

The Beast And The Blessed by Ashley Breanne

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One Hundred One: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

The smirk could be heard in his words, and I pushed myself further against his hips.

Killian growled lowly as my ass rubbed his hardness, and his hold on me only tightened in response.

"I will not beg for what is mine." His lips rubbed against mine, and my knees

threatened to buckle beneath me. "I will not beg for something you willingly give me."

I smirked as he called my bluff. I was willing, so willing to give him anything he

wanted. Everything about him called to me, begging me to always be closer, please

him, and take anything he wanted to give me.

I didn't just love him. I adored him.

He was mine, forever.

The brief fear that I wouldn't be in control when he fucked me had me worried, but I

pushed it down as I savored this moment with my mate. I

trembled with want,

desperate to take him as hard and deeply as possible.

He was right. It had been too long. I had shut myself off from him after the battle...after

I committed mass murder.

My eyes fell shut as I also forced that thought to the back of my mind. I would not let

that rule me. I had saved my people, and that was the job of a good leader. We had

emerged victorious. I just needed to keep reminding myself of the justification for what I had done.

For now, I wanted to forget. I wanted Killian to consume me so thoroughly that I had no choice but to forget everything.

“It is yours,” I whispered, nodding slightly as he let out a groan of approval. “I am yours.” “Good girl.”

I leaned back against his chest, gasping as he slid his other hand from my hip to my waistband, his fingers expertly unbuttoning and unzipping them with ease before letting his fingers dip beneath the fabric.

“Tell me what you want,” Killian ordered as his teeth grazed over his mark on my neck, over his claim on me.

“I want you to touch me.” My tongue slipped through my lips, wetting them anxiously as his hand went further beneath my panties. I moaned, my knees buckling as he moved between the lips of my pussy, grazing over my clit and moving to my entrance.

I knew exactly what he would find there. I was wet and wanting for him.

Killian’s forehead landed on my shoulder as he let out a growl of pleasure. “You’re so fucking wet for me, my love. I love that I do this to you.”

His fingers slid back up my slit, slick with my wetness. He stopped at my clit and

began rubbing slow circles, toying with me. My hand wrapped around his forearm, enjoying the feeling of it flexing and moving as he continued to touch me.

My nails dug into his skin as I held him to me, wanting him closer

and ensuring he wouldn't pull away until I reached my orgasm. His other hand moved from my neck to slide over my breasts, using his arm across my torso to hold me up as he cupped my breast.

My legs parted further as he stroked and rubbed the bundle of nerves between them, causing each breath I let out to be a low moan.

"That's it, baby. You smell so fucking good." Killian slid his tongue over my mark,

making my hips jerks forward into his hand. I released a small whimper as he moved

his fingers down, sliding two into me. The meaty part of his flesh beneath his thumb

stayed locked on my clit, rubbing it with every thrust.

My thighs and hips trembled as I resisted my orgasm, wanting it to last longer. But the

pleasure was too intense, and I cried out Killian's name as my walls tightened on his fingers.

My weight was on Killian as I pressed my body against his hand, wanting more. His

arm holding me up still had a tight grasp on me, and I whimpered in pleasure as he

pinched and rolled my nipple between his fingers.

I wiggled against him as he stopped moving both hands, desperate for more. We had

a week to make up for, and I wasn't going to stop until I had him inside me, even if I

had to be the one to beg for it.

"Turn around, my mate.' His deep voice sounded strained, but when I fluttered my

eyes open and glanced at him over my shoulder, his black eyes told me he was still in

complete control. I relaxed my grip on his forearm until he could pull his arm away from me.

I did as he asked, my chest brushing against his as I spun to face him. His finger slid across the tops of my breasts to the collar of my shirt before ripping it and my bra clean from my body. I stumbled against him, but he held me in place with his other arm wrapped around me and his hand on my ass cheek. My eyes were locked on his mouth as he licked his lips, enjoying the sight of my bare breast pressed against him.

“Take off my clothes.” His hand stayed on my ass, and I kept my hips pressed to his as I immediately unbuttoned his shirt. His hardness was against my stomach, and I couldn’t help but rub against him slightly as I pulled his shirt over his shoulders. My fingers followed the fabric, exploring and dipping into every line of muscle as it did so.

When he removed his hands from me to let his shirt fall to the floor, I felt my bottom lip push out ever so slightly into a pout at the loss of contact. I placed my hands on his chest, looking up at him with surprise and desire as his thumb rubbed over my lip.

“Don’t pout, my mate. I am not done with you yet.” His eyes were locked on my mouth, but one of his hands grabbed my wrist and moved my fingers down his stomach to the button of his pants. “I didn’t tell you to stop.” I looked up into his black eyes, watching the red swirl in their depths as his beast became more present. I wanted to taunt him, to ask him what he

would do if I disobeyed. I wanted to see what kind of punishment I would receive.

But I nodded as I bit my lip and remained silent while I did as he ordered. He let out a low growl when I hooked my thumbs into his boxers, pulling them with his pants. My breasts slid along his torso as I dragged the fabric down his large, muscular thighs.

His cock sprung free, and I looked up at him, holding his gaze as my breasts moved over it.

When my knees hit the ground with his pants, he let out a loud growl, sending a rush of excitement through me. My already throbbing clit pulsed with pleasure and need as I licked the tip of his cock before taking him in my mouth as deep as I could.

My tongue rubbed along the underside of his large member, and his fingers laced in my hair as his hips rocked in time with me, pushing himself deeper into my mouth.

“Fuck, Natalie!”

I moaned, humming against his cock as I tasted his pre-cum on my tongue. I pulled back, using my hand to grab as much of my saliva from his tip and dragging it down toward the base of his cock before taking him deeper than before. My hand worked in time with my mouth, and his growls and groans grew louder. “Yes, baby! Oh, fuck that feels good.”

Each noise only encouraged me to take him deeper, to suck harder, and to pump faster. His hand on my head pushed me down until he reached the back of my throat,

and I gagged. My cheeks hollowed as he pulled back.
“Take your pants off and bend over the arm of the couch.”
I watched, mesmerized, as Killian wrapped his fist around his
cock, pumping it slowly
as I sat on my knees before him. He had given me an order, but a
part of me wanted
to sit there and watch him touch himself until he came on my
chest.
“Now.” Killian gritted out. “Before I change my mind and fuck your
mouth.”
I jumped to my feet, quickly removing the rest of my clothes. My
panties were soaked,
and I was sure the wetness would drip down my thighs at any
moment.
The dominating side of Killian was one of my favorites, and I felt
my heart grow as he
stopped me for a moment to kiss me deeply and passionately. It
was a kiss that I felt
in every part of my body. I panted when he pulled away with his
hand on my neck.
“I love you, Natalie. It’s never been a problem before, but I need
you to tell if I am
being too rough.” He said, waiting for me to nod before he smiled
wickedly. The look
on his face was encouraging, a guarantee of a good time, and I
spun around and bent
over the arm of the couch.
My legs were together, and my arms held me up as I got into
position. Killian’s hand
landed loudly on my ass cheek, and I moaned as he spanked me.
“There are so many things I want to do to you. But you deserve to
be punished for
keeping yourself from me.’ His words made me grow ever wetter,
and my thigh
pressed together to try to give myself some relief. I wanted him to

touch me, and if he didn't do it soon, I would slip my hand between my legs and do it myself.

Another smack landed on the same cheek. The sting soothed away as he rubbed it with his calloused palm.

Again. His hand landed loudly, this time pulling a loud cry from me as I panted

desperately. My hips pushed back as I moaned for more.

And he gave me more. Each smack had me jumping, moaning, and crying for release.

My upper body had dropped to be held up on my elbows, and I was seconds away

from pressing my face into the cushion.

I calmed momentarily as he rubbed his hand against my ass, but my eyes rolled to the

back of my head at the feeling of his mouth meeting my pussy. I wanted to look over

my shoulder at him. I wanted to see him naked on his knees as he sucked and licked

my clit.

Yet, when I pushed myself up and did just that, the sight was even better than I

imagined. Killian still had his cock in his hand with his knees spread on either side of

my feet, pumping himself as he devoured my pussy. He pulled his face away when he

felt my movement, but his hand never stopped.

My wetness glistened on his chin, and part of me wanted to turn over to watch him

and grind on him as he fucked me with his tongue.

"Is this still part of my punishment?" I asked, watching as the glowing red took over his

eyes.

"Don't test me, Natalie." His threatening growl as he stood drove

me wild. I held his stare as I slid my hand down between my legs, challenging him. He grabbed my arm and pulled my hand away immediately before pinning it behind my back. It took him only a second to grab my other hand and restrain my wrists behind me with only one of his hands. "You fucking asked for it." He said as he slammed his cock into me as deep as he could go. My face pressed into the cushion as he fucked me harder than ever. I didn't ask for it. No. I begged for it.

One Hundred Two: Killian
Killian's P.O.V.

Natalie smiled brightly as we walked down the hallway hand in hand. I had yet to determine if she had ever explored this part of the castle before, but it would soon become her favorite place.

I glanced down at my beautiful mate. My lips pulled into a prideful smile as she walked gracefully, covered in my scent. Never had I imagined that I would be able to feel this level of happiness.

Before her, it was just anger, frustration, and stress. My life was hollow. I kept going because there was always something that I was needed for. Something for me to do, but nothing I enjoyed.

I had a kingdom of people depending on me to keep their lifestyle, safety, and future up to their expectations.

Now I had Natalie depending on me too, and somehow that additional pressure only

encouraged me to work harder to give her the life that she deserved, that our kids deserved. This surprise was the first step in providing her what she needed for her mental well-being.

The large white doors were decorated with a golden accent of swirls and markings.

Only someone who knew what to look for would see the incantations in the wood.

Joselin had worked miracles, and I had complete faith in the result.

“Where are we going?” Natalie asked, tugging on my hand lightly as I stopped walking. She turned to face me, with excitement bubbling beneath the surface.

“I thought we could eat lunch together in your study,” I whispered.

Her eyes widened adorably, and her lips parted so beautifully it felt like they were pulling me in. I stole a quick kiss, pulling back before she could compose herself, and watched as she looked over my face before turning to the doors to our right.

“My own study?” Her soft words of disbelief made me smile, and she lifted her

fingertips, dragging them across the golden design. She had voiced her admiration for the detailed work countless times since arriving here, and I had ensured the beautiful artistry was one of the main requirements for her room.

“Yes. I was speaking to Joselin before... well, she had agreed that you needed a place of your own to practice freely instead of using the library. She worked hard to complete this for you, but we can make any changes you want. It is entirely your

space.” I motioned with my hand to the doorknob. She immediately wrapped her hand around it, impatient to see the inside. Her reaction as she pushed the double doors open only made me love her more. She held her breath as she entered, and her hand moved up to cover her mouth. Joselin did a great job, and I was a bit frustrated that she refused to show her hard work to Natalie herself. After everything the women have been through, I thought they would have bonded more. Yet, with how busy they have both been, it was almost only possible to get them in the same room as each other if they were working on the same project or training. I considered giving Joselin some time off and delegating some of her tasks to others so she could have more time for herself. But she needed to fix the runes burned into the floors around the castle first. I was grateful they hadn’t caught anyone, but I was tired of seeing them. We would always have enemies, but I had faith in my people, myself, and my mate that we could handle them. Inside the room was a witch’s dream. I requested that it be kept large and open for her to practice, but she had rows of shelves against the walls filled with everything any witch could ever need or want. I knew nothing about it myself. I didn’t even know until recently when Charlie was digging into our family tree after the battle, that we had a witch in the family four

generations ago. It finally made sense how I had always been able to sense Joselin's magic and how my mother had powers after her wolf had died. It was in our blood.

"We can get you anything you want, and I requested it to be left open for you to design, but you should have everything you need here." I picked up a glass jar, grimacing when I saw it was filled with siren fangs. "Joselin, put up a protective barrier to contain your magic. When you're in this room, your powers should not leave it. You don't have to worry about losing control here. Once you feel more confident in your abilities, she said she can lift that for you."

Natalie nodded, facing the large open window overlooking the city. When she turned, tears were streaming down her pink cheeks. The choked laugh she let out warmed my heart, and I opened my arms as she sprinted toward me, jumping and wrapping herself around me.

I grabbed her, placing my hands under her butt to hold her up. She wrapped her legs around my waist to stabilize her as she peppered kisses over my face, whispering a "thank you" after each one.

"Maybe we should have waited and christened your new study instead of fucking in the sitting room."

She laughed, but I was so serious. I would fuck her again right now if I hadn't heard her stomach growling during the first time. I moved forward until we were only a foot away from the blanket and picnic that was spread out in the

middle of the room.

Natalie kissed my jaw as she ran her hand from my shoulder to her mark on my skin, where she began drawing circles.

“Thank you. It is perfect! I love it!” She kissed my lips before jumping out of my hold, ignoring my grumble of protest and my hard-on as she moved to take a seat for our lunch. “I’ll get together with Joselin, and maybe we can decorate it before my mother returns.”

I ran my hand over my face as I thought about Joselin. Whatever was going on with her was something our friendship hadn’t experienced yet. We had kept things from each other, sure. But never before had we shut the other person out entirely.

I was optimistic that we could get through it, but she made it clear that she would need time, so I would give it to her.

It wasn’t a surprise that Charlie left only two days after the battle. Her goodbye was long and drawn out. Definitely her most uncomfortable one yet, but I had been expecting her departure, so it was easy to hide how disappointed I was in her leaving.

Her promise to come back soon meant nothing to me. She had said that before and didn’t come home for almost a year.

“That sounds great, my love.”

A knock on the door made me look up, and my eyebrows pulled together when I recognized it was Joselin on the other side.

Speak of the devil.

She rarely ever knocked. Joselin always just popped in. It

frustrated me that she had stopped teleporting. I knew it probably had to do with her teleporting with a knife in her back, but she wouldn't even talk to me about that. Perhaps it was her near-death experience, but I needed her to tell me exactly what was wrong, so I could try to make things better. The few times I had assumed I knew what was going on in her head in the past, I had been wrong and ended up making a fool of myself. She had been my best friend since we were kids. Her withdrawn nature was unlike anything I had ever expected from her. Since we were children, she had never been afraid to speak her mind or roam where she pleased. Now she was acting all proper, curtsying, knocking on doors, using my title even during private conversations. I hated it. Natalie shot up with excitement. I watched as she threw the door open and hugged Joselin. "Thank you! It's so perfect! I can't wait until you're free and we can train together again! This room is amazing!" The wide-eyed witch looked at me over my mate's shoulder but scowled when I shrugged in response. She could deal with it herself. It was amusing how she stood frozen with her arms at her side and her back stiff. "You're touching me." She muttered, annoyed. "Yes, I am. But I am the Queen, and I can hug anyone I please. So shut up and deal with it," Natalie muttered. For the first time since we returned home, I watched Joselin relax,

and eventually, her arm moved up to lightly pat my mate's back. After a minute, Joselin cleared her throat loudly, ending their hug.

"I was sent to tell you that your mother has returned."

One Hundred Three: Natalie

Natalie's P.O.V.

Killian seemed highly amused by me as we ate our lunch together. I would find him staring at me with a small smile or chuckling to himself while I was nibbling on my food.

I was happy my mother was here, and she was safe. But the bigger part of my mind was stuck on whether my father had returned with her. Did she tell him about me? Did he want to meet me?

"You have barely touched your food, my love. Did I not do a good enough job to help you work up an appetite?" His words sent a wave of warmth to my core, and I shifted as I picked up half of my sandwich and took a dramatically large bite out of it. He had absolutely done his job to work up my appetite, but it was still tempting to tease him and tell him no. Maybe then he would ensure I was thoroughly ravished and christen the study like he suggested. "You're distracted."

I shook my head as I swallowed, not wanting to talk about it on our date. He was right that I had been distracted, and I didn't want to bring him down when he had taken time out of his busy day to have a lunch date with me. It had been sweet, and, at least

to me, it had been needed. Just time for the two of us to be together and alone without interruptions. Even if we sat in silence, having him near me was like having my soul recharged.

“I didn’t mean to be distracted by other things. I’ll go down and visit my mother after our date. Right now, it is just you and me.” I insisted, wiping my fingers on the napkin and reaching for my glass of wine. The bitter yet satisfying liquid was delicious, and Killian immediately refilled my glass once I placed it back down. We had it once before, and his remembering that I loved it made me incredibly happy.

“You have every reason to have your mind occupied.” He said before gesturing with his head toward the door. “Do you want me to come with you to meet him?”

I bit my lip, debating if I wanted an audience to this. “No, that’s okay. I know you have a lot of work to do. Do you... Have you ever met him before?” Killian nodded, his eyes never leaving mine as he rested his hand on my thigh, rubbing it soothingly. “Yes. You have nothing to worry about. He is a good leader, one of the few wolves I respect.”

I had other questions. Questions that I needed to ask my father directly.

From what I had seen, Killian’s respect was hard to come by, and I was proud that this man had earned it.

“Go ahead.” Killian moved to grab another grape, popping it into his mouth as he smiled at me with his heart-stopping grin. “I know you are dying to go see them. You

know where to find me, my love. I'm not going anywhere.”

I pressed my lips together as I debated, but I was eager to get this over with, so I could know the truth. “I changed my mind. I think it would be nice if you were there.”

He nodded, taking one last bite of his food before getting to his feet and holding a handout for me. I appreciated that he didn't give me a hard time or question my decision. He simply supported me, and it meant the world.

“Right now?” I asked, my nerves swirling what little I ate around my stomach. “We haven't even finished eating.”

Killian laughed, raising an eyebrow at me in disbelief. ‘You aren't even eating, and there is no time like the present. Let's do this now so it won't hang over you anymore.”

I grabbed his hand, allowing him to pull me up. “You're too positive now. What happened to my grumpy, bossy mate? Where did he go?” “He is still here. Now do what I say.”

I narrowed my eyes at him as he pulled me in front of him but jumped when he smacked my ass as I walked by.

There was a low murmur of voices in the private sitting room on the first floor, but the doors were still open to the hallway, letting the sound carry out for anyone to hear.

“You saw something, didn't you? Your aura has changed since the mountains. What did you see, my dear?” My mother's voice was low but easy to pick up with my wolf hearing. She sounded very concerned but firm. It was interesting how she voiced her

words in a way that sounded like a question but was delivered as if she were demanding a response.

As we rounded the corner, both women looked our way. Joselin seemed almost

relieved to have us join them. I wanted to ask what they were talking about, what

Joselin saw that had been bothering her. But the man standing by the fireplace

immediately had my interest. He stepped toward us as he stared at me, and I felt

myself moving closer to Killian as we entered the room.

Joselin glanced from us to the man with a raised eyebrow of curiosity, but I had no

idea where to start. Seeing him drop into a bow was the last thing I expected, and an

uncomfortable laugh was forced from my lips.

“Natalie, how are you feeling?” My mother asked, standing from her seat next to

Joselin. She rushed toward me, her long black hair swaying as she approached and

pulled me in for a hug.

I was stunned by the unexpected show of affection, and Joselin smirked at me over

my mother’s shoulder in a ‘now you know how I felt’ look. I stuck my tongue out at her,

happy to see it made her smile, but I quickly collected myself when the man moved

forward again. My arms wrapped around my mother, and she held me tighter for a

minute before letting me go.

“I am fine. I should be asking you that.” I said, holding her elbows as she pulled away

and scanning her over. Her injuries seemed to be gone, but maybe she was just really

good at hiding them.

“I am as good as new.” She said before turning and gesturing toward the couches for us all to sit together.

The sound of footsteps coming down the hallway made me pause, and I bit back a groan when Rona appeared. “Oh! I’m so sorry! I didn’t realize anyone would be in here.”

I glanced over my shoulder with a forced smile as she narrowed her eyes at Joselin.

“We are having a private family discussion, but you are free to use the room when we are done.”

The redhead turned to me, dipping her head slightly before turning back to Joselin.

“Not a problem. Joselin and I will just be on our way then.” Rona turned until her body was perpendicular to the door, raising her eyebrows challengingly at my friend.

“Nonsense,” my mother chimed in. “This is a family discussion; she is family, so she will stay. Please close the door on your way out, dear.”

I pressed my lips together as I could hear Rona grinding her teeth before she turned and stormed out, closing the doors harder than necessary behind her.

“I hope you don’t mind,” Aurora said, sending me a small smile over her shoulder.

“That girl just rubs me the wrong way.”

I shook my head, too distracted by the man still staring at me to respond. In this

lighting, his hair was undoubtedly the same shade as mine.

“Henry, welcome,” Killian said, extending his hand and stunning the Alpha, who

promptly shook it. 'I don't believe you have met my mate. Queen Natalie Amery.'

The man turned to me, his pale green eyes boring into mine as he smiled widely.

Water lined his lids, and he cleared his throat before responding.

'No, but your mother has told me a lot about you over the past few days. I really look forward to getting to know you.'

One Hundred Four: Natalie
Natalie's P.O.V.

My mother nodded subtly as I turned to look at her, answering my unspoken question of whether he knew who I was to him. She managed to look more terrified than I felt, which only made me even more anxious.

"Henry,* I tested the name, unsure how to address him. I still avoided calling Aurora by her name when I spoke to her. I didn't want to offend her by calling her Aurora instead of mom or mom instead of her name since she hadn't been in my life for more

than a few months. "It is nice to meet you. Please, have a seat.'

I gestured with my hand toward the couch and armchairs by the fireplace, and he

nodded before taking a seat in one of the individual chairs.

Joselin was openly examining him with her head tilted to the side.

Her back was

straight, and her legs were crossed, looking every bit as beautiful and poised as she was terrifying.

"I'm under the impression that you know why you're here, so I'm just going to come

out and say it to clear the air.' I swallowed hard, stalling as I

moved to take my own seat. Killian stood at my side as I sat back on the couch, his arms crossed. I was speaking to Henry, but my eyes traveled to Aurora as my statement came out sounding more like a question. "You're my birth father." It had been up to me to decide if I wanted to meet him. But then he recognized me as Aurora's daughter. If that wasn't the giveaway based on my age tang their history together, our matching features could have done it. Once he knew, it was no longer my choice. It was his. He chose to come back when he could have just returned home. He could have pretended that I never existed, and it would have been the end of it.

He made a choked noise before clearing his throat at my words, and I bit my lip.

"You're an Alpha?"

The bitter irony that I had been treated like an omega in my last pack made me want to laugh, but there was no point. I had already won when they discovered that I was the daughter of the Descendant and was crowned their queen. I was no longer the runt of the pack.

"Yes, and you are a queen. Your brothers will be so jealous when they find out." He said offhandedly, and I felt my breathing stop. He hadn't said his other children or his sons ... he said my "brothers." "I have brothers?"

Joselin shifted in her seat, and I glanced over to see a stunned look on her face, realizing this was the first time she was learning about my father

as well.

“Yes,” He laughed, his voice thick with emotion. “Two.”

“And you are planning on telling them about me?” It almost hurt to ask for

confirmation. But I feared that I was going to be cast aside again.

Everything seemed

too good to be true, and I was waiting for the color to fade and the shadow men to

drag me away, waking me from my dream life.

“Of course! I have no doubt that they will want to know you too.’

He nodded.

“What about your mate? I don’t think she will be happy with me.” I

shifted, my pinky

touching the side of Killian’s thigh for comfort where he was

leaning against the arm of

the couch. ‘I won’t take it personally if you want to keep this a

secret... me a secret. I

have to imagine she won’t like knowing about me.”

Henry’s gaze moved to where I was touching Killian, and the look

in his eyes was a

deep, soul-crushing pain. “I’m sure it would have, but my mate

passed when our boys

were little.”

I’m sorry to hear that.”

There was a tense and awkward silence as we tried to figure out

what to say to each

other, but he broke it when he rubbed his palms on his pants and

leaned forward to

place his elbows on his knees. “I understand you were raised by

another couple. Did

they come with you when you moved here?” “They are dead,”

Killian growled out,

clearly still unhappy about my treatment in my old home and

pack. That would never

go away, but I would always be blessed for the life I had now.

“I’m sorry to hear that as well,” Henry said, looking to Aurora for help as the room fell

into an uncomfortable silence once more.

Joselin smiled widely, and I narrowed my eyes as I glared at her.

“What’s so funny?”

Her laugh was musical and made me relax as she sounded more like her old self.

“The tension is amusing. I am glad I am here to witness this.”

Killian growled, and Joselin rolled her eyes but pressed her lips together in a failed

attempt to hide her amusement. I was more curious about her than ever before. After

overhearing her conversation with my mother, I wanted to pull her aside and ask her

what she had seen in the mountains. Something there had shaken her, and I felt it

was more than just her getting stabbed.

“Why don’t you stay with us for a while, Henry?” Killian offered, and I was grateful that

he was willing to let my father stick around to get to know me. “It’ll give the two of you

a chance to bond.” “That won’t be a problem. It’ll allow my eldest to get his feet wet

running the pack. I think it will be good for him. My eldest son, I mean.” He smiled

widely, and his slightly crooked teeth only made him more charming. It was a warm

smile, one that expressed his genuine excitement.

“How old is he?” I asked, mentally kicking myself when I saw Aurora flinch at his

answer.

“Brandon? He is nineteen, a few months younger than you. You recently turned

twenty, from what I understand.* His eyes flickered over to Aurora briefly before

looking back to me. "My youngest, Holden, is eighteen."
I bit my lip as I realized he was right, and Killian turned to me with a scowl that almost resembled a pout at the news of my missed birthday. In my defense, we had been a bit busy.

Aurora stood suddenly, excusing herself politely before making her way out of the room. It had to be hard hearing how the love of her life had moved on so quickly. Not only did he mark another woman in the short time she was away, recharging, but while she was all alone trying to raise a newborn in The Sanctum, he was at home loving and caring for another woman's baby. His baby.

Henry's eyes dimmed as she left the room, and I knew no love was lost there. I only hoped the two of them realized that for themselves one day soon. They had spent enough time apart and shouldn't waste any more.

"You should probably go after her," I whispered, standing up and feeling Killian's hand immediately finding my lower back.

"I think we have done enough talking over the past few days. She needs space, but I would love to take you up on your offer and stay for a while. It would mean the world to me to get to know you. Maybe we can go on a run later?" He looked hopeful, and I was filled with excitement. Mainly because we wouldn't have to fill the time with uncomfortable small talk.

I nodded, "I would love that." "I'll need to run to town to buy a few things since I'll be staying, but I look forward to it." Henry moved toward the door,

sounding excited. He paused on his way past me, and I tensed as he placed his hand on my shoulder. "I..." His voice cracked, and he cleared his throat. "I've always wanted a daughter."

One Hundred Five: Killian

Killian's P.O.V

I should have been over the gut-wrenching feeling that settled in my stomach

whenever I approached my family crypt where my father lay.

The more time that passed, the more secrets I learned about my parents. Every

secret I learned about them made me hate them a bit more.

Joselin stood before the doors to the crypt, holding my father's crown in her hands.

She had been stalling on doing this, and I knew it would be hard for anyone, even her.

Disturbing one's rest in the afterlife was frowned upon, not that she hadn't done it

before. But my father was different.

Not only had he taken her in as family, but we already knew he was still wandering

between realms. He hadn't made contact since before the war, and I was almost

positive he had moved on. Yet, disturbing his body could anger his spirit; if he was still

here, that could mean trouble for her.

"I can do this if you would like, Joselin." I offered, moving to stand at her side, our

shoulders only inches apart. "He's my father."

Joselin looked away from the building before us, her hands tightening around the

crown. "That won't be necessary. I need to reseal the vault anyway since someone

was able to get it. It shouldn't take long, but if his spirit is angered, his wrath should not be targeted at you. You have more important things to deal with."

Only five steps led down into the crypt beneath the church where my family was buried, and we stood at the top, surrounded by beautiful flower arrangements to honor our people's fallen leaders. If only the people knew just how awful the ones before me had actually been...

If they didn't before, then after my mother's speech on the battlefield, they probably were getting an idea. My mother hadn't been laid to rest here. After what she did, I refused to let her lay with the rest of our blood. She was cremated and released into the wind so no one could ever find her remains.

"Do you want me to go in with you?" I offered, curling my top lip in disgust at the idea of seeing my father's preserved body.

Joselin snorted as she smiled, but I could see the tension on her face. "I don't need an escort." "Then what's stopping you?" I raised my eyebrow at her, amused when her face turned pink with anger. I was taunting her, and I knew getting her worked up was the only way to give her the push she needed to go in there. Over time I learned that the easiest way to get Joselin to do something was to challenge her.

"Nothing!" She snapped like her usual headstrong and stubborn self. I watched, amused, as she stormed down the steps and into the crypt. Joselin was in there only

a few minutes before she came racing out empty-handed like a demon was chasing after her. "There, it's done."

We were all scared of something. Joselin, in particular, hated being around corpses even though she could cut any creature down faster than anyone I had ever seen.

She was lethal, but she still had a soul.

"Was that so hard?" I joked, eyeing the goosebumps on her arms, the only sure sign that she had been affected by going in there.

"You're such an ass," Joselin muttered as she stopped at my side, looking back at the castle. 'I don't know how Natalie puts up with you.'

I smiled at the thought of my mate. I didn't know how she did it either. A woman that strong and beautiful was bound for greatness no matter who the Goddess chose for

them. I was proud that Natalie had been tied to me instead of someone else. Before her, I never thought I could be loved the way she loves me, nor did I think I could ever give my heart to anyone and walk away unscathed. "She doesn't. She's stuck with me."

Joselin laughed, bumping her shoulder into mine as we continued to face opposite

directions. My eyes were locked on my future, on the entrance to the crypt holding my parents' bodies, which would one day hold mine.

Hers was on our present, on the castle where our loved ones were.

"You were wrong," Joselin muttered, and I looked down at the little witch who had stuck by me for so many years. She had been through her own

hell. Our shitty
childhoods helped us to form a connection, and I wanted her to be
happy even if I
didn't know how to talk to her about it. "When Natalie first arrived,
I told you to go for it
and be happy, and you told me to do the same thing. I should
have just kept my
feelings to myself. I made a move, and he wasn't interested."
My eyes widened in surprise as I turned and faced the castle with
her.

Tobias always had his eye on her. I had never talked to him about
that specific topic,
but his feelings for her were obvious since we all grew up
together. His rejecting her
was the last thing I expected.

"So, make another one. You've never been one to give up."
Joselin shifted uncomfortably as I threw my arm over her
shoulders supportively. She
had also never been one to need comfort, at least not from me.

She used to go to
Tobias, and I was glad about it. It saved me from having to have
uncomfortable
conversations. But if he was the issue, maybe it was time for me
to step up... or
encourage her to talk to Natalie.

"Trust me, I have made dozens at this point. I did everything
except strip down and
crawl into his bed to get his attention. I may not act like it, Ian, but
I do feel it. It hurts
each time he turns away from me or pulls back at my touch. At
some point, I have to
move on."

I was stunned as she let the side of her head rest against my
chest, and I tightened
my hold on her. "Sometimes it takes people a long time to accept

the love they are offered.

It took me months to finally let myself care for and be cared for by Natalie." "Yes,"

Joselin agreed, but she looked at me with a sad smile. 'But it has been over a decade,

Ian. I don't think this situation is the same. He doesn't feel the same way, and it's time

to stop humiliating myself." "I'm sure other men would fall to your feet to get your

attention if Tobias is too stubborn to grab a good thing when it's handed to him." I

offered, and she pulled away from me.

"Maybe. I'm sure I'll find one eventually," Joselin's voice trailed off as my gorgeous

mate came into view with her guards, the devil himself in tow.

She was magnificent, and my eyes trailed over her body instinctively as she drew

closer. Her toned legs, wide hips, tapered waist, the swell of her breasts... She was

perfection in every way. I couldn't wait to see her round with our children.

Joselin pulled away, throwing her hair over her shoulder as she stood up straight. Any

sign of emotion was gone, and for the first time, I saw the emptiness she displayed to

be what it truly was. Loneliness.

She had been excited to bring Natalie here because she had wanted a friend. With

Tobias, she had wanted to love and be loved by someone.

I stared at her for a moment longer as Natalie approached. When I turned my gaze to

my woman, she was staring at Joselin with the same look.

Curiosity and confusion.

She knew something was wrong too, and with any luck, my mate

could help Joselin.

'Everything okay?' Natalie asked with concern as she leaned up and kissed my cheek.

"Yes, my love. Everything is fine. We were just discussing the future." My gaze darted past my mate to land on her guard, seeing his eyes sweeping over Joselin like I had

Natalie, confirming her well-being and admiring her form.

"Hm,' Natalie hummed distractedly, noticing the same thing I did before gesturing to

the side with her head. "It is time for the run with my father. Would you like to come?"

My arm looped around her waist, pulling her against my body as I leaned in and let my

lips hover over hers. "And you came all this way to ask me instead of linking me?"

What are you up to, my mate?"

Natalie threw her head back and laughed loudly as she lit up like the Goddess she

was. "I knew you were more likely to say yes if I came to ask you in person, and I really want you to go."

I didn't think I could have said no to her if I wanted to. After how long I spent resisting

her and saying no back then, I wouldn't dream of ever saying no again. She could ask

me for my heart, and I would reach into my chest and rip it right out. It was hers anyway.

"Then, yes. Tobias, you are dismissed for the evening.

Tomorrow, I would like to discuss a rotation change with you." He dipped his head,

spared one last but brief look at Joselin, and went on his way.

We didn't need multiple guards on Natalie anymore. As long as

she remained within the walls of our well-guarded castle, I trusted that Natalie was safe on her own. She must take someone with her if she ever left to go to the city or anywhere else. But she was strong, and I knew she could handle herself once she felt more confident in her training.

“Oh, before you go, Joselin!” Natalie called out, and my best friend turned on her heels to face my mate. “Don’t worry, I won’t hug you against your will this time. I just wanted to thank you again for the study. It means a lot to me.” Joselin smiled back, laughing at avoiding a hug, and began to walk away as she yelled over her shoulder. “It’s no problem. I’ll send you a bill for it later.”

Natalie curled into my chest, pressing a kiss over my heart before looking up at me. “I can’t wait to run with you.”

My chest swelled with pride as I picked her up to have her legs wrapped around me and took off toward the forest, where I caught traces of Henry on the breeze. Natalie also seemed to smell him, dropping her legs as we got closer. He wasn’t alone, and I heard Natalie’s heart pick up when she saw her mother’s white wolf standing next to the brown wolf that was her father. He licked the side of Aurora’s neck, making the woman shiver in her white fur before she looked away and noticed us intruding on their moment.

Natalie cleared her throat with discomfort before going behind a tree to remove her clothes and shift. I did the same, not bothering to preserve my

clothes as they
shredded around me.

It was fascinating to watch as Henry approached Natalie, and they began to sniff and bump their heads against each other's sides. The run was a good starting point in their relationship. I was glad my mate was finally getting the family she always wanted. I just hoped one day soon, it would be us taking our kids for a run

