Once they got out, they found a Thai restaurant near campus and sat down to eat before returning to Storybrooke.

"I'm sorry, the dorm situation is unacceptable," said Gold.

"Rumple..."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. "I didn't make the dorms."

"The bathrooms weren't coed," Belle pointed out. "Besides, it's an hour from home. We need to be willing to make some accomodations in light of that."

"I'm to pay sixty-thousand dollars a year so my daughter can have the privilege of sharing a building with some young men I haven't been able to screen and live in a room smaller than most dungeons."

"Yes, but look at the opportunity she's getting! In our land, I never even would have dreamed of getting to go to university." Belle looked back at Beatrice. "In fact, the only woman I know of who went was Joseph's mother."

"Really?," asked Beatrice.

Belle nodded. "We really need to get together with them sometime. Every time I think I have a date set, something falls through. Never mind that, though. What did you think of the school?"

"It was cool, I guess," said Beatrice. "The Physics Department was good. I still want MIT, though."

"It's four hours away," said Gold.

"It's MIT."

"Well," said Belle, "I think we ought to make a visit. Maybe early in the summer? We could spend the night."

"I suppose," Gold said with a grimace.

Belle patted Gold's arm. "I'm sure we'll have lots of schools to visit."

"Yes and maybe we could cut down on the dungeon talk next time," Beatrice suggested.

Then

Beatrice knocked on the door of her parents' bedroom.
The moment that passed seemed to last forever.

"Come in?," Gold finally said.

Beatrice opened the door. Her dad was sitting on the side of the bed in his pajamas.

"Hey," said Beatrice.

"Hey."

"I just wanted to say I'm sorry about the whole dagger thing. I wasn't trying to control you, I just wondered if there was one."

"It's alright, sweetheart. I know."

"And about Baelfire." The name still sounded weird coming off her tongue. She was going to have to google it. "I'm okay."

"You really don't have to lie, sweetheart."

"I'm not lying."

"I appreciate you wanting to spare my feelings, but you really don't need to. I know exactly what I am."

Beatrice walked further in the room.

"No..." she said. "I'm not trying to spare your feelings, in fact, I'm pretty confused about your feelings at this point..."

"I am a terrible father and a man who chose power over my son."

"Yeah, you messed up, but you've been trying to fix it for like hundreds of years."

"I doubt that will be enough."

Her father looked so forlorn and Beatrice wished she could do something. She wasn't certain she could.

"Look, I don't know this guy and you have your own stuff to work out on Dr. Phil on something, but you didn't screw up with me and whatever Bale decides-"

"Baelfire."

"Yeah, that guy, whatever, anyway, maybe you're right and maybe he won't ever forgive you, but I'm here and I'm not trying to say it like I'm more important or I make up for it, but like you've got me. No matter what."

Gold stared at her in shock.

Beatrice suddenly felt very self-conscious.

"Okay, good night."

"Wait!"

Beatrice looked up to see her mother come out of the bathroom.
"Were you going to just let her walk out?" Belle looked at Beatrice. "And were you just going to walk out?"

"I said... stuff. We're good," said Beatrice.

"Hug."

"Mom..."

"Belle, she doesn't really need to be forced-"

"Hug now!"

Beatrice walked over to her father and he hugged her tightly.

"I have done nothing to deserve you."
Here

Though he generally found Ariel to be the smartest mermaid he had ever met, Joseph was beginning to think the art of deduction was not something found under the sea.

"So, process of elimination," Joseph began, "somebody who knows the woman is here."

Ariel frowned as the sheet finished printing. "How do you know that?"

"She came here for a reason and so did Lestrade."

"Then why don't we just ask Mr. Lestrade?"

"Because he doesn't think he should tell me and I know he can hold out. He's just thick enough for that."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Go around town. Visit everyone, but I really want you to ask Merlin."

Ariel frowned. "Why don't I just visit Merlin?"

"Because he'll get suspicious so see everyone, then go to Merlin, then tell me how he reacts."

"You mean if he knows her?"

"No, because if he knows her there's a high probability he's going to lie. Do I really have to explain this much?," asked Joseph.

"What are you doing?"

Joseph turned. "Regina." He glanced at Ariel. "Go on."

The former mermaid left. Regina closed the distance between her and Joseph.

"It has been days and you have done nothing to find the Author."

"What? And you've done so much? Or perhaps you were so busy with Robin Hood that you neglected to?"

Regina gritted her teeth. "Stop spying on me!"

"Make it harder."

"I would think you would be more concerned about this. After all, you're the one who's going to die."

"I don't see what I'm supposed to do."

"Tell your girlfriend to find the author and defeat him! At least then I can have a chance at a
"Right, let me just bring that up to her. Let me see if she can fit that in between calculus and college applications. Then again, Doctor Who is on hiatus. It might work."

"Then again, maybe killing you is part of the Author's plan for Beatrice."

"Excuse me?"

"Well, if he can't manipulate her, but he can manipulate the people around her, there's still a chance that he could manipulate her into becoming a villain."

"Beatrice? A villain? That's absurd."

"I'm willing to bet if you had met me when I was her age, you would never have thought I'd turn out like I did."

---

**There**

The witch walked towards Alec and snatched the straw doll from him.

"Where did you get this?"

"It was just on the floor," said Alec.

The red-headed woman eyed the trio as she held the doll.

"See, I know you're all liars, so who's going to be the first to tell me the truth? I can make the truth hurt or not. It's your choice."

Jenna turned to look at Louise.

"First, I want some answers," said Louise.

"I don't think so dearie."

"Don't dearie me." She looked at Jenna. "Can you believe she dearied me?"

"Louise, stop," said Jenna.

The woman eyed them. "There's an air of falseness to those names."

"Let's hear your name," said Louise.

"My questions first."

"No," said Louise. "You're the one who dragged us here. We were minding our own business-"

"Well, not exactly," Jenna admitted.

"I was actually," said Alec.

"I'm talking," said Louise. She crossed her arms. "Who are you and where are we?"

"I don't see why that should matter to you, dearie."
"Be careful with those dearies. Now, why don't you tell us something?"

The woman reached into Louise's chest. Alec gasped. Louise didn't flinch and threw her hand back, sending the woman flying against the wall.

"Oh, God," said Jenna, looking at the crumpled woman.

Her fears were quickly assuaged as the woman stood.

"So, you're a sorceress then," said the woman, waving a hand to heal herself.

"I also own a vintage clothing store."

The witch shook her head. "What's that?"

"It's a store for vintage clothing. What don't you get?"

"The vintage part," said Alec.

"It's old."

"Why would anyone pay for old clothing?," asked the witch.

"I am not having this conversation again," said Louise. "I am actually breaking even. Okay?"

"Look," Jenna interrupted, smiling sheepishly as she approached gingerly. The redhead recoiled at her. "If you could just reverse your spell and send us back home, that would probably be for the best."

"No one is going anywhere until I get what I want," said the witch. She plucked a hair from Louise's head.

"What are you doing?," asked Louise.

"Well, I can tell you know where to find Rumplestiltskin so I would guess that means he is wherever you just left."

"Oh, I don't know I would conclude that," said Jenna.

Louise waved her hand again causing her hair to flame out. The witch scowled and then fainted. Jenna turned to Louise in amazement. "Where did you learn to do that?!"

"Where do you think? Come on, we have to get out of here."

"Out of here to where?," asked Jenna.

"Well, I don't think we should stay here," said Alec.

"It doesn't matter where!," said Louise. "Anywhere is better than her. We should probably just add her to the collection of crazy witches. Let's go."

They walked over to the circular stone door.

"How do we open it?," asked Jenna.

Louise waved her hand. The door rolled open.
"Well," she said, "that was surprisingly simple."

---

**Here**

Belle had taken over the dining room table with shiny college prospectuses. At the moment, Gold sat by her side nursing a cup of tea.

"There are just so many factors to consider," Belle lamented.

"How many of them have separate dorms for the girls?," Gold asked tightly.

"You know, I was thinking about that. It wouldn't be so hard to get Beatrice an apartment. We have enough money."

"Her own apartment?"

"Well, you don't want her living with boys."

"And if I get her an apartment, what boy do you think will be driving over to Waterville every day?"

"I trust her judgment."

"I trust her judgment as well, but there's only so much I ought to expect of her. She's at a treacherous age."

Pamela walked in the kitchen.

"Pamela," said Belle, "you think Beatrice could have her own apartment, don't you?"

Pamela gave a quizzical expression.

"Well, not tomorrow," said Belle. "When she goes to college."

"Feel free to tell the truth, dearie," said Gold.

Panela cleared her throat. "Well, Beatrice is a very bright girl, but in my work, I've noticed that a certain class of young lady is barely accustomed to the ordinary tasks of everyday life."

Gold scoffed. "Why should she be?"

Beatrice entered and looked at the table of brochures.

"Right, how is my college search going?"

"I just want to know more than I do. There's so much to read," said Belle. "Say, what would you think of an apartment in Waterville?"

"We're not getting her an apartment," said Gold.

Belle rolled her eyes at her husband and looked up at Beatrice. "If a pipe bursts, what do you do?"

All eyes were on Beatrice.

"Call him?," Beatrice asked, pointing at her father.
Gold sat back. "My point is made."

"A pan fire?," asked Pamela.

"Wave my hand and stop it?"

Belle looked up at Beatrice. "You're not helping."

"Sorry?"

"Where are you going, sweetheart?," asked Gold.

"Joseph is picking me up and we are going on a double date with Mulan and Aurora."

"A double date?," Pamela asked skeptically.

"I think Aurora's been watching too much TV and like, not good TV. Crappy TV."

The doorbell rang. Beatrice went to answer it, having to shove Martha to the side as Joseph entered.

"Good evening, Mr. and Mrs. Gold."

Beatrice turned to her parents. "Following me to the door?"

"Yes," said Gold. He looked at Joseph. "Eleven."

"Dad, it's Friday," said Beatrice.

"Eleven."

"Eleven," said Joseph, giving one last pat of the head to Martha.

They left.

Belle turned to Gold.

"Eleven?"

"You, too?"

Belle crossed her arms. "This isn't about Beatrice. This is about you not wanting your baby girl to grow up."

"I have accepted that she is going to grow up and I have accepted that she will someday move out when she marries the boy that just came in."

Belle furrowed her brow.

"Have I surprised you?," Gold asked.

"No, I was just thinking about Joseph. He's never lived on his own, either. Granny's can hardly count."

Gold stepped back.

"He can't cook," said Gold.
"I think he might know how to make tea," said Belle.

"Gods," said Gold, hit with the revelation, panic taking over his countenance. "They're going to starve to death."

"I suppose everyone has to learn..."

---

**There**

"Okay, seriously?," asked Jenna. "Why can't we find some candles or something? And honestly, what good are these magical realms if they don't have electricity? And cars?"

Alec stared at her blankly.

"Never mind that," said Jenna.

"What we need is a window," said Louise, navigating through the hall.

"What good will that do us? We'll still have no clue where we are!"

"Your sister is right," said Alec. "We need to get our bearings."

"Maybe I ought to get out my phone and see if there's a wifi connection."

Louise shot Jenna a look.

"Alec, you go that way, we'll be right here."

Alec marched off, they heard doors open and close in the distance.

Louise glared at Jenna.

"What?!"

"What are you doing?"

"Does it matter?"

"Yes, you're confusing him."

"Well, I'm a bit confused myself! I don't know what realm I'm in!"

"And whose fault is that?"

Jenna groaned. "Oh, I knew it. You are mad at me."

"Fine! Yes! I am! There are three laws of magic and you decided you knew better on this one! Look at us now!"

Jenna shook her head. "The other two get broken all the time!"

Alec cleared his throat. The women turned to see him.

"Sorry. Yes?," asked Jenna.

"I think you may want to have a look out the window."
They followed Alec to what they presumed to be a hall of some sort, with cloths draped over the furniture and what would seem to be statues. At one end, the hall was lined with huge windows. Alec had pried the wood open on one.

They went and looked to see an astonishing sight: a glittering city in the distance that they looked down upon. Even further off they could see other great castles on great mountains and a huge roaring waterfall.

"It's beautiful," remarked Jenna.

"Look up," said Alec.

Jenna and Louise held their heads out and turned to face up where they saw a great black cloud over the castle they currently stood in.

"Now, I myself may not practice magic," said Alec, "but I think that's a tempest."

"Yes," Jenna answered. "That would be a tempest."

Louise pointed down.

"That sort of seems to be an army."

"Well, this just keeps getting better," said Jenna.

---

**Here**

"You're awfully quiet today," said Merlin.

Lila looked up. "Am I?"

"In fact, I would say that you've been awfully quiet lately."

"I suppose I've had a lot on my mind."

"Yes, with your memories returning along with your youngest son..."

"Yes."

"How are you getting on?"

"I don't suppose we've had much opportunity to reacquaint ourselves."

"Is that all?"

Ariel entered.

"Hello, Merlin. Hello, Mrs. Foley."

"Hello, Ariel."

"What do you need?," asked Merlin.

"I will make it quick. I just need you two to look at the photo we took of the woman in the hospital and let me know if you know her."
Ariel handed the polaroid to Lila first.

"No, I'm sorry," said Lila.

"Merlin?"

He looked at it and handed it back.

"No, absolutely no idea."

Merlin walked out, leaving Ariel flummoxed.

Of the four people on the date, Aurora was the only one enjoying herself. Beatrice tried valiantly to pay attention. Mulan put in a nod or "yeah" every few sentences when asked. Joseph just didn't care.

"I'm so excited Mulan and I are finally getting our own place," said Aurora. "We should have a party when we move in. You guys should come."

Beatrice's phone buzzed. "Oh, sorry, probably my dad."

She looked at it.

**How much longer will she go on? JG**

Beatrice turned to Joseph.

"What did he say?," asked Joseph.

"For you to behave," said Beatrice.

"Of course we'll have to decorate," said Aurora. "Mulan and I have been looking at window treatments."

"Yeah," added the warrior.

Beatrice's iPhone buzzed again. She looked to somehow find herself in a group text with Joseph and Mulan.

**Can't you make her stop? JG**

**I spent three hours looking at curtains. My brain is fried. M**

Aurora looked eagerly at Beatrice. "What about you two?"

Beatrice shook her head. "What about us?"

"Well, no engagement?"

"Aurora, sorry, are you insane?," asked Beatrice.

"What?"

"Starting at the beginning? I'm seventeen and I haven't finished high school yet."

"My mother was seventeen when she got married," said Aurora.
"That's just the first problem with her," said Joseph who was now typing away on his iPhone.
The three women stared at him quizzically.
"Seriously, has no one else heard the real story?"
"That was a lie," said Aurora.
"That's not how I heard it..."
Aurora jumped up and stalked out.

Mulan groaned and called after her. "Aurora!" She turned to shoot daggers at Joseph. "You did that intentionally."

"Well, I had to do something before she moved on to what color paint she wanted on the walls."
Mulan hurried off.

Beatrice turned to Joseph. "Really?"
"We're not talking about decorating her flat anymore, are we?" He stood.

"Are you leaving?," asked Beatrice.

"I know you don't want to stay. Come on. You can blame me. I'll play the part of the bad boyfriend."
She frowned at him. "You're sort of being one."

"All the better. Come on. They'll be back soon. Unless you wish to explain to Aurora the concept of a child bride."
Beatrice stood and picked up her bag. "Fine, but I am not a child."

Gold and Belle sat in front of the fire. The TV was blissfully silent since Beatrice was absent. Neither of them much cared for anything that was on. The device was their daughter's domain. He sat quietly as Belle pored over a brochure.

"It's just Boston's such a big city," said Belle. "I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing."

"I suppose we'll see."
Belle sat up.

"Rumple, I have to confess something." He raised an eyebrow at her.

"I wish she didn't have to go, either."

"Oh, Belle."

"I know we have to let her have her own life, to decide her own fate, but, Rumple, she's been my life for thirty years. What am I going to do when that time is done?"
"Oh, Belle," said Gold, brushing her hair back between his fingers. "Do you really think her growing up is going to change that? We will never be done with her."

His phone rang and he looked to see who it was. He grimaced.

"Not Mary Margaret?," asked Belle.

"Worse. Your father."

---

**There**

The three made their way down to what they presumed was an entry hall.

"Wait a minute," said Jenna. "What is our plan?"

Louise and Alec stopped rushing.

"I sort of assumed something would come to me," said Louise.

"Odd, I just had the same thought exact," said Alec.

Jenna groaned. "You never think anything through, do you?"

"Right, unlike you," said Louise. "I forgot. You're perfect."

"I didn't say that-"

"You're perfect and you don't need magic and you can do just fine all on your own, can't you?!"

Alec looked between the two women. "I feel as if I'm missing something..."

"Oh, get over it! It wasn't about you! It was about my life, what I wanted!," said Jenna.

"It doesn't matter what you wanted! You had an obligation! To everyone!"

"I don't want it!"

"Too bad!"

At that point, the doors broke open. A group of uniformed guards marched in. A lone figure stepped forward.

"Halt!" He stepped forward and looked at themselves. "Consider yourselves under the authority of the Royal Guard of the Dark Forest!"

"The Dark Forest?," asked Jenna. "Is that where we are?"

"Oh, I see you're a funny one." He stepped forward. "Inspector Lestrade."

Jenna and Louise looked at each other, then turned back.

"What? Seriously?," asked Louise.

A woman stepped forward, her black hair pulled up in a bun, holding what seemed to be some kind of magnifying glass. "Inspector."
"What is it, Donovan?"

"Oh, my God, they have a Donovan, too," Louise said under her breath.

Lestrade took the magnifying glass and took it from the woman.

You two have magic," said Lestrade. He looked at Alec. "You even seem to have some."

"Yeah, we've got magic, so what?," asked Jenna.

"You're confessing then?," asked Donovan.

"God, she even acts like her..." Louise whispered.

"You two are realm jumpers," said Lestrade.

"Not by choice," said Jenna.

"Anderson!," Lestrade shouted.

"And they have an Anderson!," Louise said in amazement.

Another shorter man came over.

"Their blood, Anderson," said Lestrade.

"Our blood? For what?!," Jenna exclaimed as guards went to hold them all back against the stone wall. Anderson took a crystal needle and put droplets of blood into an embossed wooden box.

"Used for tracking," said Anderson. "Magic in this realm is controlled, per the order of the King."

"Shut up, Anderson," said Louise. "You're lowering the IQ of the whole castle."

Jenna turned to glare. "Really?"

"Well, I couldn't just leave that now, could I?"

"Yes! Yes, you could have left it!"

Lestrade returned to them as Anderson finished poking them.

"How did you get here then?," he asked.

"The woman brought us," said Jenna.

"What woman?"

"Red-headed witch who lives upstairs?," said Louise.

Lestrade and Donovan exchanged looks.

"What? What's that?," asked Alec.

"Donovan, stay with the guards."

"Inspector," said Anderson, holding the box for him to look at.

Lestrade's eyes widened as he looked at the women.
"Don't let anything happen to them, under any circumstances," he warned as he rushed off.

**Here**

Joseph and Beatrice made their way to Starbucks. Joseph ordered tea, Beatrice ordered a mocha and they sat at the usual sofa.

"So," Joseph began, "how was the Colby visit?"

"School is good, parents are crazy."

"Oh?"

"My mom took notes on the tour. Then they started talking about the dorms rooms in comparison to the size of various dungeons they had been in."

"Well, it was their first foray into the real world."

"I have to think of something to get them into shape. Mom wants to go to Bates and at some point I'm supposed to leave them alone for an hour while I do an interview." She turned to smile. "You could do me a favor and watch them..."

"Oh, am I being invited to watch the Dark One and his wife?"

"Just stay there and make sure they don't talk about... anything."

"Because I am such a model of appropriate social behavior."

"So you see the severity of my problem."

Joseph smiled. "Indeed I do."

His phone buzzed. He picked it up.

"I prefer texting."

"Joseph, it's Doctor Whale."

"And?"

"That woman. She's awake."

"Alright. I'll be by."

"Could you maybe hurry? She's kind of on a rampage."

Joseph hung up. Beatrice looked at him questioningly.

"Mystery woman on a rampage. Care to join me?"

"Yeah, sure, why not?"

As Joseph pulled up to the hospital, they noticed the flashes of light and people running from the building.
As Leroy was the first to run over to them.

"Beatrice, you have to do something!"

"Oh, look, I'm a hero again."

"What's happened?," asked Joseph.

"That woman they found, she's woken up and she's crazy! She's on a rampage!"

"Right. Of course she is," said Beatrice. She looked at the screaming hordes as they left. "Whatever you do, don't panic!"

Beatrice walked towards the entrance.

"I'll call David and Emma!," said Leroy.

"What will that do?," sneered Joseph as he texted. "I've told Marian to bring Lestrade. The situation is well in hand."

"How do you figure that?!," Leroy shouted.

"Well, we can't all run screaming from the building!," he said as he followed Beatrice in.

There

"Unhand them," Donovan said to the guards. She nodded at Alec. "Keep watch of him."

"Don't you dare hurt him," said Jenna, bolting over to Alec as the guards released her and Louise. Donovan eyed Jenna. "Are you vouching for him?"

"Would it mean something if I did?," asked Jenna.

"I suppose it would."

"Then I am vouching for him."

Suddenly, the ground shook. They looked up to see the castle tearing apart, the hall above them being ripped away until they could only see the tempest that had been hovering outside.

"Get out!," Donovan ordered. "All of you! Now! Now!"

"What about Lestrade?," asked Anderson.

"Now, Anderson!," shouted Donovan.

The guards led them out as the castle fell into pieces.

Here

Beatrice walked down the hall, catching a flash of red hair before a crash cart went flying at her. She threw up her hands to send it to the side where Joseph narrowly avoided it.

"Sorry."
"Yes, try not to give me a head injury here. It is the worst hospital in the world."

"Hey!," Beatrice shouted down the hall. "Hey!"

"What, dearie?!"

A gurney went flying.

"Oh, you do not dearie me, dearie!," Beatrice shouted back. She turned to Joseph. "Do you believe she just dearie'd me?"

"That is interesting."

Beatrice frowned. She turned back to the direction of the magic.

"Look, just stop throwing stuff and we can talk for a minute!"

"Not interested. As far as I'm concerned, this whole world can burn! I just want what I came for!"

"Yeah, well, you might as well tell me what it is because I can't let the whole world burn!"

"And who are you to make such declarations?"

Beatrice swallowed. "I'm the Dark Princess!" She looked at Joseph.

"Pretty good. Delivery could use a bit of work. Does your father have any pupils we don't know about?"

"What?"

"Milah, the Jolly Roger, what do those things have in common?"

"Hook?"

"I grant you that, but she picked up 'dearie' from someone. Someone who was connected to Milah and the Jolly Roger! Lestrade is knowledgeable in magic because he's a detective- well, sort of detective, his methodology is rather pedestrian- that investigates its practitioners."

Beatrice groaned. "Great, we have another revenge seeker. We should really just pick a day for people to do that so we don't have to spend so much time on it. Like a 'Seek Your Revenge on Rumplestiltskin Day'."

The woman's magic roared again. She lobbed a fireball behind Beatrice. Beatrice launched an ice ball back.

They looked up to see Merlin quickly followed by Gold. Gold rushed towards Beatrice.

"Sweetheart, are you alright?"

"Hello, there," Merlin called.

The magical outburst ceased.

"Is that who I think it is?"

"It is indeed," said Merlin. "How have the last few centuries been for you?"
"Centuries? What do you mean centuries?"

"He's here with me. Do you want to see him?"

Gold looked up at Merlin. "What is this?"

"A reunion." Merlin turned back. "Do you want to see him? You came all this way, Gormlaith."

"What trick is this?" asked Gold.

"No trick."

"His mother!" said Joseph. "Damn! I can't believe I missed that!"

"I just missed that," said Beatrice.

They heard footsteps. Gormlaith rounded the corner, carefully walking towards him. Gold was frozen, clutching onto Beatrice just to stay upright.

"Where is he?," Gormlaith demanded of Merlin. "You said he was with you."

"He is with me," said Merlin. "Did you not hear me when I mentioned the centuries that passed?"

Slowly, Gormlaith turned to Gold.

"Rumplestiltskin."

She reached out to touch his face and he backed away.

"What the hell is this?," Gold demanded.

"I thought that would be obvious, sunshine," said Merlin.

"Rumple, I-"

They were interrupted by footsteps clamoring down the hall. Beatrice turned to see David, Marian, Lestrade and Emma in a bizarre dress running down the hall.

"Highness," said Lestrade.

"Inspector."

"Oh, of course," said Joseph. "That's why you were protecting her."

"Okay, yeah, Emma, what is that dress?," asked Beatrice.

"Could we focus here?," asked Emma. "What is going on? Who is she?"

"Well," said Joseph, "obviously this is Rumplestiltskin's mother, Gormlaith, who appears to be royalty of some sort, but he's obviously thought her dead."

"No, I thought she abandoned me," said Gold. "Which she did, actually."

"I was only going to be gone a few days, you never used the ball-"

"Papa sold the ball to go to the pub!," Gold shouted back.

Gormlaith shrugged helplessly. "I didn't know, I'm sorry-"
"Sorry?! You're sorry?!” He turned. "Beatrice, we're going."

"Rumple, please," said Gormlaith.

Beatrice looked back as Gold led her out. "Um, hi, I'm your granddaughter. Sorry about the witch fight?"

Gold kept walking.

Beatrice leaned in. "Are you sure you don't want to stay and discuss some things?"

Gold shot her a glare.

"Okay, so I'll Google how to get on Iyanla."
Now

Beatrice was finding it trying to be on City Council. She sat between her mother and great-grandmother on the sofa in Regina's former office, now littered with what she could only interpret as baby junk. Pamela was in the corner tending to the little prince and Roland, but every time Beatrice looked her nanny was watching her.

"How do we know she's not plotting something?," asked Leroy.

"Okay, Gormlaith-"

"Even her name sounds like a witch," Ashley muttered.

Beatrice turned to Mary Margaret. "Can somebody even tell me why she's here?"

"Why is she here?," Ashley snapped back.

"I-" Mary Margaret began.

Catherine cut in. "Because she is Heiress to the Far North Kingdom."

Mitchell Herman spoke up. "Ashley and my son are the heirs to my kingdom."

"Don't interrupt me," Catherine warned. "She is Heiress to the Far North Kingdom. In the Far North Kingdom, the heiress rules upon her ascension. In the meantime, her mother is her regent, but then again, she is also the ruler of Edelweiss. So frankly, I still don't know why your daughter-in-law is here and certainly not why she's speaking and worse interrupting the Heiress to the Far North Kingdom. Perhaps you ought to advise her on deference to her betters."

Mitchell gave Ashley a look. She crossed her arms and sat back.

"Wow, you really turn on that Dowager Countess stuff, don't you?," asked Beatrice.

Mary Margaret attempted to start again. "Beatrice, why don't you tell us what you know about your grandmother? Just to put everyone at ease."

"Well, Gormlaith was separated from my father and cast the spell that brought her and Lestrade and the Jolly Roger and the ghost of Milah here. There seems to be some difference in the time streams-"

"Time streams?," asked Granny skeptically.

"See, imagine that all the universe is just constantly inflating and occasionally bubbles form in the surface creating a new universe with its own laws of physics so-"

Beatrice noticed the roomful of fairy tale characters frowning at her.

"I can't really get it down from time streams, but there are several Doctor Who episodes I can recommend. Anyway, she thought he would be like five, not three hundred and five. I'm trying to
think of a way to get them on Iyanla.”

"See?,” asked Mary Margaret, smiling. "She just wanted to get back to her son. It's completely understandable."

Archie cleared his throat. "Aren't we all sort of here because Mr. Gold wanted to get back to his son?"

Beatrice spoke. "Like I said, I'm trying to get Iyanla involved."

They all stared again.

"She's all over stuff like that."

"I think that answers everything," said Mary Margaret. "Now, did anyone have any suggestions?"

There was silence. Beatrice felt Belle elbow her.

Then Catherine.

Then her nanny betrayed her.

"I'm so sorry, I think Beatrice wanted to say something."

David frowned. "I didn't hear anything."

Mary Margaret turned. "Beatrice? Was there something you wanted to discuss?"

Beatrice tried to collect herself.

"Um, I was just thinking that this process- while a step in the right direction- is a little exclusionary."

"Well, I don't mean to exclude anyone," said Mary Margaret.

"I'm not saying anyone meant to, it's just that there's a lot of people who aren't in this room. Not everybody's royalty. Maybe we should ask some other people what they think."

She got stares again.

"Or I could go back to explaining the bubble universe."

Beatrice walked out. "That went just great..."

"Mary Margaret didn't say no," said Belle. "I think they're all just having trouble conceptualizing what you mean. This is the way things have always been."

Beatrice shook her head.

"She didn't say you should accept them," said Pamela. "Even if the other members of the town council aren't behind you, you still have authority over the Far North Kingdom and Edelweiss."

"Conveniently located in the Enchanted Forest."

"You're supposed to see to your people," said Belle.
"So, what?"

Belle stared back at her. "So you tell me."

"I could have some sort of thing where people come tell me their problems?" She looked at Catherine. "Like your levy?"

"Excellent notion," said Catherine.

"Great," said Belle. "We'll do it at the library. You can talk about it on Good Morning Storybrooke."

Beatrice groaned. "You know they picked me for that because they don't like me, right?"

---

**Then In The Enchanted Forest**

Belle found that sleep was hard to come by with the baby growing. Rumple kept insisting she rest and every time Leigh visited she heard the same thing which made Rumple even more vehement in his insistence that she rest. The trouble was Beatrice seemed intent on being awake and so Belle awoke early and went to the kitchen.

"Sweetheart?"

Belle looked up to see Rumplestiltskin.

"Are you going out?," she asked.

"A bit of business in a rather tiresome realm..."

"Another realm?," she asked.

He closed the distance between them and took her hands in his.

"Old business to finish."

"You'll be so far."

"You will be fine so long as you don't leave the castle. Nothing can get in here."

His eye turned to the tray of tea and cakes on the work table.

"Unless you were expecting someone..."

"I think Merlin might stop by."

Rumplestiltskin grimaced.

Belle frowned. "Why don't you like him?"

"Why do you like him?"

"Perhaps I'm partial to sorcerers."

"I don't like that he has plans for our daughter."

"We've seen her, Rumple. We know she has something incredible. If Merlin knows what that is, I
want to know."

"So you'll ply him with cakes and tea until he reveals his plan?"

"If need be."

He frowned again and gave her a peck on the cheek. "I must be off." He leaned down to be near Belle's swollen belly. "You, little one, be good for your mama and don't listen to what that tiresome wizard has to say."

Belle giggled as Rumplestiltskin disappeared into a puff of smoke.

Now

Merlin entered the pawn shop. Gold rolled his eyes.

"Shut up. I came to watch Beatrice," said Merlin, heading directly to the backroom. He found the ancient TV Gold had placed on the workbench.

"What is it you all are hoping to accomplish?," asked Gold.

"We're hoping to get your daughter a following," said Merlin, adjusting the channel. "Princesses need a following. Surely you realize that."

Beatrice waited patiently through Doctor Whale's segment and then it was her turn. She took her seat opposite Hart and Goldie, glancing over at her mother's encouraging smile.

"Welcome back. We're here with Storybrooke's very own Dark Princess, Beatrice Gold, to keep us up to date with what's going on at City Hall," Goldie began.

Beatrice frowned. "Really? That's how we're introducing me?"

She caught Pamela's disapproving glare out of her peripheral vision.

"So, Beatrice, tell us about how the city council's been going? We understand that Mayor Mills has resigned."

"Right, well, Mary Margaret is mayor now... for some reason. The good news is that the city council has had a complete overhaul and you're going to find a lot of your local leaders from the Enchanted Forest in position on the new council."

"Now, you weren't a leader in the Enchanted Forest, though," said Hart.

"No," said Beatrice. "I was one."

"Are you ready for that kind of responsibility?"

"Yeah, sure."

She caught Pamela's glance again.

"Maybe you could tell us some of what you have planned," said Goldie.

"Well, there's the Community Garden initiative and I do want to better organize Storybrooke's homeless outreach."
Hart frowned. "You mean for the trolls?"

"No, I mean for the homeless people."

"But they were trolls."

"Yeah, but now they're homeless people."

"They're kind of used to living under bridges," Hart pointed out.

Beatrice motioned at Goldie. "And she's kind of used to breaking and entering."

"So, how are things going with your boyfriend?," asked Goldie.

"Really? I want to talk about the issues, you want to talk about my boyfriend?"

"Papa?"

"In the back!," Gold called.

Neal entered and nodded at the television. "Slacking off?"

"Beatrice is making an appearance on Good Morning Storybrooke to discuss the issues of City Hall." He looked at Merlin. "Who are you texting?"

"Pamela. She needs to get Beatrice to back down, anyone who's private with their personal life will never win a popularity contest with these people."

"Why does Bea need to win a popularity contest?," asked Neal.

Merlin's fingers kept flying across the phone screen. "One can't rule without the will of the people. The royals all know that. Why do you think the peasants still let Prince Charming and Snow White run the show when they're clearly incompetent?"

"Incompetent?," asked Neal.

"Look around you, Baelfire, there's practically a curse a week here. Is that what you would call successful leadership? Though, to be fair to Charming, he does remarkably well for someone with a tenuous grasp of abstract thought. No, kings and queens rule with the backing of their mythology. The daughter of a beauty and a beast, heiress to the Far North Kingdom and a line of True Love, whose own love broke the Dark Curses of the Wicked Witch of the West, that is someone worth following."

Neal looked at Gold. "Is he for real?"

"I ask myself that quite often, but unfortunately, he seems to be."

"Guys, seriously, I'm seventeen," said Beatrice. "Not getting married just yet."

"So, what about your new grandma?," asked Goldie.

"Um..." Beatrice started glancing at Belle.

"Well, easy question, is she good or evil?," pressed Goldie.
"You know that's like a cornerstone of western philosophy, right?"

"A what?"

"Well, she's from the evil side of the family," said Hart.

"She's what?!," asked Beatrice.

Goldie looked at her co-anchor.

"Well, come on. Peter Pan, Rumplestiltskin, both evil."

"My dad is not evil! Okay? Dark, yeah."

"Well, that's all the time we have," said Goldie. "Up next, a new way to refresh your wardrobe for summer without a fairy godmother!"

---

Then

Merlin appeared and soon saw the tea service waiting on the table of the Great Hall. He turned to Belle who carried another tray in.

"Here, let me," he said, taking it from her.

"I am not actually an invalid," said Belle.

"I never said you were." He placed the tray on the table.

"I got a little hungry and made a cheese soufflé," said Belle. "The kitchen cook back in Avonlea taught me. I hope you like it."

"I expect I will. You were expecting me?"

"Well, Rumple left and I am getting good at predicting the whims of sorcerers." She sat and poured. "One sugar, right?"

"Exactly."

Belle handed him the cup.

"Is it true that children born of True Love have magic?"

"Always some."

"See, I was thinking about it and my mother was born of True Love-"

"As were her parents and theirs and so on."

"And you must know about the Far North Kingdom. My mother and I have never had the propensity for ice, but my grandmother insists it is there. My grandfather's mother, Amelia?"

"I knew her."

"Then you know she was a weather witch and her powers were passed through her family."

"What are you leading me towards?"
"Well, there's Rumple and his powers and Beatrice will be born of True Love, that's a lot of power. I've seen it- a little. I wouldn't know how to judge, but Rumple seemed impressed."

"The power will be useful to her and it will come naturally to her."

"Yes, but why does she need it?"

"Because there are forces against her."

"So Sherlock was telling the truth?"

"Did you doubt him?"

Belle shook her head as she went to work cutting the soufflé. "He said so many things, about my father, about what he was plotting. I didn't think him capable of such brutishness."

She handed Merlin a piece of the soufflé.

"This is excellent," said Merlin.

"Stop."

"No, I'm serious."

"I know that I'm not much of a cook. Rumple tries not to say anything. I know he would rather stews or something simpler, but this is about as simple as I can get."

"And it's still delicious."

Belle smiled. "You mean that?"

"Of course I do."

Belle looked down. "I forgot the bread."

"You needn't worry about that."

"No, it will just take a moment."

Belle hurried back down to the kitchen. She heard whimpering from outside the door that led to the small garden.

"Hello?," she called.

And everything went dark.

Now

"Are you sure I can't help, Rumple?"

Gold looked down to where Martha, Lady and the family snowman padded after him in the kitchen. He was used to the canine interference while he prepared dinner, but the snowman was a change.

"No, Olaf, I have it."
He heard the door open. The dogs bounced up eagerly as she came in the kitchen.

"Sweetheart," said Gold, greeting Beatrice with a kiss. "How was your day?"

She raised an eyebrow. "You watched, I assume?"

"I did."

"Then you know how it was." She put down her bag and sat at her stool. Olaf stood next to her.

"I thought it was good," said Olaf.

Beatrice frowned at the snowman. "How was it good?"

"I found out how to save money on a bathroom remodel."

"Okay, let's focus on the part I was in."

"Oh," said Olaf. "Yeah, that part didn't go so well."

"You ought not bother reasoning with them, you're wasting your breath and I won't have you exhausting yourself trying to defend me."

"Seriously, does no one else look around at this planet? You're not a cannibal, you're not Hitler. If you ask me, being the Dark One sort of pales in comparison to some of the stuff that has happened."

He took a breath. "Beatrice, you and your mother think better of me than anyone else, better than I deserve, but I am a villain. Whatever good I might do is because of you and your brother and your mother."

Beatrice considered this as Gold handed her a plate.

"Why won't you hear what your mom has to say?"

"I don't know if you and Bae are working together on this, but the matter is closed for discussion."

"Neal gave you a chance. I would give you a chance."

"You are more than I deserve."

---

**Then**

Belle awoke to cold and damp.

"Sleep well?"

Belle looked up to see a woman with black and white hair, in an arm baring gown and huge white fur coat.

"What-" She tried to sit up and covered her stomach with her hands. "Who are you?"

"You can call me Cruella."

"What am I doing here?"
"Well, that's all up to you. We can do this easy or hard."

"Cruella!," another feminine voice chided. A woman in all black with horns appeared before Belle. "Where are your manners? You can't have her on the floor like this? What are you thinking?"

Belle soon found herself sitting on a rather cushy bed with a fire roaring nearby.

The woman in black smiled at Belle. "I am sorry about that, dear. Are you alright?"

"Yes... Thank you."

"Good. There's no need to be unpleasant about this, after all. We don't really have anything against you, do we, Cruella?"

"Her taste in lovers?"

"To each her own," said Maleficent. "After all, it's not as if Rumplestiltskin's the worst man I've met."

"Is that what this is about?," asked Belle. "Rumple? Please. Our child is innocent."

Another woman with tentacles soon appeared. "For once, this isn't about the Dark One."

"Not everything revolves around him, you know," Cruella snapped.

Maleficent rolled her eyes. "Is this necessary? The poor thing is frightened. Cruella, Ursula and I-oh, Maleficent, by the way- mean you and your daughter no harm. In fact, we need her help."

"You know she's a girl?," asked Belle.

"Of course," said Maleficent. "We've been waiting for the Dark Princess."

Belle sat with a cup of tea as Maleficent sat across from her.

"It's perfectly safe," she's promised. "I don't know what your imp has told you, but I've given up on sleeping curses."

Belle glanced across the room at Ursula and Cruella.

"They seem unhappy," she remarked.

"Of course they are," said Maleficent. "Now, I don't suppose you know much about your daughter."

"A little," said Belle.

"I suppose you know she's powerful."

"I know her power is hers and it's innocent."

"True enough," said Maleficent. "But do you know what it's for?"

"What it's for? I know my grandmother had the power of ice?"

Maleficent chuckled. "Oh, yes. Catherine. I'm a big fan of hers, except that part where she actually froze everything over to protect the peasants, that was a bit of a letdown, but otherwise, she was
great. She had the temper, the wit, the outfits? But I digress, ice powers are not the main feature."

"Then what is?"

"There is a book in which all the stories of the people in this land are written, in which we are all cast onto two sides: heroes and villains. The one constant is that the heroes always win and the villains always lose."

"Because you want to hurt people."

Maleficent laughed. "It's not that simple, dear. Even when the villains try to be heroes, they lose. The game is rigged, which is really something you ought to take note of considering you've allied yourself with a villain. Whose side do you think your daughter is going to end up on?"

"If what you say is true and the game is rigged, then what is the point?"

A male voice called out. "Because the book is missing a character."

Maleficent turned. "Merlin, I was wondering when you would turn up."

---

**Now**

"What are we doing?," asked Joseph.

Beatrice walked down the street with Joseph. Olaf followed behind them. She had a stack of fliers, Joseph carried another.

"We are trying to tell people about my event," said Beatrice.


"Ah, Archie," said Beatrice. "You wouldn't happen to be a former resident of Edelweiss, would you? Ah, forget it, have a flier."

"A community meeting? Are you sure that's a good idea?"

"Well, currently the community only meets when there's a new curse or they want to form an angry mob..." said Joseph.

"I just want to give people a chance to voice their concerns," said Beatrice.

"Well, Snow White and the Prince have always led us and they've always taken care of us."

"I don't even know where to start with that," Joseph whispered.

"Well, just if you know of anyone who might be interested..."

"I'll certainly pass it along," said Archie. He walked away.

Olaf spoke up. "Uh, guys, didn't you all end up here because the Evil Queen hated Snow White and Prince Charming?"

"Yeah, but they like to pin it on my dad, then Regina gets mad and takes the credit. Every time. You would think one of these days she would just shut up." Beatrice looked at the fliers. "I'm thinking two hundred was too many of these."
Belle looked up. Merlin approached Cruella and Ursula.

"Cruella, what the hell are you doing here? You don't belong here."

"Excuse me?"

"You look ridiculous. I mean..." He motioned at her evening gown and fur. "Maleficent, back me up on this. Come on."

Cruella rolled her eyes. "You know nothing of fashion."

"Now that may be so, but that doesn't change the fact that you look about as in place as a giraffe living with meerkats and don't you dare go killing either of those."

"Never mind him," said Ursula. "He's just feeling insecure."

"Insecure? Brave words from a sea goddess on land."

"I'll get back."

"That's not the way I heard it."

"I'll ignore your insults if you give me my book."


"Yes."

"The person you got that book from left it with you because they thought I would never find it. You traded it to the Three Fates and I got it from them. It's not even my book, it's her book," he said, motioning at Belle.

"What book?" asked Belle.

"I'm sorry. I was trying to motion towards the baby, but it was a bit difficult given her current location."

"I am sick of losing," said Cruella.

"Well, stop turning animals into your coat or whatever it is you do."

Maleficent stood and walked over. "Come on, Merlin. You know the game is rigged."

"I know the odds are stacked against you, but this child is no guarantee of victory."

"She will be once we've had our say," said Ursula.

"No, she is the guarantee of the possibility of victory. There's an important distinction there."

"Elaborate," said Maleficent.

"Well, let us use Rumplestiltskin as an example."

Cruella arched a skeptical brow.
"What is the first act that led him on the path to becoming the Dark One?"

Cruella scoffed. "Stabbing the previous Dark One?"

"Before that."

"If this is the story of the old beggar, we all know that," said Ursula.

"You aren't looking deeply enough," said Merlin. "Why did he need to become the Dark One? I'm guessing Belle probably knows the answer."

"To save Baelfire," said Belle.

"And the first act that led him to this destiny?"

The women stared.

"He gave a thirsty girl some water and then his life went to hell. How is that fair? So, you're right, the game is a little rigged. If the Author wants you to walk through one door, he'll set all the others alight. Except maybe for you, Cruella. I don't know what your problem is."

"And why have you come?," asked Ursula.

"Because unlike Rumplestiltskin, I am willing to reason with you. You know the game is rigged and the Author doesn't want you to win. So, you're not going to win today. You obviously can't keep the girl. I won't allow it and you know the Dark One won't. We are at what is called an impasse."

The three witches exchanged looks.

"And why should we believe you?," asked Ursula.

He threw his arms up. "Because you have no other options."

Belle was relieved to come back home. She sat on the sofa in the Great Hall.

"And what have we learned today?," asked Merlin.

Belle looked up. "It's not as if I meant to be kidnapped."

"You need to exercise an abundance of caution," said Merlin. "You carry something precious."

"I know that," said Belle.

"We needn't tell Rumplestiltskin about this. I hate to feed his paranoia any more than I must."

"You don't want him to know, do you?," she asked. Merlin took a seat across from her. "He doesn't know anything about everything you said, does he?"

"Rumplestiltskin has a habit of being ruled by fear. I don't blame him. He's lost everything he's loved, but I do fear it might keep Beatrice from her destiny."

"Then why are you telling me?"

"Because you are brave enough for the both of you, the three of you if need be. There is one thing I do see, though."
"What?"

"The one who writes the book is called the Author and someday you will find the Author's house. When you do that, it is..."

"It is what?", Belle asked.

"The end of the beginning."

---

**Now**

Joseph entered the library to see...

No one.

Beatrice looked up from her phone.

"Hey."

"Hey," he replied and walked over. He leaned against the table Beatrice currently stood by.

"So, I don't suppose you have a concern for the Dark Princess?"

"Well, there's a pirate who seems to loiter about the sheriff station all the time."

"Duly noted."

Joseph looked around. "Didn't your father come?"

"No. He didn't want to scare anyone off and you see how that went." Beatrice motioned at her table of snacks. "Cookie?"

Belle looked over at Beatrice, then hustled Pamela and Merlin into the office.

"This is going badly," said Belle.

"Agreed," said Pamela. "Any bright ideas?"

"She'll think of something," said Merlin.

"Think of something? What's she supposed to think of? We have just set her up for massive rejection."

"I never said it would be easy."

Beatrice shook her head. "I don't know what I did wrong."

"I doubt I know."

"You're supposed to be smart. Come on. I tried to give people a voice in the democratic process along with free snacks and nobody came."

"Any upheaval of the social order must be bound to encounter this sort of setback."

"What? You think Stalin had this problem?"
"No. I think he just shot people."

Beatrice motioned at the empty library. "Nobody's even come in all afternoon. This is worse than not coming, this is avoidance."

"Well-"

"I know. You're going to say yes."

"Yes."

Beatrice rolled her eyes. When she stopped she saw Toby hanging around outside the window.

"Toby!," she cried out.

Joseph turned to look. "Your homeless friend?"

As soon as he asked, Toby bolted. Beatrice hurried outside with Joseph following.

"Toby, hey!," she called. "Stop! Please?"

Toby stopped and turned.

"I don't want to cause trouble, Beatrice."

"It's okay. You're not." She shrugged. "Did you meet Joseph?"

"He's the fake homeless guy."

"Sometimes," said Joseph.

"Anyway, I'm on the town council now and I'm having a meet and greet thing. Did you want to come?"

Toby looked uncertain.

"It's okay," said Beatrice. "You can bring your friends. I've got lots of food that nobody's eating."

"You mean it?"

"Yeah, I don't suppose you guys were residents of Edelweiss?"

"Next town over."

"Close enough. Go get your friends."

Beatrice turned to see Ashley.

"Is that the best you could do?," she asked.

Beatrice frowned.

"No, actually, it's not."

Beatrice turned and shot a fireball into the sky. It exploded and made everyone on the street stare dumbstruck at it. Belle, Pamela and Merlin came out onto the sidewalk as Beatrice walked into the middle of the street.
"Attention, people of Storybrooke! If you feel like nobody is listening to you, if you have an idea or a concern that you wish people would listen to? Yeah, I know that feeling! And guess what, I am actually in a position to listen and maybe even help! You are welcome to come into the library, tell me all about it and have a cookie!" She looked at Ashley. "If, however, you would rather watch princesses in ballrooms and have blind faith that everyone is going to turn out just fine or look down on everyone who doesn't conform, you can stay out here!"

Belle ran into the pawn shop.

"Rumple?"

He looked up from his ledger. "I trust there's a satisfactory explanation for her explosion?"

Belle's face broke out in a grin. "She did so well! You would have been so proud! She told off Ashley- and probably half of Storybrooke- and said what she thought and..." Words failed, Belle let out a noise of excitement.

Gold smiled. "I see it was a success."

Belle hurried over and kissed him on the lips. "We have a wonderful daughter."

The doorbell rang. They looked up to see Gormlaith walk in.

"I hope this is alright," she said. "This was the time you said, yeah?"

"It was." He motioned at Belle. "You know my wife, Belle."

Belle looked at Gold in surprise and then back at Gormlaith. "I'm so glad to finally meet, but I should go so you two can talk..."

"Stay," said Gold.

Gormlaith looked at him questioningly.

"Whatever you have to say, you can say to both of us."

"Alright," said Gormlaith.

---

After Zelena's Curse...

"Mom..." Beatrice groaned.

Belle stopped running up the path and looked to her daughter. Beatrice sat down on a rock. She walked over.

"I don't want to run. I don't want to do anything."

Belle sat down on the ground next to her.

"I have no comparison for what you've been through," said Belle. "I never will. I've never given up a world. I do know I can't just let you sit alone in your room and be sad. If you're sad, I need you to be sad with me and then I'll be sad and we can be sad together."

Beatrice hugged her legs. Belle leaned over to hold her and Beatrice grunted.
"No, I'm hugging you," said Belle.
She glanced up at the hill above them and saw a mansion. One she had never seen before.
"What's that?"
Beatrice looked up. "I thought Jefferson's house was the only one up here."
"Maybe it came over with Zelena's curse," said Belle. "Come on. Let's go see who lives there."
Beatrice followed her mother up the last bit of the incline.
"Mom, what if whoever it is doesn't want visitors?"
"We're just going to see," she answered, knocking on the door.
The front door fell open. Belle stepped inside.
Beatrice threw her head back. "Mom. Really?"
Belle continued inside. "Hello? Is anyone home?"
Beatrice followed reluctantly. "I have ice powers and I can use them any time I want!"
"Beatrice..."
"Just saying," said Beatrice. "Not in the mood for a lot of crap."
Belle walked further down the hall. "Look. You can see the ocean from here. How lovely."
"Great. Maybe Dad can buy it."
Belle looked to see some double doors. "What's there?"
She pushed the heavy doors open. "It's a ballroom." She walked inside, admiring the chandeliers and floors. "Who wouldn't claim this house?"

Now
Joseph pulled up to the mansion. He got out of the car and walked to where Regina waited.
"This house wasn't here before."
"No, it came over with my sister's curse. Belle mentioned it."
"And why have you brought me here?"
Regina frowned. "I thought Beatrice would have mentioned it. She and Belle found it one morning."
Joseph froze. It could have been one of the things that had happened as a result of his changing the past.
He played it off. "Right. Of course."
"You don't have a clue what I'm talking about."
"Of course I do. What's the point?"

Regina walked inside as he followed. "I was thinking there must have been a reason she found it."

Joseph followed her down the hall. She pulled back a light fixture to open a concealed door.

"Turns out I was right."

They walked into a room lined with shelves.

"These all look like Henry's story book, but they're not," said Regina.

"Why not?"

"Most of them are blank," said Regina.

"And the ones that aren't?"

Regina walked towards a table stacked haphazardly with dusty, ratty books. She brushed one off and handed it to Joseph.

He opened it.

"The Tale of the Dark Princess."

"That's what all of these are," said Regina. "There are different versions of her life, details change, some major, some minor."

"So he's tried to do a rewrite."

"And failed it would seem." Regina looked up at Joseph. "I think it's time to let her in on this."

"No."

"And how does that help us?"

"You want Beatrice to fulfill her destiny so you can have some happy ending with the Prince of Thieves. You don't care about anyone else."

"This book has me wrong!"

"Not quite. You did what it says you did, you're not excused. If it's Beatrice's destiny to defeat the Author, then I will help her in any way I can."

"Including dying?"

"We'll see."

Joseph began to leave.

"You know the line between hero and villain is not a very thick one," said Regina.

Joseph scoffed as he walked out. "You say that as if I don't already know that."
Chapter 80

Last Summer

Steven Moffat had been sitting in the room for hours when a guard let Mark Gatiss in.

"Mark?"

"Steven? What on earth is going on?"

"I've absolutely no idea. I was at St. Paul's filming the finale. I thought there was a problem with our filming permit and I ended up in this place."

Mark sat. "This is mad. This place looks like M's headquarters from a Bond film in the seventies."

"I know," Steven agreed. "It's as if I wrote it."

The door opened again. A ginger woman in a suit came in, followed by a tall man.

"Mr. Moffat, Mr. Gatiss," said the woman. "My name is Nellie Gillette. This is Hector Bennett."

Hector stepped forward and placed a piece of paper in front of each man.

"Gentlemen, this is the Official Secrets Act. Feel free to read through it before you sign."

"The Official Secrets Act?," asked Mark.

Steven shook his head. "Am I dreaming?"

"I am afraid not," said Nellie.

"Listen, I'm not signing anything until I at least know what's going on here," said Mark.

"Well, that's one strategy," said Nellie. "Unfortunately, that may take rather a long time."

They both signed.

"Now can we know what's going on?," asked Mark.

"Gentlemen," said Hector, opening a briefcase and pulling out a book. "This is a Sherlock Holmes' story, it's been lost until recently. The Adventure of the Gold Pendant."

"The Adventure of the Gold Pendant?," asked Mark.

"You've heard of it then?," asked Nellie.

"It was just a rumor, but some say it was a story Doyle never wanted published."

"Well, it's going to be published now. The print and digital releases are scheduled for next month," said Hector.

"And it will be adapted for the Sherlock Christmas special," said Nellie.
Mark frowned. "What Sherlock Christmas special?"

"The one the BBC is going to announce."

"But we only just settled on Series Four," said Steven. "There was no talk of a Christmas special."

"Well, there will be a Christmas special, set to air Christmas Day 2015."

"Who are you people?" Mark demanded. "You drag us down here, tell us to write a Christmas special we've not heard of off a Sherlock Holmes story we've never read."

Nellie spoke. "The British government has known for some time that all the characters from all the stories exist somewhere else, in parallel worlds. Sherlock Holmes is real and he needs your help."

"You're joking," said Steven. He looked at Mark. "This is starting to sound like something I wrote."

"And where is Sherlock Holmes? Can we meet him?" asked Mark.

"No," said Nellie. "He's currently in Maine with his girlfriend who happens to be the daughter of Rumplestiltskin and Princess Belle."

And in a bit of comeuppance, Steven Moffat was confused.

Now

Joseph opened the door to his room and was quite surprised to see his brother.

"John."

His brother glared at him as he put his suitcase and backpack on the floor.

"You keep putting me off so I thought I would come here."

"Putting you off what?"

"Coming back? Seeing your doctors?"

"Sorry?"

"Rehab!"

"Don't be ridiculous. I'm not going there." He checked his watch. "I am going to be late."

"No. We are going to be late for our flight. It leaves Boston in six hours."

Joseph shook his head. "Not going." He picked up a box off the dresser and placed it in his pocket.

"Joseph!"

"Look, you can stand here and do the concerned brother thing which would be a bit stupid and entirely pointless or you can put down your things and join me."

Joseph walked out.
"Joseph!," John called after him. "Joseph, you're not listening! We are going home!"

---

Then

Gormlaith came through the Falls quite easily, wondering at how easily magic came back to her.

"Violeta," she said. She went to greet her cousin with a kiss on the cheek. "Thank you for coming."

"I'm not alone."

Gormlaith looked up. A man walked towards her.

"Your Highness, I'm Inspector Lestrade of the Royal Guard."

Gormlaith crossed her arms. "Father knows I'm here."

"His Majesty's gave instructions for you to be brought to the palace immediately."

She glowered.

"Don't fight them, Gormlaith," said Violeta. "It won't do any good."

---

Now

John looked up at the pink house. "What is going on? Whose house is this?"

"This is Beatrice's house."

"What? Beatrice? The girlfriend? She's..."

"Real? Quite."

John followed him up the steps. He rang the bell and heard the barking of dogs.

Joseph turned back to John. "This all might take a bit of explaining, but I think we might do well just to immerse you in it."

The door opened and Belle appeared. Martha jumped up at Joseph.

"Down, Martha!," said Belle.

"She's fine," said Joseph, easing the dalmatian down.

Belle smiled and gave him a quick squeeze. "Joseph. And you've brought a friend!"

"Yeah, hi. John Watson."

Belle's eyes lit up. "John Watson?"

"Yes, my brother."

John was surprised now as Belle hugged him.

"It is so good to finally meet you! This is so wonderful. What a surprise! I'm Belle Gold."
looked back at Joseph. "The Foleys aren't here yet, but the others are. I'll find Rumple."

Belle vanished into the crowd of people.

"Who's she?"

"Beatrice's mother."

"Really?" John tried to follow Belle back down the crowd. "Stepmother?"

"No."

John frowned. "Adopted?"

"No."

"Joseph!," said Aurora.

Pretty soon, Aurora, Mulan and Ariel came over.

"Joseph, who's your friend?," asked Aurora.

"This is my brother, John. He's visiting from London."

"Hi," said John.

"These are Beatrice's friends. Aurora, Mulan and Ariel."

John frowned at the trio. "Right..."

"Are you staying long?," asked Ariel.

"No, not really. We're supposed to be leaving town."

"We're not," said Joseph as he spotted Regina standing in the corner. "Well, I'm not. I suppose I can't keep John a hostage. Excuse me."

"Joseph-"

Joseph made his escape, leaving John to the mercies of the women. He approached Regina.

"Odd to see you here."

"Why would I miss the eighteenth birthday party of my son's aunt?," she asked tightly.

"I would really feel much better if you stopped stalking her."

Regina scoffed. "Well, I would feel much better if we found the Author. It's been months."

"Leave it."

"Why won't you tell her?"

"And don't you dare."

John approached. "Joseph? That ginger woman, she just told me that Beatrice gave her voice back to her in Neverland and the other one? Aurora? She said she met Beatrice in a Netherworld from a sleeping curse? Are you having me on?"
Joseph looked back blankly.

"Is this a theme party? Is everyone supposed to be a character or something?"

Regina looked at Joseph with an amused smirk. "Friend of yours?"

"My brother in from London. John Watson."

"Welcome to Storybrooke, Doctor Watson."

John shook his head. "No, no, I'm not a doctor yet. Sorry? Who are you?"

"You can call me Your Majesty," said Regina as she stalked off with an empty glass.

John looked at Joseph questioningly. "She's here as the Evil Queen. Also, Beatrice's nephew's mother."

"What? Like in Snow White?"

Mary Margaret's head popped up as she bounced the baby prince on her hip. "Sorry? Did someone call me?"

"Seriously, what sort of party is this?," asked John.

"Hey, Joseph," said Emma.

"Ah, Emma. Happy birthday."

"Hey, it's Beatrice's day. I'm letting her have it." She eyed John inquisitively.

"This is my brother, John Watson. This is Beatrice's nephew's mother."

"Okay, I'm getting confused."

"Joseph?"

He looked over to where Catherine called him. She sat with Venus and Ingrid on the sofa that had been pushed to the side. He dutifully made his way.

"Catherine. Venus. Ingrid." He looked up to see John had followed him. "These are Beatrice's great grandmothers Venus and Catherine and her rather distant cousin, Ingrid. My brother, John."

"Well, well, a brother," said Venus. "How come we haven't seen you here before?"

"You didn't mention he was coming," Catherine said pointedly to Joseph. "We would have organized a proper welcome."

"That's because I didn't know."

John looked at him pointedly. "Joseph, can I talk to you a moment?"

---

*Then*

The royal guard took them back to the palace. It was made of dark marble, carved from the ground, the earth around it flattened so that it was the only structure in sight, the high mountains
They walked inside. Gormlaith looked to Violeta trying to read her cousin. She was about to pose a query when they were interrupted by a woman's voice.

"Welcome home, your highness."

Gormlaith looked up to see the woman. She was quite petite, clad in a long, liquid black dress with raven hair and a slash of red lips.

She frowned. "I'm sorry. Have we met?"

Violeta took over. "Gormlaith, this is Irene Adler. The King's Official Mistress."

"It's so good to finally meet you," said Irene.

Lestrade interrupted. "I'm sorry, ma'am, we're under orders to take her to His Majesty immediately."

"Of course."

Lestrade led them off, Gormlaith looked back behind her as the woman stood behind her.

King Niall may not have been a physically imposing man, but his dark hair and serious eyes were enough to get most people to comply.

If that didn't work, there was magic.

Gormlaith walked in behind Lestrade and Violeta who quickly bowed.

Niall eyed Gormlaith critically for a moment before he turned to Lestrade. "Where did you find her?"

"She came in through the falls as promised, Your Majesty."

"And what realm did she come from?"

"The Enchanted Forest."

"Ah, the Enchanted Forest," Niall said with amusement. "One of Merlin's follies. And what did you do there, daughter?"

Gormlaith didn't answer.

"I don't see how what you've done could possibly anger me more than your running off so you may as well answer me."

"I got married."

"Married? Under whose permission?"

"I was coming here. I need your permission to bring someone back."

"And who is it you would like me to bring back? This worthless husband?"

"You don't know he's worthless."
"Is he?"

Gormlaith shrugged. "Okay, a bit, but this is about my son."

"Your son?" Niall drew a deep breath. "I have a grandchild sired by a worthless father. What is the boy's name?"

"Rumplestiltskin."

The king glared with displeasure. "And you named him after your grandfather."

"He's not magical. He's no threat to you."

"I think I'll be the one to determine what does and does not threaten me." He paused. "Why have you returned?"

"What?"

"It wasn't that you were homesick, I am certain of it. Has this worthless husband of yours been sleeping with the milk maid or whatever they have there?"

"No, I just-"

Gormlaith fell silent, not wanting to reveal the prophecy Merlin had given her.

Niall turn to the majordomo of his court. "Bring me the ball."

---

**Now**

Merlin looked up to see Richard.

"What the hell are you doing here?," asked Merlin.

Richard glared at the wizard. "Pamela invited me."

"What for?"

"Well, she's done after today, isn't she?"

Merlin shook his head in disbelief. "She is not done. Who said she was done? Did she say she was done?" He put down his drink. "Pamela!"

He made his way upstairs and into Beatrice's room. The girl herself had her hair in rollers while her nanny tended to it.

"Grandpa!," said Beatrice.


"This is a TARDIS bathrobe."

"Is there something you wanted?," asked Pamela.

"A chimney sweep said you might be considering resigning."

"What?," asked Beatrice.
"Not tomorrow, but she is eighteen," said Pamela.

"But that was not our deal," said Merlin.

"What deal?," asked Beatrice.

"Never mind our deal," said Merlin. He looked at Pamela. "You are not backing out of this one."

"What do you want me to do? Go to college with her?"

"Okay."

"Okay, Grandpa, really?," asked Beatrice.

Belle and Gold entered.

"What's going on?," asked Gold.

"They're arguing," Beatrice answered.

"There is no argument," said Merlin. Belle eyed him as she stepped up to help unroll Beatrice's hair. "None at all."

Belle gave one last disapproving glare and turned her attention to Beatrice. "Joseph's arrived and he's brought his brother."

"Really?"

"No, not the Foley boys, his adopted brother from London. John Watson."

"Seriously?"

Belle squeezed Beatrice's shoulders. "Don't be nervous. I'm sure he'll love you."

"I wasn't nervous and now I'm rethinking that..."

"Has Gormlaith seen fit to show herself?," asked Merlin.

"And what does it matter to you?," asked Gold.

"It matters to me because you've all believed her story so completely."

"And why shouldn't I?"

"Because she's lying."

"Yes, dearie, I've heard what you have to say."

Merlin rolled his eyes and left.

Belle glanced at Gold. She then pressed a kiss to Beatrice's head.

"I'll be right back."

Belle darted into the hallway, catching Merlin before he descended the stairs.

"Father?"
Merlin shook his head. "Sweetheart, I can't keep having the same conversation with him. I've spent more of my life looking after him than both his parents combined, yet he would rather believe her."

"It's not that. He's never had that. You can't expect him to just give it up. Besides, how do you know Gormlaith's lying?"

Merlin closed the distance between he and Belle.

"The place she comes from."

"The Dark Forest?"

"I've only visited once. There, magic rules everything."

Belle shook her head. "I don't understand."

"The inequities of the Enchanted Forest pale in comparison to this place. Magic is still power, but only a precious few possess it."

"And she's one of those who does?"

"Oh, sweetheart, she is the one." His eyes darted back to Beatrice's door where Gold stood. Belle glanced over and looked back at Merlin.

"I want to celebrate Beatrice's birthday tonight," she said, squeezing her father's hand. "And tomorrow we can talk more."

Joseph led John into the library and shut the door.

"What the hell is going on?," he demanded.

"Beatrice's birthday party."

"You keep introducing people and it makes no sense. What sort of insane asylum is this place?"

"Everything I've told you has been true."

"A woman just answered to the name Snow White-" He paused and shook his head. "Really, Joseph? This is about the Sherlock Holmes thing again, isn't it?"

"In a way."

"Right. Because you're Sherlock Holmes and that was Snow White and the Evil Queen so I suppose I must be Doctor Watson. We are going back to London right now."

"I'm really not. It does happen to be Beatrice's birthday."

"Right and she's real? Why doesn't she have a fairy tale name?"

"Interesting question."

The door opened and Olaf stuck his head in.

John's eyes widened.
"Hey, Joseph, Belle said they're about to do the introduction. She said to come to the backyard"

"Right. Thank you, Olaf."

"He's..." John stammered.

"Of course, Olaf," said Joseph. "Would you mind coming over here? I'd like you to meet my brother, John."

Olaf bounced in. "Right! John! How nice to meet you!"

John stared at the snowman, quite shaken. "He's got a little cloud over his head."

"It's my own flurry!," said Olaf.

"Right, yeah, yeah, of course," said John as he stuck his finger in the side of Olaf's torso.

The snowman giggled. "Stop! I'm ticklish!"

"He's made of snow," said John.

"Because I'm a snowman?," Olaf slowly suggested.

"Is he..." John. "No, that's ridiculous. I mean, he can't be..."

Joseph turned. "Hey, remember that time I said I was Sherlock Holmes?"

John stared at him in shocked silence.

"Yeah... I am."

"My name is Olaf and I like warm hugs," the snowman added.

Then

The court watched through the crystal ball as the tale of Rumplestiltskin unfolded.

When it was done, the king looked to his daughter.

Niall shook his head.

"I'm sorry. No."

"But..." Gormlaith couldn't understand. "I can go back. I can change that."

"No one can alter fate. Rumplestiltskin is to be the most powerful sorcerer in all the realms." Niall sat back. "We can't have that, now can we?"

"I will change that."

"Gormlaith, be reasonable. I won't harm the boy. He can just never come here."

"I can find him. I can fix it."

"The dye is cast."

"Father, please-"
"Lestrade, take the princess to the Over Castle. She will be confined there until I decide how I can repair the damage she's done."

Lestrade nodded. "Yes, Majesty."

Lestrade took Gormlaith away unaware of her next plot.

---

**Now**

They walked out in the backyard where most of the party goers had gathered. The yard was covered in some sort of floor that appeared to be made of glass. Icicles and lights in a sort of invisible garland hung from the air.

John looked up. "What the hell is going on?"

"Magic."

"I think I died on the plane..."

"When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

"So, I'm meant to take it as truth that you've spent the past year in a magical town in Maine?"

"Has it been? You must remind me to tell you about the Wicked Witch."

The party goers silenced. They looked over to see that Belle and Gold stood on either side of Beatrice holding her hand. Gold looked uncomfortable, not that his daughter was much better off.

Belle was the one to speak.

"I just wanted to thank you all so much for coming. This is a very important birthday in our land or here and we're glad you could celebrate with us." She turned to her daughter. "Beatrice, Papa and I are so proud of you and so grateful and so fortunate to have you as our daughter."

There were some awws. Belle hugged Beatrice and then she was left to turn to the party.

"Uh, thanks for coming. Just um, have a good time?"

The music kicked on. Beatrice was spared from further speeches, but had to endure Mary Margaret and the other well wishers before she could make her way to Joseph.

"Hey," she said.

"Happy birthday." He kissed her. "This is John."

"Yeah, I guessed." She turned. "Hi."

"You have a snowman called Olaf."

"Yeah..."

John motioned at some chairs. "I'm going to go sit until I get the oxygen back to my brain."

He walked away.
Joseph turned to Beatrice.

He held out his hand. "May I have this dance?"

Beatrice took it. "You may."

The party continued until Merlin found his favorite guest.

"Gormlaith, you came," said Merlin.

"She's my granddaughter too, you know," she said with a scowl.

"And how do you feel about that?"

"I don't know what you mean. Excuse me."

The redhead left. Merlin turned towards Beatrice when he felt Belle's hand on his wrist.

"Let her have her birthday."

"I am."

"It doesn't seem like it."

Merlin nodded over at Joseph and Beatrice.

"Young love."

Belle smiled. "Yes."

"Oh, what a night..." Beatrice sang. "Come on."

Joseph spun Beatrice around. "I take it I'm missing a reference."

"We have to get you up on your Sherlock."

"Do we really?"

Beatrice nodded. "Yeah, we do." She glanced over as Ariel stepped on John's toes. "So, your brother seems cool and he does remind me a little of a hedgehog..."

"A hedgehog?"

"Oh, have I not shown you that?" She looked over and caught Gormlaith's gaze. Catherine and Venus were standing around her, but she seemed unaffected by what they were saying.

"Hey," said Beatrice, grabbing Joseph's hand and leading him away.

They disappeared to the library.

She turned to him.

"Does Gormlaith seem..."

"Completely plotting something?"
"I was going to say off..." She paused. "Merlin doesn't trust her."

"Then I believe Merlin. There's something Lestrade's not telling us." He pulled the box from his breast pocket. "Happy birthday."

"Thank you," said Beatrice.

The door opened and Gormlaith entered.

"Uh, hi," said Beatrice.

"Beatrice, I just needed to mention something to you."

"Okay..." she said putting Joseph’s present down on the table.

"I just..." Gormlaith took Beatrice's hand in hers. "I'm sorry."

Beatrice felt something like a pin prick.

And she froze.

"Beatrice?," asked Joseph. He moved to face her, her expression blank, muscles still. He looked to Gormlaith. "What have you done to her?"

"She's fine." Gormlaith waved a hand, tossing Joseph against a wall. "But I don't have time to argue with you, dearie."

"Is there a reason we couldn't have a normal birthday party?," asked Neal.

"Normal party with a bunch of fairy tale characters?," Emma scoffed as she held Henry with one hand.

"It was Belle and Merlin's idea to throw a larger party this year," said Gold.

"I think it's cool," offered Henry. "And not just because of the ice floor."

Neal and Emma snorted at the pun as Belle came over.

"Rumple, have you seen Beatrice?," asked Belle.

"Have I seen her?"

"It's time for her cake and I can't find her."

"I don't see Joseph..." Neal teased.

Emma snorted. Gold shot her a glare.

"Yeah, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that out loud."

Gold continued to glare.

"I'm going to... go get some more cocoa." She put her hands on Henry's shoulders. "Yeah, let's go."

They walked off.
"Belle, where are your bowls?," Ingrid called across the room.

"I'll be right there!," she answered back. She looked to Gold. "Would you go find her?"

"Gladly."

Belle gave him a peck on the cheek and rushed back to the kitchen.

Gold walked back in the hall. He saw John walking into the library.

"Joseph?" He walked in. "Jesus..."

Gold hurried after, suddenly struck by the most ominous feeling. His instincts were realized upon seeing the room.

John hurried to Joseph's side as the great detective stirred awake.

"What have you done?," Gold demanded.

"Rumple, I can fix it."

"Fix what?" He turned to his daughter.

"Your life, I can fix it."

"My life?!," Gold exclaimed.

They were suddenly joined by Lestrade who looked at Gormlaith.

"Not again, your highness."

It all became bright light.

---

**Then**

Leaving his new charges with Donovan and Anderson, Lestrade dashed up the stairs to where he presumed Princess Gormlaith was casting her spell.

He banged on the door.

"Your Highness!"

"Don't try to stop me! I won't even bring him here! I'll go there!"

"You can't do that-"

As Lestrade spoke, the castle began to fall apart.

When he did awaken, it was on the floor of a forest that was bitterly cold and not the Dark Forest. It was another realm, one he had never seen before.

He heard voices in the distance.

"Oh, come on, Swan, why not?"

"Well, for one thing we're in the middle of an investigation."
"Must you always make excuses?"

"I'm not making excuses, I have a job to do. The dwarfs found that woman out here, Merlin said there would be clues."

Lestrade scrambled to his feet and behind some trees where he could get a vantage point on the blonde and the leather clad man with a hook for a hand.

"I think you owe me."

Emma shined her flashlight in Hook's face.

"I owe you? How do you figure I owe you?"

"Well, I did come to warn you all about the Wicked Witch's curse."

"Yeah, you were kind of late for that and besides, you owed Neal."

"I helped you reunite your parents."

"Not a good reason to go out with someone," said Emma, moving her flashlight to the treeline. Lestrade moved to conceal himself.

"And how would you know? Your latest paramour turned out to be a flying monkey."

"You're definitely not getting anywhere with that attitude," said Emma.

Lestrade breathed a sigh of relief as the two left and wondered at the realm he had just arrived in.

Now

The light beamed through the house, making Beatrice's guests scream and generally panic.

"What the hell's that?," exclaimed Emma.

"Beatrice!," Belle cried, running for the library.

"That hag..." muttered Merlin.

Emma tried the door. "I can't get in."

"Let me," Regina offered.

As she did, a larger light blew out, knocking them aside for a moment.

"Are you alright?," Merlin asked Belle.

"What the hell is going on?," Regina snapped.

They got to their feet and the door fell open.

Once they stepped inside the library, they saw Gold staggering, his suit looking mussed. Beatrice was next to him, her hem torn and her hair ruined. John stumbled to sit in a chair, his face in his hands. Wherever they had been, it had been longer than a few minutes.

And Alec was there.
"Beatrice," Gold said softly.

Beatrice stood still, then stumbled slowly, seemingly headed for the floor.

"No, no, no," Gold said, quickly grabbing her. "It's alright, sweetheart. It's alright."

"What happened?," asked Emma.

"Rumple, what happened?," asked Belle, approaching Beatrice.

"Where's Joseph?," asked Merlin.

"He's gone," said John.

"Gone?" Belle looked up at Gold. "What do you mean he's gone?"

Gold shook his head at her as Beatrice moved to her mother's arms. "He's dead."

---

**Last Summer**

Mark stared at the couple. He looked back at Steven and to them again.

"Suppose we believe you."

"You really ought to."

"Why is it so important that we tell this particular story at this particular time?"

"Because at that time, Sherlock Holmes is going to need your help."

"Things aren't working out with the daughter of Beauty and the Beast?," he offered smartly.

"This story is a clue," said Nellie. "And we need to make certain she gets it at the correct time."
Then

Beatrice landed on the stone floor, Joseph was crouched over her. She caught her breath as Joseph pulled away.

"Is everyone alright?," asked Alec.

They had just escaped Niall and his Death Curse, magically transitioning to a tunnel far from the throne room.

"Yeah," said John, standing up and brushing himself off. "Except I don't have a bloody clue what's going on."

Gold looked at Beatrice. "Are you alright, sweetheart?"

"Yeah, your grandpa is crazy," she said as Joseph helped her off the floor. "Worst surprise relative ever."

Louise snickered.

"What? Did I miss something?," asked John.

"I just have a thing with surprise relatives," said Beatrice. "Like my crazy grandma, my evil grandpa, the ones who just have magical powers..."

"Look, I'm sure we could discuss crazy family all day, but we need to get out of here," said Jenna.

"Now that is a sound notion," remarked Joseph.

"So, does anyone have any ideas?"

They fell silent.

"Well, that was anticlimactic," said John.

"This way," announced Gold.

The others filed out following Gold.

"Look, Joseph," said Beatrice, "about you throwing yourself over me..."

Joseph shrugged. "I didn't think. I simply reacted. There's no need for thanks."

"Yeah, about that," said Beatrice, "I have magical powers, but if you're in my way, I can't launch a fireball or an ice ball without hitting you so in the future it might not be the best move."

"Oh. Right."
"Just, you know, something to think about."

Jenna doubled back as Louise peered around the corner.

"Oh, come on. You're not seriously doing this, are you?"

"How can you not?", Louise whispered. "They're adorable."

Gold cleared his throat from behind them. Jenna and Louise stood to attention. Joseph and Beatrice turned.

"Was I the only one interested in escaping this realm from the evil king who just tried to use a death curse on us?"

"I was interested," said John.

Gold eyed him.

"Actually, really interested."

Jenna raised her hand. "Very interested."

"Then let's move along, dearies."

Gold let them file out and took Alec and Joseph aside.

He looked to Alec. "Who are those young ladies?"

"I'm not certain, but they did vouch for me."

"Interesting," said Joseph.

"Well, no hard feelings, but remember our priority is to get Beatrice home," said Gold. "Nothing will stop me in that. Are we clear?"

"Crystal," said Alec.

Joseph nodded and Gold went back with Beatrice. Alec looked to Joseph.

"We weren't properly introduced. I'm Alec, Duke of Padua. Beatrice's great-grandfather."

"Joseph Gillette. Beatrice's True Love."

"Ah..." said Alec. He motioned at Gold. "Quite interesting future father-in-law you've managed to secure for yourself there."

---

**Now**

"Am I always starting over in a brand new story? Am I always back at one after all I've done?"

The music from her alarm clock awoke Beatrice.

Yes, that was Idina Menzel.

Yes, Joseph was still gone.
"Beatrice?" said Pamela. "Beatrice?"

Beatrice squeezed her eyes shut. Around her she heard Martha and Lady pad out of the bedroom and felt Pamela's slight weight sink into the bed.

"Come on," said Pamela. "You have to get up."

"Why?"

"You know why. At the very least you have a session with Doctor Hopper."

"What the gods have to give, I'll take and I'll live and I'll be bold..."

Pamela motioned at the iPhone. "Why do you choose this song to listen to?"

"If we're always starting over with every brand new morning then we're always starting out with the end in doubt..."

Because they had seen it together in New York. Of course it had been under the supervision of her parents, but they waited for Idina backstage and she never would have gotten the star's attention if Joseph wasn't there because Beatrice was just too short. Luckily, she had a tall boyfriend with a cute accent and that had been enough.

"We can leave life for tomorrow, we can grieve all that we thought we'd do or make each moment new..."

"I like it, okay?" Beatrice held back tears.

Pamela sat up. "Get dressed. Your father's making breakfast."

Then

Lestrade returned to his chambers, ready to change out of the wardrobe from the other realm, but not eager to rejoin the guard. The Death Curse was a line the king should not have crossed, but it was never as if Niall had gotten to the throne with clean hands. He looked up and saw Joseph.

"Bloody hell! How do you do that?"

"How long do we have?"

"Not long. Nearly the whole guard is out there looking for you. I ought to report you."

"Are you going to?"

Lestrade didn't answer.

"How do we get back to Storybrooke?"

"The quickest way in or out of the realm without ripping a hole in time or space is the Falls."

"The Falls?," asked Joseph.

Lestrade motioned him towards a window to look out the castle. There was a huge waterfall.

"The waters have magical powers, summon it when you ascend to the top and you can go home."
"And it just works like any other portal?"

"I dare say your lot ought to be able to figure it out. Just... be careful."

---

Now

Beatrice hated Archie's office. Even Pongo cuddling next to her could not make up for the crap that was their now three times weekly sessions.

She hated herself for being here. She had been at Colby a semester, not really wanting to go farther from home. The highlights of her semester had been the Italian bakery and the Thai restaurant on the street by campus. She had done alright, but her advisor and the campus psychiatrist had set her down and wondered if maybe she shouldn't take more time off to deal with her emotional issues.

Or rather she was too depressing and bumming out the people who were here to learn.

She had liked her theoretical physics seminar. She had written a paper on alternate universe theories that even got a good grade but she had liked that because it meant there could be a world out there where Joseph was alive. She didn't even care about one where they were together, just alive was good enough.

So now she came here and Archie...

What the hell was Archie even trying to do? Get her to grieve less? Grieve more?

"Grief is a perfectly normal process," said Archie. "There's no right or wrong way to do it..."

"I don't want to grieve any more," said Beatrice.

"Well, that could be good, getting on with your life-"

"No, see, I don't want to grieve anymore, but I don't have a choice. I don't know why people think I have a choice. This is not a choice. Why would I choose this?"

"Well, they say it's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all..."

"Have you ever actually loved anyone?"

Archie sat back.

"You tried to turn your parents into puppets..."

"Well, that was a mistake and I didn't quite understand the consequences..."

"You went to my dad for help and now you want to act like you didn't know what would happen?"

"It was a mistake, but this isn't about me-"

"No, you're trying to give me advice-"

"I'm really not, Beatrice."

"Good because you have about no authority. I am grieving. I don't think I'll ever stop and I can't stand it."
"Beatrice, have you had thoughts of harming yourself?"

Beatrice stood and picked up her coat. "Don't be stupid."

"Beatrice, we're not finished yet-"

She opened the door again and found Belle sitting in the waiting room. She quickly put down her book and stood.

"Beatrice? That was a little soon, wasn't it?"

She pointed at Archie.

"Give me one damn reason I should take advice from this guy."

"Perhaps that's as good a place as any to end for the day. We can meet again on Friday."

"I'm not coming back," said Beatrice, putting on her coat and stalking out.

Belle caught up with Beatrice on the sidewalk.

"That wasn't very nice."

"I'm sick of the grief is a natural process crap. I can't think of anything less natural. I don't want to do it anymore."

Belle took Beatrice's hand, forcing her to slow her pace as she stormed down the street.

"That's not how it works."

"Then how does it work?"

"One day it just doesn't hurt as much, Then it hurts a little less, it never goes away entirely but you learn to live with it."

"It's been over a year. When does it hurt less?"

"Well-"

Belle was pulled back as Beatrice froze in her tracks. She looked ahead on the sidewalk to see Lila Foley pushing Enola along in her stroller. The woman pointedly avoided eye contact with them as she walked away.

"You should try talking to her again," said Belle.

"What would that solve?" She looked at her mother. "She blames me for Joseph's death and she's right."

"She's not right. You can't blame yourself."

---

**Then**

While Joseph found Lestrade, the others waited in the underground catacombs of the castle.

"And now there's tunnels of skeletons!," Beatrice hissed.
"Well, we can't choose our families..." Gold quipped back.

"You know, I think you owe Merlin an apology," said Beatrice.

"Merlin?," asked Alec.

"Yeah, because Mom said you had a fit about that whole thing, but there are definitely worse people to be related to," said Beatrice.

Alec frowned. "How are you related to Merlin?"

Beatrice's jaw dropped. Gold gave her a bemused smirk.

"He doesn't know, does he?," Beatrice whispered.

"No," Gold whispered back.

"I don't know what?," asked Alec.

Louise covered her mouth to stifle a giggle. The others turned to eye her questioningly.

"Uh, nice dress," Jenna said to Beatrice, attempting to change the subject.

"Oh," she said. "Thanks. I usually don't wear party dresses to other realms, but it's my birthday."

"Oh," said Jenna. "Well, happy birthday."

"Happy birthday," Louise added.

"You always wear party dresses to other realms," Joseph announced emerging into the light of the torches.

"Well, you always wear some version of that suit."

"Did you find the way out?," asked John.

"Yes," Joseph pulled a map from his breast pocket and handed the swords he'd been given to Alec and John. "Lestrade says the portal is at the Falls. He thinks your magic will be enough to open it."

John pulled out the map. "Anyone have a compass?"

"I do," Louise said quickly, pulling a phone out of the pocket of her motorcycle jacket.

Jenna coughed.

"What? There's a compass function on the phone?" She handed it to John.

"What kind of iPhone is this?," asked John.

Beatrice peered over. "It's not a 6, is it?"

"Um..." Louise began.

"Yeah," hissed Jenna.

"Let's go," said Gold.
"Right. Allons-y," said Louise.

"Oh, cool, do you guys watch Doctor Who, too?," asked Beatrice.

Now

It had come to this.

Beatrice rang Regina's doorbell.

"Beatrice," Regina said with surprise as she came out.

"I need help."

"Of course. Come in."

Beatrice followed Regina into the white house.

"Can I get you something?," asked Regina.

"A forgetful potion."

Regina turned. "For what?"

"For me. I thought you would get that."

Regina nodded. "You want to forget Joseph."

"Yeah."

"You won't be the same."

"No, I will be who I was before I met him. I'll be fine."

"Do you really believe that?"

"Yeah, I can watch Sherlock again. Totally missed the Christmas special."

Regina shook her head. "Unbelievable. You want to forget your True Love so you can watch a TV show."

"No," said Beatrice. "I want to forget my True Love so that I can wake up in the morning without having to cry."

"You're betraying him."

"No," said Beatrice. "He wouldn't want this for me."

"And how can you possibly know that?"

"Because I would never want it for him."

Regina crossed her arms. "Before we do anything, I need to show you something."

Beatrice followed Regina into the mansion.
"What are we doing here?" asked Beatrice. She shuddered. "My parents’ honeymoon mansion?"

Regina shuddered.

"It's not that," she said. "Follow me."

Regina led her to the wall sconce that opened the secret room.

"It's a library."

"No," said Regina, plucking a book at random from the shelves. She opened it to reveal the blank pages. "These are blank storybooks. This house belongs to the Author."

"You mean that's actually a real thing?," asked Beatrice.

"Someone is pulling the strings and..." Regina paused. "That's why Joseph's gone."

"What?"

Regina led her to the pile of story books and motioned at them. "See for yourself."

Beatrice opened one.

"The Dark Princess." She looked up at Regina questioningly. "What is this?"

"Where the Author has tried to tell your story. So far you're the only one he hasn't succeeded with. I think that's why he... well, why Joseph is dead."

Beatrice looked at the book. "I'm the villain. Why am I the villain?"

Regina shrugged. "It would seem the Author prefers to reuse the same tropes. A princess of untapped potential with a magical parent loses her first love."

Beatrice looked up at Regina.

"Why did you bring me here?"

"Don't look at me like that. I just thought you deserved to know who you really ought to be mad at."

"Does my dad know?"

"No, for once, Rumplestiltskin is in the dark. You're the only one who can defeat the Author and get our happy endings."

Beatrice put the book down.

"Your happy ending," she said.

Regina was insulted. "This is for everyone."

"Like you care about everyone. This is about you and Robin Hood."

"It's about always losing."

"How are you always losing? Oh, you mean how you tried to kill his wife and the relationship has been kind of awkward since?"
"I know I've made mistakes. I want to be a better person, but the way this book is laid out, there is no point. The heroes always win, the villains always lose. Even when we do the right thing, we lose. You know that."

"I have to go," said Beatrice walking away.

"Beatrice, don't go," pled Regina. "Please."

Regina followed her out of the house.

"Even if you forget Joseph, no one else will!," said Regina. "Your father won't stand for it."

Beatrice stood at her car door.

"You're the only one who can get us happy endings."

"Regina, I don't care! I just don't care! My happy ending is gone! So, whatever!"

Beatrice got in her car and drove off.

Then she started wondering if the Author was real.

And had he killed Joseph?

Because Regina was right. Beatrice had seen heroes and villains and the thin line between the two. She had assumed the game was rigged because of people's prejudices.

Now...

Then

"Okay, this must be it," said John as they arrived at the top of the waterfall.

"And you possess this magical knowledge how?," asked Gold.

John held up the map. "I can read this well enough."

Beatrice approached the edge. "How does it work?"

"Well, let's see," mused Gold.

He closed his eyes and held up his hand.

"What is he doing?," John asked Joseph.

"No idea," he answered.

Gold stopped and turned to Beatrice.

"I think I need your help."

"Oh, right," said Beatrice who then proceeded to do the same thing her father had.

John looked at Joseph. "Now what are they doing?"

"I still have no idea."
"How can you have no idea?"

Beatrice stopped, falling back, Gold caught her as Joseph rushed over.

"Are you alright?," asked Louise.

"Whatever spell my mother did appears to have damaged her magic," said Gold.

"What? Like permanently?," asked Beatrice. "We have to get home."

"No, I don't think it's permanent. Your powers are too strong for that."

"What's our course of action?," asked Alec.

"Wait and let Beatrice rest," said Gold.

Jenna and Louise exchanged glances.

Gold motioned at the rocks. "Take a seat, dearies."

Louise walked over by Jenna, glancing back at the others.

"We could..."

Jenna stared at her sister with her jaw dropped. "You're not serious, are you?"

"Well, it's better than sitting here for the army to show up."

"No, it's not because he's already wondering why you hugged him."

"I thought he had come to get us."

"Is there a problem?," asked Joseph.

Jenna and Louise straightened up immediately.

"No problem," Jenna said quickly, motioning at a rock. "Just gonna sit here."

John looked around. "This isn't exactly safe you know, the landing further down, behind the falls was at least concealed."

"Mr. Gold?," asked Joseph.

"Fine."

---

**Now**

Gold walked into the back room of the shop. Beatrice sat behind the spinning wheel.

"Sweetheart?," he asked.

As he moved closer, he could make out something in her hand. The telltale luster of gold thread wrapped between her fingers.

"Beatrice?"

"I wanted to see if I could do it."
"And so you can."

"I did what you said, the way you said it happened for you."

Gold pulled a chair next to her, removing the thread from her fingers.

"That's alright."

She looked him in the eye. "I have a moment. A moment that would make me kill."

Gold shook his head. "You would never hurt anyone."

"I almost did. With Zelena. I'm going to be a villain."

"That's simply not true, sweetheart."

"Nobody ever loses something and becomes the good guy. You didn't, Regina didn't, even Batman has questionable ethics..."

"Beatrice, you are nothing like me or Regina-"

"Check again because I think I am."

"You are not a villain."

"Love makes us sick, haunts our dreams, destroys our days..."

"You should never listen to anything I say."

"It's true. I'm sick and it won't stop. It's never going to stop, is it?"

Gold couldn't answer.

"Please, Dad, don't sit here and tell me that it's going to get better, that I'll find someone else because we know that's not true. There's no one else. True Love doesn't strike twice."

Her father held her as she sobbed and that's when Beatrice knew she had no other options.

---

Then

Night fell and the group remained huddled at the landing under the falls. John sat with Joseph staring at Gold.

"He's terrifying," John whispered.

Joseph looked over. Beatrice slept next to her father as he kept watch, his suit jacket rolled up underneath her head.

"I mean, I have met some terrifying people lately, I thought they were anyway and he is just... terrifying..." He eyed him. "I thought he would be shorter."

"He's not so bad, he doesn't kill anyone because he doesn't like their religion..."

"Yeah, suppose there's that." He looked up at Joseph. "Why the hell didn't you say anything?"
"I did."

"You left me some drunken text messages about a wicked witch."

"The Wicked Witch."

"Oh, pardon me, then, the Wicked Witch. How was I suppose to know to take any of this seriously? And this True Love bit, what is that?"

"It's not a bit," Joseph said tightly.

"Then what is it?"

"I love her."

John drew a breath. "God, you are actually serious."

"I never thought I would. I never thought anyone would... love me."

They heard a rumbling down below. Looking through the water at the base of the Falls, the Royal Guard had assembled.

"Your man Lestrade couldn't buy us more time?," asked John.

"It's hardly his fault," said Joseph, moving to look over the edge. "If he knew this was the only way out, did they."

Beatrice stirred. "Is there a reason this guy just can't let us go home?"

"Well, we're going home now," said Gold grabbing her hand. "Back to the top."

Joseph tripped over something.

"You alright?" asked John.

"Yeah, fine."

"Well, hurry up, I'm pretty sure your girlfriend's dad has no problem leaving us all to die."

Now

Gold walked into the bedroom. Belle was already under the covers.

She put up her book.

"She's not alright," said Belle.

Gold listened as he got in the bed next to her.

"She as much as said she wouldn't go back to Archie and if you found her crying in the back of the shop..." Belle shook her head. "Did she say anything else to you?"

"No," said Gold.

Belle curled next to him.
"I want to help her, to give her hope..."

"You always have."

Belle shook her head. "We knew. We always knew that someday she would have True Love and now that's gone. I don't know what to tell her. He's gone and he's taking her life with his..."

"We'll find a way," Gold said because he didn't have a better idea.

Belle nodded and sniffled. Gold pulled her closer and she began to cry.

---

**Then**

Gold and Beatrice approached the portal.

"Ready?," asked Gold.

"Ready to get out of here..."

"Good girl."

They held their hands up.

"I'm missing something," said Joseph.

"What?," asked Beatrice.

Gold grimaced.

John shook his head. "Please don't indulge him."

"There was a clue down there on the landing."

"A clue to what?," asked Alec.

"We are leaving now, dearie."

"How long will it take you to open the portal?," asked Joseph.

"Joseph..."

"I won't wait for you," said Gold.

"I understand," said Joseph, hurrying off.

John moved to follow, but he waved him off.

"Just stay here, I'll be right back."

Gold, Beatrice, Alec and John looked back at the portal.

Jenna looked at Louise.

"I mean, he'll be fine," said Louise. "He has to be fine, doesn't he?"

"I'm finding it hard to take a chance on that," said Jenna as she began after Joseph down the path.
Joseph rounded the corner.

As he did, he came across a young man and pointed his sword at his neck.

The man turned around slowly.

"So, we meet at last..."

"Who are you?"

"Oh, that's right, you don't know, do you?" He waved his hand, pushing the sword aside with disdain. "James Moriarty."

Joseph was taken aback, but tried not to show it.

"Well, I do suppose we were bound to meet sooner or later..."

"I'm afraid this will be the last time." Moriarty shrugged. "You can't be allowed to continue. You just can't."

"And why is that?"

"The Author doesn't want it."

"The Author."

"See, the Dark Princess can't have True Love because then she might be happy. The Author needs a villain and I'm just the one to help her along."

"The Author can't control her and you will never be able to change her."

"Well, I never said it wouldn't take some work."

"Andrew..."

The men turned to see Jenna and Louise standing at the entrance to the pathway.

Jenna looked as if she had seen a ghost.

"You said he was dead," said Louise.

"Andrew, what the hell are you doing here?" Jenna shook with fury.

She threw her hand back and a fireball launched. Joseph and the man both had to fall out of the way. Joseph winced, finding himself landing on something hard, probably the same thing he had tripped over earlier.

Moriarty looked up with a sneer, a bolt flew from the crested cignet ring he wore, knocking back Jenna. As soon as Louise lifted her arm, he took her out as well.

Moriarty stood over Joseph.

"I wouldn't worry about them. The Author wants a bit of a rewrite anyway. Extraneous characters..."

"Joseph!," he heard Beatrice call from further up the path. "Joseph!
Moriarty tsked. "She is going to be so sad, isn't she?" he asked in a sing-song voice. "Well, nobody said villains were happy and you know what every fairy tale needs..."


Moriarty motioned at the ascending army. "See, I know you, Sherlock Holmes and you want her to live. As for me, I haven't been lounging about the Colby astronomy lab for nothing..."


Joseph grabbed him by his lapels. "Well, I'm Sherlock Holmes, you're Moriarty and you will never turn her into a villain."

"Why's that?"

"Because this is the Reichenbach Falls."

With that, Joseph hurled he and Moriarty over and they vanished into the rushing water leaving the plaque that bore the waterfall's name behind.

"No!" Beatrice screamed.

Gold grabbed Beatrice by the back of her dress, she had been so consumed that she hadn't noticed how precariously close to the edge she was.

She turned to him, her eyes blown wide. "Do something!"

Gold held her with one arm. "Beatrice, it was too fast-"

"No!"

The rattle of the approaching guard grew louder. "We need to leave," said Alec, trying to keep his tone objective. He led John away from the edge. "Rumplestiltskin."

"Sweetheart, stay with me," said Gold. He cupped her face with his free hand. "I can't do this without you."

"But he-"
He shook his head. "No, none of that. You think of your mother and nothing else."

The portal opened and everything was covered in white light.

---

**Now**

When she knew her parents and Pamela were asleep, Beatrice began.

It wasn’t a very hard spell and the book was just laying out. A swish of water, a thought.

The trick was not getting out of it. She gathered up everything having to do with Joseph and hid it in the bottom of a chest in her father’s shop. She couldn’t bring herself to just delete everything on her computer so she hid it in an external hard drive and locked it with a password.

Then there was the matter of the rest of the town. Regina had been right. She would not have peace if everyone else knew she had forgotten about Joseph. There would be a lot of talk of True Love and Mary Margaret would go on about hope.

So they were all going to have to forget.

She went to the wishing well with the potion.

She dropped it into the water and the cloud of purple smoke began to plume from the well.

She then turned to her own potion.

"I am so sorry, Joseph. I wish I was strong enough to go on like this, but I just can’t."

Beatrice knocked the liquid back in one shot and the vial vanished as the smoke began to billow over the town.

---

**Then**

Jenna rushed down, Louise carefully followed.

"Come on! We have to get there faster!"

"I’m trying!"

"Who told you to wear those shoes?!," Jenna snapped.

She caught sight of Joseph, sprawled out on the rocks of the stream, a bloody mess.

"Oh, God, hang on, hang on," she said hurrying over. "I can fix you, but you have to hang on!"

She knelt at his side, eyes full of water. Louise joined her. Jenna looked up at her sister.

"Okay," Louise said placidly, taking her sister’s hands in hers. "We can do this, but we have to do it together. Focus on love, not fear."

Jenna nodded. They closed their eyes and the magic they formed swirled from them to Joseph, healing over wounds until he sat up, coughing.

The women looked at each other, grinning in relief. Louise hugged Joseph.
"You're okay," she breathed.

"Yes, thank you," said Joseph, recoiling at the hug. Joseph looked up at the waterfall. "Where are the others?"

Jenna and Louise exchanged looks.

"They're gone," Joseph supplied.

"Yes," said Jenna. "So we just need to find another way home."

Now

Beatrice Gold awoke between her dogs as the sun shone in her room.

"Beatrice!," Pamela called. "Time to get up!"

"Coming!"

Beatrice sat up to see a post-it on her Mac monitor.

"Play Video."

Beatrice went to the home screen where a video message was waiting.

She hit play and was surprised to see herself with swollen eyes and red cheeks.

"Hi," her past self said. "If this works, you have no idea what this is about. You just need to know three things. One, you can't leave town. Two, you will never find True Love. Three, you need to find the Author and defeat him."

The message ended.

"Beatrice?," an English accented voice asked.

She turned back to behind her and didn't see anyone. Pamela entered a moment later.

"Are you still in bed? You have a constituent meeting this morning."

"On it," said Beatrice, throwing off the covers and standing.

Joseph awoke back in Lady Adler's chambers. Jenna and Louise stood over him holding the stone in their overlapped palms.

"Did that work?," asked Jenna.

Joseph sat up as the women stepped away.

"I saw her, I thought she heard me," said Joseph. "Then it was over."

Irene stepped over, motioning for the servant girl to offer him tea. Joseph waved her off.

"This sort of magic is always tricky," said Irene. "It's much harder when there's not a stone on the other side."
"It did work, though," said Jenna. "You did see her."

Irene motioned at Joseph. "He has no magic of his own."

Jenna turned to the woman.

"No, he has True Love and True Love is the most powerful magic of all."

Irene laughed sharply. "What quaint sorcerer taught you that?"

Jenna ignored her and turned back to Louise.

"We'll try again. We'll try harder. We will try until we get it right."

Joseph eyed her. "You seem very determined. Why?"

Jenna shrugged. "I'm a fan of True Love."

Chapter End Notes

If you're on tumblr and so inclined, I am trying to get Beatrice nominated for Best Rumbelle Child for the TEAs. Nominations go through the 23rd and of course, I have other works I'd like to see nominated.

Check out my promo post here:

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!