

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 144

Thirty-Seven: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

Dinner was a tense affair. Cyrus seemed uncomfortable trying to manipulate Rona into getting information from her, but he didn't have a choice.

She was obsessed with getting him to talk and spill his secrets. He was convinced she had actual feelings for him, even if it was only a physical attraction. Perhaps she would accidentally let something slip if he took advantage of that.

Even better would be if we took advantage of how close she let him and had him sedate her.

One quick slip of a needle and her magic could be blocked for hours. It would be the perfect way to question her. But if I was wrong about my suspicions of her, it could have catastrophic consequences when she was released. Killian wouldn't let me just kill her, no matter how badly I wanted to.

He insisted that we still had to follow the rules. He was trying to be a good leader, and he was. But that didn't make it any less frustrating when the rules were getting in the way of my job to protect him.

Cyrus agreed to try the more civil way first and attempt to get Rona to talk to him. He violently opposed my idea of resorting to drugs and torture, but

I was sick of waiting for someone to slip up and trying to be discrete as I searched for answers.

Someone who had been in the mountains the night before the war had built that altar and had performed the ritual to drain another of their life essence and magic. Someone powerful enough to perform that ritual on their own, if they were alone, shouldn't need more magic unless they were doing something big.

Cyrus was running for his life, needing protection from some unknown threat who wanted him dead. When I asked him about it during dinner, he confirmed the same thing he told me in the mountains.

He felt them.

He felt them pulling at his soul and magic, trying to separate the two. He looked haunted as he recalled the event that finally pushed him to ask for help. I had experienced something similar fifteen years ago, so I knew he remembered how much it hurt, with his experience being only a few months ago.

The pure and unbridled agony that came with that curse haunted me to this day, and I knew he would have to live with it for the rest of his life too.

When that didn't work, the mountain shook fiercely like it was about to come down on him. He said he was positive that if it wasn't someone powerful, it had to have been one of the Gods because he had never felt anything as strong or threatening.

His attacker had been livid by their failure, and it was only a matter of time before they tried again.

He had said, for a moment, he was sure he was about to die. It seemed to bother him more that he wouldn't have been able to face his killer before he was sent to meet the Goddess. Without embracing his powers, he would have died anyway. But getting the chance to see and face the person trying to kill him... no one deserved to be stabbed in the back.

If someone was going to murder another, it was only fitting that they do it face to face, not hiding in the shadows like a coward.

I had shared a look with Tobias that Cyrus seemed to pick up on immediately. It was then that we shared the story of how Rona's mother passed over store-bought lasagna.

It was the same method, less extreme, but still similar. Rona had cast a curse that allowed her to kill her mother using the distant absorption of her magic. Her mother, Melinda, didn't realize what was happening until it was too late. At that point, she was too weak to fight back. Rona drained her of everything, stealing her magic, life, and seat on the council. All while leaving no evidence behind to convict her.

My thoughts should have been on that. As I crawled into bed, my mind should have been dissecting every word that crossed Cyrus's mouth tonight, looking for hints or answers.

Instead, as Tobias pressed his warm body to mind, I couldn't think of anything other than our own future. I had been working hard enough for the past decade to save and protect everyone else. I didn't even feel guilty that

I was thinking about myself for a short while.

But those thoughts, the thoughts of us, only conjured more questions.

"You're thinking very loudly," Tobias spoke against the back of my neck, his nose nuzzling through my hair, his hot breath hitting my skin, making me shiver.

His arms tightened around me, pulling me against his bare chest.

"That is not true," I whispered, but he was right. Even if he couldn't hear my thoughts, I knew I was acting unusual. If I weren't, I would have been wrapped around him by now, just like every night before.

There was a deep, almost suffocating silence between us as he waited. He was patient, but it felt more like a silent demand for an explanation. I pressed my lips together until he placed a single kiss on the mark on my neck, and I felt myself crumbling.

"We never talked about kids," I mumbled, refusing to turn my head and look at him. Kids. The thought made my stomach turn because I didn't know what answer I wanted. I didn't even know if I wanted to have any.

I wasn't even good with adults.

The type of mother I pictured I would be wasn't very inspiring, making me regret bringing it up. If he did want kids, and I had them, would he resent me for not being the kind of mother he wanted raising them?

"Do you want kids?" He questioned with excitement laced in his tone, answering his question without needing me to ask him the same thing.

He wanted them.

"Would you be okay with them looking or being like me?" My eyes were locked on the wall across the room as I lay still in his arms, scared that if I moved and faced him that the conversation would become even more difficult to have than it already was.

"I would be proud." His smile against my neck felt wonderful as he tried to ease my fears, but inside I was fighting down my stomach acid with everything in me.

Kids.

After everything we had gone through as children, he wanted to bring some of his own into the world. He would be a great father, but I knew I would not meet his expectations. How could I?

I had no idea what to do if I were put in that position.

Every female figure in my life growing up had abandoned me or turned on me. My parents had locked me in my room for the first decade of my life, hiring priests and witches to try to take my gift from me. It was unclear whether they knew that ritual would kill me, but it didn't lessen the pain.

When the king found me, I was taken in and assigned to be mentored by the Royal Advisor at the time, Talia. She abandoned me when Killian chose me to stand by his side over her and tried to kill me only a few short months ago.

Even my only female friend growing up, Charlie, had left to travel the world slaying monsters. She never asked if I wanted to come, and she rarely returned home for visits. Her trips back to the castle were becoming fewer and farther between. When she was here, it was to visit her brother.

The rest of the women in my life were power-hungry bitches who made me want to pull my hair out from the frustration of having to deal with them. 1

Children were bound to be much worse.

"I don't know if I would be good at that." My admission was met by his body stiffening, and I could feel his sadness and frustration through our mate bond. We hadn't been mated for more than two weeks, and I was already letting him down.

Queue the regret.

I waited, but I didn't feel it. Nothing came through our bond beyond the two feelings I had already sensed from him.

"You are a wonderful mate. If you decide you want children, I know you will be a great mother. We would learn as we go and raise them together. If you don't want them, we will still have a beautiful life together, just the two of us." He kissed my neck before settling his head down behind mine. 'I will love you forever, no matter our path.'

My body was filled with a sick feeling. It was the kind that sat deep in my belly and came from an unhealthy amount of anxiety and stress. I couldn't figure out if I needed to eat something to fill the uncomfortable feeling, throw up, or sleep.

None of it would help, though.

"I love you too," I whispered into the dark room. Tobias's breathing evened out, and I couldn't say how long we lay there in tense silence before we fell asleep.

The vision that awaited me in the darkness was only welcomed as confirmation that I could still have them. My last vision had been before we found Natalie. After that, everything went quiet, and I was worried that I had lost my gift.

I stood in the corner of a familiar room. The black bedsheets and the glowing item on the dresser made me hold my breath even though I already knew Rona wouldn't be able to see me.

Whenever I had a vision, the timeline was never clear. Sometimes it had already happened. Occasionally, it was happening as I saw it. But most of the time, it had yet to happen.

Rona entered the room with panic visible on her face, her bedroom door slamming against the wall as she raced toward her trophy. Her hands shook as they hovered over the bones, but she didn't touch them. I had never seen her show so much emotion before. The most she had ever expressed was anger or annoyance.

Watching her now, it was clear that she was on the verge of breaking down. Her whole body quivered as she took a deep breath and sat on the edge of her bed. It wasn't the reaction I would have expected from someone worried their secrets had been discovered, and I couldn't help but wonder what was happening inside her head.

Not that I wanted to be in her twisted mind, but I needed to know more.

Rona calmed after several breaths before lifting her hand, shaking it with disgust as if something had just crawled over it. She turned her head to look, jumping from the bed with her usual scowl of annoyance before her eyes narrowed.

A fire was burning behind them, and I swallowed hard as she grabbed something between her two fingers before lifting it in front of her face.

"I'm going to fucking kill her!" She whispered with malice as a strand of my long white hair hung between us.