

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 153

Forty-Six: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

I hadn't decided what from my study I wanted to bring to Tobias's house... well, it was our house now, according to him. He had a contractor drawing up plans to build an extension on the place to be my study, and until then, I decided it would be best to keep everything from my study in the castle.

Even once I moved fully into the house, I would still have most of my study here. It was my job. Having everything at home wouldn't make sense when I still had to come to the castle daily for work and meetings.

Meetings like this one that made me want to pull my hair out.

Four women joined me in the conference room, Aurora somehow managing to keep a conversation going with Aisha and Margot. It was a miracle that no blood had been drawn, or threats had been issued yet.

Cora was absentmindedly rubbing at her leg where her stump sat in her prosthetic, looking lost in thought.

Natalie was currently babysitting Cyrus, and he wasn't happy about it. He liked her well enough, but being taken away from Blanche had him pouting like a baby. Every time I saw him now, they were together, and I was positive that no houses had been sold over the past few days.

"But if you really think about it," Margot stated, "There is no reason why you couldn't tame a sprite to be a pet instead."

The table fell silent, and I tilted my head to the side as I stared at her. Something in her brain had to be misfiring.

"Maybe because they are conscious creatures that can think, talk, and sustain life on their own. They aren't domesticated, Margot! You can make friends with a sprite; you don't need to capture them and force them to live with you as some pet that you have to feed, water, and wash. Goodness!" Aisha snarled, not liking Margot's idea of holding a sprite prisoner.

Margot ground her teeth, glaring at Aisha, "You're right! Maybe I'll domesticate a siren. I bet you would love it if I had one of those at my beck and call!"

Aisha shoved her chair backward, rising to her feet as she placed her palms on the table. Ever since Margot had dangled Aisha over the Cliffside of a siren cove for a few days, she had been a bit sensitive to the topic of that creature. "Do it, and I'll sneak into your room and release it one night so it can eat you!"

"Ladies," Aurora said calmly with an amused smile. "It's simple; the answer here is a troll. They have basic survival instincts, rely on brute force, cannot communicate well, and don't clean themselves. If any creature should be domesticated, it should be a troll."

Both women turned to look at her as she remained calm, sipping her glass of water. Her lack of acknowledgment of their spat didn't bother them, but Aisha sat back down as she pondered Aurora's words.

"I'm surprised to see you at a council meeting," Cora said calmly, giving Aurora a soft smile. She looked tired. So very tired.

The dark circles under her eyes and the strand of silver hair that appeared to be thickening by the minute were concerning. She didn't look healthy by any means.

I cleared my throat. "I have made an executive decision, and you are here today to have the option to voice your opinions on the matter."

Aisha's eyebrows shot up to her hairline. "A vote, with the full council not present?"

She didn't sound bothered by it but rather amused that Rona wasn't here for this. Aisha was a troublemaker who loved to stir the pot, but she had never been disloyal to the crown. She was just the bitch who enjoyed turning the fan on so other people's shit could hit it.

It was better this way, though. The last thing we needed were three empty seats once Rona was dealt with, and if she had been here to object to this, she would have. She would do everything she could to keep any control she thought she had over the council.

Then again, it might have been good for her to be here so I could see if she influenced how anyone else reacted to the matter. Maybe that would have given me insight as to who she was controlling. Maybe it was Cora, or perhaps, she had gone with the silent but deadly one, Margot.

With how sickly the middle-aged woman looked, I had a feeling Cora was being hit by the same curse I was. It made me feel good to know that meant I had plenty of time to figure this out. Cora had been without her leg for a few years, so either Rona's spell to drain her of her magic was a lot slower than we thought, or she didn't start doing it until recently.

"An open forum, not a vote. My decision has been made, but I am offering the opportunity for any objections before anything becomes official.

Pledges will still be presented for the open seats, but I move to bring the Descendant into the council as an extra seat, a seat only to ever be held by a Descendant." I met each person's stare, knowing they couldn't say no without drawing suspicion.

Aurora was in the ear of the queen more than any of us at this point, and as she carried the blood of the Goddess, to be in her good books would benefit them all.

"And she is present for the debate?" Aisha asked with surprise, and I hid my suspicion at her tone and the implication that she wouldn't vote for the additional council seat.

"That will be her choice. I asked her to join us to confirm her consent. With it, we will proceed." I nodded once, turning to look at the fair-skinned woman. Her long ebony hair was in a loose braid over the front of her right shoulder.

Aurora smiled and nodded, "I confirm my consent, interest, and willingness to join the council."

"This would not take away either of the empty two seats currently available; it would be in addition to." I laced my finger together and sat back in my chair. "Aurora, thank you for your time. You are free to step out during the discussion, and I will come to find you once it has concluded."

She nodded with a proud smile as she stood and left the room. It was a look I had been dreaming about getting from my own mother one day and seeing it coming from a Descendant of the Goddess had me taken aback.

As soon as the door shut behind her, Aisha and Margot began to bicker over each other, their pointer fingers pressing into the table to emphasize their point. Margot was the first to vocalize that she was on board, which made Aisha immediately reject the idea.

Although, I had the feeling she would reject it to begin with. "It would make it an even vote for everything! Eight on the council? That is a headache waiting to happen!"

"She's going to be here anyway! She's the mother to the queen. Do you really think her not being on the council will make a difference? Her opinion will still be sought after, and she will be involved in almost everything.

Might as well make it official." Margot shrugged, but I ignored them, knowing they would continue to argue just for the hell of it.

Cora made them fall silent as her answer surprised us all. I had anticipated her refusing to let anyone join the council without an official vote, but she nodded as she sat back in her chair. "I think it's a wise decision."

Aisha gaped at her, knowing Cora resisted anything I usually said.

It didn't matter what answer she gave; I was suspicious of everything at this point. If she was for it? Suspicious. Against it? Suspicious.

When she said nothing more, Aisha slumped back in her chair and a resigned sigh of defeat. "Fine."

I clapped my hands together, getting to my feet. "Alright. It is set. I will let Aurora know. Don't forget to have your pledges ready for the other two seats. Once Rona gets back with hers, we will give them a few weeks to make their case and prove themselves. Then we will vote."

The other women rose to their feet behind me as I made my way to the door without turning back. I was feeling significantly better today and wanted to get things squared away before anything else happened to me.

Aurora was easy to find; her power and energy led me to Natalie's study. The door was already open, so I walked in, closing it behind me. Aurora was sitting on a chair next to Henry, their hands linked together between them as they each read a book.

Holden was sprawled out on the floor in a starfish dramatically while Cyrus kicked at the bottom of his feet. Goodness, he acted like an annoying little brother to everyone. I half expected him to throw out a song-like, "I'm not touching you."

Natalie was lying next to him, their heads together, but their toes pointed in opposite directions, forming a line.

"Joselin! Thank the Goddess! Do you know how depressing this guy is?" He nudged Holden's foot again.

Holden kicked outward toward Cyrus, but the spell caster dodged him, stumbling to the side. I couldn't help the smile stretching across my face when I stared at them. If only Tobias and Killian were here, then it would be the picture of the family I had always dreamed about.

I walked over and sat on the ground before laying back with my head next to Holden's and Natalie's.

"Do you even care why I'm depressed, beautiful? How are you, by the way? Saw the fall. It looked awful." Holden asked. From the corner of my eye, I could see him tilting his head back to look at me, but I ignored him.

"I am fine, and cheesecake." I reminded him of the agreement of friendship. Tobias wouldn't be too happy if he heard Holden flirting with me, and I didn't want to disrespect my man by allowing Holden to do so without saying anything.

Holden sighed.

"Fine. Joselin, do you even care why I'm depressed?" He tried again with annoyance, laced into every word.

"Not really." My ankles were crossed, and my hands were clasped over my stomach. "Aurora, welcome to the council. Your initiation will take place with the new members in a few weeks, but you are in. Congratulations."

The room was silent, but Natalie reached up, accidentally hitting my face with a laugh before patting my shoulder in gratitude.

"Well, now it all makes sense!" Holden exclaimed. "I have to go back home to help my brother because my father is stepping down from Alpha to stay here, but he didn't tell me why."

"I will travel back and forth until Brandon is comfortable in his new role," Henry said, unbothered by his son's complaining.

"This place is so much better than the pack." He groaned.

"You'll live, and you can always come back to visit. At least your father and sister would love to see you." I stared up at the gold swirls and runes painted into the ceiling. It had taken me a long time to protect this place; it probably had more security than my own tower.

I could see the difference in markings where Natalie had added her own protection spells and examined them. They were well-done, advanced-level casting. Something Aurora had to have taught her, and I was happy that Aurora was giving her the training she deserved.

"I'll come see you from time to time, Josie. Don't you worry." His voice was softer, and as I looked at him, I saw he was still staring at me. I dipped my chin down, silently affirming that everything would be okay. He had shared his fears with me about his future, and I hoped he was wrong. If he wasn't, he would always have friends and family here.

Cyrus sat down between Holden and me, and I glanced at him as he leaned back onto his hands with his legs crossed.

"Cyrus, I would like to have you as my pledge for one of the open council seats. Consider it. You have a week to decide. Once everything with this threat is resolved, you can come and go as you please if selected, or you can be housed here in the castle if you wish to stay." I closed my eyes, relaxing for the first time in a long while. "You will have access to training and resources here and would be protected as a council member."

"Joselin!" Cyrus scolded me for giving away his secret of being a spell caster.

"Calm down; everyone in this room can be trusted," I said, and he fell silent. He was so quiet that I thought he might be holding his breath, but when I cracked an eye open, he was just lost in thought, looking at the floor. "Just think about it."

Even if he didn't join the council, he would probably stay for Blanche based on how close they were becoming. Cyrus let out an unintelligible grumble before nudging my elbow. "Has anyone heard from Rona?"