

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 129

Twenty-Three: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

My arms wrapped around him, pulling Tobias against me. I could feel his body shaking, but the tear that hit my shoulder made me hold him in impossibly tighter.

After the horrors this man experienced, I was in awe that he still grew to be such a good man. No one should ever have to experience what he did.

"I'm so sorry, Tobias," I whispered, feeling his arms wrap around me. He was fighting back his emotions and held his head up, leaning it against the side of mine. His breathing was low and deep as he tried to calm himself, but he was clearly in pain. "You did the right thing. He deserved to die."

The idea of the woman carrying half of his soul being killed before him was heartbreaking, and I knew he had been silently suffering for years. Not many people lasted long after their mate died. They went crazy, but most just killed themselves to end their agony.

For him to be standing here with me only spoke to his strength. He wasn't the same as he was before, but he survived.

"I should have done it sooner."

I almost wished he did, either that or for him to have told me. At that point in my life, I already had blood on my hands, and killing his father would have brought me great joy. If it meant saving Tobias from his father's torment and Ana from death, I would have skinned that old bastard and let him bleed out in the garden.

I wouldn't have had Tobias for myself, but as long as he had been happy, I would have been fine.

"You did what you could. You were just a kid." I whispered, pressing my lips against his shoulder.

We stood there for what felt like hours, holding each other as he grieved the loss of his childhood, father, and soulmate.

I wasn't even happy that I didn't need to worry about him finding his true mate and leaving me eventually.

I was mourning with him.

There was no joy to be had when the man I loved more than anything in the world was hurting. So I just held him, wanting to take away some of his pain and sorrow.

He pulled back, placing his hands on either side of my face as he looked into my eyes. He was searching for something, and whatever it was, he seemed to have found it. "I wanted to be ready for you, Josie. I'm sorry I took so long."

"You can take as long as you need. I'm in this with you." It was the same thing he had said to me the other night. We were in this together.

He gently pulled my head forward, kissing my temple, and my eyes closed." I don't need too much longer. Once I finish fixing this house, I will sell it and leave it all behind."

I wanted to tell him that it was okay to take his time and not rush this. Grieving was natural, and I wanted him to be sure about us before we moved forward. But I kept my mouth shut because the picture he was painting for me, the one where we had a future together, was a dream come true. It was something that I had wanted for so long.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" As soon as the words left my lips, I mentally kicked myself, not because I didn't want to help but because I wouldn't be here to do so.

"You have already done more than you could possibly know, sweetheart." He looked around the room, and I felt my stomach turn when I saw how bothered he was to be here. "I brought you here because you deserve to know everything before we move forward. I also wanted you to see what I have been spending my time on each day. I wanted you to know that I am working toward this, toward us."

"Thank you for sharing this with me," I whispered, resting my cheek against his chest. It had to of been hard to tell me about his past. But now that I knew, it helped me to understand him so much better.

I jumped as the distant sound of an explosion echoed through the house. Tobias covered my head with his arm, holding me tightly to him.

Whatever caused the noise had been close enough to cause panic but far enough away not to have done any damage. The pack could be heard outside, shifting and running to their positions for battle.

My mind was whirling, trying to remember my practice from earlier that day.

Light.

I needed to get us through the light and to the castle. Tobias would need to guard the queen, and I needed to protect them against a magic attack.

It took me longer than I would have liked, but the world faded around us. I held Tobias tightly as we teleported through the light and to the castle courtyard.

Tobias swiftly pulled me behind him, placing me between him and the castle as Killian and Natalie made their way through the door. They were looking out to the horizon, just as the rest of the pack was. A fire could be seen burning on one of the mountains in the distance.

For it to have been so loud while being so far away, it had been a huge explosion.

"What the hell is going on?" Holden whispered, joining us with Aurora and Henry at his side.

Another explosion shook the ground as trees flew and flames consumed more of the mountain. I watched in shock as the enormous billows of grey smoke filled the air above the mountain.

"Gather the guard. Lock down the city. I want everyone in position and prepared for an attack." Killian's voice rang out strong and deep, spurring the pack into action.

"There is no threat to us, your majesty, not from that." Aurora's voice was calm, and I stiffened when she glanced in my direction. "Joselin, it is time."

"Less than a day. I get less than a day to decide? I haven't even had a chance to talk to my...." I cut myself off. The immature title of 'boyfriend' was on the tip of my tongue, but I wasn't sure we were even in a

relationship yet. Whenever we discussed it, it was agreed that we both had things we needed to work on to make 'us' possible.

My eyes flickered up, and I felt my body relax as Tobias looked over his shoulder at me, and the corner of his lips twitched. He was happy. He knew exactly what I was about to say, and it had amused him.

"Explain." Killian barked, grabbing Natalie's hand and rubbing his thumb over the back of it. The smooth gesture made me want to smile now that I knew what it felt like to be protected by the man I loved as well. It was a good feeling.

Killian had come a long way from the man who refused to let anyone in to becoming a man who was completely taken by the young queen.

My hand lifted, and my fingertips landed on Tobias's lower back. His arm reached back, pulling me closer as Aurora looked at me. She nodded to the side where the mountain was burning, and I narrowed my eyes at her.

"This is Joselin's task. There is no threat to the people. The fight will stay on the mountain and only end when she has accomplished what I asked of her." Her continuously vague comments were getting on my nerves, and I was starting to think she spoke this way on purpose. I had even heard her talk to Natalie in those empty statements.

It was infuriating.

"I am getting a little impatient with your vague statements, Aurora. Either spit it out, or you can forget about the pledge, and your precious little pet out there can burn for all I care." My threat was spat through gritted teeth, but Natalie surprised me when she turned to me.

"Joselin, you should go." It was an order from the queen, not my friend. I had no choice but to give in or go against her order and give up my position earlier than necessary.

"Has she told you her requirements, your majesty?" The title rolled off my tongue with disdain. The more often I said it, the less I respected it.

"I trust that she has good reason for this request. If she says you are the one who has to go, then you should." Natalie stepped forward to place her hand on my arm, but I stepped back.

"She had ordered that I go alone and powerless. I am up for a challenge, but we just watched half of that mountain get blown up, and you're blindly ordering me to face an unknown threat with nothing? No information, no magic, no healers, no help. We don't even send out border patrols on their own! There are at least three in a squad! You're sending me to my death!" I snapped, my anger fueling my tongue as I lashed out at the queen, not caring that I was being openly disrespectful in public.

"This is ridiculous! You can't just send her out there alone." Holden argued as Tobias let out a loud growl.

Tobias's arm tightened around me as I tried to pull away and step toward the stunned queen.

"Enough." Killian's voice boomed, and my jaw slammed shut. "I've seen you take on creatures three times your size without magic. I know what you are going after, and I need you to trust me, Josie."

"I would trust you if you didn't keep secrets from me all the time. Since Natalie was brought here, I have been kept so far out of the loop that I don't see a point in my presence anymore." I kept my voice low and emotionless even though the courtyard had rapidly emptied. It was more than likely under Killian's order through the mind link to prevent a scene, but I was past that point.

"Watch it, Josiel!" Killian warned, his eyes swirling black as his beast started to make his presence known. It wasn't the first time I had fought with my best friend, and it wouldn't be the last, but this was the first time I felt like an underling fighting with their king.

"Just do as you are told."

"Or what? Will you kick me out of my home and have your mate take over my duties? You're already halfway there, Your Majesty. Just ensure you have someone monitor the situation I warned you about while I'm gone." My fingers trailed along Tobias's back as I moved around him, freeing myself from his hold and making my way inside to pack a bag.

I heard him moving behind me, and it made me feel better that Tobias was still on my side even though I had just disrespected the King and Queen. His hand landed on my lower back, and I sank into his side as I made my way to my tower.

I was burnt out. Completely and utterly burnt out. I would tackle this challenge.

I loved a good fight and could benefit from drawing blood right now. After that, things were going to change around here.