

Caught Up In the Crossfire Of Heaven and Hell, and We're Searching for Shelter

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Caught Up In the Crossfire Of Heaven and Hell, and We're Searching for Shelter

by [go_sullivan](#)

Summary

After she stole the Crown and used Maleficent's Scepter, Hades was able to save Audrey's life. But her soul was still up for grabs. And then she was gone.

But Evie's willing to do anything to get her back. There's salvation and redemption to be found in love.

When you're in Hell, you keep going. And when you come back, there's always an Evil to stop.

Notes

I just couldn't get this idea out of my head. So I had to write it.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Chapter 1

Coming back to life, only to have it snatched back seemed cruel to Audrey. But that seemed to be the direction her life was always heading in. Once upon a time, her family had been cursed. But even that had been broken. Yet here was a curse of her own.

“The Villain Princess is coming with me.”

A man in a white suit had appeared in Audrey’s dorm room stepping out of smoke and flame. He had dark hair and eyes with a face so dangerously handsome it was otherworldly. The guards of Auradon stepped towards the stranger, but they froze their forward motions. Jay, Carlos, and Ben got ready to fight but a head shake from both Hades and King Adam made them pause. Something both men agreed on was something to take notice of. Queen Leah wailed before she fainted. Chad caught the older woman and brought her gently to the ground. Audrey rushed to her grandmother’s side. Mal crouched next to the queen across from her.

“No!”

The loud protest came from the daughter of the Evil Queen. Audrey didn’t know the girl cared. Evie stood, shoulders square and chin up defiantly. She was scowling at the man, brows furrowed. Audrey had never seen Evie so furious. Even though the girl was raised on the Isle, Evie was kind and patient. She seemed incapable of anything stronger than annoyed. Evie’s fists were clenched so tightly, Audrey was worried for the skin of the girl’s palms, knowing that her nails had to be cutting deep.

It was Queen Belle that stepped forward, her husband hanging back. Ben went to stand beside his mother but Adam stopped him with a hand on his chest.

“Mom?”

“Stay back, Ben.” Belle’s voice was firm, but cracking.

“But-“

“Listen to your mother, Boy King.” The Stranger grinned.

“What are you doing here, Old Scratch?” The Queen’s voice was firm, but her body was shaking.

“A price must be paid,” Old Scratch said apologetically. “All those who use the scepter must pay. And I’m here to collect.”

“She didn’t know!” Evie marched closer to the man. She would have gotten in his face, if Carlos hadn’t pulled her back. “You can’t have her! Who even are you?”

Old Scratch laughed. “You’re too bold, Little One. I could have just taken her. But I’m here as a courtesy.”

Everyone in the room knew it too. Power radiated off him so strongly, that even Hades didn’t meet his eyes. Old Scratch could easily destroy everyone in the room and everyone outside it. He could raze all of Auradon to the ground in a heartbeat.

“Though,” Old Scratch’s eyes burned like embers. “You can take her place, if you’d like.”

Evie looked like she was seriously considering the man’s proposition. She was the first one to come to her defense. She was hurt to see that Queen Belle and King Adam were hanging back. It made sense. She had just spelled the entire kingdom to sleep or to stone. They would gladly sacrifice her for their safety after what she had done.

So she would sacrifice herself before they could throw her away.

“I’ll go with you.” Audrey stepped in front of Evie, as if to shield the girl from Old Scratch’s wrath. She bowed her head. “Thank you for letting me have this chance to say goodbye.”

Old Scratch waved his hand. Queen Leah regained consciousness. “Get on with it, girl. We need to be going soon.”

Audrey stood before her grandmother. Queen Leah wrapped her arms around Audrey’s legs, hoping to change her mind. “Don’t go, Audrey. He can have me instead.”

“You’re getting on in years. I’ll have you soon enough.” Old Scratch sneered. “You have the rest of your life to suffer your mistakes with her. That’s what I want from you.”

“I’m sorry, Audrey. I lead you to this.” Queen Leah cried, fat tears falling from her eyes.

It was true. Her grandmother pressured her ever since she was a toddler. Telling her to watch what she ate, or how to style her hair and make up. But Audrey knew she could have rebelled long before she was tempted by the scepter. She couldn’t blame all of this on her grandmother or Mal and Ben. She was tired of all of it.

“All I wanted to do was make you proud.” Audrey stated simply.

“You have, Audrey. I’m so proud of you. Your mother and father are as well.”

Who knew that all it took to hear those words from her grandmother was to be snatched up by a mysterious stranger.

“Good-bye, Grammy.” Even after all the hurt, the woman put her through, she still loved her grandmother. “I’ll miss you.”

Audrey turned to Ben. “You’re going to be an amazing king. I’m sad I won’t get to see it. Mal, please take good care of him.”

“I will, Audrey.” Mal reached for Ben’s hand. The boy had started to cry, realizing one of his oldest friends was leaving.

“Chad, I’m sorry for treating you badly. You’ve always been a friend to me. Ready to support me in an instant. Always by my side. Don’t be afraid anymore. I want you to find your happy ending.” Audrey, Chad, and Ben were all old childhood friends. But Chad and Audrey were closer, even though she ended up with Ben. Chad’s family put just as much pressure on him as her family did on her. So Chad was always a jerk to everyone but her. It was his defense mechanism. He was getting better, but he was still scared. Audrey couldn’t blame him.

“You’ve always known the real me, Auds.” Chad was crying even harder than Ben. Audrey was trying to be strong for both of them. She managed to hold her tears back when Chad grabbed her up in a big hug. “I’ll miss you.”

Audrey let go of him and went to join Scratch.

“Hold on. Just wait a minute,” Evie cried. “Why are we all just accepting this? Why is no one stopping him! You’re just going to let him take her to be his child bride? Aren’t you supposed to be heroes!” She screamed at Belle and Adam.

“A bride?” The man laughed again. Audrey shuddered. He looked at the adults in the room. “You really do seem to raise your daughters to only think of themselves as future wives.”

“Your parents told you nothing of me?” The other teens in the room didn’t answer him. Mr. Scratch stalked up to Evie. He towered over her. “I, who gave them all the tools to be evil? I gave your mother her mirror. I gave Maleficent her Dragon Eye. They all, like the Daughter of the Rose, could have chosen otherwise. But they chose wrong. They chose the dark. They chose to be mine. The Ruler of the Dark and the Bad.” He winked at Audrey. “Pleased to meet you. Hope you guess my name.”

“I like you, Little One. Think of these as a gift.” He gripped Evie’s face in his hand. Flames rose from it. Evie cried out in pain as her cheek was burned. He shoved her into Audrey’s arms. “This is your last good-bye, Princess. Make it count.”

“You didn’t have to do that.” Audrey held Evie. They had never really been close. They just had a mutual respect for each other, but she was still confused as to why Evie had been willing to be hurt for her. She was touched.

“I wanted to.” The burn on Evie’s face was still giving off smoke, spreading up along her cheek. “I- We just got you back. It isn’t fair. I’m sorry.”

“Evie-“

“I knew you were hurting.” Had Evie been watching her enough to notice? No one else had. Audrey had made sure to keep that mask up. The other girl was crying. “But I didn’t ask you if you were okay. If I had, maybe none of this would have happened. And you wouldn’t have to go.”

It was one of the nicest things anyone had said to her in awhile. She had some idea of where she was going, so she was happy for something good to hold on to.

Audrey's eyes flicked to the other girl's lips. They both leaned forward and their lips touched. Audrey's hand were on Evie's cheek. Evie's hand was in her hair. Their bodies were close. For a moment, the whole world fell away. The kiss was freedom, healing, and a promise all at once.

"I just had to know what your lips on mine felt like." Audrey smiled sadly as she pulled away. It burned to know that they could have had a future together. "A kiss to remember me by."

"As if I could ever forget you." The burn on Evie's face was starting to heal, but it would still scar. "I don't want to let you go."

"Touching," Old Scratch smirked. He then tore Audrey away from Evie. "We'll be going now. I'll be seeing you." He gave off a salute, using only two fingers.

Black flames rose up in a circle around Audrey and Old Scratch. People started to shout. Half out of fear of the fire, the rest because Evie was running towards the flames. Audrey screamed as Evie reach through the black flames to grab her. Old Scratch threw his head back as he let out a roar of laughter. Then they were gone.

"Evie! Your hand!" Mal shrieked as she called attention to the girl's hand.

Much like her cheek, the flames were creeping up her arm. But this time her fingers and hand had already burned to ash, falling away like Cruella's cigarettes. Carlos picked up a pitcher of water that had been left on Audrey's nightstand. He flung the water at Evie to put the water out but the flames held on strongly.

"Hear these words that I shout: Quickly put the fire out!" Mal tried to spell but that didn't stop the creeping combustion.

Ben tried next to stop the fire by trying to put out the flames with his suit. The absurd thought of Imagine if it was a blazer! flashed in her head. Then the universe would truly have a sick sense of humor. It all made Evie start to laugh hysterically. Audrey was gone! And now she was being consumed by hellfire. She might as well be smacked about her body by a well-meaning King.

Then came Jay with the sword, raised above his head. He sliced cleanly and precisely above the fireline taking her arm, right through her bicep. Only Li Lonnie would have done a better job.

Evie fell onto her side and curled into a ball. She was crying not over the loss of her arm. But over the loss of Audrey. She clenched her eyes shut in anguish.

"You'll be okay, Evie!," someone told her. "Please be okay."

"Just hold on!"

Evie let go.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The Fear of Falling Apart. The aftermath of Scratch taking Audrey for Evie.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Everything hurt. Evie had been burned before. It was bound to happen when her mother had forced her to do all the cooking and cleaning around the house. This had been so much worse. Her face stung. Her arm throbbed. She figured she was on pain medication. But it did nothing to dull losing Audrey.

Knowing her friends, she wasn't alone in whatever room she was in. They'd want to be there for her when she woke up. Sure enough, she could hear whispers but couldn't make out what they were saying. Even though she wasn't up to seeing them, she wanted to get her awakening out of the way.

Evie opened her eye.

She would have opened the other one but it was covered with dressing. The sight that greeted her was a white tiled ceiling and fluorescent lighting. Her throat was dry, but she let out a sigh. Then she croaked out a "hey" to the room.

"Evie!" Mal and Jay loudly greeted her as they leaned into her field of vision.

"Hey." Carlos greeted her gently. "Do you want some water?"

"I'll get the doctor." That was Ben.

"I'm going to raise the head of your bed up, okay?" Carlos warned her. Evie just nodded.

Once she was sitting up, after grimacing and waving off Carlos's apologies, Evie looked around the room. It was big and full of flowers, balloons, and stuffed animals wishing her "Get well soon."

Carlos helped her drink from a glass of water. He didn't fuss. Evie appreciated it. It was how she patched up his cuts and scrapes. A gentle touch, but not too much coddling unless he signaled he wanted to be. Jay and Mal were hovering around her. Those two weren't the best at expressing their feelings. They looked like they were itching to touch her to make sure she was really there, but also afraid to break her.

Ben came back into the room with Fairy Godmother and a woman in a white coat. Evie could count the number of times she had seen a doctor in her life on one hand. This doctor was a lot younger than the one she had seen when she had first arrived in Auradon. She seemed to be a lot nicer too.

“Hi, Evie. I’m Dr. Sweet.” The young woman introduced herself.

“You sure are.” Jay half flirted, half tried to lighten the mood. Evie couldn’t help, but smile.

“Jay,” Fairy Godmother reprimanded the boy.

“I’m sorry about him.” Mal punched him in the arm, happy for something she was used to.

“You must get that a lot.”

“You’re not wrong,” Dr. Sweet had a playful twinkle in her eye. “As I was saying, I’m Dr. Sweet and I’m the main doctor handling your case. Before I start, do you want your friends here for this?”

“Yes. I do.” Evie looked at her hand. A nervous habit she had was clenching and unclenching her hands, fingers at her side, always moving like she was putting thread to cloth. She was aware of what she was missing.

“We were able to save your eye. For a burn that just happened today, it’s already healed. We started you on a cream that should minimize the scarring. Now, it’s not going to be 100% back to before the incident. But we’ll do our best.”

Evie wish she could say she cared. She was grateful to still have her eye, but what did beauty matter at a time like this. Is that what people thought of her, that she was so shallow? She wasn’t her mother. She just nodded her understanding.

“Your arm, unfortunately, we were unable to save.”

Evie swallowed the acid she wanted to spit out. She thought her missing arm was obvious.

“Cursed injuries like yours are beyond what magic can fix. Medical science can fill in the gaps. I salvaged enough of your arm to give you a better use of prosthetic once you start physical therapy. And we have you on prophylactic antibiotics and pain meds. I wish there was more we could do.” Dr. Sweet shook her head sadly. “If you need anything, don’t hesitate to ask.”

“You’re very lucky to be alive,” Fairy Godmother took over explaining. “Hellfire burns quickly and it would have consumed, you leaving nothing but ash. Jay’s quick thinking saved your life.”

“Thank you, Jay.” Evie gave him what she hoped was a smile, but knew it was a grimace. What kind of life was she left with knowing that she had failed to save Audrey?

“And I know I you guys helped him.”

Ben blushed awkwardly. Carlos looked away. Evie wished she took no pleasure in pointing out their own failures. They hadn't helped when it counted.

"Just get better, okay." Mal gave her shoulder a squeeze. Evie tensed at the touch. Mal took back her hand with a frown.

"Audrey's gone."

"Yes, sweetheart. She is."

Evie appreciated how direct Fairy Godmother was.

"And no one did anything to stop him." Evie laughed bitterly.

"Evie, you have to understand that Old Scratch is one of the most powerful beings in the world. The power behind the scenes of every villain. Pulling all their strings." Fairy Godmother shook her head.

"Why wasn't he on the island? Hades was," Ben asked not only as a king with a duty to protect his people, but since he was good and because he cared.

"Without him, there's no light. There's no goodness." Fairy Godmother frowned. "He could not be contained on the Isle. There's a balance we must keep."

It made sense now. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. It also seemed to be true when it came to good and evil. The villains were always defeated by the heroes. Did all that goodness bring equal evil? King Adam had banished all the villains to the Isle, but abandoned their children to rot. King Adam banned magic hoping to do good, but ended up harming magic users and magical beings in the process. Good created Evil. Villains made heroes. There was a balance.

Was there more to it?

Evie's head hurt and her heart mourned. Her patience was wearing thin.

"Evil triumphs when good men do nothing," Evie sneered making Fairy Godmother recoil. "I don't know why I expected any different from the people that let us be raised by the very people that abused their heroes."

She started to get out of the bed. Mal and Ben tried to stop her. She growled at them. Ben backed off. But Mal glared at her.

"Where do you think you're going?" Mal put a hand on her shoulder. "You need to rest and heal."

"I lost an arm. Not my legs. I'm going to get Audrey back. You can either help me or get out of my way." Evie shrugged out from under Mal's grasp.

"Why?"

“What?” Evie turned to glare at Mal.

“You weren’t exactly friends.”

“And if her friends had noticed what was going on with her,” Evie snarled, directing her bile at Ben. “She wouldn’t be in the hands of that- that bastard. I know you’re new to being good. Part of that means caring about other people.”

“Don’t talk to Ben like that!”

“She’s right, Mal. I never apologized to Audrey for breaking up with her in front of the whole school.” Ben held his hands up to defend Evie.

“That wasn’t your fault. You were-”

“Under your spell?” Evie spat out.

“I- You’re right. I owed her an apology. And I owe you one too.” Mal wrapped her arms around herself.

“Let me help you out. You actually have to say the words, ‘I’m sorry.’ And mean it.”

“Evie, please. I thought you were going to die. You’re still hurt. So why do you have to be the one that goes after Audrey?”

“Because no one else will.”

Evie dared everyone in the room to say otherwise.

“Do you have feelings for Audrey?” Carlos asked, finally speaking up.

“I thought kissing her made that clear.” Evie tugged at her hair.

“You kissed Audrey?” Fairy Godmother gasped.

“Let me guess, two girls kissing is wrong and unnatural?” Evie narrowed her eye at the older woman.

“No. Love is love. Some people in Auradon may frown upon it but I’m not one of them.” Fairy Godmother reassured her. “When it comes to Old Scratch, we have to be cautious.”

“Are you saying what I felt wasn’t real?”

“I’m not saying that. I’m saying with nurture and care, it could have been. With time.”

“You’re joking right? Some of your princesses met a prince and fell in love in like three days.” Evie rolled her eyes.

“You’re right.” Fairy Godmother held her hand up. “But that doesn’t change the fact that Old Scratch would let you have a taste of True Love’s Kiss only to take it away at the last minute. It’s what he does. He feeds off of destroying happy endings. So when he can, he does.”

“True Love’s Kiss?” Evie’s eye widened.

“Your cursed wounds should have been worse than they are. Hellfire- no one’s ever survived it,” Fairy Godmother explained.

Audrey and her had shared True Love’s Kiss. She hadn’t even known it was True Love’s Kiss when her lips had touched Audrey’s. All she knew it filled her with more warmth and passion than she had ever felt in her life. And she was never going to feel that way ever again.

Evie screamed in anguish. She leapt up from the hospital bed. Her IVs ripped out of her hand. Her hand stung for a bit, but overall it meant nothing to her. She started to run towards the door.

“Calm down!”

“Get her. She’s going to hurt herself!”

Someone grabbed her shoulder. She stomped on their foot and they let go. Ben stepped in front of her and she decked him in the face. Arms wrapped around her in a bear hug, pinning her arm against her side. She threw her head back and heard a yelp of pain. She must have broken their nose. She bared her teeth as the door to her room opened and men in scrubs came in.

“Don’t hurt her! Don’t hurt her!” Mal shrieked as she bit one of the men.

That’s when Evie froze. Her body didn’t respond to her straining to move it. She was no longer in control. She felt tears stream down her face. She thought she was still screaming but no sound was coming out. She could still hear everything around her, but could only see in front of her. She couldn’t even move her eyes.

“Thank you, Mal!” Fairy Godmother said.

Mal had spelled her. She felt a soft touch on her arm. If she was free, Evie would have snarled and pushed her away.

“I’m sorry, Evie. I’m so sorry.” Mal’s voice cracked.

Why did Mal sound so hurt when Evie was the one who had been betrayed?

“We’ll have to sedate and restrain her. She’s a danger to herself and others. She bit one of my nurses. And the rest of you should be checked out too.” That was Dr. Sweet. “Let’s get her to the bed.”

She was picked up by way too many hands. The mattress was soft. Atleast to the parts of her body that were actually touching it. She had been lunging for the door when she had been spelled so she wasn’t flat on her back. Still she felt a strap put across her waist. She watched a fabric cuff be wrapped around her outstretched wrist. A strap was attached to it.

She started to panic. If she had her voice, she would have begged them not to. The Evil Queen living up to her name used to chain her to the walls of rooms until she was done

cleaning it to her satisfaction.

“May I?”

“Yes. She’s still aware of everything. She’ll feel the needle.” Fairy Godmother explained.

“Evie, I’m going to inject you now. It’ll just be a quick little sting.” There was a prick in her deltoid. “It’ll take awhile to take effect.”

“Oh, Evie sweetheart.” Fairy Godmother cupped her cheek. “You’re burning up.”

Even though her muscles were rigid and unmoving, her body ached, begging to be released.

“You can reverse the spell now.”

Her body went limp. She finally let out the scream she was denied. She pulled on her restraint. She even kicked out. Her scream fell to a whimper as her brain turned to fog.

“Let me go. I won’t do it again.” Her voice slurred. “Please, Mommy.”

“I can’t be here.”

“Mal.”

“I think we should all go. You’ll let us know if anything changes, won’t you, Fairy Godmother?”

“Of course, Dear.”

“Just get some rest, Evie.”

Evie nuzzled into the gentle hand on her cheek as she closed her eye. She fell into a sleep, one fueled by magic and medication.

That’s when the dreams came.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone that's read this, left kudos and comments! I appreciate it.

Fic Title: Crossfire by Brandon Flowers of The Killers

Listening to This Is Gospel by Panic! at The Disco really helped me write this chapter.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Evie dreams about Audrey. Are they really just dreams?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

An endless white void was interrupted by black flames. The flames extinguished and Audrey stumbled forward. She landed on her hands and knees. She looked around. There was nothing there but her.

And Old Scratch.

Still, she cried out as she went to pound her fist on his chest. “Evie! What did you do to her?”

“What did I do to her?” Old Scratch caught Audrey by her wrists. “It’s what she did to herself. Play with fire and you get burned. Don’t worry she’s going to live an annoyingly long life.” He spat out, but then grinned as he added. “Without you. Her other half. Her True Love.”

Audrey was destroyed. Her eyes widened in shock.

“That’s right. You didn’t know. You could have been happy all this time. If you hadn’t been so afraid. But this all worked out for me. Let’s get started.” Old Scratch snapped his fingers. “Have a seat.”

A chair rammed into the back of her knees and she fell back into it was a gasp of pain. Straps clasped around her arms tightly and another one went across her waist tying her to the chair.

“Do your worst!” Audrey challenged.

“My sweet child. I’m not going to hurt you. Physically, at least. Don’t like to get my hands dirty if I can.”

“What do you want from me?” Audrey was confused. Sometimes the man was pleasant and cheerful. But she couldn’t forget how Evie burned. “Who’s villain are you?”

“You haven’t figured it out yet? I’m everyone’s villain.” Old Scratch grinned. “Please allow me to introduce myself. I’m a man of wealth and taste. I’ve been around for a long, long year. Stole many a man’s soul and faith. No? How about I’m the devil on your shoulder where the angels used to be.”

“You- “

“I go by many names, but Scratch will do.” He put his hands on the armrests of Audrey’s chair and leaned in close to her face. She tried to move her head back. “You’re going to relive your darkest moments. See where you went wrong. You’re no villain, but you’re no saint either. And that’s exactly what I need.”

Suddenly, it was the day the Villain Kids arrived in Auradon.

“You had me at prince. My mom’s a queen, which makes me a princess.” Evie greeted Ben with a gorgeous smile, the back of her hand held out to him.

Audrey shot the girl down. “The Evil Queen has no royal status here and neither do you.”

There was clapping as the scene paused except for Audrey. Scratch put his arm around her and pulled her in close to his side. “What a horrible thing to say. I love it. I knew I made the right choice. Look at her face. It would have hurt less if you had slapped her. And look at Ben. That’s disgust. He was so happy when Mal’s love spell gave him an out.”

Fastforward and Ben was singing to Mal and declaring his love for her in front of the whole school plus the away team!

“How embarrassing for you!”

Audrey was in her cheerleading uniform, watching Ben and Mal in the stands from the field. Scratch was next to her again.

“And they never even apologized.”

Audrey was crying now. Now, that Ben had proposed to Mal with that same stupid song, calling her name. She had lived this before and reliving it still hurt. She looked around this time and saw Evie looking at her with worry.

She watched everything happen again. Then again. And then a couple more times before she realized she could change things.

There were times where she tried to be better.

She tried to be nicer to Evie and her friends. She tried helping Jane with her confidence. She tried letting Ben go. She tried standing up for herself to her grandmother.

None of it mattered.

Then there were times she tried being worse.

She stole the scepter and attacked not only Mal, but Evie and the boys. She turned Mal into an old hag. Jay and Carlos were turned into dogs. While Evie became a cat with blue fur. The crone was too frail to do anything. The dogs were leashed and muzzled. But she rather liked the cat.

Until it clawed at her face and drew blood.

The next time she made sure Jane didn't escape. Another time she made an alliance with Uma. Audrey escalated the next time, getting Jay and Evie to turn to her side with the influence of Jafar's lamp and the rest of the Evil Queen's mirror. She tried and she tried.

The next-go-rounds weren't pleasant. She ended up dying. A lot. The worst deaths always came from Evie. She had the scars from those all over her body, from the cat scratch through her lip to the sword going right through her body. Those never reset. They were a constant reminder.

Over and over. A thousand lifetimes of mistakes rubbed in her face. Ruling lonely from her throne over a kingdom of slumber and dust when she won. Or banished for her worsening crimes, spat on and reviled when she lost.

She was never happy.

Until she gave up and gave in.

Audrey kissed Evie at the Royal Cotillion.

That one lasted the longest.

She and Evie had a life together. A marriage. Children. Grandchildren. Growing old together until she lost Evie when she passed away in their bed during the night.

Wrinkled and grey, Audrey was met by Scratch at Evie's grave after the funeral.

"Don't say I never gave you anything." Scratch put a hand on her shoulder.

"I could have had that." Audrey let loose a stream of tears.

"Come on." Scratch handed her a handkerchief to dry her eyes. "There's more you have to learn."

They were back in the void. Audrey was back to her youth. Her hand went up to her neck. That execution had been excruciating, all the more since it was an evil Evie that had ordered an inept hangman to do it. She licked her upper lip. The claw mark was still there.

"Now comes the hard part."

Chapter End Notes

I'm going to have a fast forward next chapter to age up the characters. And the next few chapters will have flashbacks to fill in gaps.

And shout out to tumblr user, deafchild2000. Audrey going Evil and getting Jay and Evie to join her was mentioned in one of their tumblr posts.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Evie needs information on Scratch and who better to supply it than the owner of Dragon Eye herself: Maleficent, the Mistress Of Evil.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is set after a time skip. But the part in italics is a flashback.

The dreams would continue in the years after Evie woke up from the coma she had fallen into. She never told her friends about dreaming of Audrey across thousands of lifetimes. The look on her friends' faces had told her what would happen if they ever found out. They had told her that lingering effects of the hellfire had caused a fever that had made her brain swell and that led to a coma. They had been glad she had survived, but they were already afraid they didn't have her back. Not completely. If she had told them about her dreams of Audrey, they could have taken them away from her.

Maybe the dreams were due to brain damage from the hellfire. Maybe she was losing her mind. Maybe they were a curse. But she couldn't lose Audrey again.

So she kept the dreams a secret.

Even the ones that were nightmares. The ones where she was evil. The ones where she became a new Evil Queen, worse than her mother. Worse than any villain before her. Sometimes Audrey ruled at her side. Sometimes Audrey challenged against her. Sometimes she killed Audrey. Once when she was the Evil Queen, she had sentenced Audrey to drop with a noose around her neck, watching her struggle to breathe. She could remember the warmth of Audrey's blood spilling over her hands as she ran her through with a sword. Even the scars she had given Audrey as a cat, made Evie feel guilty.

The worst was when Evie had Audrey fully and completely. Until the very end, when death did them part. Days and nights together. Picnic and trips to the beach. Late mornings where they slept in. Watching Audrey and wondering how she ever got to be so lucky. Children with the princess's eyes and smile. Birthdays with her grandchildren. Years and years, every minute a moment.

Evie chased those moments in her slumber.

But she couldn't sleep her life away.

Her waking moments were spent on finding a way to bring Audrey back.

Evie learned everything she could about Scratch.

She had come up with a plan of action. A running list of people she would talk to. She had a lot of free time, while she had been trapped in the hospital for three months.

It wasn't less than five minutes once they drove away after she had been discharged, that Evie made her demands.

"You want to what?" Mal screeched.

"You heard me." Evie stared the purple haired girl down. "We both know I'm going to do this. So let's not pretend I'm not going to do this the minute your back is turned. You can be with me or against me. I'm going to speak to Maleficent."

"Well you can't." Mal scoffed.

"Or what? You'll lock me up again?," Evie growled. "You don't get to make decisions for me anymore."

"It wasn't safe. You were a danger to yourself and others. I watched you throw yourself into fire. You almost died, Evie. You weren't even conscious for a day before you tried to charge off on a fool's errand! Without a plan or any idea of any idea of who you're up against."

"You're not my mother. Even if you act like her. You had me committed! You left me there, Mal. You owe me this."

Mal clenched her jaw. "I know I do. Which is why I spoke to my dad. He told me that Scratch is the worst evil. Hades is afraid of him. So are most of the other villains we talked to."

"And your mother?"

"Refused to speak to me. Or Hades."

"Oh, she'll speak to me."

They went to Castle Beast. Ben received them in the parlor. Carlos and Jay were with him.

"Evie!" Carlos ran up to her and picked her up in his arms.

"Carlos, you can't have missed me that much! You just saw me yesterday." Evie laughed.

Carlos had visited the most. Jay came sometimes but he felt guilty so he didn't come as much. Evie had refused to see Mal.

"Ben, you were right." Mal begrudged. "She asked to speak to Maleficent right out the gate. Literally."

"I didn't ask. I told you I was." Evie lifted her chin up defiantly.

"Well, she's ready for you." Ben clapped his hands together. "After lunch!"

Evie cocked her head to the side to study Ben. "Okay."

Ben let out a breath, as if he had been worried she would say no. "Great. I had the chef prepare your favorites."

"Hmm. Thank you, Ben." Evie followed the king to the kitchen, where there was a cozy little breakfast nook.

"I thought we could just have something small for now. But if you're up for it, we'd love to throw you a bigger welcome back party. Everyone would love to see you."

"Yeah. That sounds great." Evie agreed if partly to put the King at ease as she sat down on the nook bench. Ben beamed happily at her.

Lunch was a very quiet affair. Evie was a little saddened that they couldn't pick up where they had left off before everything had gone wrong. But she knew that everything had changed. The boys would be handling her like she was made of glass. Mal was watching her every move. Still, the purple haired fairy had been distracted when Ben tried to tell them all a funny joke to break the tension. That's when Evie made her move.

Then it was time to talk to Maleficent.

Mal lead her to a room in what used to be the dungeons of Castle Beast. There was a group of seven guards outside armed with what had to be iron weapons. The door was made out of the same metal.

"This room is used for questioning. My mother. Some of the other magical villains. The walls and the ceiling are all made of iron. It's layered with a magical barrier and then another layer of iron. Outside of it, Maleficent remains a lizard," Mal explained.

"I appreciate this, Mal."

"If you're going to do this, I'm coming in with you."

"Whatever makes this go faster," Evie shrugged.

The guard closest to the door, unlocked it for them. There was a barrier behind it. Just like the one that had been around the Isle. Evie waited for the barrier to open so she could step through.

Evie walked in. The four walls of the room were metal. Mal shuddered as she came in behind her.

"The iron?"

“Yes” Mal nodded. “It takes a huge amount to bother me since I’m only-half fae. Being a demigod helps. But not as much as you would think.”

Evie thought and looked at the sole occupant of the room seated at a table.

“Well, well. Mirror, mirror on the wall, someone’s no longer the fairest of them all.”

Maleficent looked frail and worn-down sitting at the interrogation table. The little glass habitat for her lizard form was on the floor.

“Mother,” Mal warned.

Evie waved it off as she sat down across from the villain. Mal remained standing, arms crossed against her chest.

“Maleficent,” Evie smirked her greeting. That’s all she said.

Minutes went by.

Evie knew villains like Maleficent. They loved to hear themselves talk. Her mother did the same all over her castle, ranting about every little thing. Evie could see Mal beginning to squirm out of the corner of her eye. Evie continued to stare unflinchingly at Maleficent.

“What do you want? Out with it! Stop wasting my time, girl,” Maleficent huffed.

Evie cocked her head to study Maleficent. She had played this game with the psych doctors. But she only told them what they wanted to hear. Her mother had taught her about people. Then she learned more on her own. How far flirting or a compliment could get her. She was smart about it by playing dumb. Everyone let things slip. Once she reached Auradon, it got a little harder. They didn’t trust her because of who her mother was. But then she treated everyone the way she wanted to be treated, and it worked. She found she did enjoy being kind and nice and how it made her feel. She was nice to people first, but if they wronged her or treated her loved ones poorly then she’d give them what they deserved.

“Let me guess. You’re here because of your Princess Audrey. Yes, my darling girl and King Benny Boy were here to ask about her. Not very original was she? Sleeping spells and turning people to stone? Not that I blame her. Why not imitate the best?”

“Are you,” Evie paused. “The best, Maleficent?”

“Of course. The most feared. The most powerful. And good-looking too.” Maleficent winked at her.

“That’s true,” Evie leaned forward. Mal scoffed. “Dragon Eye could have no better to wield it than you.”

“Yes, that stupid little girl didn’t know what she was getting herself into.”

“What was Audrey getting herself into?” Evie asked calmly. She knew she couldn’t lose it. She couldn’t show any anger or anguish. It’s what Maleficent wanted.

“She took my place,” Maleficent grinned. “Dragon Eye wasn’t a gift. It was a business transaction. A soul for all the powers of Hell. Old Scratch didn’t say it had to be mine.”

Evie hated how self-congratulatory the villain was. Sitting there, so proud of herself. Evie knew Maleficent would brag about herself but she hadn’t been expecting this.

“How... clever. And he allowed that?” Evie asked slowly.

“He had to. Old Scratch is nothing but fair. Anyone that uses Dragon Eye to get what they want, gets what they deserve. Except me. I’m still here and the precious princess isn’t.”

“How did you pull it off? Getting one over Old Scratch?”

“I put a spell on it.” Maleficent looked at Evie like she was stupid.

Evie decided to use that. “I don’t understand.”

“Look. Dragon Eye would give you everything you wanted. Your deepest, darkest desires. And what does everyone want?” Maleficent was relaxed and enjoying herself. “Power. So I put a lure on it that would attract someone at their weakest and at their rock-bottom. It wouldn’t work otherwise. Dragon Eye wanted a tasty, corruptible morsel. Someone that lost everything so their emptiness could overflow with evil. Sound familiar?”

“Never in my wildest dreams could I imagine it being Sleeping Beauty and Philip’s spawn,” Maleficent cackled. “Their only child. Just gone. Delicious. Wish I could have been there to see Aurora’s face when you told her.

“So thank you, Mal for giving me the opportunity to hurt Aurora’s family one last time.”

Evie bristled. She was mad at Mal at the moment and would be mad at her for awhile, but Maleficent was being too cruel. The woman had never complimented or thanked her daughter for anything. To do it now, for something Mal blamed herself for was something she couldn’t let go unpunished. But she’d get to that.

“How did you get in touch with Old Scratch?”

“Why? You want him to burn off the rest of your face?” Maleficent chuckled at her own joke. “Oh? I see. You want to get her back. Well, you’re going to need a very good lawyer.”

Evie eyed Maleficent’s hand flat on the table. Quick as a flash, she stabbed the knife she had stolen at lunch through Maleficent’s hand right to the table.

“Evie!” Mal ran closer to the table as her mother screamed in pain.

“Well, I didn’t think that would work.” Evie chuckled, as she left the knife in and stood up. “Lucky for me, the castle staff doesn’t trust us Villain Kids enough to bring out the good silverware.”

Mal reaches for the knife to pull it out, but pulled her hand back when she got burned.

“Too much iron here for you to do that, Mal.” Evie gestured around the room. “Sorry about that.”

“You have a brain in that pretty head of yours,” Maleficent hissed. “Too bad you’re not smart enough to know that I’m going to rip it off your body when I get out of here.”

Evie grabbed the hilt of the knife, and wiggled it out of the table. Maleficent howled in pain.

“I’ll ask you again. How do you get in contact with Old Scratch?” Evie gritted out.

“You don’t! He finds you,” Maleficent growled.

“That’s enough, Evie!”

“Thank you, Maleficent,” Evie chirped cheerfully while pulling the knife out. Then, knife still in fist, she punched the villain in the face.

“And that was for Mal.” Evie brushed her fist off on her shirt to show Maleficent how beneath her she really was. She slipped the knife back in her pocket.

“Evie! We’re leaving.”

“Be seeing you.” Evie gave the villain a two finger salute.

Once outside the room, Mal nodded at the guards. “Send for a doctor. One that knows how to keep their mouth shut.”

“Yes, My Lady.” The guards saluted, and then one that spoke jogged away to retrieve a doctor.

Evie walked ahead of Mal. She didn’t stop to see if the other girl was following her. She knew her friend was behind her since she going to yell at her. She laughed to herself. Let Mal yell at her. She got what she wanted. She went into the kitchen.

“Evie!”

She turned at her name being called. Here came the lecture.

But Evie was surprised when Mal embraced her instead. She tensed in the other girl’s arms, but allowed herself to be hugged.

“I missed you so much. And I still miss you,” Mal held on tightly. “Everything’s changed. I’m being selfish, I know, thinking you would still be the same after losing Audrey. But you scared me back there.”

“Let me see your hand,” Evie held her own hand out. She couldn’t blame Mal for hesitating to follow the order. But she relented when Evie raised an eyebrow and cocked her head to the side.

Mal's hand wasn't so bad. It was just a superficial burn, even if there was some blistering. She had seen worse on the Isle. Some of which she had been responsible for. She smirked when she thought of Maleficent's hand.

Evie lead Mal to the sink. She started washing Mal's hand with soap and warm water. Evie went to the first aid kit on the wall for easy access. She paused to look at Mal then nodded towards a chair. Mal got the idea. She sat down and waited for Evie. Armed with sterile gauze and ointment, Evie stood in front of the other girl. She began to bandage Mal's hand.

"Are we- Are we still friends?" Mal asked, afraid of the answer.

Evie sighed. "I know you did what you did because you love me. We're sisters. And I probably would have done the same thing if the roles were reversed. But it hurt. And right now, we're not okay. It does mean a lot that you're helping. That you know I'm struggling."

Mal had accepted that. Mal always came through for her in the end. She had never given up on Evie, no matter how much she could fall. While Mal's life was coming together, Evie's life had been falling apart. Evie hated not being in control. She had wreaked havoc and destruction to feel in control. Hurting Maleficent felt good, and she still savored it after all these years. But it was because Maleficent deserved it. The Mistress Of Evil deserved to be punished. Hurting Mal had felt good. But only for a moment before Evie's guilt had set in.

There was a pull inside her. A rage she had that she could quiet by punishing the guilty. All the anger was too loud for the longest time.

Maleficent wasn't the last person she would punish. Just the first.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Evie pays a visit to her mother. Then Evie gets warned twice.

Chapter Notes

Even more flashbacks from Evie in this chapter.

Thank you to everyone reading!

After questioning Maleficent, Evie had been restless. There had been so much to do. She had gone back to the Isle of the Lost. While there had been several people Evie needed to talk to after Maleficent, she had paid a visit to the Evil Queen first.

Her mother hadn't been happy to see her.

"So it's true? You're not even bothering to hide those hideous scars?" The Evil Queen sneered.

Even though Mal had brought down the barrier, Evie couldn't feel much enjoyment from getting any Villain Kids off the Isle. She had still been a patient at the Royal Hospital's Mental Health Ward. Auradon was still going through an adjustment period. Some common thieves and conmen were taking advantage of a docile, naive population that didn't know the usual tricks. The Royal guards were busy rounding offenders up and putting them in a new prison facility. This time the punishment would fit the crime. Common thieves and those dealing in stolen goods weren't on the same level as people that tried to take over kingdoms. No dumping all of them on the Isle for the rest of their lives.

But for the most part, a majority of the Villain Kids, Sidekicks and adult villains had reformed and were ready to live in Auradon.

So the worst villains, those who irredeemable and refused to change, were still stuck on the Isle under house arrest.

Then there was her mother. The Evil Queen would rather rule over an empty castle than be a commoner in Auradon.

"Hello, mother." Evie greeted cheerily.

She knew exactly how to provoke the woman. She had her hair pulled back in a neat braid. She had asked Carlos to help her with it. She had taught him years ago and he was always so gentle when he braided her hair when he would visit her on the ward. This time he had asked if she was sure about having her hair up. He was worried about her scars out in public. But she was sure. She wanted the burn on her face to be fully on display when she went to talk to her mother.

“How could you let that happen to your face?” The Evil Queen cried out.

“You’re not actually concerned are you?” Evie laughed bitterly. Her mother blamed her for every little thing. “I knew better than to get my hopes up.”

“Of course, I’m concerned. You’ll never land a prince now. I can’t even look at you. No one will ever love you with a face like that and that ugly thing at your side.”

“I have people that love me. My friends. And I didn’t get a prince. There was a princess. We shared True Love’s Kiss.”

“A princess. I didn’t raise you to be so disgusting.” The Evil Queen spat out. She turned her head away, nose upturned as if she smelt something foul. “But you were always a disappointment.”

“But the princess is gone. Taken by the man that did this to me!” When Evie’s raised voice got the attention of her mother back on her, Evie gestured at her face and missing arm with her remaining hand. “The same man that gave you your Magic Mirror.”

“He came back for me!” The Evil Queen stood up. She went to her Mirror to preen. “Just like he said he would.”

“I don’t think that means what you think it does.” Evie chuckled. If anyone deserved to be taken by Old Scratch, it would be her mother. “What did you give Old Scratch in return for the Magic Mirror and your potion knowledge?”

“He wanted a child. So I gave him Snow White.” The Evil Queen applied blood red lipstick and blotted her lips.

“You didn’t though.” Evie thought of her stepsister.

Snow White and King Florian were the rulers of Charmington without a care in the world. They had reached out to Evie when she first arrived in Auradon and offered her a place to stay away from Auradon Prep. She didn’t want to impose on the couple that had just started a family. But the offer was open ended if Evie ever wanted to reach out.

“Snow White is still a queen. And she has two kids now. You’re a grandmother,” Evie smirked.

“Don’t say such horrid things.” The Evil Queen glared at her. “Maybe Old Scratch took your bratty princess instead.”

That wiped the gleeful expression off Evie's face. Evie took a deep breath to steady herself. There could be some truth to her mother's words.

"How did you get in touch with him? The Magic Mirror?"

"The Mirror? Don't make me laugh. As if he would make something that would let him be found so easily. He likes his mystery. He just comes and goes as he pleases. Like the wind. He just left in the morning without a word. But he was so handsome. That devilish grin. And then he came back later. I even tried to give him you if he wanted a child so much. But even he didn't want you. And I can't blame him."

Evie hated to hear what she had always known to be true. She knew her mother didn't want her. She had just thought she was a mistake that her mother had turned into an advantage. A tool for Grimhilde to get what she wanted by training her and molding into what she thought a prince would want. But her origins were worse. The Evil Queen had a child on purpose to save herself.

"I told them I didn't want to see you. When the King and Maleficent's brat came to say you had almost died. You would have been better off dead than disfigured."

Evie clenched her jaw. Her mother just keep talking, and putting her down.

"At least you still have your gorgeous hair. You don't deserve it. Everything is wasted on you."

Evie pulled her dressmaker scissors from a sheath on her leg. They were a beautiful pair of professional scissors with gold plated handles. They were wicked sharp. They could cut through her fabrics so smoothly. And it also helped that Mal had charmed them to always stay sharp. She had missed the weight of them in her hand. She hadn't held them since losing most of her right arm. She knew that it was losing Audrey that was really stopping her from doing what she loved. Bringing Audrey back consumed her waking moments.

"What are you going to do? Stab me? Your own mother. I'm not Maleficent." The Evil Queen cackled.

Evie opened the scissors and closed them on her braid. In one snip, her braid fell to the ground. What was left of her hair brushed against her cheeks.

The Evil Queen shrieked as she clutched her chest as she collapsed onto her throne. "You should have just stabbed me instead. You really know how to hurt me, child."

"Don't be so dramatic, mother. You'll get wrinkles." Evie picked up the braid and laid it at her mother's feet. "I get my love of theatrics from you after all."

"Get out of my sight!"

"Gladly," Evie gave a mocking curtsy and was gone.

Evie had gone straight to the Museum of Cultural History next to retrieve her Magic Mirror .

But they had not let her have what was rightfully hers. Ever since Audrey had so easily broken in and stolen the Queen's Crown and Dragon's Eye, they had increased security with more guards and magical containment. The curator had called Ben to report his fears that they had another "Princess Audrey" on their hands. It had been the wrong thing for Evie to overhear. But the man was able to walk away with no broken bones only because Dizzy Tremaine and Celia Facilier had been there to talk her down long enough for Ben and the others to show up.

"Mr. Faust! Where's the danger?" Ben addressed the curator as he rushed into the museum with a group of armed guards. "Evie, how did you know to come here? Someone is trying to take your Magic Mirror."

Mal took one look at Evie and figured it out. "Ben, Evie is the one trying to take the Magic Mirror."

"And what did you do to your hair?" Jay gawked. Carlos elbowed him in the side.

"I got Evie to agree to let me fix it. So don't worry." Dizzy interrupted. "I'm thinking something cute, but edgy."

"Just what exactly is going on here?" Mr. Faust, the curator looked around the room. Some of the guards lowered their weapons waiting on orders from their King. Mal was pinching the bridge of her nose, eyes clenched tight. Celia Facilier looked bored.

"Everyone just shut up!" Evie shouted. "I'm here for the Magic Mirror."

"See! I told you she was trying to take the Magic Mirror." Mr. Faust pointed a finger at Evie. "She threatened me!"

"First of all, it belongs to me." Evie gritted out, as if the curator was painfully slow. "I asked for it nicely."

"It was donated to the museum."

"Yeah. By me!" Evie stepped towards Mr. Faust.

"Maybe we can reach some sort of compromise." Ben got in between Evie and the curator.

"King Ben, I'm so honored that you would come here personally to oversee this. Guards, arrest this girl."

"Who do you think you are? You can't order the Royal Guards around." Mal went to Ben's side, but was closer to her friend. "Evie, get your mirror."

"But the Magic Mirror is a priceless piece of history-"

"Say Magic Mirror one more time." Mal glared at him. "King Ben is here to oversee its use."

"You can't!"

"I assure you. She can." Ben ordered.

The curator unlocked the case the Magic Mirror was enclosed in. Evie took it up in her hand. Everyone watched her hold it. It didn't feel right.

Evie smashed it on the floor.

Everyone recoiled from the sound and the shards.

"Where's the real mirror?" Evie grabbed the curator by his tie.

"A man came to the museum. He asked me what I desired and I told him all the knowledge in the world. He told me a girl was going to come looking for the Ma- the artifact and all I had to do was prevent her from getting it and I could have everything I've ever wanted. I destroyed the mirror."

"Do you know what you've done!" Evie shouted into the man's face.

"Evie, stop." Ben asked.

Evie let go of him and he stumbled backwards into the empty pedestal where the mirror used to reside. He slid to the floor. No one helped him up.

"Well, when does it start?" Evie crouched close to the man. She tilted her head to the side.

"What?" Mr. Faust stammered.

"When do you start to know everything there is to know?" Evie quickly thought of a solution. "I have questions and you'll have all the answers."

"He said-" Faust stopped and clutched at his head. He clenched his eyes shut and started to scream. Blood seeped out of his ears and nose.

"What the hell?" Mal shouted.

"Did his brain just melt out of his head?" Jay gasped in awe.

Celia was comforting Dizzy, who looked a little pale after watching everything.

"That wasn't very helpful." Evie sighed. She checked his pulse. "He's still alive. Not much left of him though."

"I guess there's some things man just wasn't meant to know." Carlos examined the curator.

Evie looked at him. He was right. This was something beyond what mere mortals could grasp. It meant it was going to be hard to find answers. So far all she got was more questions than answers. Maleficent and her mother were dead ends. She was willing to do anything though.

“Can we go?” Celia had her arm wrapped around Dizzy, who looked like she was going to be sick. “Please?”

“Evie and I are going to make sure the girls get back okay.” Mal announced to her fiancé.

“Go. We’ll take care of everything here.” Ben kissed her forehead. Then he ordered the Royal guards into action.

While Mal did care about the two younger girls, Evie knew her friend wanted to get her alone. Evie hadn’t exactly filled her in on her plan to see her mother. She had given Mal the slip after lunch to go to the Isle.

It was shaping up to be a tense ride in the Royal Limo back to the castle. Celia worried over Dizzy. Dizzy insisted she was fine. Mal glared at Evie, saving all her unhappy words for when the two of them were alone. Evie simply sat back and sipped on a sparkling water.

Celia pleaded for a distraction and Evie decided to help by giving Dizzy one.

“So, Dizzy. For my makeover, what do you think?”

That was enough to get the girl to stop looking so green as she launched into a discussion of short hairstyles for women and current trends. As the limo pulled up in front of the castle, Evie was finishing up her drink and the story of her haircut.

“I would have loved to see the look on the Evil Queen’s face when you did that.” Celia howled with laughter, while Dizzy giggled. They thanked the driver as they got out. Mal instructed him to return to the museum and wait for Ben.

Then she looked at the younger girls.

“Girls, why don’t you find Lumier and tell him I said you guys can watch a movie in the home theater. And tell him to ask Chef Fieri I said you guys could have him whip up some fun snacks.”

“Thanks, Mal.” Dizzy hugged her. Then she hugged Evie. “I’m glad you’re okay.”

“Sorry if I scared you.” Evie meant it.

“I understand.” Dizzy meant what she said too.

Dizzy had visited her in the hospital, even when Evie had told her to spend more time exploring Auradon and enjoying herself. But the younger girl was adamant at spending that time with her to help her recover. The two of them were a lot alike: amazing taste in fashion, raised and treated more like a servant than a daughter, nice because they chose to be, and able to find a silver lining in anything. But Evie couldn’t find a silver lining in losing Audrey. Not a one. But it would be cruel to crush that ability in Dizzy, to drag her down with anger and despair. So Evie forced herself to lift herself up to Dizzy’s happy and bright level.

“I’m free for my haircut whenever.” Evie ended their hug. “Just go have fun with Celia.”

"I'll find you later, okay?" Dizzy grabbed Celia's hand.

"Good luck, Evie!" Celia called over her shoulder as they left the two older girls.

"They're cute. Reminds me of us. Well before all this." Evie gestured at herself. She smiled at Mal. "So, what did you want to talk to me about."

"First, I'm sorry. I never realized how hard it was to be..." Mal bit her lip, thinking of what she wanted to say.

"The Team Mom?" Evie suggested with a smirk. "The mom friend."

"Ha! Yeah." Mal rubbed the back of her neck and didn't look Evie in the eye. "The responsible one that looks after the others. The one everyone goes to for advice and comfort. Especially me. How you tried to get me and Uma, all of us, to put our differences aside. You make sure I don't run off and do crazy things. But you're always right behind me. You were willing to leave Auradon when I was afraid of becoming Queen. Which brings me to my second thing."

Mal blew out a long breath. "I want to support you. But you make it so hard. I thought I was the reckless one. I just want you to be smart about this. You saw your mother alone. And then you went to the Museum. I don't know whether to be mad or grateful that their security guards are still lame."

"Mal, I really don't know what I'm doing." Evie ran her hand through her hair. "I want something. So I take it. I'm not really thinking of the consequences. I can't."

"Well, you should. You may have lost Audrey. But we're still here for you. Let us help."

Evie explained that her plan was to strong arm more villains into giving her information. Mal reminded her that she had already interrogated some villains and had transcripts made. Most were useless, but there were people Evie determined she needed to follow up with herself. Ben had put together a small team of trusted scholars and researchers in the kingdom, and they were doing their best at going through the Royal Library. Faust from the Museum had been one of the scholars, so that really made Evie want to do it herself. Who knows what information that man kept to himself in his thirst for knowledge.

It was hours later that Evie was alone in the kitchen, about to make herself some valerian root and chamomile tea. She wanted to sleep. But it wasn't readily coming to her. Maybe tonight she would have a good dream about Audrey. It's what she was hoping for, but she'd take a nightmare just to see her.

"Can't sleep?"

"Hey, Celia," Evie greeted the younger girl. "Yeah. How about you? I could make you some tea if you like."

"Okay." Celia nodded. "Do you need help? I've brewed tea for readings before."

“Just grab us some mugs and sit tight.” Evie could feel the younger girl’s eyes on her as she pulled out a kettle and filled it with water. She put it on the stovetop to heat the water. She measured out some loose leaf tea into their mugs. She sat down across from Celia and waited.

“Dizzy did a great job with the hair, by the way! It’s not that hideous hack job anymore. Full offense.”

“I wasn’t worried.” Evie ran her hand over the bristles, tickling the tip of her fingers. Short at the sides and long at the top, so she could comb it up in a pompadour or slick it back. Or she could wear the long part swept off to the side if she wasn’t feeling fancy. “Even if I never had my hair this short. Dizzy is amazing at what she does.”

“Dizzy is amazing.” Celia smiled, thinking of the other girl.

“I’m glad you two are friends.” Evie said gently.

Celia’s face scrunched up. “Yeah. Friends.”

Evie leaned back against the counter. An awkward silence hung in the kitchen. She didn’t mean anything by what she said. She also didn’t want to push the younger girl into confessing something she wasn’t ready to talk about. Evie had a feeling about what was bothering Celia.

The kettle whistled. Evie finished preparing their tea.

“Hey, Evie?”

“Yes, Celia?”

Maybe Celia was ready to talk.

“I was talking to my dad on the phone earlier. He wants to talk to you. Just a heads up.”

Or maybe Celia just wanted to fill the awkward silence.

“That’s good because I want to talk to him. About his Friends on the Other Side.” Evie set the two cups on the table between them. Celia looked nervous about something as she sat across from Evie. It was so unlike the usually confident girl.

“And Evie, can I ask you something?” Celia looked down at her hands.

“Of course. Anytime you need to, I’m here for you.”

“I just didn’t want to bother you. With everything you’ve been going through.” Celia bit her lip.

“Oh, Celia.” Evie wrapped her arm around the younger girl’s shoulder. She remembered how Mal said she was the Team Mom, the one that everyone went to for warmth and advice. She really had been lacking if the younger kids wanted to stay away. “I know I’ve been someone

else lately. But I will always be here to help anyone that needs it. Especially you, Dizzy and the twins."

"You were awesome at the museum, by the way. That curator was a jerk to Dizzy all the times we've been there." Celia leaned into Evie's side.

Evie had even more of a feeling about Celia was getting at. About what the girl was working up the courage to tell her.

"Dizzy likes looking at the exhibits for inspiration for her pieces. And I-"

"Like looking at Dizzy." Evie finished for the girl.

"Yeah."

"Well, Cee. Dizzy likes looking at you, too. You have something special there. Don't be afraid to go for it."

"Thanks, Evie." Celia smiled as she wrapped her hands around the warm mug.

"Anytime."

"Could I read your tea leaves. To show my appreciation?"

"Of course!" Evie laughed. How could she say no when the girl was so eager and excited?

Once Evie finished her tea leaving a few sips left at the bottom, she did as Celia instructed. She turned her teacup clockwise three times. Next she turned the teacup upside down on a saucer. Finally she turned the teacup three times counterclockwise.

"There."

Evie paused before she set the teacup rightside up. "This is just for fun, right?"

"Yeah. Just for fun," Celia nodded. Evie handed the younger girl her teacup.

"Oh," Celia said as she studied the tea leaves in the cup.

"That bad, huh?" Evie chuckled. "Figures."

"Not bad. I just see a lot of sadness. But there's some good omens too, to outweigh the bad ones."

Evie watched as Celia frowned at one of the symbols by the cup's handle. She concentrated on another clump of leaves that looked like an old fashioned key to her.

"The key. In the past, you had a difficult childhood, but with the help of good friends things improved and you were happy."

Evie grinned, and tried not to interrupt. Anyone who knew her, knew what it was like for her growing up on the Isle. It was no secret that Evie has been chosen to go to Auradon. That she

and her friends were able to defeat Maleficent. When they came upon obstacles, they could overcome them. She bit her lip though when she thought about Celia's words.

Evie had been happy. Her fashion business had been doing great. She had bought a starter castle. They were bringing more kids over from the Isle, starting with some of the younger ones. She and Doug had split on good terms and agreed to be friends. Speaking of friends, everything was amazing for all of them. It was Jane's birthday. Mal and Ben had just gotten engaged.

She remembered it then. Something made her look for Audrey in the crowd. The princess looked destroyed. She seemed to crumble further when Queen Leah spoke to her. But Evie didn't bother to check up on the girl. She didn't think that Audrey could break so much that she'd be tempted by Maleficent's scepter.

"Evie?"

"Sorry, you were saying?" Evie looked up at Celia.

"The cross. Right now, your life is full of suffering."

"Well, you don't need the leaves to know that." Evie smiled sadly.

"But," Celia nodded in sympathy. "You're making sacrifices for the good of your loved ones. So have courage and keep faith."

If Celia was reading the cup in a clockwise movement, then there were clumps that looked like a knife and a big dog. At least as far, as Evie could tell. It could have been an ice cream cone and a duck, if she squinted. But knowing her luck, the shapes didn't mean anything good.

"Sometime in the coming weeks, or further along, the near future, you're going to be facing difficult times ahead. You're in pursuit of something. It's no easy task. You're on a hazardous hunt. The dagger represents danger."

"I mean it is a one letter difference," Evie joked. "I was hoping it was an ice cream cone. And that's probably not going to be a duck."

"No," Celia shook her head with a chuckle. "It's a wolf."

"A wolf? It couldn't be a sweet, little puppy?" Evie pouted.

"It's no puppy," Celia shook her head. "It's huge."

"Is that bad? As in Big Bad Wolf?"

"The wolf. It's all subjective and entirely up to the seer. Some would say it's bad. That the wolf is an enemy to watch out for. There's someone you shouldn't trust. Or there's more hard times in your future. But I've always seen the wolf as a good omen. You'll help your loved ones feel at ease in their lives. You'll bring them comfort."

It's what Evie did. Mal had said she was the one all their friends went to for warmth. And maybe she would do that. She could go back to being everyone's port in the storm. Whatever her friends needed. There was a hole in her heart that could never be filled. But she still had a heart. She still cared. She wouldn't stop caring so no one else could feel the hurt and loss she did.

"And the wolf is so big and closest to this."

Celia gestured to the bottom of the cup. The wolf was curled up against a clump of tea leaves, as if protecting it. It was a shape that Evie knew well. It featured heavily in her clothing brand's name and logo. It made her smile.

"A heart."

"That's right," Celia beamed. "The heart represents love. And there's a lot of people here that love you, Evie. Now and forever. You're going to have a life full of love, no matter what happens. I see that for you. It's what the future holds because you're so easy to love. A big sister and a friend."

"Thank you." Evie wiped a tear away from her eye but she was still smiling.

"Since you made the tea," Celia stood up. "I'll clean up."

"Wait," Evie stopped the girl. "What's this symbol mean? The one you didn't want to tell me about."

"Don't ask me that, Evie. Let's just end it all on a good note. It's just for fun, remember?"

"Right." Evie could tell how spooked the other girl was. She didn't want to push her. "You head up to bed. I'm sure Dizzy will wonder where you are if she wakes up and you're not there."

"Yeah." Celia bit her lip and nodded. They both knew what Dizzy was like. "Okay. Good night, Evie."

"I'll see you in the morning. We can have waffles for breakfast. Sweet dreams, Celia!"

The girl left her alone in the kitchen.

Once she was alone, Evie studied her cup. The symbol that Celia didn't tell her about was obvious to her. As obvious as the heart was. It looked like a man with horns.

"The devil."

The cup began to shake violently. It burst into flames. Black flames. Then the cup shattered into pieces.

"I'm not going to be scared off that easily," Evie smirked as she looked around the room.

She was glad she had sent Celia to bed. Faust literally losing his mind at the museum and an exploding tea cup were warnings. Celia was tough, but the girl worried. She probably would have told Mal about the teacup right away. And the whole castle would be woken up.

It could all wait until morning. She'd have her chat with with Dr. Facilier. She would bring it up then.

What Celia had seen in the tea leaves had come to pass. Difficult times came and went. Same with suffering. She had helped her friends navigate their heartaches and triumphs. She had witnessed engagements and weddings. All while she was on her own quest to bring Audrey home.

And then, she least expected it, Evie had found love.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Evie meets with Dr. Facilier. And then she calls out Queen Belle.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Sleep didn't come as easily as it used to for Evie. Lately, she needed a chemical helping hand. Potions to fall asleep and caffeine to stay alert. Luckily she wasn't too far gone that she needed a lot of sleeping potion. Just enough in her bedtime tea so she could go to sleep.

She went about making her tea. And she thought about what Celia Facilier had predicted for her when her tea leaves had been read. It had been years and years. Through all that time, Evie had lived her life awake and had lived many lifetimes in dreams.

Celia had seen a devil in the tea leaves. If only Old Scratch was so easy to find.

"Thank you for meeting me, Miss Evie." Dr. Facilier stood as Evie approached the interrogation table.

"I appreciate you coming to me before I went looking for you." Evie smiled as they shook hands.

Villain and Villain Kid laughed as they sat down across the table from each other. Mal was playing chaperone again. Evie kept her on her on her periphery. Mal was projecting an air of toughness and authority. That worked on the teens of Auradon and some of the ones from the Isle. But it was all insignificant to a villain like The Shadowman. Evie let Mal come because she knew how useless and not in control her friend had felt. Mal crossed her arms and glared at Dr. Facilier, like she was there as a bodyguard.

"Oh, I like you. I have no doubt of what you could put me through. The Nice Ones are always the ones to look out for." He waggled his hand, his pointer finger up. "Raised on the Isle and you choose to be kind and thoughtful of others, but deadly when it comes to protecting people who need it. That's why I know my youngest is in good hands."

"Celia's a good kid." Evie nodded. "She deserves a good life. All the kids do."

"And you out of everyone in Auradon will make sure she gets it. I know you've been absent for awhile. But it's understandable given the circumstances and who's involved. I'm glad King Ben and Captain Uma have stepped up." Dr. Facilier glanced at Mal and smirked. "And I must apologize. Lady Mal too, of course."

Everyone in the room knew that Facilier's apology was just empty words. And that tacking on Mal as an afterthought was a slight against the future queen consort. Not many people knew that Mal had wanted to close the barrier for good. Facilier was one of the few that knew. Even though Mal came through in the end and destroyed the barrier instead, the man was always going to be suspicious. Evie couldn't blame him. Going by the guilty look on Mal's face, the dragon couldn't either.

"Dr. Facilier, I hope you can help Evie. She's read the transcript of the interview you gave us when she was," Mal tensed up. "When she was in the hospital. But she has more questions."

"And I have more answers." Dr. Facilier leaned forward on the table. "We both know I wasn't exactly forthcoming, Queenie."

"No you weren't," Mal spat out.

"It's because I don't like you very much. And I don't trust you." Dr. Facilier sat back in his chair never breaking eye contact with Mal, hands behind his head, completely relaxed. "Not after Celia caught me up on all that nasty business with the barrier. Hey, I'm used to being betrayed and disappointed. And the kid was that way too. And the minute Celia put her trust and hope in you, she found out you were lying to her. And your friends-"

"We're not here to talk about Mal's failings, Dr. Facilier," Evie cut him off.

"Of course not. We'd be here all day," the man grinned.

"So, you have answers for me." Evie stared him down, not sharing a smile with him this time.

"Yes." Dr. Facilier sobered up and he sat up straight. "But let me ask you a question."

Evie waved her hand for him to continue.

"What do you know about the Afterlife?"

"That it exists." Evie tilted her head, studying Dr. Facilier. "And that you have first hand experience of it."

Dr. Facilier let out a roar of wild laughter until he sighed. "And I'm not the only one."

"No. You're not. My mother, Maleficent, Ursula. Probably about half of the villains that were on the Isle."

"Even if I couldn't personally vouch for it myself, Hades being a prisoner-

"Former prisoner," Mal corrected.

"Hades, the God of the Underworld is just out and about, walking amongst us mortals. It means that Tarturus, Hell, The Bad Place, is real. Anywhere where Evil Souls go to be punished in cruel and unusual ways. Better than a mere king could at least. Don't you think? What even was the point?"

Evie clenched her jaw as she thought about it. It was true. If the dead villains were already buried and gone, and being punished for their evil deeds, why bring them back to punish them with banishment to the Isle of the Lost? She was grateful, of course. If her mother had stayed dead, she would never have been born.

“Hope,” Evie answered. “For a second chance. Another try. Either for redemption. Or revenge. Just always out of reach on the other side of the barrier.”

“That is a good punishment. Very creative. You’d make a great punisher.” Dr. Facilier paused. He rubbed his chin in thought. He looked at her, like she was a puzzle to solve. It made Evie uncomfortable.

“Facilier!” Mal smacked the table to get their attention.

The man paid her no mind and continued on like nothing happened.

“Someone once told me, “What power would Hell have if those here imprisoned were not able to dream of Heaven.” And He was right. People hope for something better. Hope gives birth to misery and despair. It’s dangerous.” Dr. Facilier licked his lips. “It makes people do crazy things just so they won’t be disappointed. You know a lot about hope. Don’t you, Evie?”

Evie wondered if everyone knew what she had done. Did everyone know that when faced with the most feared man of kings and gods, she stood defiant in front of him? Did they know she went after Maleficent and dared to anger the Mistress of Evil without a care or fear? That she boldly called out her mother and took back her image and self? It must look like madness to many. Mal worried for her safety. Evie knew her friend was right to. She was going to keep doing dangerous things.

“People always try, don’t they?” Evie challenged. “Even if there’s disappointment. Hope anyway.”

She would always hope.

If she didn’t, that emptiness inside would take control and she’d fall apart. Again and again.

“If you’re going through hell, why would you stop?” Dr. Facilier chuckled.

“Exactly.”

“You’ll keep going, no matter what you lose. Just so you won’t lose everything.” Dr. Facilier stated like he had her all figured out.

“This is nothing.” Evie pointed at her face, the scars on display. “I’d give anything to have Audrey back.”

“Anything?” Dr. Facilier leaned forward. He just couldn’t help himself.

“You don’t make deals anymore, Facilier,” Mal interrupted.

“No. But my old friends still do,” Dr. Facilier smirked.

“Absolutely not.” Mal stepped toward the man, her eyes glowing green and her magic flaring. If she could spit fire in her human form, the Shadowman would have been burned to ash.

“Mal, if there’s a way to get Audrey back I’m going to do it.” Evie’s voice was steady and firm. She had no doubts. How many times did she have to tell this to Mal.

“You almost died.” Mal laughed hysterically. Her hand pulled at her hair. “A guy is brain dead.”

“Hate to agree with her,” Dr. Facilier butted in. “But Mal is right. It’s very dangerous. Think of all the villains that came back. They all came back wrong.”

“You seem okay.” Evie glowered at him. She thought he was on her side.

“Is anyone really okay, Evie?” Dr. Facilier sighed. For a moment, his whole body sagged in defeat. But he wasn’t down for long.

“You have all your friends fooled. Even yourself. Pretending. But it’s there. Itching underneath your skin and burning through your veins. You want people to hurt like you hurt.”

“I’m not a villain,” Evie growled.

“No.” He raised his hands in front of himself to still her ire. “But you could be. Anyone could be a villain. Anyone could be a hero. There’s rules to break and lines that shouldn’t be crossed. You end up where I did and I don’t ever want to go back there. Even after everything I’ve changed and everything I’ll do, it won’t be enough.” Dr. Facilier clenched his eyes shut, and balled his fists on top of the table, like his was fighting a bad memory. “And maybe it’s too late for me. But I don’t want it to be too late for Celia.”

“It won’t be. I’ll make sure of it.” Evie softened. She put her hand on top of Dr. Facilier’s.

“You’re at a crossroads. That’s what I can tell you. Remember that.”

A crossroads? Hardly.

That implied she was stuck with some hard choices. She had already made up her mind. It was easy to choose, even if she knew the path would be long and rough.

Audrey was worth it.

“I’ve already made my decision.” Evie stared Facilier and Mal down. “Find Audrey and bring her back.”

“I can’t say anything more,” Dr. Facilier shrugged.

“You can’t or you won’t?” Mal sneered.

“Here I was thinking you wanted Evie safe and sound more than you hated being left in the dark.” Dr. Facilier laughed at Maleficent’s daughter. Mal didn’t like that.

“You-”

“I like Evie.” Dr. Facilier didn’t back down from Mal getting in his face. There were worse things than an offended teenager with magic. “But I’m not going to risk it. You all saw what happened to Faust. Celia tells me these things. I’m not afraid to admit it. I’m a coward. But I’m more scared for my daughter.”

“Okay,” Evie nodded in understanding. She couldn’t blame him for doing anything to keep a loved one safe when she was doing the same thing for Audrey.

“If that’s all.” Dr. Facilier made to leave and headed towards the door.

“One moment. Mal, can you step outside?” When Mal hesitated, Evie gave her a smile, a shadow of the ones she used to. “Dr. Facilier will probably tell me more if you weren’t in the room. I’m not going to hurt him. And he can’t hurt me.”

She left the words, “more than I’m hurting now” unsaid.

“I’ll be right outside.” Mal left with a threat of bodily harm lingering in the air.

“She’s nice.” Dr. Facilier chuckled. “Now, Evie. Even without your guard dragon in here, I can’t tell you anything. But I’m guessing this is about something else. Something you wanted to ask without your friend knowing.”

“You said Celia tells you things,” Evie spoke softly. It was obvious by now how much Dr. Facilier loved Celia. What he would do to protect her.

“She does. But not everything of course. A girl should have her secrets.” Dr. Facilier winked. “And I’m sure she’s told you things in confidence. Just between you girls. She trusts you. And I trust you with her. So do not, I’m begging you, drag her into this.”

“She told you about the tea leaf reading. That’s what I wanted to ask you.” Evie tested the waters. So far, the Shadowman had been cordial and polite. She knew if there was the slightest chance that Celia could be in danger, Dr. Facilier would not hesitate to destroy her. She definitely wasn’t going to mention that the tea cup had exploded right in front of her.

“Yes. She did.” Dr. Facilier balled his fists. “And I’ll ask you to leave her out of this. Do not let her read your palm or tell your fortune again.”

“She told you what she saw.” Evie couldn’t forget the leaves that took the shape of a devil. Celia had been scared. “She tried to hide it from me. But I figured it out. And I already met him, didn’t I? And what could be worse than what already happened then?”

“Don’t be foolish,” Dr. Facilier warned. “You have to know that Celia and Dizzy and many more would follow you anywhere. She was so worried for you. And she wanted me to help you. So I am. Please, keep her safe.”

Evie thought of the younger villain kids. “Celia. Dizzy. The twins. The young ones. They’re under my protection. No harm will come to them as long as I live.”

She didn't know why she said that. She just knew that in her heart and soul that it was the right thing to say. She felt it to be true.

"Shake on it." Evie held her hand out. Dr. Facilier stared at her for a moment.

"And what do I give you?" He chuckled. "Old habits die hard."

"You did help me," Evie argued. She really didn't want anything in return. "Kind of. And I'm doing this because I want to."

"It's hardly a fair trade." At Evie's look of annoyance, he explained further. "I'm trying to change my ways."

"Fine," Evie relented. Dr. Facilier could be helpful down the line. "You owe me a favor of my choosing in the future."

"Celia is worth it." He smiled fondly, thinking of his daughter. "You have yourself a deal."

He grabbed her hand.

And Evie burned again.

Instead of the unspeakable pain and the slow burning agony, this burning soon became pleasant. It was the warmth of gripping a freshly brewed hot chocolate, or snuggling in a cocoon of thick blankets and quilts. It was feeling the sun on your face. The warmth spread up her arm to her heart.

Mal burst back into the room.

"Evie! I heard you shout. Are you okay?" The dragon eyed their hands suspiciously. "Take it back! No deal!"

Dr. Facilier let go of Evie's hand. He shook it out. "Never been on the receiving end of that. Ouch. This poor sinner's hand."

"It's not what you think. Really. We just reached... an agreement," Evie rushed to defend herself and Facilier. It was unfair to the man. "Something I was going to do anyway."

"And what was that?" Mal's narrowed in suspicion at Dr. Facilier.

"To protect the younger kids. After what Celia and Dizzy saw at the museum." Evie's clenched her jaw. She had been selfish. Her quest could blow back on innocent people. "If this is as dangerous as what everyone says. If he is as dangerous as everyone says. Then I don't want them to get hurt."

Mal had a sour expression on her face, like it was taking everything in her power to not say what she wanted to. Evie knew what her friend wanted to say. That people wouldn't get hurt if she stopped looking for Old Scratch and Audrey. Evie didn't want to hear it.

“They won’t get hurt.” Dr. Facilier looked at the palm of his hand in awe. “You’re something powerful, Evie.”

Evie felt it too. Something had passed between her and Facilier. It still hung in the room. She felt it pumping through her veins. She knew that her promise had power behind it. What she had said had become real because she meant it. She spoke it into existence.

Her own kind of magic.

She doubted she inherited it from her mother. Grimhilde was brilliant at potions, but not very powerful with it came to spells. For her mother, enchantments came from being charming and beautiful. Evie had to learn to do magic in other ways. She had to bewitch boys with a siren smile and a flirty flip of her hair. Her laughter at their lame and unfunny jokes had to ring hypnotic. Her mother taught her how.

How to possess a heart.

But this was a different power.

It had to come from her father.

“Thank you for your help, Dr. Facilier. You’ve given me a lot to think about.”

“And you me. A lot to think about.”

The next day Evie met with the research group that Ben had formed.

“Thanks for doing this, Ben. I know how busy you are.”

“Of course, Evie.” Ben rubbed the back of his neck. “Audrey was- is one of my oldest friends. I owe her this much after everything.”

Evie nodded. She knew Ben still felt guilty over what happened with Audrey and Maleficent’s specter. A lot of people did. Evie most especially.

The guilt was a storm in her head. Just when she thought she could manage, it would hit her and she couldn’t get her bearings. She could think of little else before another thundercloud came and she was lost, sinking deeper and deeper into the flood.

“Evie? We’re here.”

Ben had lead her to a room on the second floor of the Royal Archives. He opened the door for her and allowed her to enter first.

Introductions were made. Evie felt at ease with the committee chairwoman, Dr. Porter and the co-chair, Dr. Thatch. They were very friendly. The Sorcerer Yen Sid on the other hand was his usual stern self that she knew from the Isle. The one person on the committee she was unhappy to see was Queen Belle.

Since she had already read the past testimonies of various magical heroes, villains and sidekicks, Evie asked them what their plans were.

“As you know, we’ve been able to hear the testimonies of villains from the Isle on the subject. Most weren’t very helpful,” Dr. Thatch bit his lip. “But the books and documents we’ve found in the Royal Archives gave us plenty of information-”

“On Scratch? I already know who he is. I grew up around villains like him on the Isle. He’s a manipulative bastard that wants more power and control. They all want power and control. What I need to know is how to defeat him and get Audrey back.”

“Young lady-”

“Let me guess.” Evie cut Queen Belle off. “You have nothing. Why are you even here, your majesty. I heard you didn’t even like Audrey.”

“Evie, please-”

“Ben, I have to be honest. I’m a little underwhelmed. You should have at least appointed a villain or two to the committee.”

“Are you telling your king how to do his job?” Queen Belle scoffed, defensive on behalf of her baby boy.

“I am,” Evie challenged.

“By all means, if you think you can do better.” Queen Belle crossed her arms.

“I can. And I will.”

“Your majesty, if I may. Evie was a student of mine at Dragon Hall. Though my time with her was brief, I could tell she possessed a brilliant mind. So I made a suggestion to the young king and he took it under advisement.”

“Mom, I’m appointing Evie to the committee.”

“She’s barely finished school.”

“I think it’s a splendid idea.” Dr Porter clapped her hands.

“Same here,” Dr. Thatch pushed his glasses up his nose. “We have plenty of students from Auradon Prep researching and helping us.”

“But they’re only on the staff. Like interns.” Belle looked betrayed. “Not the actual committee!”

“She’s helped save Auradon,” Ben offered. “Three times!”

“She’s just a child!”

"I may be a child, your majesty. But I certainly don't act like one. You and your husband made sure of that when you left us on the Isle. We had to grow up fast. You took our childhood."

There was a fire in her voice. Queen Belle actually took a step back as if burned.

"Damn, Evie!"

Evie turned around.

Standing behind her were the captain of the Lost Revenge and her first mate. Standing behind the pirates, slowly closing the door and looking resigned was Mal. Uma was the one who had spoken and looked impressed. Harry was grinning ear to ear.

"What?" Noticing all eyes on her, Uma sauntered over to stand by Evie. "She's right and she should say it."

Queen Belle marched up to the two teens. The older woman's jaw was clenched and she was shaking with her arms at her sides. Uma smiled back sweetly.

YenSid looked at the two researchers sternly. It was a look that couldn't be argued with. This was a private matter and didn't need any other witnesses.

"We're, uh, just going to go..." Dr. Thatch pointed at the doors with his thumb.

"Into the archive stacks!" Dr. Porter grabbed the man's arm.

"Yes!" Dr. Thatch let himself be led out by his colleague. "And be not here for this."

The two all but bolted from the room. YenSid stayed behind to keep the peace.

They were all waiting for Queen Belle to yell at them. It's what adults did on the Isle. Or worse. Some of the adults on Auradon had yelled at them too. No matter where they were from, adults didn't like when children or teenagers spoke back to them.

But the woman just sighed and turned away from them.

"You're right." Queen Belle admitted. All the anger and posturing left her, leaving only behind guilt.

"Oh, I'm good." Uma smirked as she nodded her head.

"We weren't fair to you children." Queen Belle staggered to a seat and collapsed into it. She covered her face with her hands. "We thought that if the villains had children they could love them."

Evie laughed. She remembered when Li Lonnie had caught them baking cookies dosed with a love potion to get Ben to fall for Mal during what felt like forever ago. The daughter of Mulan had admitted she had thought the same thing. That even villains loved their kids.

It was one thing for a sheltered teen to think that. It was completely different for adults who should have known better. At least Lonnie realized how wrong she was and shed a much needed tear.

But the adults couldn't even spare a second thought.

"Of course," Evie spat out. "Who could have predicted that the woman that cast a deadly curse on an infant would be a horrible choice to raise a child? Or how about the woman that wanted to kill puppies for a fur coat? Puppies! What does a power hungry man do when everything is taken away from him, I wonder. I don't know, maybe take it out on his son."

"You're telling me the pirate captain killing Lost Boys would be a good father?" Uma laughed bitterly. But there was an edge to her voice that cut like a blade. "Or that the hunter who only ever loved himself and his reflection could care about a child?"

"How about the evil queen that made a poisoned apple for a 14 year old after her first murder plan failed? Would a woman jealous of a child be a good mother? I mean she wasn't the first time." Mal surprisingly joined them. Evie had almost forgotten she was there, but still she took hold of her best friend's hand.

Harry and Ben went to stand in strength and support with their respective queens. All five teens presented a united front.

Mal continued, "And heaven help the daughter of the sea witch. Because she sure as hell didn't get any help from her mother or us. She had to make her own family. And did a better job of looking out for her crew than I ever did."

Evie smiled at her best friend. She loved to see Mal and Uma getting along, especially when it was to help back her up. Evie was well aware of how she was viewed in Auradon. She was the Sweetheart. She was harmless. Mal and Uma were the ones to keep an eye on. They were fierce leaders and commanded respect.

But Evie could be poison when she wanted to.

"Aye, right. Some of the villains even raised some of yours, so ye cannot pretend to not have known what would happen. Our parents were shite and we didn't have a choice. But all you heroes did. And you made the wrong ones." Harry shook his head.

"Not all of us." Belle grimaced. "Maybe we could have saved you all a lot of pain, if more of us had actually acted like heroes."

"There were a few younger royals, new to ruling their people, who were against the Isle. We thought them naive," the queen chuckled sadly as she continued. "But Aurora was surprisingly against the Isle. She and the others wanted to see the villains reformed. Even Maleficent. She and Philip were really the only other royals in the running to be King and Queen of Auradon. But the majority of the Great Council voted for Adam and me since we vowed to lock up all the villains-"

"And their sidekicks!" Harry chimed in.

“And their underlings. All crime is the same, right?” Uma jumped in. The Captain’s righteous fury shining through. “Steal a loaf of bread or sell fake watches and you’re on the Isle with would be dictators and world-enders. Unless you’re one of those pet thieves that a princess falls for.”

“You guys sure aren’t holding back your punches,” Belle sighed.

“This is nothing,” Uma snickered.

“That’s fair,” Queen Belle rubbed her temples. “Some of these member states are already helping with relocation of Isle residents that wish to move and start fresh.”

“Yes,” Ben shared a look with Uma. The two of them had spoken with Queen Rapunzel and Queen Tiana about relocating former Isle of the Lost residents within their states. Evie knew them to be the most welcoming. They believed in second chances.

“If Queen Aurora is so open and receptive to us, where is she? I would love a chance to speak to her directly. Instead of the snobby representative I have to put up with right now,” Uma crossed her arms.

“Queen Aurora and King Philip are serving Auradon as Ambassadors,” Queen Belle explained.

“So work’s more important than their daughter?” Evie bristled at the mention of Audrey’s parents. “They didn’t even come back.”

“It’s complicated.” Queen Belle’s face was pinched. She was hiding something.

If Queen Aurora was as kind-hearted as everyone said, then she wouldn’t stop fighting for her daughter. Even a self-serving royal cared about appearances and what others thought, so mourning would become a public spectacle for all of Auradon to witness.

Evie quickly came to a conclusion.

“They’re in exile.”

It made sense. Auradon was a kingdom of contradictions and hypocrisy. They claimed to be just, fair and kind. But very few were. A man that could abandon children to the Isle of the Lost, could banish political rivals to foreign lands.

“They volunteered.” Belle’s voice wasn’t very convincing.

“I honestly think you believe that after how long you’ve been telling yourself it was true.” Evie shook her head.

“Evie, I’ll look into this. I promise. But for now-”

“Yes. Thank you for that. And thank you for getting us back to the matter at hand.”

Evie gave some names of villains that could help. The villains that were cunning and intelligent. The ones that were brilliant tacticians. The sinister schemers and the master manipulators.

“What do you think?” Evie looked at her fellow Villain Kids and YenSid. She valued their advice and input.

“Good choices. A few will be a problem.” YenSid rubbed his chin. “But, yes. This is acceptable.”

“How do you suggest we keep them in line?” Belle griped. “I don’t trust any of them.”

“I trust, Evie,” Ben said without any hesitation.

“I have something.” Evie beamed back at her friend.

She thought back to how she promised Dr. Facilier to protect his youngest daughter. She could probably do the same for the villains, but just the opposite. Instead of protection, she could promise pain and punishment. She didn’t want to resort to harm, but she had a feeling some of the villains she had picked could only trust threats and respect ruthlessness.

“We’ll have to ask some of their heroes,” Mal put forth. It was very different from her usual easier to ask for forgiveness than permission attitude. “As a courtesy of course. To let them know.”

“Before we go and do it anyway,” Harry cheered with his fist in the air.

“Of course.”

“That shouldn’t be a problem. We want to show that the villains can be reformed. And this is one of the ways we can show Auradon,” Ben nodded.

“I think someone is missing.”

Uma had been quiet for most of the discussion. She hadn’t said anything until then. Whoever she was thinking of was causing her pain to name out loud.

“Who?” Evie asked softly.

“My mother.” Uma had her chin up, like she didn’t want to look vulnerable.

“I didn’t want to involve anyone from our family’s parents.” Evie put her hand on the other girl’s shoulder.

“You should have more dark magic users to help you out. And the Sea Witch knows something about making deals.” Uma waved her hand.

“If you’re sure.”

"I'm sure," Uma said with such force, more to convince herself than Evie. "It'll let me know where she is and what she's up to. Plus, I can't wait to see her face when you keep her in line. Wish I was there when you stabbed Maleficent."

"You stabbed Maleficent!" Belle screeched.

"Yeah. I did," Evie said with no hesitation or denial.

"I don't know if I'm more shocked that someone stabbed Maleficent," Ben's eyes were wide. "Or that that someone was Evie."

"That's why Evie is so dangerous," Harry threw his arm around her. "You'll never see it coming."

"Underestimate her at your own peril," Mal joined in on the joke. "It'll be your funeral."

"What was his name?" Uma asked the other Villain Kids. "That man that was too touchy around children? He had a bad batch of mead and just keeled over after cornering sweet Dizzy Tremaine."

"Stop spilling all my secrets," Evie chuckled.

"Children," YenSid called their attention. He nodded towards the two Auradon royals. Ben was frowning and his fists were clenched at his side. Belle looked pale at hearing just an iota of what they went through on the isle. Evie didn't have it in her to feel bad for making the queen feel ill. It was something she needed to hear. Belle also probably didn't like that they could just joke about such dark topics so easily. It's not like they had much choice. It was either laugh or cry. No one from the Isle could afford to break and curl up into a ball. So they often used humor as a defense mechanism. It served them well.

"I think I need to have a chat with my husband. And some of the other royals." Queen Belle looked grim. "Excuse me."

No one stopped her from leaving. Ben and Mal were the only ones that said something resembling a goodbye, with Ben promising to see his mother later to check up on her. Uma muttered something that sounded like "good riddance".

"I'll leave you all to it. You have a long and dangerous journey ahead of you. But you've already taken your first step. When you reach a crossroads, I'll know you'll make the right choice, Evie." YenSid gave her a small smile and then he was gone.

Crossroads. There was that word again.

"Well as much fun as this is, we should get started," Uma lept into action.

"Don't forget that Evie is taking the lead on this. We're just here to help," Mal added.

"Not that I'm not grateful for your offer and your back up with Belle back there but why are you here?" Evie looked between Uma and Harry.

"I asked them to come," Ben answered. "We're going to need a lot of help to get Audrey back. If there's not a lot of information here, we'll have to find it."

*Evie was touched by Ben saying "we". As much as she wanted to do this alone, her friends — no her **family** wouldn't let her. They would help her.*

"I haven't had the chance to tell you this yet. But I'm sorry about Audrey."

"Thanks, Uma. I appreciate that."

"Me as well, Evie," Harry said in a rare serious moment from him.

"We'll get her back," Uma pumped her fist. "This is a job for pirates!"

"No," Evie put her hand on top of the pirate captain's and brought it down lower. "This is a job for our family."

Uma groaned. Harry actually booed her. Evie just grinned at them. She knew they were just pretending to be annoyed since Harry put his hand on top of hers. Then Ben joined in, without any teasing or realization that Evie was having fun annoying the pirates.

"Glad to see gumball offering, icebreaker suggesting Evie make an appearance." Mal put her hand on top of Ben's and everyone else's.

Ben surprised everyone and pushed down on everyone else's hands underneath him. Evie and Harry stumbled forward a bit at the pressure. Uma looked impressed. They all laughed at Ben's unexpected playfulness.

Evie smiled at her friends, hoping they brought her happy and playful mood. Her mother taught her how to "fake it until you make it." She could wear a mask when she wanted to. Dr. Facilier had called her out on it during their meeting.

A nice happy moment to cherish before everything went to hell. She could give them that at least.

Uma and Harry ended up becoming such dear friends. They couldn't help but grow close on their missions for information. They spent many days together on The Lost Revenge, just having shallow chats or deep conversations. Some nights the crew would play lively music and they'd all dance. Other nights Evie just needed to be held in strong and caring arms. Uma and Harry provided all that and more.

"Mama!"

"Oh, Rosebud," Evie walked over to her daughter and embraced her. "What are you doing out of bed?"

"I had a scary dream," Rory pressed her face into Evie's chest.

"Everything's okay," Evie wrapped her arms around the little girl. "You're safe here with me."

“The Grey Lady and the shadows always fight. I always get stuck. It’s scary. I’m sorry. I know I should be brave,” Rory murmured.

The little voice broke Evie’s heart. The Evil Queen had never comforted her after nightmares. Her mother sometimes starred in her bad dreams.

“You know, I have nightmares, too.” Evie lead her daughter back to her bedroom.

“You do?”

“I do. And they’re pretty scary to me.” She got her daughter tucked in under the covers. She spotted her daughter’s favorite toy on the floor next to the bed. It was a gift from her godmother. She gave her daughter the purple dragon stuffie. “Don’t want to forget, Iggy.”

“Yeah. Thanks, Mama.” Rory cuddled the dragon tightly.

“I’ll tell Mr. Sandman to give you sweet dreams from now on,” Evie kissed the top of her daughter’s head. “Good night, Rosebud.”

Evie had told her daughter a little white lie. She used to have nightmares. The absence of nightmares was what was scary to her. What she wouldn’t give for a nightmare. Just to see Audrey again.

The truth was she hadn’t dreamt of Audrey in years.

She hadn’t dreamt in years.

Chapter End Notes

“...what power would Hell have if those here imprisoned were not able to dream of Heaven?” is a quote from *Sandman* by Neil Gaiman where Dream is talking to Lucifer Morningstar. It's a bit of an inspiration for this fic.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Evie makes some discoveries. Chad is there.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Yawning, Evie made her way to her daughter's room to check on her. She had to get to the kitchen and start breakfast for her and Rory before the girl woke up. Her daughter had woken up from a nightmare in the early hours. She wanted to do something nice for her. Like make her favorite breakfast. Evie went into Rory's bedroom.

Her daughter's bed was empty.

"Rosebud?"

The girl is not in her room.

Evie heard her daughter's laughter from the kitchen. Before her heart could stop beating out of her chest at not being able to find her daughter, she realized Rory wasn't alone. Her body tensed up, ready for a fight.

Life had taught her to be cautious. Her guard was always up.

Never knew when something bad could happen.

Since something bad was always happening.

Dr. Porter insisted Evie call her "Jane." She just couldn't do it. Her mother raised her to call people older than her "Sir" or "Ma'am." And she kept it up, least a slip up summoned her mother to chastise and berate her poor manners. Which would lead to other criticisms. Her hair being too short. Her makeup just being the bare minimum and doing nothing to soften her scars. Her clothes being more practical for adventuring than formal even if still stylish. And her weight, having started to add muscle for strength and endurance in her quest.

So Evie respected titles. Even though her mother had been thinking more along the lines of "Queen" and "Duke" over the ones gained through years of study to obtain a PhD or MD.

Evie slammed the book she was reading shut.

"What did that poor book ever do to you?" Carlos tried to lighten the mood.

Evie groaned and rubbed her face. "There's nothing new in any of these books."

"Go on. If you need a good scream or to punch something, you just go right ahead." Dr. Porter waved her on.

"Jay is free if you want to punch something," Carlos grinned. "But I think hitting Harry would be more satisfying. It sure was fun for me to watch when you beat him in a sword fight. I'm sure he'd want a rematch."

"I don't think he was expecting Evie to be so good," Jane smiled.

"Yeah. He thought he was the expert at fighting with one hand. He was wrong," Carlos laughed.

"Guys, he was trying to help." Evie was probably the weakest fighter in their group. At least she used to be. She couldn't have predicted that some of the skills from her dream lives had passed on to her in the waking world. If she hadn't needed a big stress relief that day, she wouldn't have realized it. Still there was no excuse not to train.

"Okay. I would pay to see Evie fight Jay or Lonnie." Carlos gasped as he was struck with an idea. "Or Jay and Lonnie at the same time!"

"I think it would be fun to watch Evie beat Chad," Jane suggested.

"I love the way you think!" Carlos kissed Jane.

"Thank you!" Jane beamed back at her boyfriend.

Evie chuckled at her friends. They were so sweet on each other. She was so happy for Carlos. She wanted that too.

It was a reminder of what she was working for.

For Audrey.

"Carlos and Jane, would you grab us some coffee and tea? I know we have a pot and a tea cart here but it's absolutely dreadful." Dr. Porter asked the two younger teens. She handed them some money. "I think we need a special treat. Oh! And some pastries. Pick out whatever you'd like."

"Sure," Jane stood up and grabbed Carlos, making sure he was following.

Both teens knew they were being sent away to give Evie some privacy as Dr. Porter checked up on her.

Once the young couple was gone, Dr. Porter sat down next to Evie. "I'd ask how you were doing, but I'm sure you're tired of being asked that."

"And I'd probably tell you I was fine if you asked and hope you left it at that."

"It's very frustrating," Dr. Porter nodded, hoping for Evie to continue talking it out.

"We know as much about Scratch that everyone else does," Evie groaned.

"If there's something to know about him, we'll find it," Dr. Porter tried some words of encouragement.

"We're going to have to head out. I don't even know where to start. I'm not a historian. I'm more of a scientist. The only histories that interested me were the romances. The Happily Ever Afters. None of the wars or treaties."

During her castle schooling, her mother never bothered to teach her history. She had managed to learn about the failings and downfalls of other villains when her mother complained of foolish people. She would not make their mistakes. She just had one simple task to carry out back then. Evie just had to worry about marrying a prince.

But now her job was to save a princess.

"You're a scientist. But you know the importance of history."

"That those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," Evie answered. "Villains aren't very good at learning history. It would explain why they never learned from each other's mistakes."

"Some would think that scientists only think with their heads," Dr. Porter lectured. Evie imagined this was the voice she used on her students at Auradon University, engaging and passionate. "That they're unfeeling. Everything for knowledge and nothing else. But there's a danger to only using logic. You start seeing living, feeling beings as numbers and figures."

"Questions of science, science and progress, do not speak as loud as my heart," Evie stated like it was a fact.

"Exactly."

"The cost of human lives will never be too high for people like that," Evie shook her head.

People like King Adam.

The man gave people safety but he took away their freedom. Villains were on the Isle. But not everyone had deserved to be there. At some point everyone that broke the law ended up there. No matter how minor the offense.

Then of course there was the magic ban. It was hard for magic users. But it was worse for magical beings. They could not be separated from their magic. It caused them pain and illness.

But King "Beast" didn't care.

"The future is in safe hands. You and your friends are doing an amazing job," Dr. Porter reassured Evie.

“Doesn’t feel like it.”

“You’ve already accomplished so much,” Dr. Porter pointed out. “Bringing the barrier down wasn’t easy. Putting the barrier up shouldn’t have been so easy in the first place. It was such a careless act and no real thought seemed to go into creating it. They put villains there and wanted to forget about them. No reassessment or talk of parole. And then there was the fact that you children were never guilty of any crimes and you all received life sentences just the same.”

“The sins of the father,” Evie laughed bitterly. “Auradon really screwed us over.”

“We really failed you kids,” Dr. Porter lamented. “And for that I’m truly sorry.”

Evie wanted to soothe the older woman of her guilt, tell her that she didn’t have any real power to make any changes. The woman obviously had an upper class upbringing. She couldn’t be a female academic traipsing through the jungle otherwise. But her time away meant that she had no real say in the going ons of Auradon. Still the woman was patient and kind hearted. She was one of the first adults, one of the first heroes to apologize.

Instead, Evie just nodded.

“Coffee for you. Coffee for me. And tea for thee.” Carlos grinned as he returned, holding a carrier full of drinks. Jane followed behind him carrying a box that was full of pastries.

“Thanks, Carlos.” Evie grabbed one of the cups. She took a sip. “If you don’t mind I’m going to my room.”

“What about a pastry?”

“No thank you,” Evie shook her head, not bothering to look at her friends. She was in a rush to get to work.

“You sure? We got your favorite!” Jane frowned. She opened the box to show off an apple fritter.

“When was the last time you ate something? You can’t survive on coffee alone,” Carlos scolded.

“Fine!” Evie took an apple fritter from the box and took a huge bite out of it. With her mouth full, she kept talking. “Happy now!”

Evie turned quickly and stormed off towards her room.

“No! Of course not,” Carlos shouted after her.

Evie gritted her teeth, angry with herself. But she didn’t stop to apologize to her friends.

The room in the Royal Archive they had been given was big. At one end was the tables and comfortable chairs they did research at. At the other was a door to a smaller room that Evie laid claim to and thought of as hers.

She pulled open the door and slammed it shut behind her.

In her room, two of the walls were littered with pieces of paper and thread running back and forth between each. Evie ran her hand through her hair, messing it up a bit. She reviewed her work as if an answer would jump out at her.

“Evie!”

Someone called her name after touching her shoulder.

She shrugged out of their touch, and elbowed them in the stomach.

Chad Charming grunted and doubled over in pain.

“Chad!”

“That was on me.” Chad wheezed out.

“Still I shouldn’t have-“

“No, I get it. You’re on edge ever since...” Chad trailed off. His lips quivered.

“How are you?” Evie cringed at the question slipping from her mouth. She was close to screaming every time someone asked her that.

For Chad it was obvious how he was doing. He looked as terrible as Evie constantly felt. While he was wearing clothes that a servant had obviously laid out for him, he looked rumpled and deflated in his ironed shirt and pressed slacks. The buttons on his shirt weren’t done up completely, as if he got tired half way. The prince’s hair was even longer, unwashed and uncombed.

“Horrible. And yourself?”

“Oh pretty much the same.” Evie glanced at the box of pastries Chad had in his hands. “Did they send you in to try and get me to eat something?”

“No, these are all for me. As you can see I’ve been eating my feelings.” Chad stroked his softer, scruffy chin. “And like I could get you to do anything. I heard what you did to Hook. No, I’m pretty sure there’s only one person that could set you straight.”

“Who? Mal?” Evie chuckled.

“No,” Chad grinned. “Dizzy.”

“Low blow.”

“Dizzy asks you to do something and you’re powerless. She actually asked me to bring you food.” He pulled containers out of his messenger bag. He set them down on the table in the middle of the room.

“A good way to take care for yourself is to take care of other people,” Evie nodded.

“So yes I will acknowledge that my little cousin tricked me into leaving the house in clean clothes to check up on you. Not only because Dizzy asked me to, but because of Audrey.” Chad’s voice cracked. “You’re like the only one that cares about finding her because you care about her. For her.”

Chad shook. Evie gave him time. He looked up, like he was trying to keep tears from falling. “After everything she did, Audrey is still my friend.”

“She didn’t have very many. At least she had you,” Evie patted him on his shoulder.

“I wish I had been a better friend to her,” Chad wiped his eyes on his sleeve. “I was caught up in my own drama and angst to notice she was hurting.”

“Weren’t we all?”

“Don’t take this the wrong way, but you weren’t even friends with her,” Chad sniffled. “I mean we both were awful to all of you and gave you no reason to be friends with us so I don’t know how you could have noticed what was happening.”

“Even a broken clock is right twice a day.” Evie wrapped her arm around herself. She could get annoyed, but Chad wasn’t wrong. “Everything you said is true. Audrey and I weren’t friends. You and Audrey, especially you were-“

“The absolute worst.” Chad flashed her a crooked smile.

“Maybe just you,” Evie teased.

Audrey had been kind to Evie in their interactions after coronation, almost like they could be something if Evie wasn’t best friends with Mal. They had shared grins and giggles, but Audrey would always pull away once she realized what she was doing and who she was doing it with.

“I haven’t apologized for how I treated you. I was such a- such an asshole.”

“Am I the first stop on the Chad Charming Apology Tour?”

“Actually the second. Doug was first.” Chad smiled, like he was ecstatic about the results.

“It went well, I take it.”

“It did,” Chad’s smile grew even wider. “He somehow forgave me after everything. I bullied him. But he just-“

“Accepted your apology and started over.” Evie knew how kind Doug could be. There were no hard feelings when they broke up before graduation. They agreed to remain friends.

“Doug has a big heart. And if you do anything to break it, I’m going to make you regret it.”

“If I ever do, then I’ll let you.” Chad nodded solemnly.

"But I'll help you with Doug," Evie clapped him on the shoulder. She would have clapped excitedly in the past, but she needed another hand to do that. She squashed that thought down.

"Thank you," Chad rubbed his shoulder. "But I don't think he'd even go for me even if he's forgiven me."

"I think you'll be surprised," Evie said reassuringly, "Speaking of surprises, I'm proud of you for speaking so openly about your sexuality."

"The last thing Audrey said to me was to not be afraid anymore and to find my happy ending." Chad's eyes were watering again.

"And that's with Doug."

"I want it to be." Chad smiled softly then grimaced. "I screwed up. Audrey and I had the same problem. That we needed to keep up appearances. That we had to behave a certain way as royals. Princes are supposed to be brave leaders and manly. Not soft. And princesses were supposed to be beautiful and quiet."

"Sit still, look pretty." Evie remembered her own princess lessons. Her mother drilled into her that she always needed to look her best. And told her to always agree with a man so he would stay with her.

"That wasn't really Audrey." Chad murmured. "Not at first. Not when we were little. When Queen Leah first introduced her to us, she didn't care about keeping her dresses clean. She liked looking for frog eggs and playing sword fights using dirty sticks we found. Rough and tumble. She always went the highest when we climbed trees. And by "we" I mean Ben and Doug. I stayed with Jane, on the ground, where it was safe."

Evie laughed at hearing stories about Audrey and their friends when they were all little kids. "Aww. You were all friends growing up?"

"Of course. Jane and I were close because of our mothers. Doug was the same age as me and Ben. And Ben and Audrey were... promised to each other."

That last part had worked out so well, Evie thought bitterly. But she just said, "Seems that you all stopped being so close. What happened? Did you all just grow apart as you grew up?"

"Kind of. Jane was a year younger than us so she was still in elementary when we went to middle school. So in that year she didn't go to school with us. Things were different. Plus," Chad rubbed the back of his neck. "Her mom being headmistress when we got to Auradon Prep didn't help."

"Kids can be so cruel."

"I know all about being cruel. I learned from the best," Chad whispered, voice dripping with self-hatred.

Evie wondered at that. But she let Chad keep talking.

"We all had different interests by then. Doug went off and joined band and was into all that science stuff."

"So you guys ditched Doug to be more popular?" Evie's voice was hard as she accused Chad.

"Well, Ben and Doug kept in touch. But they couldn't hang out as much since Ben was going to be king. Doug got his own friends. I had already stopped being friends with him by then. And Audrey stuck by me. Let me try to explain."

Chad put his hand in his hair and tugged, like he was punishing himself for what happened. "If a family can be cruel to their own blood, I can't even imagine what they could do to the children of villains they hated."

"You already know how Queen Leah treated Audrey. Their servants tried their best to let Audrey play and enjoy herself. But they were all found out. The servants were fired and Audrey couldn't play with us like she used to. She said mean things. I've had time to think about it and I get it now. She was just parroting things her grandmother had told her. I know because I did the same thing. Acting like the son my father wanted instead of the son he got."

Chad gulped.

"I kissed Doug once." Chad's eyes glistened with tears once more. "When we were kids. Before it all went wrong for us. My grandfather caught us and dragged me to my father. My father-"

"Chad, I'm sorry."

"It's not an excuse. I know I'm a garbage person. And I've been horrible. You know how it is. Well, maybe not you because you're so... you. How we're too scared to let anyone see our true selves. And I was jealous of Doug. And jealous of you and the other VKs. That all of you were just so unapologetically yourselves."

"You're wrong. Maybe not about Doug. He marches to the beat of his own drum. But we," Evie began. "All had our masks and roles to play on the Isle. You couldn't show kindness. We weren't friends. We were allies. Coming here to Auradon, they could finally admit what I had no problem saying out loud. That they cared. Sure, I never once doubted they cared, I mean maybe after the incident with the bear traps."

"Bear traps?" Chad's eyebrows shot up.

"It's a long story. But you're not the only one of my friends that used to be mean to me out of fear of their parents."

"I don't know what to say. Other than thank you and I don't deserve your friendship but I'll do my best to be worthy." Chad looked determined to prove himself.

“Where was I? Yeah. Carlos, Jay and Mal? They never had to say they cared. They showed it through their actions.” Evie grinned wide. “Mal and Jay act tough, but they’re complete marshmallows.”

“And Carlos and you have hidden edges. I know first hand how scary you can be when the people you care about are getting bullied by a dickhead prince.”

“I mean dickhead wasn’t the term I used.”

“Yeah. I know it was, “Mirror, Mirror in my hand, who’s the biggest jerk in the land?” Chad winced as he brought up the events of that first Family Day. “Evie, you’re not a gold digger. And you’re certainly not a cheater. That was me projecting.”

“Chad.”

“I have a lot of girls to apologize to. A lot. I used them all. Not just for homework. But as a cover. A gay guy wouldn’t be juggling multiple girls at once.”

“It’s good that you’re owning up to your mistakes,” Evie nodded.

“All it took was losing Audrey.”

The silence between them was heavy. They both took the moment to stay in their memories of the girl they lost. Evie realized that Chad had more memories of Audrey, and she had enjoyed talking with him about her. Everyone else seemed to avoid saying her name, as if it would set her off.

The door opened.

“There you are!” Mal came in screeching.

“Like she’d be anywhere else.” Uma came in right behind her.

“Hello to you too, Mal.” Evie said, annoyed. Another lecture was going to come from her best friend. “And Uma, hi.”

“Sup,” Uma nodded at her. Evie appreciated the pirate captain’s presence. She never treated her any differently.

“Why did Carlos call me all huffing and puffing incoherently so much that I couldn’t understand him? Jane had to take the phone from him to explain-”

“If Jane had to explain, then you know what happened.”

“Evie! You’re being so-”

“Mal, back off,” Uma warned.

“What! What am I being?” The guilt turned to anger that Chad managed to distract her from had returned. It felt like it was always there, simmering under her skin. It came out in bursts

and when it did she needed an outlet. Right now it was Mal.

“Mal, I think it’s best if you-”

Mal seemed to finally notice Chad was in the room with them. “What are you doing here!”

“I’m here for Evie.” Chad’s voice wavered, but he stood fast in front of Mal. “I know how hard it’s been for her.”

“And I don’t?” Mal spat out.

“I brought her some food. An actual meal and I thought the two of us could talk about-”

“Looks like you’ve been doing enough eating for the both of you,” Mal sneered.

“Don’t talk to him like that.” Evie clenched her eyes shut and took a deep breath. “He knows what I’m going through. He lost Audrey too. And I know you’re frustrated, Mal. You all are. You just want everything to be like before. But it can’t be. Let me be selfish. Let me hurt and heal on my schedule. Not yours.”

“I don’t know why you won’t let me-”

“What? Fix me?” Evie growled. “I don’t need you to fix me, Mal. I didn’t stop sewing and designing because I lost my hand. I stopped because it feels empty to do it in a world without her.”

Mal closed her eyes and took a deep breath.

“I’m sorry, Evie. For making this about me. I’ve never lost anyone like you and- and Chad have. I don’t want to know what that’s like. The closest I ever came was the day Audrey was taken and you could have-” Mal shuddered. She shook her head as if she was getting rid of a bad memory. “So please. Eat whatever Chad brought you. I’ll leave you to your work. And I’ll get back to mine.”

Evie clamped down on her anger. She knew Mal was only angry because she was worried. And scared. They all were.

“Sometimes, I feel normal. Or at least next to normal. But then the next thing I know, I’m so far from it.” Evie put her hand in her hair. She pulled at it as she clenched her eyes. “Like I can’t bother with being okay.”

“And that’s okay,” Uma said. “Grief comes and goes. Like waves. You’ve just been shipwrecked and everything is lost. You’re drowning. But you come up for air. Then another huge wave crashes down on you again. The waves keep coming, tossing you around with the flotsam and jetsam. But the waves get smaller. You can manage. You can breathe. But the waves can start back up again. You can see them coming and you’ll be ready sometimes. Birthdays, holidays. The anniversary of when she was taken. But maybe you won’t be. Roses in bloom. Or songbirds in spring. The waves never stop coming. And maybe you won’t want them to. I get it. The hurt is yours and you think if you stop hurting, you’ll forget her. But it’ll

stay. When somebody pass away, they don't really go away. That's just the wave. Waves don't die. You'll remember her."

"Thanks, Captain," Evie smiled softly.

"Anytime," Uma laughed it off.

"Where'd that come from," Mal asked in awe.

"This old pirate Snow told me that. He was a regular at my mom's place. I may have put it into my own words," Uma shrugged. "But his lesson always stayed with me. Ugh. Don't tell anyone about this. I have a reputation to maintain."

Evie looked between the fairy and the pirate. She was glad they were becoming friends again. She knew part of that was because she was busy. But she was thankful that Mal had a friend when she couldn't be one.

"Evil, I'm such a horrible friend," Evie's tongue felt heavy in her mouth.

"No, you're not. I am," Mal shook her head. "Pushing you all the time. You're grieving,"

"Yeah, but even though I push you away you never give up on me."

"You never gave up on me. Even after the bear traps."

Chad scrunched his face up at the mention of bear traps. Mal saw him.

"And if Evie can forgive me for the bear traps, and forgive you for being the biggest jerk in all the land, I can be nicer to you. Sorry, about the dig at your weight."

"No worries." Chad waved her off. "It's a stressful time."

"Still," Mal bit her lip. "No one deserves to be shamed like that. Even you."

"You know it's bad when Carlos is losing his patience." Chad shrugged.

"Fuck," Evie muttered. She knew Chad was right. "Looks like I have some apologizing of my own to do."

"He understands. It's like you said. We're not just friends, we're family," Mal held Evie's hand in both of hers. "And siblings argue sometimes, right? You're my sister. Nothing has to change even though it changed. You can find me in the space between."

Mal and Evie leaned in close to each other, their foreheads touching. They both laughed.

"Evie, come get your food," Uma interrupted.

Chad and Uma had given them some privacy by laying out the food on a table set up in the middle of the room. Like Evie, Dizzy could cook since they were both treated as all around servant girls. Since they had to make do with what Auradonians threw away, they had to be

creative. Evie had passed on some of her favorite stews, casseroles and meat pies recipes. Dizzy had made her one of her favorite comfort meals: meatloaf with mash potatoes, and roasted vegetables. And for dessert! An apple crumble.

“This looks amazing,” Chad admitted. “Dizzy made all this?”

“Yep,” Mal said proudly. “Evie taught her.”

Chad bit his lip. “Such a shame that such a sweet kid lived such a hard life. You all did.”

“That wasn’t on you.” Mal challenged him.

“If there’s anything I can do,” Chad offered.

“I can think of some things,” Uma smirked.

“Guys. Let’s eat!” Evie invited her friends to share the meal. She wanted to stop Chad before he was talked into giving Uma a small fleet of ships. “There’s more than enough.”

Chad needed no further prodding and happily made himself a plate. He dug in. He actually closed his eyes and moaned at the taste.

In doing so he missed the wink that Uma gave to Mal.

“And can you believe this was all made from garbage,” Uma grinned deviously at the prince.

Chad looked at Uma with his mouth full. He swallowed what was in his mouth. Then shrugged. “I don’t even care. This is so good.”

Evie glared at Uma. “You just waited until he took a bite to say that. She’s joking. I’m sure Dizzy used fresher ingredients than that.”

“This is one of Evie’s favorites,” Mal changed the subject.

“I didn’t really think of you as a meatloaf kind of girl,” Chad admitted

“They don’t exactly have lobster thermidor and truffle oil on the Isle,” Uma teased.

“Ugh. Truffle oil. Yum. I think Dizzy used some in the mash potatoes,” Chad spooned another bit of mashed potatoes into his mouth.

Evie tried the mashed potatoes. “You’re right she did.”

“So, um.” Chad’s eyes flitted between the three Villain Kids. His curiosity got the better of him. “Did you guys have to eat a lot of rotten garbage?”

“It was kinda mixed actually,” Evie answered. Chad sincerely wanted to know. “You’d be surprised what people just throw away. Kinda wasteful. Day old veggies. A lot of beef and pork. Dented canned goods. Bruised fruit.”

"Why would Auradon care when you could just go to the grocery store for organic pre-sliced mango." Uma jabbed a piece of meatloaf angrily.

"Sometimes, we'd get really lucky. One time Jay won a whole brisket. That was nice. Other times there would be fresh fruit or you know like canned fruit and vegetables that were nowhere near expired. Packaged cookies and chocolate," Evie was thoughtful. "Almost like people were intentionally throwing away nice things. Like what would be nutritious for growing children. Maybe multivitamins."

"Too bad some of the adults hoarded that stuff for themselves," Mal chimed in. "I had it better than most kids. Not that Maleficent actually cared. She just wanted to show off. You had to fight for everything on the Isle. And she was the most powerful and most feared."

"They did you know." The Villain Kids stared at Chad. "Throw things away on purpose. Not me of course. But like Aziz and Ruby did stuff like that."

"They did?" Evie reflected on what she knew about the two royals.

Aziz had been in the grade above theirs. While Ruby was in the grade below. Aziz was a nice guy. He wasn't on the tourney team, but instead on the cross country and swim teams. Evie didn't understand the appeal of running for fun. Back on the Isle, people ran to survive and if you saw people running you'd start running too, no questions asked. But Aziz was good at it. Ruby and Aziz seemed to be in the same clubs at school even if Aziz was more popular. They were both socially conscious.

"Yeah. Rapunzel's always been trying to get better care for the people on the Isle, so her daughter would too. And Aziz is like Ben, but even more," Chad scrunched his face up thinking of a word to use to describe the other prince. "Ben. He's all about improving society. He wasn't there that first semester you guys came. If he was I'm sure he would have been friends with you guys and would have never turned his backs on you like the rest of us. Ruby was still a little shy and still figuring high school out or she would have too. They were some of the few royals that made an effort with Audrey when she started pushing everyone away."

"Damn, Chaddington." Uma pointed her fork at him. "You know a lot about people."

"I know gossip." Chad started on dessert. "And you have to know this stuff as a prince. Forming alliances to get what you want. This is so good."

"People want to pretend that the Isle and Auradon are different, but hell if it isn't the same." Mal would know. She had to be a leader of both.

"A lot of other royals and nobles don't like Aziz," Chad continued. "He talks a lot about kings and queens being an outdated system. Let the people decide."

"Like a democracy?" Uma asked. "One person. One vote?"

"Isn't that Auradon?" Mal turned to Evie.

“No, they have an elective monarchy,” Evie explained. “Where the senior nobility vote for the king or queen. And the majority chose Beast and Belle over Queen Aurora and King Philip. And Beast basically just declared himself emperor, and changed the rules. And no one complained because they valued security over freedom.”

“Wow. Have you been talking to Aziz?” Chad laughed nervously.

“Okay, I’m going to drop this for now.” Evie pointed at the prince. “But we’re going to have a little chat about the dark side of Auradon.”

“The dark side of Auradon,” Uma arched an eyebrow. “Don’t make me laugh.”

“No, seriously,” Evie turned quickly to face the pirate captain. “Beast was content to let us all rot on the Isle when we did nothing wrong. He banished his political rivals. Queen Aurora and King Philip. What could he do to the ones with a lower standing?”

“Uma, you just had to get her started,” Chad hissed at the pirate.

“Which makes sense!” Evie blurted out. “Since there were people on the Isle that were too old to have been born there, but too young to have been adults when they were sent there. Their parents must have opposed Beast.”

“Or they could have supported the villains,” Mal argued. “This is my future father-in-law we’re talking about.”

“Stop talking.” Chad ordered. “Both of you.”

“Excuse me?” Mal rounded on him. Evie was surprised at his outburst.

“Mal, Uma. Can you cast some sort of ward over this room? So no one can overhear us.” His tone was firm and kingly, so very unlike him. They knew he was serious. It spurred them into action.

Uma and Mal worked together to ward Evie’s room. They also went further and put alarms on it that would warn Evie if someone was near the room, if someone was trying to come in, or if someone was inside when Evie wasn’t around.

“This need for secrecy and privacy just shows something is going on.” If Evie could throw her hands up, she would. Mal wasn’t getting it.

“Look, Evie.” Chad covered his mouth with his fingers, picking his words carefully. “You’d have an easier time finding Old Scratch than going up against King Beast. It would probably be a lot more safer, too. I’ve heard stories about families disappearing.”

“I mean security is good and that’s the only reason I did what Chad asked.” Mal crossed her arms. “I don’t believe any of this.”

“Mal, whose idea was it to shut down the barrier forever?” Evie stepped towards her sister.

“It was mine.” Mal looked at the ground.

“Was it?” Evie asked, a look of suspicion on her face. “Or did the adults in the room manipulate you into being the first to say it?”

“He-They-,” Mal stammered.

“Used you against Ben.” Evie put her hand on Mal’s shoulder. “They shouldn’t have put that on you.”

“Then why did King Adam go along with the barrier coming down in the end?” Mal bit her lip.

“You did kind of spring it on them in front of everyone. And there was a positive reaction to it in the crowd,” Uma chimed in. She had been watching the other two, ready to step in again if tempers flared. She wasn’t enjoying this role reversal. Being the peacekeeper was no fun. “After that pretty speech of yours about how anyone could be a hero no matter where they came from.”

“You’re buying into this?” Mal shook her head. “Of course you are.”

“I mean why wouldn’t I?” Uma stood up. “The man came up the Isle of the Lost. He left children there. And Evie has a point. He sent children there. Harry’s older sister is almost 30. She wasn’t born on the Isle.”

“Okay,” Mal said slowly. “If King Adam is so power hungry, then why did he let Ben become crowned king at 16?”

“Yeah! That was dumb as hell,” Uma admitted. “Does anyone make good choices at 16? Unless you want him to be so inexperienced that he relies on you for advice on how to rule and if the people revolt it’s your son’s head on a silver plate not yours.”

“Mal, that’s the same thing your mom did. She made you so unsure of yourself that you always deferred to her. All our parents did that. Grimhilde, Cruella, Jafar. He probably hated that you were going to be Ben’s queen until he realized how to pull your strings just like Maleficent,” Evie wrapped her arm around her sister’s shoulder. “Can’t you recognize an evil scheme when you see one?”

“We should be cautious around the bastard,” Uma added. “He’s up to something.”

“There is something that’s been bothering me.” Chad stood in front of Evie’s work. “And I didn’t think of it until I saw all this.”

Chad was examining the photos of heroes and villains and places covering the walls. He touched a thread going from a photo of Audrey and Maleficent.

A sketch of Old Scratch was at the center of it all. Evie had done it from memory. She could never forget the monster that took Audrey away.

“I mean I didn’t want to say anything earlier,” Uma whistled. “But wow. That’s a lot.”

“I had a lot of thread.” Evie shrugged. “What else am I going to use it for?”

“For your intense obsession board,” Uma waved at the wall.

“No, it helps. Because I know what’s bothering me about all this. The day that Audrey was taken. Every adult in the room seemed to know who Old Scratch was. Like they were familiar with him and he knew them.”

“You’re right!” Evie pumped her fist in the air. “Belle addressed him by name. I understand why some of the Villains would know him, but why would Heroes? There’s something there. There’s a link between Beast and Old Scratch.”

An alarm started blaring.

“What is that!” Chad shouted, his hands clamped over his ears.

“It’s part of the spell we cast!” Mal shouted back. “Someone is trying something!”

The sketch of Old Scratch burst into familiar black flames. The flames tenderly licked the wall, turning Evie’s work to ash.

Chad screamed but grabbed onto the girl closest to him, which happened to be a surprised Uma and pushed her behind him.

“What the hell! This shouldn’t be happening!” Mal yelled.

“Well, it’s happening. Again,” Evie said, not impressed in the slightest. But she was angry at the black flames that had swallowed Audrey being used to destroy her work. She had taken her phone and started recording what was left of the wall. “Get out! Go!”

“I’m not leaving you!” Mal pleaded.

“Hurry up! I can’t lose another friend.” Chad told Evie. He grabbed Mal and dragged her over to the door.

“It won’t open!” Uma started slamming her hand on the door. She made a fist, but nothing appeared in it. “Help!”

“Hold on!” Chad started to kick the door down.

“Make it easy, make it quick. Open up without a kick.” Mal tried. Nothing happened. “Uma!”

“This is all I’m asking for, open up, you fucking door!” Uma screamed.

The door didn’t budge.

The black fire had crawled along until even the door was on fire.

“I don’t want to die in a glorified closet!” Chad gave the door a final kick that did nothing at all.

The four friends ended up back to back in the middle of the room. Smoke filled the air. They were all coughing. Evie felt the heat on her skin. She snarled and held her hand out to the flames.

“Evie! Your hand!” Mal shrieked.

The black flames crept up her arm, curling around it. She felt it cross her shoulders to what was left of her arm. It didn’t burn her like before. The flame started to take the shape of her missing limb. She stared at the new hand. She wiggled five fiery fingers. She grinned as she brought both of her hands up. The flames moved like she was in control.

“That-” Mal’s eyes widened. “That burned you before.”

“He won’t hurt me anymore,” Evie declared, as the flames danced around her. “I won’t let him.”

Evie inhaled deeply and pushed her hands forward, sending the fire towards the door. Evie watched in satisfaction as the door exploded outward.

“Holy hell!” Chad was staring at Evie dumbfounded.

“Took the words right out of my mouth.” Uma was looking at where the door used to be. “Didn’t know you had it in you.”

“You guys okay?”

Carlos and Jane had popped their heads from either side of the doorway to peer into the room. Carlos was holding up a fireman’s axe, while Jane was holding a fire extinguisher.

“No one seriously injured?” Mal asked the others. “Chad?”

“Yes. The mere mortal amongst you ravishing goddesses is okay. I’m just a little singed.” Chad patted his arm with a charming grin.

“I still think you should all still get checked out at the hospital. Smoke inhalation is just as dangerous as the flames. Smoke contains carbon monoxide, can impede oxygenation-”

“Glad to see some things haven’t changed,” Carlos joked.

“Carlos, I’m sorry about earlier. My little brother is just worried about me.” Evie lamented, wanting to look anywhere but at Carlos.

“I know. It’s probably not going to be the last time we argue. I’m not giving up on you yet,” Carlos consoled as he came to stand in front of Evie. “Now, we saw the smoke and came running. What the hell happened?”

“Hell is right.” Evie glanced at her arm where black flames had formed a hand. She looked around the destroyed room. The flames were completely out.

“So that was hellfire?” Uma had an expression on her face that was a mix of awe and annoyance. The daughter of the Sea Witch despised fire.

“It was.” Chad grimaced.

“It was a warning!” Mal shouted. “We could have died.”

“It was a sign! That we’re going in the right direction. There’s something there.” There was a connection between King Beast and Old Scratch. She was going to find out. “And we wouldn’t have died. I had it under control.”

“We have to be smart about this.” Chad spoke up. He looked at Jane and Carlos. “For now, keep it a secret. What you found out. And what you can do.”

Chad had been right about keeping quiet about her suspicions of King Adam. He had shown his true intentions soon enough. Which had caused Evie to reveal her abilities.

Fortunately for her, most people weren’t afraid of her having such power. The ones that were afraid of her already hated her for who her mother was and where she had grown up.

“Looks like your mom’s awake,” Chad was in her kitchen making pancakes. Her daughter was on a step stool right next to him. She was allowed to help in the kitchen under adult supervision. She was great at mixing pancakes.

Evie extinguished the flame in her hand.

“Mama! Uncle Chad came over! He’s making pancakes. Chocolate chip! I’m his soup chef!” Rory beamed up at her mother.

“Wow, Rosebud. I’m proud of you. Not so close to the stove though, okay?” Evie went to make a cup of coffee. She glanced at Chad. “I see you let yourself in.”

“Good morning to you too.” Chad expertly flipped a pancake. “Thanks for putting that out. I like this shirt. My niece gave it to me.”

Chad was wearing a simple baby blue shirt that said “BEST UNCLE EVER” down the front.

“Rory got those for all her uncles.” Evie smirked into her coffee, as she leaned against the kitchen island.

Just like she had with Uma and Harry, she and Chad had ended up becoming good friends. Confidants. Just two lost souls clinging to each other through the waves.

Chad had really helped her during her pregnancy with Rory, so much so that some people thought he was the father. He wasn’t. But he did know the truth. He was the only one of her friends she could tell.

“Late night?” Chad put a pancake on top of a stack of pancakes.

“Aren’t they all?” Evie sighed.

“Roro said she had a nightmare.” Chad looked worried.

“Uncle Chad said we can go pick out a night light!” Rory bounced up excitedly. She wasn’t paying attention. She slipped on her step stool and fell towards the hot griddle.

“Rory!” Evie dropped her coffee mug as she rushed to her daughter.

Chad had his hand on Rory’s chest, stopping her from falling.

“It’s okay! I didn’t get burned! See!” Rory put her other hand on the still hot griddle before either adult could stop her.

Rory was right. Evie examined her daughter’s hands. There were no burns or blisters. Nothing. The little hands weren’t even warm.

Chad looked over at Evie. “Well, she is your daughter.”

Chapter End Notes

I don't even know what happened with this chapter. I was just like Evie would totally make one of those intense link maps. And I wanted her to talk to Chad. This happened.

Song lyrics in this chapter are from:
The Scientist by Coldplay
Waves by Chance the Rapper

Uma's advice about grief are base on a reddit post. <https://thelossfoundation.org/grief-comes-in-waves/>

I relate to it so much with all the loved ones I've lost over the years.

Thank you for reading.

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Evie and her friends try to solve a problem. When are they not.

In the past, Evie's had to deal with Frolo and Hades. And her new powers. She finds out where she got them and who her father is.

Chapter Notes

This chapter contains:

Frolo being a sorry excuse for a human.

Jay having two hands.

Hades being Hades.

Chad and Evie being bros.

Thank you to everyone for reading and leaving kudos and comments!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“So the wee lass has powers?” Harry leaned back in his chair with his boots up on the table.

“Considering who her mother is, I’m not surprised.” Uma was sitting next to him, her hand in his lap.

“What all can she do?” Jane asked.

“She touched a hot stove and didn’t get burned. That’s all we know so far.” Evie explained to adults in the room. Most of her friends had come when she explained they had a problem.

Doug’s eyes widened. “We can test-”

“My daughter isn’t some experiment.” Evie slammed her fist on the table. “She’s five.”

“I know.” Doug looked apologetic as he reeled himself in. “I’m just saying it doesn’t hurt to be prepared. We can assume she has the same abilities as you. She’ll need to learn how to control them. She’s much younger than all of you were when you began to exhibit powers.”

“Jane and I will help you, Evie.” Mal looked around the room. “We all will.”

“They already talk about her because of me. I know what they say about her.” Evie clenched her jaw and felt the flames in her fingertips.

“Mama! Are you done talking about me?” Rory came bounding into the room. Chad and Ben slunk in behind her looking guilty.

Several of the adults in the room started talking at once at getting caught in the act.

“We weren’t talking about you-”

“This coffee is great!”

“We had other stuff to talk about. Adult things-

“Like making babies?” Rory looked at the adults, with an expression of judgement on her face that didn’t belong to a five year old. She pointed at a very pregnant Mal. “Uncle Ben and Aunt Mal made a baby and that’s why she’s so big.”

“What! No!” Chad sputtered. He covered Rory’s ears. “Harry! Uma! What have you been telling her?”

“This is why Ben and I watch Rory more than you and Harry,” Mal chuckled.

“Like you were watching her when you and Ben lost her?” Uma scoffed.

“We didn’t lose her,” Mal defended weakly. “We were playing hide and seek. She was just really, really good at it. A hide and seek prodigy!”

“Seriously?” Uma roared with laughter.

“We’ll talk about that later.” Evie shot Mal and Uma a warning look. Her actual child didn’t give her as much grief as her grown family. “Hi, Rosebud. How was your shopping trip with Uncle Chad and Uncle Ben? You’re back earlier than expected.” She glared at the two men. This hadn’t been part of the plan.

“Why don’t you tell us about your morning, dear one? While your mama talks to your uncles.” Jane led the girl over to the table. At least one of her friends could be counted on to be an adult.

“When she heard about everyone being here she wanted to come back early,” Ben began his explanation.

“And who told her about everyone being here?” Evie asked, already knowing the answer.

Ben dipped his head sheepishly. Evie sighed.

“And my new nightlight is so cool! I won’t have nightmares anymore.” Rory exclaimed, her hands in the air.

“Nightmares?” Carlos asked Rory, but shot Evie a look of concern.

All of the adults at the table had nightmares from time to time. But especially the ones that had grown up on the Isle.

“Yeah! No more shadows. I’ll miss the Grey Lady,” Rory murmured sadly. “She was nice even if she was scary.”

“The Grey Lady?” Jane’s worried face mirrored Carlos’s.

“She fights the Shadows and other Bad Ones,” Rory explained, a little frustration sneaking in as if the adults really should already know this.

“What does the Grey Lady look like?” Carlos followed up his wife’s question.

“She’s grey,” Rory said, like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Harry started to laugh hard. “Yeah, Carlos. She’s obviously grey.”

“It’s right there in the name.” Uma was smirking. She gave Rory an encouraging nod to continue.

“And she’s got scars on her face like Mama. But different.” Rory traced a finger around her face.

Uma and Harry stopped laughing.

“Miss Grey.” Harry sat up. He glanced over at Uma.

“There was a villain on the Isle. That all the other villains were afraid of. But she was always nice to us kids.” Uma crossed her arms.

“Who are you talking about?” Evie took Rory into her lap.

“You wouldn’t have known her. She was around when we were little. Back when you were in exile.” Uma nodded as she spoke, as if each movement of her head brought back memories.

“I remember her!” Mal gasped.

“You would! You had a big ol’ crush on her,” Uma teased.

Mal blushed. “So did you!”

“She was something like a teacher. Taught us how to read and write,” Carlos cut in.

“A responsible adult?” Chad scoffed in disbelief. “On the Isle?”

“Well no,” Carlos winced. “She gave us chocolate and knives. Taught us how to use ‘em too.”

“She gave me a knife too! But just in my dream. Can I have a knife, Uncle Ben?” Rory knew exactly which adult would get her what she wanted.

“Of course!” Ben noticed Evie and Mal glaring at him. “When you’re older.”

“Rory, why don’t you go supervise your Uncle Ben while he sets up your nightlight.” Evie kissed the top of her daughter’s head to send her off.

“Okay!” Rory hopped out of Evie’s lap and took Ben by the hand.

“I’ve never heard of a villain by that name. Who’s villain was she?” Doug asked, hungry for knowledge.

Uma shrugged. “I don’t know. She was just there. Like I said all the villains were terrified of her. My mother was. Same with Gaston and Mother Gothel. Frollo was especially afraid of her. He would scream and call her a demon. He really just fell apart when he saw her in the alleys.”

“The only other villain with that kind of reputation on the Isle was Maleficent,” Carlos added.

“Yeah, but even my mother was afraid of her. She never let on. But I knew she was.” Mal bit her lip.

“But she’s not around.” Doug looked at everyone in the room. “She wasn’t one of the villains we interviewed back then.”

“She disappeared.” Harry waved his hands slowly, always one for theatrics.

“Someone who was a villain’s villain just disappeared? From the Isle that had a magical barrier around it.” Evie couldn’t be hearing that right.

“Yeah no one knows what happened to her for sure. Frollo said she went back to hell where she came from,” Carlos said sadly.

“Whatever happened, Maleficent took responsibility for it,” Mal explained.

They had all gathered to talk about Rory’s powers. But now they were talking about Rory’s nightmares like they were a real person. It wasn’t so hard to believe. Evie had dreams that were so real. Her last dream with Audrey, the last one she had in years, had been so realistic. Evie was sure it had been more than just a dream.

This villain could be visiting her daughter in her nightmares.

Evie didn’t like that.

“Okay. I’m going to come out and say it. Do you think Rory’s powers have something to do with her nightmares? Who was this villain really? Childhood memories aren’t much to go on.” Doug rubbed his chin.

“Dr. Facilier was friends with Miss Grey. They played chess together,” Uma offered. Harry beamed at her, like she was a genius.

Not to be outdone, Mal threw in a suggestion. “And Hades, too. We can ask them?”

Evie clenched her jaw. Hades didn’t really like her.

There were a lot of people that had written about Old Scratch. Evie had read the books. She learned his other names. There were accounts of people who had made deals with Old Scratch, like the farmer Stone and a fiddle player. She learned about the properties of hellfire and how to fight demons. (Harry and Uma, in particular, took a lot of interest in hunting demons.) Monks and scholars had their long winded tomes on witchcraft, which were poured over until her eyes blurred the letters.

But nothing could beat a first hand account.

Which is why Evie was speaking to Frollo.

The man. The monster.

The former Justice Minister was sitting at the same table Evie had spoken to Maleficent at. The table still had the gouge from the knife she put through the dark fairy’s hand. Evie grinned at the memory.

“I knew it was only a matter of time before you came for me,” Frollo said. His back was straight and his hands on the table in between them, his fingers steepled together.

Frollo had always disgusted Evie. Back on the Isle, she had stayed far away from his creperie. But whenever they had crossed paths, she would feel his eyes on her. She knew he was undressing her with eyes every time.

He was doing that exact thing right now.

“You were always a favorite of mine. I feel absolutely vindicated now.” Frollo reached a hand out towards her face. “You tempted me so you burned.”

“I see you haven’t learned a damn thing.” Jay grabbed Frollo by the wrist and squeezed it. “Keep your hands to yourself or I break them.”

“And you brought a bodyguard. Afraid of little old me?” Frollo smirked.

“I’m here for your protection.” Jay crossed his arms and went to stand behind him.

Like Mal, Jay hated feeling useless and powerless. When he had heard about his friends and Chad almost getting killed by hellfire, Jay had stuck close to Evie. Harry and Ben were doing the same to Uma and Mal respectively. Of course, Uma and Mal were hovering around her as well. Which just led to Evie never being alone. She usually ended up with an entourage everywhere she went.

Her friends practically fought for the honor of babysitting her during this interrogation. In the end, Evie picked Jay. She knew how much he needed it.

But one of the good things to come out of nearly burning alive in a cursed fire, was that Chad and Doug had gotten closer. Evie was still a romantic in spite of everything. She was happy for her friends.

“Yes, I heard what happened to Maleficent,” Frollo chuckled.

Another silver lining to have come from the fire was learning that she could control it. The hellfire answered to her.

“Jay,” Evie warned with a smile. She trailed her finger along the table, which began to smolder under her touch. “I think the judge here knows what’s good for him.”

“You!” Frollo’s eyes widened. “I was right about you! Sent here by the Devil himself to seduce me!”

“Don’t flatter yourself. The weakness is in you. You died. Now there’s no doubt as to where you ended up.” Evie called forth a black flame to her hand. She let it dance around her fingers. “And He shall smite the wicked and plunge them into a fiery pit.”

“Hellfire.” Frollo stared at the black flame. “The villains. We all died. But they don’t remember Hell. I do. The flames. I never had a moment’s peace.”

“Good.” Evie clenched her hand. The flame just hugged her fist. “After what you did to all those people. They should have left you there.”

“But I am here,” Frollo sneered. “And the one you lust for is there.”

“Do not!” The flames erupted along Evie’s skin. Her eyes burned.

“That demon! She got what she deserved! She was the worst of them. No wonder she ended up there,” Frollo screamed.

Evie slapped him across the face. Lucky for him, she had put her flames out. Even though she hadn’t wanted to. The way he spoke of Audrey, of any woman, was so hateful and it made her rage.

“I can easily make you wish you were back there!” Evie roared, as she held onto the front of his robes. “So talk.”

The man shook with fear. Evie was excited. She enjoyed being able to get such a reaction from such a vile man. But she hated the need for vengeance simmering under her skin.

The need to punish.

“There isn’t much to say,” Frollo gulped. “All of the villains that died ended up there, it’s true. But you’re missing one. The worst villain is the victor that put us all on the Isle. Ask him

how he brought us back.”

Evie hadn't thought of that.

She let go of the man that filled her with nothing but disgust. He fell to the floor and crawled behind Jay, shielding himself behind the young man's legs.

How had the villains come back?

“I was burning and then I was back on earth. King Beast gave me a lighter sentence. The man was a fool. Bringing people back from the dead is unnatural. Just like you, abomination.”

“Watch your mouth!” Jay shook the man off his leg.

Frollo crumpled to the floor.

“She was made for you!” Frollo began to cackle. “Who is the monster and who is the man?”

Jay went to the door and knocked four times. The King's Guard entered. They stood at attention.

“Take our guest back to his quarters on the Isle,” Evie spat out, disgust in her voice.

The guards had been ordered by Ben to follow Evie and Jay's instructions.

“Yes, Ambassador.” The most senior guard saluted Evie.

Evie wondered at the title. It hardly fit. She was a girl from the Isle representing her people, sure. But she was hardly up to the task of advising the King on Isle affairs these days.

“And your name, sir?”

“Fidel Mensonge. Captain Fidel Mensonge.” The man stood at strict attention, chest out and chin up.

Evie continued to study the man. There was something about him she didn't trust.

The two younger guards hauled Frollo from the ground. The villain started to laugh maniacally.

“I must attend to our prisoner, Ambassador,” Mensonge stared straight through her.

Evie nodded and said nothing more. The guard was someone to be suspicious of. But then she was suspicious more and more these days.

The guards took Frollo away.

Jay and Evie didn't move to follow.

“Something you want to say?” Evie didn't turn around.

“Mal was right.”

“I wasn’t going to do anything to him. His blood isn’t worth spilling. I just wanted to scare him,” Evie smirked.

“Well, you scared me.” Jay moved into her.

Evie stepped back from him. “I scared you?”

“I don’t want you to lose yourself. We don’t want to lose you,” Jay sighed. “When you got angry with Frollo, your eyes were completely black.”

That was why her eyes burned. Evie was surprised, but she didn’t show it. “I have it under control.”

“Your grief? Don’t let it turn into rage. That’s a fire that burns out of control. And you end up like our parents.” Jay wrapped her up in his strong arms. Evie let him.

“Come on,” Evie pulled out of the embrace. “I’m sure they’ve figured that Frollo is in one piece. So they’re waiting to check up on us. Well, more me than you I suppose. Though I’m sure that doesn’t apply to Lonnie.” She bumped Jay with her shoulder, a sly grin on her face.

When she and Jay stepped out into the hallway outside the interrogation room, Evie was surprised to see Chad actually acknowledging Lonnie. He had been giving her the cold shoulder ever since Cotillion. She was even more surprised to see Gil as part of the conversation, though she shouldn’t have been.

Both Lonnie and Gil’s face lit up when they saw Jay. Chad, on the other hand, was frowning. He took that as his cue.

Chad went to her side, distracting her from watching Jay flirt with Lonnie and Gil. The two didn’t seem to mind Jay’s divided attention.

The group made their way back up into Ben and Mal’s castle from the dungeons, walking and talking all the while.

“When the guards brought Frollo out he was screaming about hellfire. Did you show him your powers?” The prince was frowning worriedly.

“Please. Like anyone will believe him. They’ll think it’s more of his fire and brimstone bullshit. To him, every woman is a vile temptress demon. He’s a misogynist. He said it was Audrey’s own fault for what happened to her,” Evie growled.

“I know he’s an irredeemable bastard, but it just takes one person to believe him.” Chad held his hands up.

“Okay, I’ll be careful.” Evie decided to change the subject, more to satisfy her curiosity. She nodded at the trio walking ahead of them. “What’s up with them?”

“Well, Gil came down here looking for Jay. He was happy to see Lonnie. The two of them caught up since they last saw each other. And of course, it was like they were the only two people on earth and nothing else existed including me. My phone doesn’t get signal down here so I had no choice but to watch that disgustingly cute interaction. Then Jay came out and it was like the two got heart eyes for him.”

“Aww. You’re totally invested.” Evie bumped Chad with her shoulder.

“I am. And I’m about to win a lot of cash.” Chad grinned as he rubbed his hands together.

“Nope.” Evie linked her arm with his. “You’re splitting the pool with me.”

“Shoot.” Chad pouted. “You bet on the three of them too?”

“Ha! Yeah.” Evie smiled to herself. She knew that Jay was smitten with Gil and Lonnie. She was happy to see that Gil and Lonnie wouldn’t mind sharing. But also seemed to be growing closer themselves.

“We can hear you, you know!” Jay piped up as he looked back at the pair.

“Yeah. You haven’t won yet. But check back tomorrow,” Lonnie smirked.

“Whoa.” Evie gasped, pretending to be scandalized. “Too much information.”

“Get your mind out of the gutter, Eves. We’re going on a date later.” Jay wrapped his arms around Gil and Lonnie’s waists.

“That’s what I like to hear. Ka-ching,” Chad teased as rubbed fingertips of his free hand together.

“So how are we going to handle the shovel talk? I’m friends with all three of you,” Evie laughed, as they reached the stairwell.

“Aww. Thanks, Evie,” Gil beamed at her.

“I’ll just have to beat you all up if you break each other’s hearts.” Evie glared menacingly at each of them.

“You’ll probably have to get in line behind Uma and Harry,” Lonnie chuckled.

“Damn. You’re right,” Jay grimaced.

“Yeah. They don’t like it when I’m sad,” Gil agreed.

“Since I probably won’t stand a chance against Jay or Gil, I’ll be there rooting for Lonnie while she kicks either of your asses if you ever dare hurt her.” Chad pumped his fist in the air.

“You two are good now?” Evie looked between the prince and the warrior.

Their group stopped on the stairs to have it all out.

"Yeah. I told Lonnie about how her cheering for Mal and Ben at the tourney game made Audrey feel. I also apologized for being a jerk towards her at R.O.A.R. since that was partly me trying to get back at her for hurting Audrey. And the rest was being a sexist asshole." Chad shook his head. He balled his hands up into fists, mad at himself more than anything. He slammed the bottom of his fist into the stone wall. "So much wasted time. If I wasn't being a petty dickhead, maybe we could have gotten to Audrey sooner."

"And I apologized for the part I played for losing Audrey." Lonnie put her hand on Chad's shoulder. "I should have been here. I should have realized-"

"We all had our parts to play. We can't dwell on what ifs." Evie pressed her lips together into a thin line.

Evie had already spoken to Lonnie. The other girl had come as soon as she heard about Audrey and had visited Evie in the hospital. She couldn't get mad at Lonnie. The girl had done the same thing she had. Not realizing how much Audrey was hurting until it was too late.

Chad had been the only one to stick by Audrey after everything that happened at the Coronation. He hadn't been able to be in the same room as Lonnie for the longest time.

"I'm sorry about Audrey, too. But we're helping to get her back! Uma and Harry said."

Gil could really cut to the heart of the matter. He might not have been the brightest but he knew what to say. It spoke volumes that the people that didn't know Audrey at all were fighting for her return.

Lonnie looked guilty so Evie knew she was thinking the same thing. But she smiled softly at Gil. "You bet your ass we are!"

"Oh, man. You're rubbing off on her!" Chad put the back of his hand on his forehead over dramatically.

"I mean not yet but hopefully!" Lonnie licked her lips.

"Li Donald! I'm shocked! Shocked, I say! Well, not that shocked. I mean, Gil and Jay are hot," Chad nodded at the other boys.

"And who's rubbing off on who! You're copying our hairstyles." Jay pointed at his and then Gil's long, flowing hair.

"Stop saying rubbing!" Chad grimaced.

"It looks good on you!" Gil offered as he climbed the last step to the ground floor of the castle. He walked backwards onto the ground floor to keep an eye on the rest of them.

"I love it too. It's getting longer than mine," Evie teased. She had no regrets about her undercut. "Screw you gender roles!"

"Dizzy wanted to braid it." Chad played with a strand of it. "Doug likes it too."

“Doug, huh?” Lonnie nodded with a knowing look. “I’m happy for you.”

Evie thought about how all her friends were pairing off. She wasn’t jealous or bitter. But she would be lying if she didn’t feel a twinge of something. Like it was shining a spotlight on what she was missing. She was left high and dry, as Harry and Uma would say. She wasn’t going to deny her friends a chance at love and happiness. She wasn’t going to fall to pieces. She wasn’t going to be the one screaming out.

All because the best thing she never had had gone away.

“You know. We should do something. All of us,” Evie brought up.

“Are you up for that?” Jay asked, opening one of the side doors that lead outside of the castle. He held the door open as they all filed outside.

“Jay, I will scream. I suggested it, didn’t I?” Evie scrunched her face up.

“Okay. Like a party?” Lonnie continued after Evie nodded, “But leave all the planning up to us. You just bring yourself.”

“Fine!” Evie relented. “You guys go have fun on your date.”

Jay shared a look with Chad that Evie caught. They were switching off on looking after her now, a changing of the guards.

“Bye, Evie!” Gil waved at her.

“Bye, guys.” Lonnie was in the middle of her boys as the trio walked away.

“Come on, Bodyguard.” Evie grabbed Chad by the arm. “Where’s your car? We’re going to talk to Hades.”

“Hades? Evie, what did I say. About doing this on the downlow?” Chad resisted the pull but not by much.

“Why wouldn’t I talk to my best friend’s father about her future wedding? Though Ben and Mal haven’t set a date yet, it doesn’t hurt to be prepared.” Evie said, voice sugary sweet.

“I won’t be able to talk you out of this,” Chad groaned. “I guess I should go as a possible contender for Best Man. Ha! I’m not even in the running, let’s be real. It’s down to Carlos or Jay. And I have no one else to blame.” His voice got watery.

“Chad, I’m sure you and Ben can reconnect. You’re definitely going to be a groomsman.” Evie took his hand in hers.

“Lonnie wasn’t the only person I was mad at for hurting Audrey. Maybe if I talked to Ben instead of being passive aggressive and petty...” Chad frowned as they walked together.

“It’s funny,” Chad continued. “Growing up, I expected to be the Best Man at Ben and Audrey’s wedding. But I probably should have been Maid of Honor since I was always closer

to Audrey. When Audrey wanted to save face after being publicly humiliated like that, I helped her. When she showed up at Jane's party with Maleficent's scepter, I helped her. I gave her what she wanted, but not what she needed. I'm not going to make the same mistake with you."

"And what do I need, Chad?" Evie stopped walking suddenly, ready to be defensive.

"I don't know yet. I hate that I don't know how to help." Chad shook his head.

"Look at me." Evie cupped his cheek with her hand. He was growing a beard, not intentionally; it was out of sorrow and mourning. It was soft against her palm. "You are helping."

Chad nodded instead of thanking her. Evie wouldn't have wanted it. They were helping each other after all.

"Where can we find Hades?"

"At his house?" Evie shrugged.

Mal had bought a house for her father so he could be off the isle as well as closer to her. It was similar to Evie's starter castle, but with more rooms. They were practically neighbors since it was down the road from her own place. Mal probably planned that.

The sound of a sword striking sword sounded from somewhere. Chad looked apologetic and reached into his back pocket and brought out his phone.

"That's your ringtone?" Evie chuckled. It was such a guy ringtone to have.

"It's Ben." Chad answered the phone. He scrunched his face up. "Seriously? I don't. She'll- Alright! It's for you."

Chad held his phone out to Evie. She looked at it. "Let me guess. It's Mal."

"It's Mal," Chad nodded. "I'm just going to put her on speaker phone."

"Evie!" Mal's voice rang out.

"Jay told you, didn't he?" Evie asked, annoyed.

"He did. So we're going to meet up with you at my dad's."

"Of course." Evie rolled her eyes.

"Bring Chad if he wants to come."

"Chad, want to be a human shield for Ben so he won't be adorably nervous around his future father-in-law?" Evie teased, knowing Ben could hear her.

A loud, offended "Hey!" could be heard in the background.

"I'd love to," Chad laughed. He unlocked his car. He waited for Evie to get in before slipping behind the wheel.

"Okay. See you soon," Mal said.

"Bye, Mal." Evie shook her head as the call ended. "Well, I was hoping to talk to Hades without Mal. But it's probably for the best. I get the feeling he doesn't like me much and only tolerates me because I'm practically his daughter's sister."

"Who wouldn't like you? I liked you even when I didn't like you. Like it's a crime to not like you. Hades truly is a villain," Chad gaped as he started the car. He really was an expressive guy. Evie thought about how we would be horrible at poker.

"I don't know how to explain it." Evie leaned back against the passenger seat. "When we crossed paths on the Isle, I thought it was because he was some big bag. But now that he's in Mal's life, he's great with Carlos and Jay. Jokes around with them. And he actually likes Ben. He's just been messing with him. With me though, he gives me this look sometimes that I used to get from people when I got to Auradon."

"Like he doesn't trust you because of who your parents are? And he's just waiting for you to do something evil?"

"That's the look." Evie pointed at him.

"As if you're capable of such things," Chad looked back at the road.

Evie thought back to the interrogation with Frollo. How much she enjoyed tormenting him. It had given her such pleasure to see the fear and agony on his face. Jay had told her her eyes had gone black. It was the same feeling she had when she had stabbed that knife into Maleficent's hand, twisting it to cause even more pain. A smile slipped on her face as she remembered. Then of course, her mother. She relished in the Evil Queen's screaming and moans over her haircut.

"I am though." Evie kept her eyes on him.

"Yes. You are," Chad firmly admitted, taking back his earlier words.

"Wow. You're not even going to say that I'm not. Thanks, Chad. And I mean that."

She really did.

"Well since you want to go there. Yeah. I mean I heard about what you did to Maleficent. And Ben told me about that man that tried to touch Dizzy. That you probably killed him."

"It was a slow and painful death." Evie had made sure of it.

"Good. I'm glad. People underestimate you. Their mistake. But you only seem to go after people that deserve it. The rotten and heinous." Chad nodded confidently.

"And that doesn't scare you?" Evie furrowed her brows.

"You're not a monster, Evie. You're my friend." Chad took his eyes off the road to stare her down.

She thought about telling Chad about her dreams. The ones that were so real and filled with lifetimes. In some of those, she was evil. She was worse than her mother. Worse than Maleficent. In her nightmares, she didn't just go after the sinners. There were some where Chad had been one of her victims, like in a world where she convinced Mal to keep the wand for themselves. After Audrey had cried out "I told you so!" at the Coronation. It was the last straw after all of Auradon's cruel words.

It was a nightmare, but it felt like a warning.

"Promise me," Evie started. "If I ever cross that line. If I ever go evil, you'll stop me."

"What?" Chad jerked the steering wheel. "Evie!"

"Promise me!" Evie raised her voice. The air in the car crackled.

"Okay, okay! I promise. But I don't think I'm that kind of friend." Chad made the turn for Hades's driveway.

"Chad! I'm being serious!" Evie hissed.

"I was trying to lighten the mood but I'm being serious too." Chad pulled up alongside the Royal limo. He put the car into park. "I'm just me. I don't think I can go up against you. You're going to want Uma for this."

"Uma. You're right." Evie slumped back against the passenger seat.

The daughter of Ursula was the one constant. She always sailed true. In all her nightmares, Uma always fought against the evil versions of her.

"Uma will help," Evie unbuckled his seatbelt.

"You have my word." Chad unbuckled his and turned towards her. "That if you ever become a villain, I will stop you. And I will get Uma to help me."

"By any means necessary." Evie held out her hand.

"By any means necessary." Chad shook it.

The handshake was charged. A deal was made. Just like she had made with Facilier.

"Ouch!" Chad put his fingers in his mouth. "So you can do that? Make deals? Like Facilier?"

"I guess that's what that is." Evie scrunched her face and got out of the car.

Chad hurried after her. "You should do the same with Uma."

“Believe me I will. And I’ll probably have Harry as well.”

If she had Uma and Harry, she’d probably have the entire crew of The Lost Revenge. Gil would be a problem though. Jay would be hurt if Gil even knew about a plan to hurt her, let alone act on it. She couldn’t risk her friend’s happiness like that.

The two of them walked up to the front door.

Evie rang the bell. Chad gave himself a once over.

“We can’t look as gorgeous and effortless as you, Pumpkin,” Chad grinned.

“Pumpkin?”

“Sorry.” Chad cringed. “I wasn’t thinking and it slipped out.”

“No, it’s cute,” Evie chuckled softly.

Ben opened the door. The young king looked relieved. “So glad you guys could join us.”

“Of course, Ben. Princes have to save damsels in distress after all. And your father-in-law is distressing,” Chad joked, but then he seemed to realize the two of them weren’t close like that.

“My hero,” Ben mussed Chad’s hair with a laugh making the other boy relax. “We’re downstairs.”

“The basement?” Evie rolled her eyes.

“Where else.”

Evie and Chad followed Ben to the basement. Since the majority of the furniture and decorations of the house were classy and elegant, she was sure an interior decorator was responsible. But in the basement was more Hades’s lair. While it was done in dark colors, it was still tasteful with wood paneling. Of course, there were guitars and framed posters on the wall. There was a pool table on the far side of the basement. There was also a fully stocked bar.

“Oh wow,” Chad looked around in awe. “I’m going to need the name of his interior decorator for when I get a place of my own.”

“I don’t know if you can afford me, Little Charming” The Lord of the Underworld was behind the bar. He was wearing a plain black t-shirt that showed off how fit he was paired with dark jeans.

“You put this all together?” Chad asked in awe.

“Yeah. Upstairs too.” Hades nodded towards the bar. “Drinks?”

So Evie had been wrong about Hades’s taste. She had to hand it to him.

"I'll have what the lady is having." Chad had his hand on the small of Evie's back. It was comforting to have his support.

"I'll have a Sidecar." Evie requested, a slight challenge in her voice.

"Please," Hades rolled his eyes. "I've been around for centuries before the island. I can make a Sidecar."

The god went to work on the cocktail. Chad led Evie away.

"Wow. I see what you mean." Chad leaned in close to Evie, whispering. "I thought he was just going to give you a glass of ice and tell you to wait instead of giving you a drink."

"Evie and Chad. Well, I guess you came." Mal waved them over. She and Ben were sitting on a couch, with Ben on one end and Mal in the middle. There was a young woman with dark skin and gorgeous dreadlocks sitting on Mal's other side.

"I want you to meet my stepmother," Mal introduced the woman.

"Miss Fine?" Evie raised an eyebrow.

"Hades is married to our history teacher?" Chad marveled.

"I'm older than I look." Miss Fine winked.

Realization dawned on Evie. She curtsied. Chad followed her lead and bowed.

"Lady Persephone," Evie greeted the woman.

"Miss Fine" was one of the few adults that didn't treat them like crap when she and her friends had first showed up in Auradon.

"Have a seat." Hades handed Chad and Evie their cocktails. "And be sure to use coasters."

"Thank you, Lord Hades." Chad bowed his head.

"Yes, thank you, Lord Hades." Evie nodded politely. Just because Hades didn't like her, didn't mean she could be rude.

Hades sat in the armchair across from the loveseat that Evie and Chad were sitting in. The god stared her down, his eyes boring a hole into her. "It's not poisoned, I promise."

Evie wouldn't put it past him. She took a sip of her drink. She tasted it then. She smirked. Hades had lied.

"I mean that's more her mother's thing, am I right?" Chad joked. Evie knew him well enough that he made jokes when he was uncomfortable. She laughed to sooth him.

But having the Evil Queen for her mother, she knew a thing about poisons. She had built up an immunity to the ones on the Isle.

Hades let out a roar of laughter at Chad's joke. Ben's eyes widened. He looked at Mal, who was frowning.

"You're alright, Charming. Loss changes a man and you've changed for the better. Not a simpering little shit." At Hades' insult, Chad managed not to pout. "You've been putting yourself between me and Evie since you got here. And you're trying to distract me. It's a good instinct."

"You're a busy god," Evie began. "I'm sure. So let's make this quick and I'll get out of your hair."

"Speaking of hair, can I just say before we begin, how much I love the new 'do? Really shows off the whole," Hades flexed his fingers towards her and clenched his fist. "It's about time you had to rely on your brains. Your beauty was just a crutch."

Evie was well aware of what her face looked like. The part that Old Scratch had burned was uneven, like a topographic map with hills and valleys. She was proud of her scar. She had gone up against a powerful being when no one else had.

"Dad!" Mal scolded her father.

"It's a compliment."

"A backhanded one," Mal pointed out.

"Hades," Persephone warned.

"What? I was saying she was smart as hell." Hades started to laugh. "I crack myself up. Come on. That was perfect."

Evie just stared at Hades, no expression on her face. They fell into a staring contest. Hades broke first. He looked away.

"Who brought the dead Villains back to life?" Evie leaned forward.

"I'm not proud of the part I played but my hand was forced." Hades slouched down in his armchair, his arms crossed.

"You did it against your will?" Evie raised a brow. "Who could do that? Someone as powerful as yourself was imprisoned on the Isle, after all. So someone even more powerful put you there. That was no mortal king."

"I think you know the answer by now," Hades huffed.

"Is that true, Dad?" Mal's eyes widened in disbelief.

"It's true, Mal," Persephone answered. "What I can tell you is that it's not the natural order of things. When you bring the dead back, they don't always come back right."

“And bringing them back doesn’t come cheap. I don’t know exactly what kind of deal Beast made but it must have been a big one.” Hades waved his hand and a glass with amber liquid materialized into it. He took a deep sip. “Their souls weren’t mine to give away. The Villains were Scratch’s prisoners.”

“My father,” Ben was frowning, deep in thought. “Made a deal with the Devil?”

“No. He made quite a few.” Hades gestured at Ben with his glass. Persephone leaned around Mal to comfortingly pat the prince’s leg.

“Bringing the Villains back and putting them on the Isle helped King Adam win the throne,” Chad stated. “The sense of security is why my father voted him as king.”

“How could they? Some of the Villains belonged there, but some people didn’t. How could these Heroes,” Evie spat the word out in disgust. “Not show any mercy or leniency. No compassion. Someone who stole to feed their family or worked under Gaston out of fear is not the same as Maleficent. The world isn’t so black and white.”

Unless...

“You said Beast made several deals,” Evie gave Hades a piercing glare. “Was getting enough votes part of it?”

“What? Like mind control?” Chad’s brows furrowed.

“No, no. Old Scratch doesn’t make people do anything against their will. He helps them with what they’ve been wanting. Take poor, tragic Audrey for example. Part of her wanted power and that’s the part that was tempted.” Hades pointed his drink towards Evie.

“When the devil wants to get something out of you, he doesn’t lie at all. He tells you the exact, literal truth. And he lets you find your own way to hell.” Persephone shook her head.

“They got what they wanted.” Ben crossed his arms and looked at the floor in disappointment. He found out his childhood heroes weren’t perfect.

“And the children of the Isle paid the price,” Chad murmured.

“The road to Hell is paved with good intentions,” Persephone nodded sagely. “Lucky for Old Scratch.”

“If you’re so afraid of the villains, why would you bring them back?” Mal asked the obvious.

“Beast wasn’t afraid of them. Everyone else was and he used that fear to control them. He put all the Villains behind the barrier so only he could keep the people of Auradon safe. It all makes sense now,” Evie sussed out.

The need to punish itched under her skin, begging for release. She raked her fingers along her thigh and clenched her teeth.

“What did my father trade for all of this?” Ben’s body was tense. He was barely containing his fury.

Hades studied him, like he was trying to guess the young king’s future actions. “A firstborn.”

“My father hurt so many people.” Ben balled up his fists. “I have to go.”

“Ben!” Mal called after him. She sighed. “I better go after him and make sure he doesn’t do anything stupid. Never thought I’d see the day.”

“Let me walk you out, Mal,” Persephone stood from the couch and helped Mal up.

Mal went over to Hades. Evie watched father hug daughter. She smiled at the sight. Hades had projected an image of being tough and hard, but he was a marshmallow when it came to people he cared about. He was obviously rethinking that hands off approach to parenting when it came to Mal. He was trying to be in her life more.

But she heard it then.

Hades’s whispered warning.

“Keep an eye on her. She’s her father’s daughter.”

Mal’s face flashed with confusion, before she schooled her expression to worry for her fiancé. “Bye, Dad. Thank you for having us.”

Turning to Evie, Mal nodded. “I’ll call you later?”

They all watched Mal leave.

“I guess we’ll be heading out too.” Chad stood up.

“No.” Evie and Hades both said at the same time. The two were staring each other down. Chad sat back down.

“What the hell was that? You told Mal to be careful around me. Not to mention, you laced my drink.” Evie bared her teeth.

From the corner of her eye, she saw Chad eye his own drink with distaste and pushed the glass away.

“I knew that you knew.” Hades grinned, slapping his knee. He stood up and made his way over to the pool table. “And don’t worry your pretty little head, Charming. It was just Evie’s drink. Fancy a game?”

“My mother fed me poisons while I was growing up. I know what they taste like.” Evie shrugged as she joined him at the table.

“What is your life!” Chad looked horrified.

“But did you die? I know you think your mother was building your immunity for poisons, but that would have wrecked your health and left you bedridden.” Suddenly, Hades roared and fire erupted towards Evie and Chad.

Evie stepped in front of Chad and banished the flames coming towards them.

“This is getting annoying,” Evie picked up a cue stick.

“Poison and fire. Have you tried anything else?” Hades racked up the balls.

“Should I bother?” Evie didn’t keep the irritation out of her voice. “I’m nigh invulnerable.”

“No, but it would be fun to watch,” Hades chuckled.

Evie held the cue stick out to Chad. He looked at her and then the stick. She raised her eyebrow at him. He ducked his head in defeat and took the cue stick from her.

Hades realized too late what they were planning when Chad raised the cue stick above his head and brought it down on Evie’s head with all his strength.

The stick splintered. Evie barely felt the impact.

“You’re right. That was fun.” Evie smirked.

“Do that with someone else’s shit. Not mine. You owe me a new cue stick, Charming.” Hades handed Evie another cue stick.

It made sense to Evie. She had felt the changes. Ever since Old Scratch had burned her.

“You’re like a superhero! Do you have superstrength?” Chad exclaimed. At Evie’s odd look, he cleared his throat. “Doug loves superheroes. So I’ve borrowed some of his graphic novels.”

“You know,” Hades bent over to take a shot. He hit the cue ball. “People on the Isle thought you were my kid. It’s the hair. And we’re a good looking pair. But your mom slept with someone else devilishly handsome.”

“No,” Evie shook her head. “That can’t be true.”

“You already know it is.” Hades gave her a knowing look.

“You said Beast traded a firstborn for power.” Evie bit her lip, as she mulled it over. She shared her thoughts with Hades. “Not Beast’s firstborn. Just a firstborn. That’s me.”

“You are a smart one. You have to be careful with your exact words around your Old Man.”

“I’m nothing like him,” Evie spat out.

“Don’t be so sure,” Hades scoffed. “I heard about what you did to Maleficent. And you sent that handsey bastard straight to your father. You’ve been reading up on him. You know what

his spawn is destined to do. You know what you are."

"The Adversary. The Bringer of the Apocalypse. Destroyer of Worlds." Evie murmured. That's what the child of Old Scratch had been referred to in the text. She looked up at Hades.

"The Execution of All Things." Hades added by interrupting. Evie rolled her eyes. "What? That's my favorite one."

"Well, I won't be doing that. I refuse." Evie###

"I can't risk it," Hades shook his head.

"So you're going to kill me? To stop the end of the world," Evie challenged, her head held high.

Chad put himself in between Hades and Evie.

"Relax, Charming." Hades leaned against his cue stick. "Even if I had a way to kill her, I couldn't."

"That still sounds like you want to kill her," Chad protested.

"I do." Hades shrugged, "No offense."

"How can wanting to kill her be anything but offensive?" Chad narrowed his eyes at the god.

"No, it's not. I mean, I get it. It's nothing personal, right? One person's death saves the whole world." Evie took her turn. She sank the 6 ball in a corner pocket.

"I'm hardly being altruistic." Hades taunted smugly. "Just thinking about me and mine."

"And I guess the fact that there won't be an Underworld left factors in?" Evie quipped as she took another shot. She knocked another ball in.

"That too." Hades frowned since he was losing to Evie.

"Okay. I'll bite, why can't you kill Evie?" Chad pursed his lips, like he was wondering what was keeping Hades from murdering them where they stood.

"I hurt his halfling, he'll put mine in the ground. Which is fucked. Nothing can harm you now. But plenty can harm Mal. Old Scratch can do anything to her and I can barely put a dent in you." Hades growled at Evie. His hair flared up as he got in her face.

Evie didn't flinch. Chad moved to separate them, but Evie held a hand up to stop the prince.

"Hades," Persephone cautioned her husband. She had finally returned from wherever she had been. She was carrying a tray with a plate of cookies.

Everyone in the basement finally relaxed. Chad let out the breath he was holding. Hades sneered at Evie, while Evie just smiled at him sweetly.

“Have a cookie and maybe you’ll calm down,” Persephone handed her husband a cookie.

“Yes, dear.” Hades took a bite. Once he finished chewing, he let out a deep breath.

“You have something to say to young Evie, don’t you, dear?”

Hades grumbled.

“What was that?” Persephone prompted her husband.

“I haven’t been fair to you.” Hades seemed to be looking everywhere except at Evie. The god wasn’t used to apologizing. “I hate your father. He does something horrible and I get blamed. Also, why does he get his own comic book? I hate it.”

“Wait, that’s all true?” Chad gasped. When she realized everyone was staring at him because of his outburst, he had the decency to look sheepish. “Sorry, the comic book thing is…”

Persephone laughed and it was a melodic sound. “You don’t know how much I have to hear about the comic book. And the musicals.”

“Forever the villain because mortals are afraid of death.” Hades took another cookie from the tray.

“I guess that’s as good as an apology that I’m ever going to get.” Evie said curtly. “If there’s nothing else.”

“Just know I’ll be watching you.” Hades sneered at her.

“Wouldn’t expect anything less.” Evie flashed him a tight-lipped smile. But she leaned over the table with her cue stick. She took her shot and pocketed the nine ball. “I win.”

Persephone chuckled at Evie’s smirk and her husband’s pouting. She flicked her hand and the tray the cookies were on folded itself into a box. She picked it up and presented it to Chad. “You kids take some cookies for the road. They’re vanilla pomegranate oatmeal.”

Hades’s jaw dropped. “But-”

“Hush,” Persephone pinched Hades’s on the side. “You know I saved you some.”

“Lady Persephone, Lord Hades, thank you for your hospitality.” Evie curtsied towards her hosts while Chad once again bowed.

“Thank you for coming. I’ll walk you out.” Persephone turned towards her husband. “Your cookies are in the kitchen.”

“Say no more,” Hades waved his hand and a plate of cookies appeared in his other one. “Later. Or sooner than you think, Charming.”

Chad went pale. Evie glared at the god of the Underworld.

“What! Let me have some fun. He broke my cue stick.” Hades pouted.

“Goodbye, Lord Hades,” Evie gritted her teeth.

Persephone led them up the stairs to the front door.

“Um, Lady Persephone.” Chad held the cookie tin in one hand and rubbed the back of his neck with the other. “Sorry for all the times I was a pain in class.”

“There were a lot of those times. But you’re forgiven.” Persephone turned to Evie. “You got this, Evie.”

“Miss Fine” had been one of Evie’s favorite teachers, who had given advice and pep talks. It was why she was so popular with the students. She knew that Audrey had also adored their history teacher. It had been the other girl’s favorite subject. It was a class they had shared together.

Persephone in her guise as Miss Fine had given their class some wise words. “There’s so much pressure on you guys, and I don’t think your families understand. Learn to bend before you break. And if you break, you heal.”

Evie had listened and she thought Audrey had too.

But Audrey had broken instead.

And Evie knew she had to heal, to fix it all when all she wanted to do was hurt.

“You’re not Orpheus,” Persephone put her hand on Evie’s shoulder and gave it a reassuring squeeze. “Don’t look back. Never look back.”

“I have no doubts about finding Audrey. And I’m not so stuck in the past. No what ifs. I’m only looking to the future and getting her back.” Evie clenched her jaw.

Nothing would stop her. Not even her own doubts and fears.

“Good girl,” Persephone smiled.

“Thank you, for everything. You always were my favorite teacher. My favorite adult even.”

“I mean, the bar was so low,” the goddess laughed.

“But you went above and beyond. And I’ll always be grateful. I know, you were probably there to keep an eye on us. Especially me because my father. But I can’t really blame you.”

“I’ll let you two go,” Persephone looked between the two teens. “Take care of yourselves out there.”

“Not that Evie needs it, but I’ll take care of her.” Chad smiled at Evie. “If she’ll have me.”

"If you need anything, don't hesitate to come to us. Yes, even Hades is willing to help you."
Persephone opened the door.

"I will." Evie nodded solemnly.

Evie and Chad made it to his car and got it. Persephone stayed at the front door and watched them drive off. The goddess waved a final goodbye. Then they pulled out of the driveway and on their way to Evie being consumed by her thoughts and discoveries.

"Man," Chad's voice interrupted Evie's musings. "I'm so lucky she didn't curse my ass every time I was one in class. I would not look good with donkey ears."

"That was Apollo and Midas." Evie murmured and then she went back to staring blankly ahead.

"Well, at least you're still correcting me. I'll take it." Chad observed wistfully. "But then again, you're like really calm considering you just found out who your dad is. I would be on the ground curled up into a ball and pissing my pants."

"No. I'm furious." Evie shook her head.

"On, the inside?" Chad asked weakly, his face scrunched up. "From where I'm sitting you're not doing a lot of emotion."

Evie looked at him. "Actually. Why are you still here?"

"Like why haven't I screamed and pissed my pants at finding out who your dad is?" At Evie's nod, Chad continued. "I'm not going to abandon another friend when they need me."

"Well, you should," Evie murmured. She thought of her other friends. Would they be safe around her?

"Evie, this doesn't change anything. You're still you. You're still my friend." Chad glanced at her. Then he looked thoughtful. "Why are we even doing this? We've had like three adventures where we all learned we aren't our parents."

"Chad, you promised!" Evie glared at him.

"I believe," Chad took on his tone of someone who was used to arguing rules. "Your exact words were if you crossed a line, and mine were if you ever became a villain. Neither of those things have happened yet."

"Jerk." Evie teased, no malice behind her words. "Using my exact words against me."

Exact words. That made her think of her father even more and his machinations in Auradon.

"Hey, let's not think about him," Chad soothed. "We can do whatever you need."

"I need to break something," Evie ground out.

"I know a place."

Chad drove them a little ways out of the city limits. Evie had no idea where they were going, there didn't seem to be anything around.

"Okay, you're probably wondering where we're going since it seems like nothing is out here. But I think you'll enjoy it," Chad wagged his eyebrows up and down.

The sun would be up for a few more hours.

Chad turned off the main road. There was a sign in fancy golden letters on a fancy stone wall that said Rocky Point Shooting Club. Chad pulled his car up to the guard house next to a big black iron gate. He rolled the window down.

"Good afternoon, uh, Jason. Are there a lot of people now?"

"Prince Chadwick!" The guard looked startled. He saluted awkwardly and then bowed. "Uh, there's not too many people, your highness. Just you and your guest."

"Excellent." Chad smacked his hand on the steering wheel. "Thank you, Jason."

"Thank you, your highness."

Evie gave the guard a sweet smile. "Thank you, Jason."

The guard beamed and waved them through.

"Wow, Chadwick. He seemed surprised you stopped to talk to him."

"Well, yes," Chad coughed. "I usually just nod at them. As I drive past."

"Aww. Kindness is a good look on you. So a shooting club?"

"Yes, one of several clubs my family is members of. My grandfather and father enjoy trophy hunting. And I don't. It's not hunting for food, which I understand. My family doesn't need to hunt. They enjoy it," Chad grimaced. "But being a champion shooter gets them off my back."

"I'm sorry, Chad."

"Well, I mean your father is-" Chad pointed at the ground.

"Ugh."

"Exactly. So I thought that breaking shit would be fun. I know it relaxes me."

"I can count on my only hand how many times I've fired a gun." Evie raised two fingers.

"Okay, I mean. I would have thought the number would be zero because why would the Isle even have guns. Gaston and Clayton live there. Does Ben know those guys are armed?" Chad's eyes widened.

“There was a handful of pistols people would constantly steal from each other. There were hardly any bullets or anything. So it was pretty useless to posture with,” Evie shrugged. “But you were saying?”

Chad still looked tense, but he didn’t ask any follow up questions. Like if any of those times involved shooting someone.

“I was thinking of a different kind of firepower.” Chad raised his hand and spread his fingers. “Pew, pew.”

“My fire?”

“Yep. Before there was a shooting club here, this all used to be Rock Pointe quarry. And parts of the quarry got filled in with water that the clay pigeons fly out over, so we don’t have to worry about setting any fires.” Chad waggled his eyebrows. “So what do you say?”

“Okay,” Evie shook her head, chuckling.

“Let’s see what you got. Let me sign us in and get my shotgun and we’re good to go.”

Chad paid her guest fee. He even bought Evie a pair of safety glasses and ear protection, explaining they were required even if she didn’t need them. Evie did have to attend a very short class explaining gun safety and range rules, not that she needed them but everyone else did. When she met back up with Chad, he had a carrying case and a box of shotgun shells.

“Ready?” Chad had his safety glasses on and his ear protection around his neck.

“I sure am.”

“We have the whole place to ourselves.” Chad led her to a shooting cart. He secured his gun case in the storage box and looked at her. “Want to drive?”

“I sure do.” Evie grinned and got behind the wheel.

Evie took it slow. She didn’t speed and just stayed in control the whole time. Chad didn’t say anything. They just enjoyed the silence. Evie had learned to drive properly and legally after Cotillion, they all had. But Evie had to learn how to drive again now that she only had one arm. She wasn’t going to let that hold her back.

Nothing was going to hold her back.

Once they got to the field, Chad explained what they were going to do. He’d shoot first then she would. And they would move stations.

“Pull!” Chad shouted loud enough for it to be picked up by the microphone in front to launch the target.

The clay pigeon flew out over the water. Chad pointed his shotgun. He pulled the trigger and hit the target.

Next was Evie's turn.

Evie concentrated and called up her flames. Once she saw the fire in her palm, she yelled, "Pull!"

She threw the fireball out and missed. She growled.

They changed positions, each moving to the right. Chad took his turn, again hitting his target.

On Evie's turn she lit up again. Her flames formed her missing arm. The target sailed from the trap house. She threw out a fireball.

The clay pigeon exploded.

Evie let out a celebratory whoop, which meant that another clay target was released prematurely. She looked at Chad apologetically, but he just grinned and flashed her a thumbs up.

They fell into a rhythm between the two of them over several rounds. Chad would point then Evie would. She changed it up each time. Sometimes she would throw her fire out like a ball. Other times, he would punch a burst out after taking a stance like a boxer or Jay when he fought. Chad even set it up so they could shoot two targets and she got to throw fire from each hand. A jab and a cross.

They decided to take a break, and enjoy the cookies that Persephone had gifted them.

"Damn, these are good," Chad put the tips of his fingers to his lips and made a kissing noise. "Unexpected yet perfect combination. Vanilla pomegranate oatmeal, who knew?"

"Chad? Thanks for this. I'm having fun. And I can see why you're a champion shooter."

"Hey, I'm happy to help. You were great out there, Pumpkin." Chad winked.

"I'm not going to lie. I'm wondering if I'm bulletproof."

"You are a curious one," Chad groaned. "Scientific minds don't know when to stop. You and Doug have that in common."

"That they don't." Evie hopped out of the shooting cart. "So are you going to shoot me or what?"

"You are way too excited to get shot."

"It's for science!" Evie shook her pointer finger eagerly.

"You're lucky I like you," Chad sighed.

Evie's life had never been normal, but she was able to shield Rory for the most part. So far,

her daughter had a better childhood than she had. Which was pretty easy to do. Rory was loved and the little girl knew she was loved.

She was afraid for her daughter. It wasn't common knowledge that Old Scratch was Evie's father. It would have put her in a world of hurt. A mob would be at her door. People knowing her mother was the Evil Queen was enough for them to judge her. And that judgement extended to Rory.

Not to mention the fact that whispers had followed Evie in the street when they learned she was a single mother. Their small minds would be blown if they knew the truth behind Rory's conception.

The Grey Lady was just another complication. If this entity was friend or foe, Evie could handle it. She had her family behind her.

Because Evie had power.

Such power inside her that it scared her.

That had scared an old king. That had scared a god.

And she had passed it on to her daughter.

The world would come after her daughter. Just like it had come after her.

The world hadn't ended.

But if anything happened to her daughter, Evie couldn't be sure it would stay that way.

Chapter End Notes

Hope this is all coming together for you all!

Please leave a comment of what you liked and didn't like! Trying to get out of the scenes in the past and get back to more sense in the present soon.

There were references to "The Devil and Daniel Webster," "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," Hadestown and the Lucifer comic books in this chapter.

Persephone says "When the devil wants to get something out of you, he doesn't lie at all. He tells you the exact, literal truth. And he lets you find your own way to hell." which is a quote from Lucifer: Children and Monsters, as written by Mike Carey.

End Notes

Was this okay? I don't even know what I'm doing.

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