

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 165

Fifty-Eight: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

Cyrus threw up for a long while. The healers pushed me aside when it went from stomach acid to blood. As much as I detested vomit, even though I was able to hold back some of my own, I stayed. He needed people, and I needed answers.

A line of sweat appeared across his forehead, and every time his eyes instinctively closed as he lost his stomach, he would jerk them right back open. He hadn't been kidding about the darkness he saw when he closed his eyes.

He looked haunted and terrified. The man, who typically looked like a teenager, was nothing more than a scared little boy right now, and it broke my heart.

Tobias had his chest to my back with his hands on my hips. While half of my mind was on Cyrus in bed, there was nothing I could do until this wave of nausea passed.

The other half of my mind was zeroed in on how Tobias had his thumbs sliding along my waist to show that he supported me.

It was so comforting, but I was still waiting for him to tell me that I smelled different or that he could hear or feel a little heartbeat inside me. I wondered if he would know before I did since I was stalling.

Once again, I pushed aside those thoughts. I didn't have the courage to take a test right now, nor did I have the time to run to a store, get one and then take it without anyone seeing me.

Deal with Cora first.

I had to keep reminding myself to stay on task. Cora was the threat here; the potential of a baby inside me was not. It was a distraction, one that I could push aside until I received confirmation that it was even true. Until then, I could continue to pretend it wasn't real and focus on the actual issue.

When the healers stepped back, they looked uncertain and uneasy. Flora's hands were up like she was backing away from a rabid animal and looked exhausted.

She had healed him several times, but it hadn't held. Trauma and magic were powerful things.

Cyrus was handed a glass of water. He took a large sip, gargled it, and spat it into the bucket.

My stomach rolled, and my mouth watered as I fought back the bile pushing its way up my throat.

"Tell me what you know." My demand made Tobias tighten his hands on my hips slightly, and while he was worried, I also sensed his amusement at my statement. I needed to get answers and get the hell out of this room before I was sick too.

If I did that, I would look weak, and it would only raise suspicion. Neither of which I wanted.

"Always so pleasant," Cyrus muttered with a grimace of disgust as he moved his tongue around his mouth, more than likely still tasting his vomit. His lips pursed, and his eyelids lowered as his stomach jerked as if he were going to gag again, but instead, Cyrus took a deep breath and laid back.

"Now." I couldn't wait any longer. We didn't have time for more delays. We needed to be ready to take action as soon as we located Cora.

"It was like there was a flimsy wall between me and Rona. I could feel and see her, but she was trapped. I had been able to talk to her, to Rona. I don't know how it worked, and it was only for a short period." He looked off into the distance, his eyes staying open abnormally long between each blink as if trying to avoid returning to the darkness.

"Cora was controlling her." My statement was met with a nod. We already knew that, but hearing the confirmation from someone who had actually been in Rona's head almost made me feel relieved. I knew she was a terror as a kid, and I assumed that Cora controlling her had been recent. So, I still wasn't a huge fan of Rona, but knowing that the motive behind her most recent actions wasn't her own, that she had been under someone else's control, made me hate her a little less.

"Yeah, but Rona had been resisting, fighting against her. She had been using Cora's leg to track her. Rona was trying to find out what Cora was up to, but she didn't figure it out until I showed up here."

This was it.

Cyrus took another sip of his water, shuddering as he swallowed it. "Rona suspected that Cora was after me after you brought me back here. That's why she was so determined to find out what I was. Rona didn't want my power for herself; she just wanted to find Cora's weakness. She wanted to figure out what my connection to Cora was."

I moved forward, placing my hands on the foot rail of his bed to stay out of the way of any vomit or the healers in case they needed to rush to him again.

I had few choice words about Rona, but I didn't want to upset Cyrus even more by speaking so ill of someone he had bonded with before they died. They may not have been friends or anything more than that, but they went through something awful together. He had been there, in her mind, when she died, and that would be enough to make anyone protective of the other person.

"Cora had been trying to learn how Rona had taken her mother's powers without performing the ritual on her. Once she figured that out, she spliced the two spells and found a way to get to me without facing me." A tear leaked from his eye, and he wiped it away quickly. "The first attack hadn't been strong enough because she only had an item of mine that she found in my last hideout. She needed something stronger."

His blood. The blood I had all but handed over to Cora by leaving it in my unattended tower. I knew I was already going to hell from my past actions, but those were all intentional, and I owned those. This one was unintentional, and that made it hit harder. If there was any question about my afterlife, it was long gone.

I had fucked up, and his life would never be the same because of my mistake.

"Then Rona woke up in her body, and it was like the wall between us had solidified. I could still feel her, but this time I could see through her eyes and feel her pain. We were trapped in her body, but I couldn't talk or move. Cora was ranting about how the love of her life had been taken from her, how she had tried to get them to stay, but they chose to side with someone else."

I turned to look at Killian, the only other person in the room who had been around Cora for most of his life, but he looked just as lost as I felt. Had Cora been with someone?

She hadn't ever shown any interest in anyone I could remember, and I had to wonder what else I had been blind to.

"She was so angry at Rona, saying that she should have done what she was told when she had the chance."

I interrupted him. "What had Rona been told to do?"

He shook his head. "I don't know. That was when Cora started cutting and chanting. I couldn't understand anything she was saying at that point. I didn't even know if it was Rona pulling at the chains or if I was, but neither of us were strong enough to break free. I couldn't use my magic while I was inside her body. I tried. Believe me, I tried."

"I know," I whispered as I remembered the force that had sent me flying across the dining hall when I was trying to save him. He had used his magic; he just used them through his body and hit me instead of through Rona's to get to Cora. I wasn't even sure if that was possible, but by his lack of attacks after, I had assumed Cora had gone far enough in the ritual to suppress his magic or weaken him too much to use it.

"I could feel Cora searching for it, my magic. Every inch of my body burned, and it felt like she was killing every cell she touched. I still don't know what she did to me versus what I felt from what she did to Rona. Then Rona

died, and I was stuck in there." He shook his head, closing his eyes with a wince at the memories.

His eyes were brighter than ever before when he looked at me again. The pale yellow stood out sharply against the bright red of his bloodshot eyes. "Do you know what it's like to be trapped in a corpse? I felt her soul leave her body. I felt the darkness close in, wanting to suck the life from her empty vessel, but I was still in there. No matter how much I screamed or fought, I couldn't get out."

I swallowed hard. Any thought of apologizing and begging for forgiveness for his blood being taken was long gone. I couldn't bring it up now, not after that.

"Did she say anything else? Anything that might lead us to her, anything about her plans?" I pushed, wanting to get him out of the spiral the memories of the torture would drag him down into.

"She didn't say anything about a plan." His response made Natalie's shoulders visibly drop with disappointment. "She just kept speaking in Latin over our yelling. Then there was a lot of growling, and it went silent. I was brought back to my body after that."

"That's what I had been afraid of. Cora had been so careful up until now. I think her plan had been to use or absorb Rona's magic so she would be strong enough to take yours without having your body present. But since the bears interrupted her and Rona died, she could be up to anything. She is probably feeling frazzled and will be unpredictable while trying to devise a new plan."

I bit the inside of my cheek as I thought about what I would do if I were in her shoes. But until I knew what her end goal was, I couldn't. Was it really just to kill Cyrus or to take his powers? What did she want to do with them once she had them?

"She's probably looking for another power source now that she lost Rona." A voice from the doorway stated, and I looked over my shoulder, seeming to be the only one unaware of the three unannounced people who had joined the room.

Aurora stood in front of Charlie and Damien, and I tried not to look at the light coating of dust on their hair. It hadn't been there before, and there had been no wind when I was back at Rona's house.

A lump formed in my throat as she nodded at me in acknowledgment, covered in ashes. She must have cremated the body.

"You wouldn't happen to know who she was involved with, would you? Someone who had turned on her?" Natalie asked with hope in her voice.

"I haven't been around the castle in almost two decades. That last person I had seen her with was Talia." Aurora moved to sit down at the table, looking tired and distressed from today's events.

I choked on my spit. "I'm sorry, what? Did you just say that Cora and Talia had been together?"