

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 154

Forty-Seven: Joselin

Joselin P.O.V.

It was clear that Tobias didn't believe me when I told him I wanted to get some fresh air and walk to the castle for dinner instead of teleporting. It was the pack dinner, and most of the pack ate together at the castle.

Tobias watched me the entire time I was getting ready, and his mouth curved down further when I wobbled in my heels and switched to flats.

Heels were part of my daily attire, and being unable to walk in them was a huge red flag. But I shrugged it off and said that flats would be more comfortable if we were walking that far.

It didn't escape my notice that he held me close to his side instead of holding my hand as we walked through the city. His grip on me was so firm as if to hold me up, but the soft swipe of his thumb over the thin black fabric on my hip was soft and sweet.

My eyes traveled over all the people walking around us with smiles, excited to attend the pack dinner. There were several paces between each family, individual, and couple, and I was grateful for the breathing room.

Even though I was hit with another wave of Rona's curse, exhausting me and making me feel sick, the sight was magical. The pack was happy and joyous as they walked through the streets under the pink glow of the sunset to the castle entryway.

The cool evening air was, in fact, refreshing, and it felt easier to breathe as we moved slowly among the masses. Most people were rushing, but a select few, like Tobias and myself, were enjoying the sunset and strolling down the street.

My eyes felt heavy, and my stomach was so uneasy that even though I wasn't hungry, the butterflies in there made it feel empty.

I entered the castle every day. I lived there since I was eleven. But something about the lighting as the descending sun hit the castle and the excitement around me made it feel brand new. Maybe it was because it was a brand new experience now that I had moved out and was walking through the courtyard with my mate by my side.

Once seated inside, Cyrus came rushing over, joining Tobias and me at the head table. I watched as my mate's lip curled in irritation as he placed a possessive hand on my thigh. His dissatisfaction with the spell caster was evident, and I reached under the table and tapped the top of my mate's hand.

Cyrus should be bumped into mine from the fast movement, but he looked nervous, anxious even. He crouched between myself and Natalie's empty seat. The crowd was loud, but even then, I knew those close to us could hear the lanky man's voice if they wanted to.

"Listen, I know I said I'm on board," He leaned in to whisper by my ear. "But

I am starting to freak out."

I took a deep breath, trying to calm myself as I let my head fall against the high back of the seat. They were nothing compared to the throne-like chairs Killian and Natalie would sit in, but they were extravagant enough. He didn't know how badly I needed to get dirt on Rona. Even if she had cursed me, as long as Cyrus could help me get proof of her treason, she could be executed, and the curse would die with her.

My cheeks puffed out as I released my breath, my head feeling heavy as I tried to lift it. "Don't back out now. We all have a job to do."

My reminder only made him look more defeated and guilty than before. I hoped he would agree to complete his end of this before I had to threaten him with his blood. Once I took that step, all trust would be broken.

"I know that and want to help, but there had to be another way to go about it." He placed his hand on my forearm, and Tobias's burning gaze snapped to it as if he were trying to set it on fire. He might have, too, if I didn't squeeze his hand tighter over my thigh.

"Cyrus, the decision was made not by just me. The King agrees. If you have a complaint about our decision, you can schedule a time to discuss it with him." I knew it was cheap to blame Killian, and while everything I said was true, I should have just dealt with it myself instead of pawning Cyrus and his issues onto Killian's already full plate.

Killian had enough on his mind, but using him as my scapegoat when I felt like shit was so easy. As my best friend, it was his job. I did the same for him when he needed me to. It was part of the give and take of our relationship.

I can't tell you how many petty squabbles he sent my way, knowing that most people were too bothered by my existence or scared of me to follow through and seek me out.

"Joselin, can you please try to understand? I really like this girl, and if I do this, it could hurt her and my chance with her." His voice was so soft that I barely heard him.

My molars clenched as I opened my eyes and glared at him.

Blanche.

That annoying fucking pixie was derailing our plans and possibly costing multiple people their lives. If I died after marking Tobias, I was sure he would die too. Cora was probably already on the chopping block, and who knew what would happen after she had gathered our combined power?

I already held the power of four witches, Rona had at least three if she had been the one in the mountains, and I had no idea how many Cora had.

"Your duty to your kingdom should always come before all else." I snapped. My body protested as I rose to my feet upon hearing Natalie and Killian's introduction. It didn't happen every night, but at pack dinners, they were announced as it was considered a formal affair.

Everyone was dressed up for it, and it was loud but not as rowdy as most nights.

Cyrus moved back behind the chairs to stand beside an unhappy Tobias, and I took a moment to admire my mate. My man looked good in his suit. It had to have been tailored to his specifications because there was no way a suit that size would be found on any shelf. His broad shoulders alone would have been an issue.

Adding in his muscular back and chest, there was no way he could find clothes off the rack.

I was so happy with him and hated waiting to be with him. Was it fair for me to ask Cyrus to put aside his infatuated with Blanche? Yes. Yes, it was.

The longer we stood, the more uneasy I felt. My head was light, and it took everything in me not to let it bob around like a balloon. The chandeliers were too bright, and my eyelids dropped slightly from the oncoming headache.

Killian spared me a concerned glance as he pushed Natalie's seat in for her, but I refused to acknowledge it. Instead, I greeted them with a dip of my chin before quickly taking my seat once Killian had done the same.

Within seconds the food was arriving. Platters covered the tables, and the pack sat patiently while waiting for the head table to be served. Killian and Natalie took their first bite, and the rest of the pack dug into the buffetstyle layout.

The baked potatoes and chicken looked divine, but the empty feeling in my stomach made the idea of any food entering it unappealing.

My mouth watered, but not from the aroma of the lemon-pepper chicken. It was the kind that told me if I swallowed the spit, it would only make my stomach worse.

Still, I tightened my hold on the fork and forced my throat to listen, taking down the excess liquid before shoveling a bite of potatoes into my mouth to distract myself.

It dried on my tongue, turning to dust and making me even queasier than before. My tongue smacked against the roof of my mouth as I tasted the gritty texture.

Tobias next to me had already finished his potatoes by the time I decided to take a fake bite, pushing some of what was in my mouth back on the empty fork. When I pulled it out, I glanced down at it and quickly shoved the bite back into the pile on my plate before anyone saw it.

But I did.

Mashed white potatoes graced the metal tongs of the fork. They looked watered down from mixing with my saliva but otherwise seemed completely normal.

"Everything okay?" Natalie asked me softly, gazing at the pile of mush on my plate. My lack of discretion would have been embarrassing if I hadn't been so concerned.

"Just peachy." I offered her a forced smile before dropping it and realizing I didn't need to be fake with her. She had proven to be stubborn, and she wouldn't believe me anyway.

"Have something against potatoes?" Her fork was half full, and as she took the bite, it looked so poised and dainty, the picture-perfect image of a true queen while I had just spat my food back out like an infant.

"When they're not in liquid form and knocking me on my ass... Yeah, I do." She laughed, but I was aware of her watching me as I speared a green bean and lifted it to my mouth.

Don't be gross. Please don't be gross.

The vegetable crunched between my teeth, shooting juice onto my tongue and making me relax as the buttery flavor of the green beans reached my taste buds.

This I could live with.

There were only so many green beans before I had to either turn to the chicken, which had no appeal to me or try the gritty mashed potatoes again. By the time I decided to go for the piece of meat on my plate, the hall had started clearing, and I placed my glass of water between myself and Tobias, hoping to use it to hide the food on my plate as I stood.

But he noticed. He always did. He noticed everything about me all the time.

He shook his head as we made our way toward the exit. Natalie and Killian were long gone, eager to get back to their room now that they had refueled for their thousandth round of baby-making.

The walls were warping around me, and I gripped the arm next to me tightly. A hand was placed on my back, the heat burning through the skin of my dress and centering me.

"Ow," Cyrus whined, pulling at his arm to escape me. I leaned away from Tobias, my glare set on the spell caster in my grip as I hissed lowly at him. I knew I had his attention with the way his eyes widened at the urgency in my voice.

"You need to use your in. We... I need you to find out what Rona is up to."