

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 148

Forty-One: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

Cyrus was like a puppy. For a spell caster, the first of his kind, he was very immature. I was surprised he lasted this long, but at least he had been smart enough to ask for help.

"But really, what's his deal?" He chimed for the fourth time this morning. "Does he ever use the mind link, or is he just quiet all the time? I know he had his tongue. I saw it during dinner. Is he a mute? Doesn't that get tiresome, always having to guess what he wants or thinks?"

My eyes rolled to the back of my head. I had found him babbling away with Blanche in the courtyard this morning. The two of them looked thick as thieves, facing each other under one of the trees with their bent knees pressed together as they laughed and spoke a mile a minute with each other.

She seemed to have rubbed off on him because he hadn't shut up since I ordered him to come with me. It was unfortunate for me, but at least he was in good spirits.

"Did he rub off on you? Are you not talking now either?" Cyrus laughed, his hand going up to his unruly blonde hair before sliding it down over his face. It amused me that he was thinking the same thing about Tobias and me as I was thinking about him and Blanche.

Maybe the two of them would be good together... or perhaps they would drive me insane.

"You're a child," I muttered, making him laugh harder. I had too much on my mind to come up with a better comeback, but he didn't care. He was amusing himself. It was fine by me as long as he didn't expect me to respond to his millions of questions and sarcastic quips.

"I'm thirty-two. That's hardly a child."

That made me pause, my feet planted firmly as I spun to face him. Cyrus stumbled before turning to me with raised eyebrows. Small wrinkles were in the corners, but his bright, cheerful yellow eyes and boyish grin made me lean toward his early twenties.

"Thirty-two, and you're still this immature?" My eyes raked over him. He looked slightly healthier, but not by much, now that he was eating more and no longer living in the wild. Once he filled back out, he would probably look more his age.

"I was mature enough to come to you for help." He quipped back with his goofy crooked smile. "I'm the first of my kind, not some all-powerful being.

I know when I am outmatched and when to put my pride aside. I don't want to be the last of my kind, and if that means living in the castle or the city, I will."

I nodded. That was fair. Cyrus may act immature with the little things, like a geeky teenager, but when it comes to important matters, he's smart about it. I admired that, even with multiple people trying to kill him, he kept his positive outlook on life and remained as positive and annoyingly happy as he was.

"Fair enough."

He followed behind me as I made my way to Natalie's study. I knew she would be in there this time of the day, and we needed to talk.

The door opened on its own after I knocked, knowing better than to walk right into another witch's study and possibly disrupt them when they could be casting or focusing. That was an easy and stupid way to get maimed or killed.

Natalie and Aurora were sitting in front of the fireplace. I watched as the flame in Natalie's hand flew back to the large but controlled blaze before she turned to us with a large smile. The pride on her mother's face was undeniable, and it made my chest ache with jealousy that I had to push down.

There was no point in feeling that way when that motherly bond I had craved since I was a little girl was something I would never have. Even if I hadn't accidentally killed mine, she never would have accepted me. My mother didn't for the first eleven years of my life; why would the later years be any different?

"Good Morning, Josiel!" Natalie greeted me, and I almost flinched at the affectionate tone and nickname. It wasn't the first time she had called me Josie, but now that we had cleared the air with all my insecurities about my position in the castle, it felt good to have her still treat me the way she used to.

There was no animosity toward me for snapping at her mate or accusing her of taking over my job. It hadn't been fair of me to lash out instead of just talking to her and Killian like three damned adults. It seemed I was immature too.

"Morning." I cleared my throat as Cyrus walked past me in awe, looking over all the shelves. "Have a minute?"

"Of course!" Natalie stood up, moving toward the round table by the window to sit, but kept a sharp eye on Cyrus as he explored her study. She was wise not to trust anyone freely. I was the same way, but I needed Cyrus to trust her. They would either need to bond or keep their distance and treat this as any job, with professionalism.

I strode toward the table, hating how formal this felt. But just like Cyrus had said for him coming to me, I could put my pride aside to ask for help when needed. Usually, I would go to Agatha as one of the only council members I trusted, but she died when Talia turned on us in the war a few months ago.

"My investigation into Rona has reached a bit of a turn, and things may be getting tense here soon. She either knows I was in her house or she will soon, but when she returns, she will focus on me." My fingers gripped the back of the chair as I tried not to let my emotions show.

For just a little while, I wanted there to be peace. As much as I loved bloodshed and the action and excitement that came with it, I still needed a break. Once this was over, I would be wrapping myself around Tobias and taking him away from here for a much-needed vacation.

"How did she find out?" Natalie asked, the fingertips on her right hand pressing into the table's top while the other gently grabbed her forearm as if to hide the sign of tension.

"She found one of my hairs in her home." I felt stupid even admitting it. I knew better. I should have made sure it was tightly tucked away, but after having her house beat the shit out of me for so long, I had just been happy to get inside. I never bothered to concern myself with fixing my hair or putting it up at all.

What Tobias and I had done in her bed was insanely hot and so very stupid.

"Okay," Aurora said, touching my shoulder to comfort me, but I didn't need it. "What's the plan?"

"It's simple. If Rona attacks me, I will kill her." The air around us popped and crackled like it was alive with electricity, but it wasn't coming from me.

I was ready to battle. I almost craved the feeling of ripping her heart out or slicing her throat. But I had control over my magic at that moment, so I knew it wasn't me.

It was coming from Cyrus.

"You have a problem with me killing her, Cyrus?" I snapped, but he shook his head. His pale yellow eyes were narrowed and angry as he sat beside Natalie. She was tense as she eyed him warily.

"No, just hate that I brought this on you." He uttered, leaning back in his chair with his knees spread, his forearms resting on the tabletop as he tapped his pointer finger into the wood to emphasize his point. The longer I stared at him, the older he looked. With his goofy smile gone, and the exhaustion evident on his face, he looked closer to his age. I wasn't sure how I had missed it before, but he had masked his feeling well until now.

I stared a moment longer before looking back to Natalie, who had relaxed, and Aurora, who was studying Cyrus with open curiosity.

"If she is the one draining witches like I suspect, taking her down is still possible but will be more challenging. If I am injured or unavailable, I want to ask that my promise to Cyrus doesn't fall flat. We can't risk their extinction as he is the only known one of his kind." I moved forward, resting my forearms on the back of the chair with my hands clasped together.

Natalie leaned back, "You want us to protect him in case she gets away."

She knew the only way I would let Rona getaway would be upon my death or severe injury. I wouldn't let the bitch escape. Once she attacked, I would finally get what I wanted. Her dead.

Rona was too much of a risk, too dangerous to keep alive. She would turn on any one of us given the chance. Even Killian knew it. He trusted her less than anyone and had already given me the green light to look into her.

"Yes."

Natalie nodded once, looking lost in thought. "Okay. Any luck on tapping into Rona's blood?"

My head shook as it fell forward. I had been struggling with it and failing for weeks now. "Not one bit. Something is blocking me."

Aurora looks up at me, suddenly losing interest in Cyrus. "You can't get in?"

My head shook, and my teeth ground together. I wondered if I had taken too little from her, but any amount should have worked.

"It only works one way." Aurora offered, and I felt my body coil in anticipation of more bad news. "If you can't get into her blood, it means that someone is either in yours or beat you to hers. So, if I tap into your blood and can control or curse you, no one can use mine to control both you and me. It doesn't work like that."

My tongue ran out over my lips. I never had this issue with blood magic before, and Talia had only taught me so much before she walked out on me. I hated that I never knew this. It was just another reminder that I was not up to the standard of my job.

I was only twenty-six and had accomplished a lot during my time as the royal advisor at Killian's side, and for having taught myself most of what I knew, I was still damn proud. But the small gaps in my knowledge that would only be filled with time were frustrating.

It didn't mean I felt unprepared for the job or would ever want to step down. They would have to challenge and fight me to the death to take my position. It just meant that I had to work harder, and I was one stubborn bitch.

"There is no way anyone is in mine," I said firmly. I had charms in place for it on all my jewelry, and the small hoop in my cartilage was no exception. I ensured that was in place right after the war when Killian had been targeted. No one would notice a piece of jewelry so small, and I would stay safe from anyone trying to tamper with me.

"So then, is Rona controlling someone, or is she the one being controlled?" Cyrus asked, breaking the silence.