

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 126

Twenty-One: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

It amazed me that his walking away from me made me feel giddy. After what we experienced together the night before, I had expected him to want to either pick up where we left off or to be done with me.

I never, in my wildest dreams, expected his declaration that he wanted me for me and wanted us to be mentally prepared to start something deeper before moving forward.

No man I had been with before had ever thought about me on that level.

I felt like I should be annoyed that he left me high and very wet, but I couldn't. He chose me tonight. Not my body and not my power. Me.

That meant more to me than anything.

I would have let him have his way with me if he had tried to. I would have loved every second of it too, but it wasn't the right step for us tonight. He knew it and respected me enough to stop.

My hand moved up to my lips, pulling the bottom one down slightly as I giggled. The sound was startling as I hadn't made a noise like that in a long time, if ever.

I felt ridiculous chasing after him, but I couldn't help it. The door to my tower flew open, and I rushed down the hallway toward his retreating figure. Tobias froze, turning to face me just as I collided with his chest and wrapped my arms around his neck.

He looked stunned as I smiled widely at him before kissing him with everything I had. His arms wrapped around the small of my waist, and he picked me up off the ground as he kissed me back.

I wanted him to feel it, to show him how much I loved him and appreciated his choice.

This was different than any kiss we had ever shared before. It wasn't a kiss of lust and desire. It was love.

I pulled back, still smiling widely as his eyes trailed over my face, reflecting the same happiness. His smile made my heart skip a beat as he set me back down on the ground.

"Soon/ I whispered in agreement before stepping back. I could feel his eyes on me as I walked back to my tower, looking over my shoulder to catch one last look. He was standing with his suit jacket unbuttoned and his fingers in the front pockets of his pants, the smile never leaving his face as I closed the door between us.

The following day did not come soon enough. I was eager to see Tobias again, but I still had a job to do.

As soon as the sun was up, a knock echoed through my tower, and I rushed to hide away the sample of Rona's blood that I had been working with.

The power on the other side of the door was stronger than the others on the council, and I let out a breath of relief that she had come to me first.

Aurora smiled knowingly at me as she looked over my shoulder. "You're up early and clearly up to no good."

I pursed my lips together, not wanting to tell her anything. I would never know how she knew I was dabbling in a bit of blood magic before the sun rose, but she didn't seem to mind.

"I'd rather not have any indirect involvement in your plans by coming inside. Let's go for a walk." She turned and began walking away, her ebony black hair hanging down her back in a loose braid.

I jogged forward to catch up with her, closing the door behind me and knowing that the ward I had in place would keep even Aurora, a Descendant of the Moon Goddess, out if I wanted.

"Holden told me something this morning that bothered me, Joselin." The double doors leading us out to the back garden opened slowly.

I couldn't imagine what Holden would have said. After Tobias threatened to kill Holden for touching me, I immediately had my guard up, ready to defend my man if she were to speak against him.

"I don't imagine much bothers you.' My response was met with a look of amusement before she cleared her throat and reached out to let her hand run along the tops of a few plants, perking them up with her magic.

"It was about your teleporting. During the war, we were all injured. I had suspected that was why we went into that realm of darkness and shadows, but Holden informed me that is how you travel all the time." We slowed to a lazy stroll the further we got from the castle. I could see her concerned gaze on me from the corner of my eyes.

I kept mine ahead, almost nervous about having such a powerful witch examining my abilities. Still, I had already planned on talking to her about how she travels through a different realm. Holden said Aurora's was light and easy, while mine was dark and haunting.

"That's how I was taught.' The memories of my teacher were conflicting. In some, she treated me like she would a daughter or a niece. In others, I was a pathetic excuse for a witch who needed to be punished.

"By Talia, no doubt." The angry spitting of her name from Aurora wasn't surprising. Talia had previously held my job as the royal advisor and was very close to the previous queen, Lillian. When Queen Lillian turned on us, Talia went with her, and the betrayal had stung.

The woman had been short-tempered, vindictive, and petty, but when she found someone she felt was worthy, she was loyal to a fault.

I thought I had been one of those people to her.

When I was found in the woods at eleven, I was brought back by the king, who handed me over to his royal advisor, Talia. At first, she didn't know what to do with me. Everything was a fight or power struggle between us. She didn't know how to care for a kid or raise one, and I didn't understand how to control my magic.

Over the years, we bonded, but when Killian ascended as the new king and chose me to be his advisor, she was livid.

I waited for her to enact revenge, but I never expected she would help the prior queen lead an army against us.

"Yes, she taught me most of what I know."

The rest of it I had learned in books and from other witches when we crossed paths during my teenage years.

"That is very unfortunate. She loved to play with dark magic." Aurora turned to me, stopping us from moving forward as she reached for my arm. I jerked away. There were very few people I allowed to touch me, and witches were not on my list.

Witches, myself included, could not be trusted. I had learned that they always had something up their sleeve, driving their actions.

The several vials of blood I had in my safe were evidence enough of that.

"Let me show you what it should be like." She held her hand out, palm up, and I stared at it blankly for a few seconds. This was one of the reasons I had wanted to seek her out upon her return, but who knew what would happen when light and dark collided in different dimensions?

As I placed my hand in hers, the world around us faded. It was different. Traveling into this realm was softer than the way it flickered with static when I traveled.

Holden had been right. Everything had been bright, and the air felt thinner. I couldn't see anything in the empty white space surrounding us, but I could feel it. We were alone. There was nothing else here but us.

"How?" My curt demand for an explanation was met with a laugh, and Aurora tightened her hand around mine as we appeared back at home on the other side of the garden.

"I will show you, but you must agree to never go into the darkness again. It is not safe." The color had slowly drained from her face, and her light green eyes dimmed as she looked away.

I knew it wasn't safe. I could feel him, the beast who had stolen a taste of my blood. He was stalking me each time I went through his realm, waiting for his chance to pounce.

"Agreed." It was an easy promise, one I didn't make lightly. But she didn't need to know that I had already been avoiding it when I could.

And so, she showed me. It was completely different from what I was used to, and I knew it would take some practice. But after an hour, I could at least get in and out of the light. It just wasn't quick or smooth.

Yet, Aurora looked proud as she released my hand and nodded with a smile. "You did very well."

"Are you planning on staying long?" My question slipped out, but Aurora seemed to understand me more than most. She had never seemed offended or read into any tone I had used with her. Others were constantly irritated and annoyed when I was short with them, but not her.

"I am. I will be here for as long as Natalie will have me." She smiled, looking back to the castle. "I never thought I would see her again, but I am blessed that I can be here now."

I hummed in acknowledgment, but I had no experience of a loving family and no way to relate to her.

"I would like for you to consider being my pledge for one of the seats on the council.' Her eyes widened, but she smiled softly as I held her gaze.

Until the war, I had been the only council member who stayed in the castle, and that was because of my position as the Royal Advisor. Once I was relieved of that duty and Natalie took over, I needed to know that there would be trustworthy council members in the castle walls at all times.

Natalie wasn't necessarily on the council but ruled over it as the queen. Besides her, there was no one else I would trust.

My suspicions of Aurora's involvement in what I saw in the mountains had dissipated over time. The longer I sat with the idea, the more I felt there were other suspects to look into.

Like Rona.

A witch that strong who had already admitted to draining her own mother for power could not be trusted. But there was also the possibility that someone survived from the other side of the war and was growing stronger, plotting their revenge.

It had been so long since I had been blessed with a vision that I was getting frustrated, not knowing which direction to start with. The idea that I was wasting time on Rona made me uneasy. It was a risk.

But I had to deal with the devil I knew over the devil in hiding.

"I would be interested in that, but you must do me a favor before I agree."