

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 160

Fifty-Three: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

His body rose. The oversized, wooden chair fell backward with a loud crack as his feet lifted off the floor. Guards, including Tobias, quickly removed Natalie and Killian from the table. It was his job. But as I watched Cyrus rise until his knees were aligned with the top of the table, possessed by an unknown force, I had one second where I wished Tobias had rushed to my rescue instead.

I scoffed at that thought as quickly as it came to mind. We both knew that I could handle myself, even if I were feeling under the weather.

I'm sure Natalie could too, but I had way more experience with magic than her. She was strong and good with light magic, but I knew light and dark magic thanks to my time with Talia. This... was dark magic.

Cyrus's scream cut off as his head was thrown back. His veins bulged from his body, and his already pale skin turned a sickly shade of grey.

I stepped toward him. Tobias's chair between us had been pushed several feet back during his rush to get the queen out.

My hand lifted, and I slowly approached Cyrus, wanting to feel the magic at play, to taste and familiarize myself with it.

The air was thin until I reached the wall of magic, and while chaos surrounded us from the packed dining hall rapidly emptying, I couldn't hear anything beyond the angry gurgling coming from his mouth.

The magic around him was thick and suffocating. Yet, I wasted no time jumping on the table and trying to force his head down to free his airway. A thick bloodstream spilled from his mouth before the pain-filled yell erupted again. The horror in his voice was haunting...familiar.

Aurora approached from his other side, holding her hands onto his body as she began chanting under her breath.

As usual, the rest of the council had been eating in either their chambers or the private dining room, leaving us to combat this evil on our own while we waited for someone to fetch them.

Cyrus shook, his body convulsing as fat tears slid down his cheeks. His arms were out to his sides, and he flinched as if he were fighting against restraints. His arms and legs were spread, his wrists bent so his palms were forward.

I was very familiar with the position he was in.

His pale yellow eyes were squeezed tightly shut as he gasped for breath." No! No!"

A force shot from his body, sending me flying through the air. I flipped once before hitting the ground on my side.

I groaned as a wave of pain shot through me and then used the air to push me right back up. Several Lycans stood at my sides, growling as if Cyrus was the enemy.

"Stand down!" I ordered, and the sound cut off. Yet, they stood tall and proud, defensive as they waited for his next move. But it wasn't him doing it. It was his attacker. The person who tried to drain him in his mountain. Possibly, the person who had tried the ritual during the war.

The person I had been hunting was so close, yet I felt like they were further away than ever.

"Help me..." The wet croak from the lanky man made my chest ache and my heart clench.

Grabbing a bowl from the table, I dumped the food onto the floor before holding the item under his dripping chin.

If Rona wanted to play with dark magic, she would have to face me, and I learned from the best...for a few years at least.

As the bowl filled with his black-laced blood, I began to chant lowly in Latin.

If she was active in his blood, then maybe...just maybe, I could tap into her.

I could feel their magic feeding into Cyrus's blood like an infection, working its way through his system. It was different than when it happened to me fifteen years ago. I had felt the witches like a thread being worked through my veins, something I could grab onto and manipulate.

In Cyrus's blood, the thread was barbed. Each time I tried to grab it, it sent a painful stab through my head, encouraging me to chant louder, to fight harder.

His chest thrust forward as if he were arching his back away from something. The sobbing cries for it to stop were layered, echoing through the room.

The sound of chains rattling in the distance was faint, but as I dug deeper into his blood, I could hear it more clearly with each jerk of his arms and legs.

"What can I do to help?" Natalie's voice called out, but growling returned as multiple guards tried to form a barrier between the royal couple and Cyrus." Let me through.*

The darkness moving through him was so thick I could almost taste it, and I turned my head to glare at the guards. "Get them out of here! Now!"

It wasn't that I couldn't use the help, but without knowing what we were up against, it was almost impossible to ensure the safety of Natalie and Killian, let alone a fetus.

"Don't touch me! Stand down!" Her order forced the guards to clear a path, and I turned my hand to them, shoving her and Killian back toward the door. Killian wrapped his arm around her waist, stopping her from running back into the room, nodding at me with approval to take control of the situation.

"You're safety comes first. Even if you can help, the risk to you is too great." My eyes dropped down to her stomach, hinting at the reality that she very well could be carrying the heir. Even if she could help to save Cyrus, the royal line came first. It would always come first.

It was why I threw myself into danger first when I saw Natalie about to go after Agatha and Aurora that day on the battlefield before a dagger was lodged into my back. It was why they always had guards and why every time there was a threat, the pack would rise up to defend and fight for them without asking questions.

Realization crossed her face, but her anger was still there. She knew she had a choice to make too. Either try to save an innocent man who wasn't a member of her direct pack but was still under her rule or to protect the life that could be growing inside her.

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty," I said as the doors closed in her face, and my magic sealed them shut. Several guards were stunned and stood frozen as the sound of Natalie throwing magic at the barrier echoed through the room over Cyrus's begging for mercy and cries for help. There weren't many left. As soon as they realized the attack was on Cyrus and not an attack from Cyrus, they ran to take their positions in the city and castle, prepared for battle.

I turned to those that remained. "Stand guard at the door. If she takes down my spell, keep her away. Protect the crown!"

They nodded, seeming both determined and uneasy about protecting the queen and resisting her commands while doing so.

As I turned back to the bowl, I could see the crimson liquid boiling in the porcelain. My stomach rolled, and I looked up at Cyrus. Aurora was still at his side chanting, but when she looked back at me, she looked hopeless.

"Go to the infirmary. Bring back some healers!" I turned, picking up a knife off the table, the blade glinting under the fluorescent lights. "I'm going to try to slow this down. But I am going to need some help."

My arm sliced across Cyrus's wrist, and the tainted blood poured from the wound. His floating body was tense, and he let out another scream of agony. This one caused by me.

I needed to bleed him out to slow their damage. The healers would be back in a moment with Aurora, and they could heal him before he became critically low.

Henry carried over a dirty tray, one that had been holding food for the pack, and slid it noisily across the floor until it stopped a few inches short of the stream pooling from Cyrus. I dropped to my knees, moving it the rest of the way, and stuck my hands into the collection of hot liquid.

Flashes of Rona's red hair appeared in my mind, and I reached for her, desperate to hold onto anything I could to get to her.

Flora and another healer appeared in front of me with Aurora before the Descendant disappeared again, presumably to get more healers or to find the rest of the council. The two began to work quickly, and the blood dripping into the large tray slowed as they healed him.

His cries quieted, but his soft mumbling for help continued. He wanted someone, anyone, to help him. He kept begging for his attacker to stop and screaming out in pain as if he were being sliced open.

My hands moved in deeper, the bottom of the basin acting like a portal as I found myself elbow deep, eyed closed. I could see her... Rona. Her eyes were closed too, and her hair was fanned out around her. But she wasn't moving, wasn't speaking.

The blood around my arms thickened, rapidly congealing until it became difficult for me to move. I had been so close, able to feel and see Rona, before she stopped me.

I gasped as I shot back up, my eyes meeting Aurora's as she watched me curiously, clearly uncomfortable with dark magic. She made that clear the morning she came to my tower when I tried to tap into Rona's blood.

"She's there. I feel her magic tied into his."

The door slammed open, and Natalie stormed in, fury written on her face. Killian, Tobias, and several other guards were with her. All but my mate were trying to get her to back away and get to safety. Tobias seemed more concerned with getting to me this time. His eyes widened, and he rushed forward when he saw my arms coated in Cyrus's blood, looking at it like it was the plague.

He lunged forward, catching Cyrus just as he collapsed so he wouldn't land on me. The healers stayed with him, working their magic as they tried to fix the physical damage that both Rona and I had done.

"I'm going after Rona. We can't wait any longer. She's going to kill him." I muttered, sliding one hand down my arm with a tight grip to wring my limb free of the blood before doing the same to the other side.

He reached for me, and I wiped my palm on my pant leg before grabbing his hand.

Natalie pushed forward with Killian at her side. "We will go with you," She announced, but I shook my head.

"It's not safe for you, Your Majesty. But I will take guards."

Several men and women stepped forward, eager to defend their King and Queen. Henry joined Aurora's side and laced their hands together. I waited a few seconds as they all grabbed onto each other's forearms or shoulders. Aurora closed the chain, nodding at me. "Lead the way."

As the world faded around us, I felt my energy drop from pulling so many with me. I knew without Aurora there, I would have been able to take only three or four people.

The dense forest appeared around us, and the lonely cottage looked bare, almost abandoned from the last time I had seen it. The abnormally thick vines were strewn across the yard, brown and lifeless. The poisonous fog was gone, seeming to have killed all the grass and plants on its way out. The pathway had many deep holes, and the rocks around them crumbled in as I picked up a stick and threw it.

But it wasn't alive as it had once been before.

"I think we are too late."