Fanciful Stories & Second Chances

by afteriwake

Summary

A trip up the beanstalk yields more than just the compass. It gives everyone a second chance at getting their happy endings, even when death is involved.

Notes

This is my answer for a combo fill at onceuponaland for their bingo challenge. I thought it would be harder to get all twenty-five prompts into one story but really, it was very easy. This fic just flowed right out. Dedicated to my friend Jade, for listening to me plot the last half of this out on the phone tonight. It's not quite what we talked about, hun, but I hope you're happy with it.
Chapter 1

The beanstalk was so tall it went up into the clouds. The fact that Captain Hook thought they could climb all the way up and steal the compass made Emma believe there was still some magic left in this world. Well, seeing Cora change from Lancelot back to her true form had started to convince her. If they were going up that high, all the laws of science that she had learned in school told her they’d need masks and oxygen tanks. His belief that not only could they do it, but they’d be able to move around at the top without passing out was not quite as reassuring as it should be, but here, at least, she was starting to see that it could be very possible.

“You three stay here,” Emma said.

“Why?” Aurora asked.

“In case we don’t come back. If there really is a giant up there and it kills us, the rest of you should be down here to try again.”

“But we don’t know what to look for,” Mulan pointed out.

“Hook, explain it to them,” Emma said. He stared at her, and she glared back. It was almost a test of wills, and she wasn’t sure whether she was going to win it or lose it. Finally, she sighed. “I’ll make you a deal, then.”

“What sort of deal?” he asked, narrowing his eyes slightly.

“Whatever you want, within reason,” she replied.

“Tell me stories of your land as we climb,” he said. “Promise to do that, and I will leave behind the drawing I have of the compass.”

She thought about it for a moment. If he and Cora had been partners in things then he probably already knew about Regina, and that meant he probably already knew about Henry. He had his own mission for revenge, and in all honesty did she really want Mr. Gold around when all this was over? It was his fault she was here in the first place. “Deal,” she said, offering her hand.

He shook it with his good one. “Deal.” He then went to his bag and pulled out a rolled up piece of parchment, handing it to Snow White. “This is what it looks like. Give us three days to get up there, retrieve it and return.”

“Fine.” She took the paper, then undid her sword and moved over to Emma, giving it to her. “I still don’t trust him,” she said quietly.

Emma took the sword. “I don’t either, but it’s the only shot we have at getting back home. I’m not looking forward at spending the next eight years sharing custody of Henry with the Evil Queen, but in order for that to even be an option I have to get home first.”

“It could be worse, that whole situation with Henry,” Snow said with a slight smile.

“How? This is Regina we’re talking about. If she could wipe me off the face of the earth and have Henry all to herself she’d do it. And since magic is back in Storybrooke, she very well could.”

“You could be sharing custody with Cora,” she said, the smile dimming slightly.

“Now there is a thought I don’t want to think,” Emma said. “Regina’s bad, but she might listen to
reason and we can work out some agreements that are in everyone’s best interest. Cora would just kill me, you, Charming and Regina to get him all to herself.”

“Then we’ll get back home and keep that from happening,” Snow said as she put her hand on Emma’s arm and squeezed gently. “Be careful up there, all right?”

“I will,” Emma said with a nod.

“I love you,” Snow said, the smile on her face coming back brighter than before.

Emma stilled for a moment. “I love you too,” she said after thinking about it. And she really did love Snow, even if she wasn’t still sure if it was as a friend or as a mother. Just because she knew Snow was her mother now didn’t mean the love went away, it just…changed. Then Emma turned to Hook. “Let’s start now while it’s still early.”

The two of them started to make their way down the hill and across the field to the beanstalk. “Story time should start now,” Hook said.

“Well, what do you want to know first?” she asked, looking at him for a moment.

“Tell me about yourself. I know you’re the Savior everyone in Snow White’s kingdom had talked about, the product of her union to Prince James.”

“Well, I got sent from here right after I was born. Pinocchio got sent as well, to take care of me. He didn’t, though, so I got shuffled around from home to home. Where I’m from it’s called foster care. It’s a kind of hell, to be honest, unless you’re really lucky and you get a family who wants to adopt you. I ran away from it when I was sixteen. Spent some time in jail, where I found out I was pregnant. I gave birth to my son Henry and then gave him up. Regina, or I guess the Evil Queen to you, she adopted him and raised him.”

“Was he happy there?”

Emma shook her head. “No. I mean, this is Regina we’re talking about. She sent everyone in this world to a small town in Maine! She may have thought they were happy. And he may have tried. But he just wasn’t.” She paused for a moment. “Anyway, in that world, Snow was a teacher named Mary Margaret Blanchard. She was actually a pretty good teacher, from what I could tell. She loved the kids in her class, but she loved Henry more than most of them. Maybe it was just the fact that he was her grandson bleeding through. Anyway, she gave him a book, one that Pinocchio had written for me when he got older, to get me to believe.”

“What was in it?”

“Stories. The stories of everyone in Storybrooke, really, with drawings that looked exactly like the people here. His own story wasn’t in it, but everyone else’s was. I’ve flipped through it a few times, but Henry must have read it every night for months before he went to find me. Henry believed, pretty much from the first time he read it, that the Evil Queen had sent everyone in town to Storybrooke. That book was his proof. And he did what Pinocchio didn’t: he set out to make me believe.”

Hook nodded. “It sounds like he had his work cut out for him. You strike me as a very stubborn and no-nonsense type.”

“Trust me, I am,” she replied. “We have these things where I live called computers, and he used one to hire someone to find me. On my twenty-eighth birthday he showed up at my door, book in hand, and told me I needed to come home with him.” She smiled slightly. “I had just wished that I didn’t need to spend my birthday alone that year. I spent it alone every year, and I just wanted
something different. Maybe that should have been the first sign to me that magic existed. I mean, how many people's birthday wishes come true?"

“Not many,” Hook replied. “Tell me more about your son.”

“He’s a typical kid or my world, I guess,” she said with a slight shrug. “He likes believing in superheroes. He kind of looks at me like I’m one, or he did when I broke the curse. I mean, I’d just freed a whole town full of people from an evil curse. That’s the kind of things superheroes do. But anyway, he’s just a normal kid. Real sweet, just a little too curious for his own good, always willing to go on an adventure.” She smiled slightly. “Even if he and Regina weren’t happy all the time, she did a good job raising him. Better than I would have done.”

“So I’m assuming you went to the town with him,” Hook replied.

“Drove him back home myself. And then once I got there I couldn’t leave. I tried, but I ended up getting run off the road because a deer. That was because of the curse, but I didn’t believe in it and I probably should have. But Henry knew, and he believed, and he was glad I couldn’t leave. His mother wasn’t quite as happy.” It was starting to get warm, and she was debating taking off her leather jacket. But she couldn’t tie it around her waist since the sword was belted around her waist, so she decided in the end just to suffer through; after all, the leather would be an added layer of protection for whatever was at the top of the beanstalk.

“I think the arrival of the Savior into town would be exactly what the Queen would want least,” Hook said.

“Oh yeah. She tried to get me arrested, but Mary Margaret bailed me out.” She paused. “Snow did. But she was Mary Margaret then. It’s still kind of confusing to me, getting used to her being Snow White. Getting used to her being my mother is even harder.” They were nearly at the beanstalk now. She hadn’t realized how fast they had been walking. The closer they got the more impossible this task seemed.

“Did she try and kill you right away?” he asked.

“No. That came later, and that was what brought about the end of the curse.” They got to the bottom of the beanstalk. “How the hell do we climb something like that?”

“Very carefully,” he said. He reached into his bag and took out his hook, attaching it to the metal covering the stump where his hand had been. “It isn’t that hard, but the higher up you go the slipperier it gets.”

“Water in the clouds,” Emma said quietly.

“Pardon?”

“Nothing. Just remembering something I learned as a kid.” She stepped up to the beanstalk and looked at it, then put her foot on a vine and hauled herself up. She glanced to her left and saw Hook do the same, though slightly differently, as he dug his hook into the stalk before he pulled himself up. “We can do this,” she said quietly, though in her head she was fervently hoping that was the case.
Chapter 2

The climb was hell. She used to think shimmying up the rope in gym class was the worst experience ever, and this beanstalk felt like that rope times a million. Hook thankfully let her stay quiet most of the time as they climbed; after all, losing her concentration when she was fifty or sixty feet up in the air and plummeting to her death did no one any good. It was only as they were nearing the top that they had a more extended conversation, all about what to expect when they got to the giant’s home. Hook said it was quite a walk, and Emma knew what that meant: more stories from her.

They finally got to the top and she stared about in wonder. It looked exactly like the land below, except larger. The blades of grass were almost as large as she was, and she could barely see the leaves in the trees. Hook had started walking down the well-worn path, and she quickly followed suit. “Everything is so big,” she said after a moment.

“This seems to be the only place where anything grows or lives,” Hook said. “You’ll notice we hadn’t heard birds on our way here. Listen closely now.” She listened, and she could hear clear birdsong coming from high above them. “One of the birds from here will feed a family for nearly a week.”

“But after that bitch of a climb I can see why more people don’t try,” she replied, rubbing her shoulder slightly. “Plus, didn’t you say the giants can sniff out humans?”

“Aye, and they’ll kill and eat a human just as soon as they’ll kill and eat a bird.” He looked around, then walked a way off the path. “Bring your sword over here.”

“Why?” she asked warily.

“I found us something to eat.” She moved off the path to where he had been, and she saw herself face to face with the largest apple she’d ever seen in her life. If Regina could have seen it she’d have died of shock and then tried to find out how to grow one of her own. “Cut some of it out,” Hook was saying.

She pulled the sword out of the sheath and plunged it into the apple, sawing off a chunk. When she got it out she handed it to Hook, who began to eat, and then she began cutting out a piece for herself. When she got it free she wiped the sword on her jeans and put it back in its sheath before taking a bite. The apple was sweet and juicy, better than anything else she’d had since arriving here. She knew if she ate it too fast she’d make herself sick, but the climb had made her so hungry and she hadn’t brought any food up with her.

“Cut some smaller chunks for later,” Hook said as he finished off his piece. “I can carry them in my bag.”

“It’s just going to make your bag all wet,” she said as she finished her piece.

“It’s a magic bag. Whatever goes in stays exactly as it did when I put it in there, and it can hold much more than it would appear to without getting any heavier.”


“The book your son had?” he asked.

“No, different book. Vastly more popular.” She went to work cutting more chunks, including a
few for Snow and Aurora and Mulan, if they got back down in one piece. Nearly forty minutes had passed by the time they left the apple and went back on the path. “So, I guess I owe you more stories,” she said as they continued to walk towards the giant’s house.

“You last told me that you couldn’t leave the town,” he said.

She nodded. “At least a few people other than Henry wanted me to stay. One was Snow. When Regina got me kicked out of the inn she offered me the other bedroom at her place. I was grateful for that. It had been a long time since someone had been nice to me, and the thought of sleeping in my car was not that appealing.”

“Car?”

“Something we use to go place to place, kind of like a carriage, I guess, but it’s not pulled by horses and it has a motor.”

“Ah,” he replied with a nod. “Who else wanted you to stay?”

“Graham,” she said quietly. “Sheriff Graham, actually. He kept the peace in town. He made me his deputy, against Regina’s wishes. He was a good man, who wanted to make sure everyone was safe. It was like that was his purpose, what he was meant to do even here in this land.”

“What is he like?”

“Was like.” Hook looked at her. “He…died. Long story short he was with Regina, then I showed up and he liked me, and then he kissed me the first time and all his memories of this place came by. Second time he kissed me, second or third…he died. Died in my arms of a heart attack.” She paused in their walk for a moment as something dawned on her. “No. He was murdered. Regina had his heart, here in this world. I’ll bet she destroyed it and he died.” New anger settled on her. “She and I are going to have a serious talk when I get back.”

“Why not just kill her?” Hook suggested. “Get your revenge for your love just as I am getting revenge for mine.”

“He wasn’t my love,” she said, walking again, faster than before. “He might have become one, I don’t know. I’ll never know now.”

“Then get your revenge,” he replied. “Take her heart the way she took his.”

“No.” She shook her head fiercely. “I may be a lot of things, some of them very unpleasant, but I’m not a killer. If I kill her Henry would never speak to me again, and I can’t lose him.”

“Then why not take her son? If the Evil Queen really loves your son, take him far away from her. Break her heart that way.”

Emma stayed quiet. She had tried this before, tried to take Henry away from Storybrooke, and it had failed that time. With the curse broken, maybe she could do it this time. But…did she want to? Did she want to sink to Regina’s level? Did she want to separate herself from her newfound family? Because if she had learned anything about Snow White during these last few days, it was that Snow would never abandon her friends, not even for family. And then she knew she wouldn’t do it. She and Henry would stay in Storybrooke, and she’d just have to have Regina answer for Graham’s death some other way. “Let’s get back to the story,” she said brusquely.

“As you wish,” Hook replied.

“He died, and then I got made Sheriff of the town. Things went fine for a while, and then Kathryn
disappeared.” She paused. “I think here she was Princess Abigail, King Midas’s daughter. In my world she was married to David, who in this world is Prince Charming. My father.” It felt strange saying that. “It quickly turned into a murder investigation when a heart was found. I was told it was Kathryn’s, and Mary Margaret’s fingerprints were the only ones on the box holding it so I had to arrest her. I’m pretty sure that was all Regina’s doing, too.”

“Snow White seems to be walking around freely,” he replied.

“Kathryn wasn’t really dead, just kidnapped. August and I found her and Mary Margaret was freed.”

“I get the feeling there’s more to the story,” he said.

“There is.”

“I want to hear it.” She looked at him. “You made a deal, after all. I want the whole story.”

She sighed. “Fine. My mother and father had had an affair after he woke up from the coma he was in. He let her down, left her high and dry while she was in jail. I don’t know if he actually thought she did it, that she killed Kathryn so they could be together, but Mary Margaret thought that and so last I’d heard David was going to leave town to give Mary Margaret space.”

“And yet true love conquered all,” he replied.

“Yeah, I guess it did.”

“How was the curse broken?”

“Regina found a way to get the apple she’d poisoned Snow White with. She used the last of the magic she had, along with a magic hat from Jefferson.” Hook began to open his mouth and she held up her hand. “That’s a bag of crazy I really don’t want to get into, and I don’t know the whole story anyway. You want his story, you can ask him yourself when we all get back to Storybrooke.”

He nodded slowly. “Fair enough.”

“Anyway, she used one of his hats to get the apple, baked it into a turnover and gave it to me. Only I wasn’t the one who ate it. Henry did. I got him to the hospital and we couldn’t figure out what was wrong, and then I saw his book and I just knew. I cornered Regina at the hospital and she told me that yes, it was all true, everything in the book. Then she told me Rumpelstiltskin still remembered his life here.” She saw Hook’s jaw clench at the name. “We went to him, and he gave me my father’s sword and I killed a dragon under the library.”

“There was a dragon in your world?” he asked, surprised.

“Apparently that dragon was the only real threat to Regina’s plan,” Emma said with a shrug.

“It must have been Maleficent,” he said. “Of all the evil witches and such in this land, she was the only one who liked turning herself into a dragon. Why did you have to kill her?”

“To get something that was inside her. A potion made from the essence of true love. Though how it got inside her, I can’t tell.”

“Your father put it there.” She looked at him. “When I returned here from Neverland I heard stories. The fact that your father had fought Maleficent and survived was one of the legends about him. He had to jump out of a window into the lake surrounding her home to get away. No one
had ever called him a coward for it, so I had assumed that he wasn’t supposed to kill her.”

“How far did he have to jump?” Emma asked, surprised.

“Quite a ways. Maybe from hallway up the beanstalk.”

“Oh, shit,” she said quietly. “I’m surprised he didn’t sink like a stone and never come back up.”

“Apparently your father learned to swim at some point, which is good for you.” She quirked up an eyebrow. “That particular exploit happened before you were conceived. If Maleficent had killed him, or he had indeed sunk like a stone, you wouldn’t be here.”

“Oh, shit,” she said quietly. “I’m surprised he didn’t sink like a stone and never come back up.”

“Apparently your father learned to swim at some point, which is good for you.” She quirked up an eyebrow. “That particular exploit happened before you were conceived. If Maleficent had killed him, or he had indeed sunk like a stone, you wouldn’t be here.”

“Ah,” Emma said, nodding slightly. “Good old dad, I guess.”

Suddenly there was a noise to the left, the sound of a twig snapping, or it would have been if it didn’t sound a hundred times louder. Hook stilled, then quickly moved to the other side of the path, and Emma dashed after him. He raised a finger to his lips and pointed. She looked over and saw a huge foot where she had just been, attached to a huge leg. She looked away and saw a mud puddle next to them. She tapped Hook on the shoulder, nodded towards it, and the two of them crept into it. She held her nose, pursed her lips and submerged herself all the way in it as quietly as she could. When she came back up and wiped the mud from her eyes she saw Hook had done the same. They waited in the puddle as the giant walked forward more.

“That was a very good idea,” Hook whispered as they crept out of the mud puddle.

“Yeah, well, I figured if we smelled like mud we wouldn’t smell like humans,” she whispered back. Her clothes were ruined, especially her jacket, but if it kept them alive then it was worth it. “Come on. Let’s get inside his home, get the compass and get out before it realizes we’re here.”

“Agreed,” he said with a nod, and the two of them continued on in silence. It took nearly an hour, and the mud had dried by the time they arrived, but soon they arrived at the giant’s abode. “It will be in his counting room,” he said in his normal volume of voice.

“Do you know where that is?” she asked, and he nodded. “Then lead the way.”

Hook crept into the home through a crack at the bottom of the door, and they stealthily made their way through one room and then another. As they passed the kitchen she smelled delicious food and was afraid her stomach would grumble loudly and give their location away. Finally they got to the counting room, and Emma’s eyes widened. There were heaps of gold and valuable items stacked all around a table. “The compass is kept in a box on the table, along with the wishing ring and the magic mirror.”

“What?”

“The wishing ring will grant one wish of whoever wears it, and only one wish per day. Supposedly it has the power to bring people back to life, but that was only a rumor. It could be that powerful, but I doubt it.” They made their way to the table. “The magic mirror allows you to communicate with anyone anywhere, even in another land.”

“Then we need to grab both of those, too,” Emma said. Hook shook his head but she put a hand on his shoulder. “I know you want revenge, but if that ring is really that magical, why don’t you just wish for whatever Rumpelstilskin took from you to come back.”

“How did you…?” he asked, his eyes wide.

“Your jaw clenched when I said his name, which means he managed to do something that really
pissed you off.”

“He killed my true love, who just so happened to have been his wife,” he said quietly. “She ran away because she didn’t love him and she craved adventure. I gave her both.”

“I’m sorry,” she said.

“I will get them both, but only if you allow me to have the first wish.”

“Second wish.” He looked at her. “I’m making the first wish.”

“And just what are you going to wish for? A trip home? If we go back to your world and the ring no longer works then I don’t get any wish.”

“I wasn’t going to wish for that,” she said. “We’ll have your compass to get us back home. I have a friend, back home. He was turning to wood the last time I saw him. If he’s still wood, I want to fix him.”

Hook looked at her. “He’s more than just a friend.”

“Maybe. I just…I don’t know. He was trying so hard to get me to believe, and I didn’t, not until it was too late. I’m hoping when I broke the curse he went back to normal, but I doubt it. It was magic that worked in my land to turn him to wood. I don’t think lifting the curse that kept everyone’s memories away would fix that.”

“Try kissing him.” She stared at him. “You’re the product of true love. I’m assuming you kissed your son to get the curse on him to break. If it worked on your son, it might work on him.”

“Yeah, well, if it doesn’t I don’t want August to be a wooden man forever. I make my wish here, we take the ring and tomorrow you wish for your true love to come back to you. And after Snow and Mulan and Aurora have their wishes we throw the ring in the nearest body of water and forget about it. Deal?”

He thought about it. “Deal.”

“Fine. Now let’s get up this table and get the stuff out of the box.” She went up to the table. It looked as though the legs were carved in a spiral, and she found she was able to make her way up. Hook stayed on the ground below. It took her a while, but finally she pulled herself up to the top of the table. She saw the box right away, and to her surprise it was open. She walked over to it, but she couldn’t reach the items. She pulled herself up and climbed in. She slipped the ring on her finger and it fit perfectly. She grabbed the compass and the mirror, tucking the compass into her jacket pocket and stuffing the mirror into the waistband of her pants.

Suddenly she heard a roar, and heard footsteps approaching. “He’s coming back!” Hook shouted up to her.

There was no time for her to get back down, and being in the box she was a sitting duck. She looked at the ring on her hand. As much as she wanted August to go back to normal, if she didn’t get out of there it wouldn’t matter. “I wish Captain Hook and I were back down the beanstalk with all the things we’ve got on us and safely back with Snow White, Mulan and Princess Aurora and back at Snow’s old castle,” she said quickly. All of a sudden things blurred and then cleared, and Snow, Mulan and Aurora were staring at them in shock.

“How…?” Snow asked, standing up.

Emma held up her hand where the ring was residing. “I made a wish.”
“Do you have the compass?” Mulan asked, coming over to them.

Emma nodded. “And a mirror that allows us to talk between worlds.” She took off the ring and handed it to Hook. “Make your wish tomorrow.”

He looked at the ring in his palm. “You wished for me to come back too,” he said quietly.

“Well, yeah. I’m not the kind of person who makes a deal and then backs out of it, and I’m not the type of person to leave someone behind to their certain death.”

He closed his hand over the ring, looked at her, and then got down on one knee and bowed down to her. “You’ll have my services, to get home and to fight against Cora, Princess.”

“Get up!” Emma hissed, her cheeks turning red. “Thank you, yeah, but get up. It’s embarrassing.”

“Why does he get a wish?” Aurora asked, getting angry.

“You all get a wish,” Hook said. “This ring is the only piece of magic in the kingdom that can bring back the dead.”

Aurora’s eyes went wide. “I could bring Phillip back?” she whispered.

Hook nodded. “Aye, Princess, you can bring your Prince back.”

She looked at his fist, and then went to Emma, hugging her. “Thank you for bringing the ring back as well,” she said, and when she pulled back tears were in her eyes.

“You’re welcome,” she said, her cheeks burning even more. Then she looked at her mother. “There’s a lot we need to talk about.”

“Then let’s go catch up,” Snow said. “Emma, come with me and fill me in as we see if there’s anything we can use to start a fire here.”

“All right,” Emma said with a nod.

It took a while to catch Snow up, mostly because she wanted to know exactly what Emma had told Hook while she was recounting her stories. Emma honestly didn’t remember everything, because two scares with a giant in one day was too much. But when they were done Snow seemed satisfied. “And so I used my wish to get Hook and I out of there and all of us to safety,” Emma said as they gathered up the last pieces of broken furniture they were going to use in the fire.

Snow looked at her, then dropped her wood and went to go hug her daughter. “I’m so proud of you, Emma. I know there’s so many things you could have wished for instead.” Emma stood there, unable to hug her mother back, and when Snow let go she was glad there wasn’t light in the room so her mother wouldn’t see her blush. “Let’s go and tell the others. Then we’ll make plans.”

“All right,” Emma said with a nod.
They caught the others up quickly, and worked out a schedule for the wishes: Hook first, then Aurora, then Mulan and finally Snow. The attitude had relaxed so much that Emma managed to initiate a game of Truth or Dare with the women. It took a few times for the others to get the rules, but none of them picked Dare. She hadn’t heard laughter in a long time, but all of the women were soon prone to fits of giggles and laughter. Aurora had a gentle laugh, Mulan had a quiet one, but Snow’s laugh was familiar, loud and warm and hearty, and Emma’s own giggles just didn’t compare. But it was good to hear laughter again. As the evening wore on and Emma listened to Snow recount her first wedding to Charming she found herself glad that she had come.

“So Lancelot actually married the two of you?” Aurora asked Snow with a smile.

Snow nodded. “It was perfect. I just…I wish Charming’s mother had survived past then. You would have loved her so much, Emma. And I know she’d be as proud of you as I am.” They were in the room where Emma was to have grown up. Snow stood up and went to a drawer, opening it. “It’s still here,” she said, pulling out a small velvet bag. She went over to Emma and opened the bag, showing her the necklace. “She gave this to me, and that was how I knew I was having a girl.” She put it in the palm of Emma’s hand and curled Emma’s fingers around it. “You should have it now.”

“Thank you,” Emma said. “How does it work?”

“You hold it over your palm and if it swings one way you’re having a girl, and if it swings the other you’re having a boy. I just don’t remember which direction is which.”

“When you remember, I’d like to do that,” Aurora said. “If that’s all right, Emma.”

“That’s fine,” Emma said. “So, Mulan, it’s your turn. Truth or dare?”

The game continued long into the night, and soon they went to bed in some of the rooms that had useable beds. Emma was up at dawn, and she quietly crawled out of the bed she had shared with her mother to go to the room where Hook’s room was. She knocked, not sure if he’d made his wish already and he was sharing his bed with his lost love. It took a moment, but he came to the door. “Emma,” he said quietly.

“Have you made your wish yet?” she asked.

He shook his head. “No. I’m actually rather nervous,” he said with a slightly rueful smile on his face. “I’ve spent so long with hatred in my heart, I don’t know if I can have love there as well.”

“You can,” she said with a smile. “Do you want me to leave you alone?”

He shook his head. “No. Come on in. I’ll make it now.” He opened the door more and she stepped inside. He put the ring on his pinkie and rubbed the ring slightly. “I wish for Milah to come back to me, safe and whole.” There was a flash and then suddenly a woman in pirate finery was there, blinking at him. “Milah?” he asked hesitantly.

She came over to him, touching his face gently. “Killian?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said, placing his good hand over hers.

“The last thing I remember is Rumpelstilskin reaching into my chest and grabbing my heart,” she said as tears leaked down her cheeks. “And then nothing, and now I’m here. What happened?”
“You died. He killed you.” There was a wide smile on his face. “I got a wish, and I brought you back.”

“Oh, Killian,” she said, moving her hand away and throwing her arms around his neck, kissing him soundly. When it began to look as though the kissing was not about to stop any time soon Emma slowly began to back out of the room.

“Wait,” Hook said, pulling away from her. He tugged the ring off his finger and handed it to Emma. “For Aurora, to make her wish.”

“We’ll be making our way back to her castle in a few hours, so that when Phillip comes back they can be there together,” Emma said, putting the ring on her finger. “Are you coming with us?”

“Yes,” he said. “I am, after all, a man of my word.”

“You two enjoy yourselves,” she said with a smile, going to the door and leaving, shutting it behind her. She walked back to the room where Snow was, only to find her awake. “Hook made his wish. Milah is back, and they’re making up for lost time,” Emma said with a wider grin.

“So it really brings someone back from the dead?” Snow said.

Emma nodded. “Prince Phillip should be fine.”

“That’s good,” Snow said with a smile. “Tomorrow we fix the problem we caused when we got sent here, then Mulan gets her wish and then I’ll have mine.”

“What are you going to wish for?” Emma asked, sitting down next to her.

“I was thinking I would wish for us to go home. And the others to come with us, if they want. I hate to admit it, but this land…it will never go back to how it was. Perhaps it’s best to make Storybrooke our home now.” She looked at Emma. “What were you going to wish for?”

“August had turned to wood right before my eyes, before I went to go kill the dragon. I was going to wish he was normal.” She paused. “Though when I was talking to Hook I brought up Graham. He told me I should kill Regina. I said no, but…maybe I should bring him back instead. I don’t know. I’ve always kind of wondered what might have happened if he hadn’t died.”

“When I knew him as the Huntsman, he always seemed so lonely. Even after Regina took his heart he would come into the woods and we would talk, though we were always careful not to let her find out. I was a lifeline, in a way. It’s hard to be out in the world with no friends, and when he realized we were friends he didn’t want to lose that. Being in Regina’s castle was awful for him, because he was different than all the others. He always struck me as someone who would be a good man to love. I don’t think Graham would be any different.” Snow smiled at her daughter. “Well, whenever you decide, let me know. I’ll use that for my wish.”

Emma laid back down in the bed. “It’s going to be strange going home, after being here,” she said. “But it will be nice, too.”

“Yes. I miss my husband and my grandson.”

“You know, we haven’t used the mirror yet. Maybe one of them is looking in a mirror.”

“I hadn’t thought of that!” Snow said, her eyes wide. She went to the mirror and held it up, and Emma moved behind her. “Mirror, mirror, in my hand. Show me...Prince James in Storybrooke, Maine.” The glass on the mirror rippled, and then they no longer saw their reflections. They saw
Charming with shaving cream on his face, razor to his skin. “Charming!” Snow said.

His eyes went wide and he dropped his razor. “Snow! How is this happening?”

“We got a magic mirror from the giants at the top of the beanstalk,” Snow said, a wide smile on her face. “We have a magic compass to get us back home. It’ll be a little while, but we’re on our way.”

“That’s great!” Charming said. “Things are fine here, more or less. We’ve had a few problems, but nothing we haven’t been able to handle.”

“Where’s Henry?” Emma asked.

“With me, at your place. Regina took him back with magic, but then they talked and she let him stay with me. She wants to prove to him she doesn’t need to depend on magic. I’m skeptical, but she’s trying. There was an incident with the man she was in love with, but—”

“How? Daniel is dead,” Snow said, confused.

“Apparently Dr. Whale is Victor Frankenstein,” James said.

“No way,” Emma said. “So he brought her true love back from the dead?”

James nodded. “She used magic to kill him again.”

Snow looked at Emma. “We should let her use the ring,” she said quietly.

“To bring him back?” Emma asked. Snow nodded. “I told Hook we’d throw it in the water after we all made our wishes.”

“I’m confused here,” James said. “What’s this about wishes? And who’s Hook?”

“We got a magic ring as well. It’s the only power that can bring back the dead, completely whole. Not like zombies or anything like that. And Hook is Captain Hook, also known as Killian Jones. He was working with someone who wishes us nothing but harm, but he’s on our side now.”

“Who wants to hurt us?” James said.

“Cora, Regina’s mother,” Snow said.

“That’s not good,” James said, shaking his head. “You need to tell Regina, and you need to get back before Cora figures out a way to get here.”

“I know. I was going to see if I could reach her next.”

“Then I’ll let you do that,” he said. “I love you, Snow.”

“I love you too, Charming,” she said with a wide smile on her face.

“And Emma? I love you too,” James said.

“Thanks,” Emma said, slightly embarrassed.

“See you both soon,” he said.

“Bye,” Snow said. The image in the mirror rippled again and then it was back to Snow and Emma’s reflections. “Mirror, mirror in my hand, show me Queen Regina in Storybrooke, Maine.”
The mirror rippled again and soon they saw Regina applying make-up in the mirror. “Regina.”

“Ack!” Regina dropped the brush she was applying blush with. “Snow! How the hell did you get in my mirror?”

“You weren’t the only one in the kingdom with magic mirrors,” Snow said. “We liberated this one from a giant.”

Regina smiled slightly, a smile that was a bit on the smug side. “Good. Those giants were always taking things that didn’t belong to them. Serves them right. Why are you contacting me, though? We’re not exactly huge fans of each other.”

“Cora is here. She still has magic, and she knows about Henry.”

The smile dropped right off Regina’s face, replaced with a look of fear and shock. “That isn’t possible. Rumpelstiltskin said she’d go somewhere where she’d never bother me again.”

“Then I suggest you go after him,” Emma said.

“So what are we going to do? I promised Henry I wouldn’t use magic anymore. I don’t want to break my promise.”

“To keep my son safe you better break that promise. Trust me, he’ll understand,” Emma said.

“Our son, and are you sure?” Regina said.

“Yes,” Snow said. “He would understand. We’ll be coming back soon. We have a captain and a magic compass, so we’ll get to you soon.”

“Tell her about the ring,” Emma said.

“What ring?” Regina asked.

“A wish granting ring,’ Snow said.

“Use it to wish my mother dead,” Regina said. “Or if you bring it to me I’ll make that wish.”

Snow looked at Emma. “I know I promised I would give you my wish, but…”

“Wish us back to Storybrooke,” Emma said quietly. “It’s more important.”

Snow nodded, then turned to the mirror. “I’ll use my wish to get us to Storybrooke, you use your wish to take care of your mother. Deal?”

“Deal,” Regina said. “Now let me get back to what I was doing, all right?”

“Fine,” Snow said. “We’ll see you soon, Regina.”

“Take care of Henry,” Emma said.

“I will,” Regina said. “Good-bye for now.”

The mirror blurred, and Snow set it down. She turned back to Emma and gave her a hug. “I’m sorry, Emma.”

“It’s okay,” Emma said, hugging her back.
“I can help,” Mulan said from the door. Snow pulled away from the hug and looked at her. “I didn’t mean to eavesdrop, but I wanted to let you know I was ready to start preparing things for our trip. I can wish you and anyone who chooses to go with you back to your world. I didn’t know what I wanted to wish for, and this is the best use of that wish.”

“Would you?” Snow asked, her voice hopeful. Mulan nodded. Snow got off the bed and enveloped the other woman in a hug. “Thank you so much.”

“I only ask that I bring what’s left of my family with me when I go. My parents and grandmother, assuming they survived. I wasn’t home when the curse hit, so I don’t know.”

“You’re coming with us?” Emma asked, surprised.

Mulan nodded. “There is nothing left for me here. The village is gone, and I am a warrior. You’re going to have a fight on your hands, and you’ll need all the help you can get.”

“Thank you. Again,” Snow said, a smile on her face. “We can think of a way for you to word your wish so it all comes true exactly as we want.”

“I’ll leave you now and go make our preparations so we can return to Prince Phillip so Princess Aurora can make her wish tomorrow.” She paused. “Did Hook’s wish succeed?”

Emma nodded. “She’s alive and well.”

“Then I have hope it will work for Prince Phillip,” she said with a slight smile. “I’ll be getting our horses ready.” And with that she left.

Snow turned and looked back at Emma. “We’re going home,” she said with a smile, “and you still get your wish.”

“Yeah. Now I just need to figure out what I want to wish for,” Emma said with a sigh, lying down on the bed. This was good news, it really was, but right now she was worried that it all might blow up in her face. She didn’t want that to happen at all, but knowing her luck that was exactly what would happen.
Chapter 4

It was two days later and they were all gathered around Mulan: Snow, Emma, Hook, Milah, Aurora and a re-souled Phillip, all waiting for Mulan to make her wish. They had talked long into the night once Phillip was revived, and all of them had agreed that it was not worth staying in this land, especially with Cora on the loose and trying to make her way to Storybrooke. It was early morning and Snow had just finished informing James and Regina that they were soon on their way.

“All right, Mulan, just like we went over,” Emma said.

Mulan nodded. She fingered the ring and took a deep breath. “I wish that myself, my family who survived, Snow White, Emma Swan, Killian Jones, Milah Jones, Princess Aurora and Prince Phillip will all arrive at the base of the clock in Storybrooke, Maine with all the belongings on our persons.”

After a moment things blurred and then when Emma looked around again she saw the familiar buildings in Storybrooke. She let out a breath she hadn’t realized she was holding right before a pair of arms wrapped themselves around her waist. She looked down and saw the top of Henry’s head, and she held him close for a few moments. When she let go he looked up. “Hi, Mom.”

“Hey, kid,” she said, her voice thick. She hadn’t realized how much she had missed him until right now.

“I recognize a few of them from my book,” he said. “Sleeping Beauty and Hook.”

“Well, then let’s introduce everyone else,” she said with a smile. She looked over and saw a frail older woman and an old man and woman hugging Mulan. Behind Mulan was a tall younger man with a hand on her shoulder. Apparently her entire family had come back, including her betrothed, Li Shang. She was happy for Mulan. She started to introduce everyone to Henry, Charming, Regina and Red, though Charming and Regina recognized a few of the new people.

The clock struck the hour and Regina cleared her throat. “I’m glad we have new citizens here in Storybrooke, but we have things to talk about and plans to make. So I suggest we adjourn to the city council chambers and start talking.” She looked over at them. “After we get all of you in less conspicuous clothing. And in your case, Emma, less dirty.”

“Oh, it will be wonderful to take a shower,” Emma said quietly, and even Regina grinned at that a bit. Henry grabbed her hand and squeezed tightly. She looked over at Regina. “Is it all right if Henry hangs with me?”

“Of course,” Regina said. “Snow, you might want to go take one as well. No offense.”

“None taken,” Snow said, not letting go of Charming’s hand. The four of them trooped to Snow’s home while Regina and Red took care of the others. The four of them chatted as they walked, Henry telling Snow and Emma about all the things that he and Charming had been doing. They let him do most of the talking, and Emma only left the conversation to take a shower and change into new clothes. She had been right that her leather jacket was ruined, but she saw a familiar jacket in her closet. She took out Graham’s jacket, fingerling the leather. How it got in there she could only guess, but she was glad to see it. She slipped it on and pulled it close.

After Snow had taken her shower and changed they dropped Henry off at school and made their way to the city council chambers. The others were there, along with Shang, Grumpy,
Rumpilstilskin and a woman Emma did not recognize, who stayed close to Rumpilstilskin. Hook and Milah were shooting daggers at Rumpilstilskin, who looked at them with surprise. But everyone appeared to be deciding to act civil, and Snow and Regina took charge of the meeting.

All of them talked at length, and four hours later some things were hammered out. They broke to eat the food that Granny delivered, and Emma took the opportunity to pull Regina aside. Regina and James had agreed with Emma and Snow that no one else was to know about the ring except Red, because Snow said she deserved a second chance at true love too. Mulan had given Emma the ring before the meeting started, and Emma pressed it into Regina’s hand. “Here’s the ring,” she said, her voice low. “You’ll get rid of Cora, right?”

“I can’t get rid of her,” she said. Emma blinked, surprised. “The one thing the ring won’t do is kill people. But I have a better idea. I’m just going to strip her of her powers and memories with no hope of recovery.”

“That almost seems more cruel,” Emma said.

“She deserves death,” Regina said. “Look, everyone else gets their second shot at a happy ever after. I’m giving up my wish to keep our son safe. If I want to be a cruel and vindictive bitch to the woman who took away my happy ending in the first place, then that’s just the way it’s going to play out. At least it’s taking care of the problem.”

Emma nodded slowly. “You’re right. It’s your choice. As long as she can’t come after Henry that’s all I care about.”

“Fine,” Regina said. “I’ll make my wish tomorrow and then I’ll give your mother back the ring so she can make her wish, whatever that’s going to be.”

“Fine,” Emma said. She moved away from Regina and went to her parents. “She’s not going to kill Cora.”

“What?” James said, surprised.

“She’s going to strip her of her powers and memory with no chance of getting it back, leave her to wander around the land,” Emma said.

“She deserves it,” Snow said fiercely. “I think it’s a fitting punishment.”

“Well, she’ll make the wish tomorrow and give you back the ring. Then you make your wish, then Red gets her wish, and finally Charming. Then we toss it,” Emma said. “Agreed?”

“Agreed,” James said, and Snow nodded.

They finished their meal and went back to the meeting, and when dusk fell they all went home, with the new people going to Granny’s inn for rooms for the night. Emma put Henry to bed, then stayed up with her parents for a while. She watched as Charming and Snow retired for the night, hand in hand, and Emma felt a tug at her heart. She wanted that, too. She wanted it so bad her heart ached. She knew she had to make a decision about what wish she wanted granted, whether she wanted Graham brought back from the dead or August brought back to normal. No one had seen August since the curse had lifted, and for that reason she was leaning towards having Graham brought back. When she finally went to sleep it was fitful and not very deep. She awoke the next morning tired and cranky.

When she got out to the living room Regina was there, getting Henry breakfast. “Didn’t know you had a key,” she grumbled, going for the coffee that was brewing.
“I thought you’d want to watch me make my wish,” she said.

“Wish? What wish?” Henry asked.

“Nothing. Why don’t you finish breakfast and go brush your teeth?” Regina said.

“Did you get the wishing ring?” Henry asked, his eyes bright.

“How did you—“ Regina asked, narrowing her eyes.

“It’s probably in the book,” Emma said.

“Yup,” Henry said with a nod. “It’s in the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Can I make a wish?”

“Only the adults are going to use it,” Regina said gently.

“That’s not fair.”

“Life isn’t fair, kiddo,” Emma said with a slight grin.

“But August got turned to wood. That’s not fair either. I want him back to normal. I want him to come back.”

“How do you know August is wood?” Emma asked. It was her time to narrow her eyes at Henry. Henry clamped a hand over his mouth. “Henry?”

“He saw me before he left,” Henry said as he lowered his hands. “He made me promise not to tell anyone, not even you or his father.”

“Henry. Where is he?” Emma asked intently.

“I don’t know,” he said. “Honest.”

Emma went over to him and ruffled his hair. “It’s all right.” By that point Charming and Snow had come out of Snow’s room. “Henry knows about the ring. He wants a wish, too.”

“I just want August back to normal,” he said, turning to Snow. “Please, Grandma? Grandpa?”

Snow and Charming looked at each other, then at Regina and Emma. “It’s up to your moms,” Charming said.

“I’m fine with it,” Regina said with a sigh. “Emma?”

“I don’t have a problem with that,” she said.

“Yes!” Henry said, his grin wide. He went over to Regina and hugged her tight, then moved over to Emma and did the same. “Thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome,” Regina said, a fainter smile on her face. She slipped the ring on her finger and looked at it. “I’m going to make my wish now, if you don’t mind.”

“Go for it,” James said.

She took a deep breath. “I wish that my mother Cora lose all her magical powers as well as all her memories, especially those concerning Storybrooke and my son Henry, with no chance of ever regaining them.” She smiled slightly and then took off the ring. “The ring warmed up so I’m assuming it’s done.”
“Thank you, Regina,” Snow said.

Regina shook her head. “I did it for Henry, not for you. I would have loved to have a second chance at happiness as well.” Snow looked at Charming, who cleared his throat. “What?”

“I have happiness, and I like things the way they are,” Charming said. “So I was going to use my wish for Emma, and Snow was going to use her wish for you.”

Regina blinked. “What were you going to wish for, Snow?” she asked quietly.

“It’s my fault Daniel was killed. It’s only fair that I use my wish to bring him back,” she said.

“But I killed him with magic this time,” she said, her eyes wide. “I don’t think he can come back from that.”

“Rumpelstiltskin pulled out Milah’s heart and crushed it. The wraith sucked out Phillip’s soul. I think it can bring him back.” Snow moved away from Charming’s side. “Just let me try. Please?”

Regina looked at her, something in her eyes Emma had thought she’d never see: hope. She nodded, first slowly and then with more speed. “Yes. Yes, you can try.”

“All right,” she said with a smile. “I’ll make my wish tomorrow, then Red, then Henry and finally James. I don’t want you to wait any longer, especially after what Dr. Whale did to him the last time.”

“Please bring him back before he pulled that stunt,” Regina said.

“I will. I promise.”

Regina gave her a smile. “Then I’ll be here tomorrow morning to take Henry to school and you can do it then. All right?”

“That’s fine,” Snow said.

Regina’s smile widened, and then she turned to Henry. “Finish your breakfast and go brush your teeth. You’ll be late to school,” she said.

“Yes, Mom,” Henry said with a grin before going back to his food. Regina turned from Henry to Emma, the smile still on her face. Emma found herself grinning back, though a bit grudgingly. Maybe, just maybe, things would work out after all.

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There was a small group assembled in Snow’s living room the morning of the final wish. Emma, Snow, Regina, Daniel and Henry all stood around Charming as he slipped the ring on his finger. Emma felt her breath hold in her chest, and it felt as though time stood still as Charming fingered the ring slightly. He took a deep breath. “I wish that the Huntsman, who was killed by Queen Regina here in Storybrooke, be brought back to life, healthy and whole, with his memories of both his life as the Huntsman and his life as Sheriff Graham fully intact.”

There was a moment, and then Charming frowned. “It warmed up. Where is he?”

“The station,” Emma whispered. She bolted to the door, heedless of how she looked or who followed. Snow didn’t live that far away, and she made it there in record time. Her hands were shaking so much she wasn’t able to get the key in the door the first time she tried, or the second, and she was about to throw the key down and kick the door open when she heard the lock slide.
The door swung open and she found herself standing face to face with Graham. “Graham,” she said quietly.

He looked shocked and bewildered, and he reached up and caressed her cheek slightly. “I died,” he said quietly, his voice hoarse. “I died in your arms, here. I was dead.”

“Yes,” she said, shaking her head. She could feel a tear slip down her cheek and she smiled widely as he brushed it away. “But you got brought back, completely whole.” She put her hand over his heart. “Your heart isn’t missing anymore.”

“I know,” he said. “And I remember everything. I remember my life there, and my life here.”

“Everyone does now. I broke the curse,” she said. “So much has happened, Graham. And I’ve missed you so much.”

He moved his hand slightly, and she pulled her hand away from his heart and touched his face as well. She leaned in first and kissed him, felt warm lips under hers, and that weight that had been in the pit of her stomach evaporated. He pulled her closer, deepening the kiss, and she realized that the trip to the Enchanted Forest was probably the best thing to happen to her since she made that wish on her birthday what felt like a million years ago. She had her parents, she had her son, she had friends, and now she even had love. Life couldn’t get any better than this.

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