

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 172

Sixty-Five: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

Aurora stayed for a while before doing her part and exiting, replenished, and stronger than before. She smiled widely as she spoke into a phone, laughing loudly and assuring Natalie that she would be home soon as she left the Sanctum.

Of course, it was all for show. I doubted Natalie was even on the phone. As soon as Aurora was outside, she teleported back to the castle in case Cora was watching her location, and we all sat in wait.

The longer it took for Cora to show up, the more nervous I became. I couldn't afford to have taken so many resources away from those who needed protection in the castle and be wrong. This had to be what she was searching for, a place of unbridled power.

If Cora could harness the power of the Sanctum, she would be unstoppable.

'Joselin,' Tobias said through our mate link, and I felt my back stiffen at the sound of my full first name. No, Josie, no, sweetheart. It wasn't a good sign. 'Don't take any unnecessary risks. I need to know that you will put yourself first when she shows up. I need to know that you will make it out of here in one piece. I know how strong you are, but just humor me, okay?'

His arms around my waist tightened, and his thumbs rubbed circles into my stomach. I glanced down. Could he know? Is this his way of telling me before I had the chance to test and find out for myself?

I looked up, not wanting to spend more time considering it until after this fight. I had told myself that same thing hundreds of times, yet it still kept coming to the front of my mind.

'This is my job. I'm responsible for the council, and I am responsible for handling magical entities who pose a threat to the crown. I can't promise to come out unscathed, but I can promise to do my best, so we can go home together.'

He wasn't satisfied with my answer. He didn't like it at all.

'I would let the world burn down around us and everyone in it before I lose my family.' His firm tone left no room for argument, but I was distracted by his word choice.

There it was again, that subtle hint. Family. As in more than one person. He wasn't just concerned about his mate. He was worried about losing a member of his family.

It could be that he was referring to Killian and Natalie, but the feeling in my gut told me that was not the case.

'I can't do this right now, Tobias.' I felt water line my eyes, not just from the emotion pouring from him and the fear of what I was risking for the crown, but from anger. I was in a pure rage that Cora had put me in this situation. It wasn't like I could just walk away and let one of my rogue council members continue to commit genocide.

I was in charge of her and should have figured out she was up to no good sooner.

Tobias nodded, his brown eyes scanning my face before he leaned down and pressed a punishing kiss to my lips. It was the kind of kiss that made me dream about forever while also worrying if it was goodbye.

My hand snaked up to his neck, and as he pushed me back to rest his forehead against mine, I felt the tears fall.

His thumbs slid over my cheeks, wiping away the trail of liquid as I masked my emotions, letting the anger fuel me. I wanted the rage and bloodlust to win over the worry and sadness.

I would gut this bitch and hang out her entrails to dry like potpourri.

'Has there been a recent update?' My demand for more information had been frequent over the past few hours since Aurora had left, and Tobias shook his head. It was time to set aside our relationship and act as the warriors we had been trained to be.

'There has been no movement yet.'

I sighed, pulling away and standing up to stretch. Cora was either still sleeping or hiding in her home. Either way, it was a good sign. If she were looking for the Sanctum, she would have a tracker on Aurora and be here soon.

Tobias's voice echoed through my head as I crouched back into hiding. I knew he would have also informed the other guards and the Sanctum fell silent. Even the bugs and birds stopped making noise.

'The crystal stopped. She's here.'

I took a few deep breaths, trying to calm the crackling of power around me as my anger fueled my emotions. I could feel Cora's excitement as she drew near, moving through the cave entrance that led to the ambush we had set.

Cora looked mesmerized by the cavern, spinning in a slow circle as she examined the brightly glowing area. She looked younger than before, the thick grey streak in her hair had almost vanished, and I narrowed my eyes, no longer doubting if she had taken Rona's magic and life force. She had.

She looked excited like she had just won the battle she didn't even know was about to start.

The planned sound of a rock hitting the wall across the cavern had Cora tensing. Her back was to me as her hands lifted, fingers slightly curled and spread as she widened her stance.

I stepped out, leaving Tobias in hiding. I couldn't show all of my cards up front. This would be a duel of magic; the Lycans showing themselves before needed would only put them at risk. As terrifying as they could be in their Lycan form, the magic of multiple powerful witches being housed in one body would be a force to be reckoned with.

Aurora stepped back inside the cavern.

Cora turned to her, masking her surprise and hopefully forgetting about the noise she heard earlier.

"Why are you doing this, Cora?" Aurora asked, and I pulled the needle from my pocket. "He has done nothing to you.'

Cora laughed cruelly. "Are you really so ignorant when you come from the blood of the Goddess? The males of our kind abused their powers. They were stronger than us women and used it to their advantage. Why do you think the first council was all men? They thought they could rule this world."

She shook her head, stepping forward toward Aurora. "I have heard and read stories about them that would make you wish you didn't live among them either. I'm doing my job! I'm not going to let them abuse their powers again. We can reproduce our kind with anyone. We don't need them. My family has protected female witches for centuries, keeping women in power."

I fought the urge to roll my eyes. Cora was certifiable.

"This is not your job, nor is it your decision to make. How many Cora? How many innocents have you killed?" Aurora asked, and as I slipped out the second needle, I listened for the answer.

"They are not innocent!" She screeched.

She wouldn't give us answers, and I had heard enough. The needle left my hand, the air pushing it faster than any creature could possibly throw without magic driving it forward. As soon as it left my fingers, I teleported through the vast, white emptiness and appeared behind her. She raised her hand, knocking away the flying syringe from her side with ease as I lifted my arm and stabbed it down toward the flesh of her back.

A force field around her stopped my attack only inches from her person, and I gasped as a jolt of electricity and agony ripped up my arm as the object in my hand began to melt. I released it quickly, shoving my energy toward her and sending her flying into the wall.

I had seen wards on locations or items before, but never on a moving person. It made me angry that she had been right. Her new combined powers were stronger than I expected.

The sound of her body making an impact echoed through the cavern, and I stalked forward as she pushed herself back to her feet. "Tsk, tsk. I wasted years eliminating those cockroaches the hard way when I could have been taking their power. Now, I know better. I have the power of four witches in me, Joselin! Do you really think you can take me on now? You don't stand a chance!"

Whether she refused to admit it or dismissed the strength of my power, I held the power of four in me too. The difference is that I was strong

enough to take their power when I was only eleven. I was strong before them.

She was weak before them.

Aisha and Margot stepped out of hiding until we had surrounded Cora. She wasn't going anywhere, and if she tried to teleport, I would follow her.

Blood seeped through Cora's side, where her body had made impact with the crystals protruding from the wall, and I smiled. Every bit of damage I could deal to her was a win. Even if she had a ward-up to protect her from my magic harming her, she could still be injured by the world around her. I wanted her so weak that she couldn't lift her hands when she begged me for mercy later.

My hands lifted at my sides as I sucked the air from around her, fighting against her magic as she tried to take control of the element.

Her hands hit the ground as her knees buckled, and the Earth shook beneath us before cracking between my feet. I jumped back, letting my magic fall as I fought to keep the Earth from taking me down to the depths of Hell, where I would one day serve my punishment.

Aurora flew through the air, several of her bones loudly breaking as she was thrown into a tree trunk, her body wrapped around it. I couldn't spare a second to glance at her to ensure her safety, but I saw Henry racing toward her in his fur from the corner of my eye.

"You brought me toys to practice my new powers on. How thoughtful!" Cora laughed menacingly.

I lifted my hand, a fireball burning bright before I threw it at her. The impact of it was enough to distract her from what she was doing to the Earth, but her ward shined brightly as the flames went out.

Margot began to throw offensive castings toward the traitor, screaming out her anger. "You turned on us! How could you?"

I took a moment to turn and examined Auror quickly, seeing her dazed and holding her side but awake. Henry snarled, standing protectively before his chosen mate.

"I was protecting you! You turned on me!" Cora snapped back before closing her fist before Margot, sending her to her knees as she screamed in agony.

My feet left the ground as Cora released Margot and turned back to me, sending me flying. Only I missed the trees and flew right into the uneven surface of the cavern wall, just as she had. Cora laughed loudly as I fell to the ground and blinked rapidly to clear the blurriness from my vision.

I felt blood soaking my hair, and several drops trailed down my cheek as I pushed myself up quickly.

I needed to get closer. I rushed forward at Cora, throwing every spell I could to weaken her ward, but it held firm. With each hit, I could see the shimmer of the surface as it absorbed my attack before hardening again.

Magic wasn't going to work against her.

The feeling of flames scorching the side of my waist from one of Cora's throws made me hiss in pain as I raced toward her.

My stomach dropped when Tobias let out a feral growl of anger as he raged forward to protect me from further damage. He was faster than me and was going to reach her first. It was the last thing that should have happened, but I knew his protective instincts drove him forward.

Cora's eyes lit up as the Lycans moved forward into view, like a predator spotting their prey. She lifted her hands for the kill.