

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 155

Forty-Eight: Joselin

Joselin's P.O.V.

My sports bra and leggings were typically my go-to workout clothes, but with Tobias being sent out to assist with border patrol, it felt wrong to work out with so much skin showing. Before, it was a tactic to get his attention. I wanted his eyes on me and hands on me.

Without him here, it almost felt dirty being so exposed.

Instead, I pulled on my usual clothes and grabbed one of his t-shirts, tying a knot in the side to keep it covering my stomach but out of the way while I worked out. It felt so intimate, and it made me fucking proud.

I wore his mark on my neck, but wearing his shirt around all the other warriors was empowering. I adored the feeling of openly showing that he was mine and that he had claimed me.

After waking up this morning stiff and drained of the energy I had yet to use, I made it my goal to stay fit. I hoped to keep my body strong enough to fight off the curse for as long as possible. I didn't need my magic and my body breaking down on me before Rona returned.

Nothing felt different about my physical ability beyond the lightheadedness and stiffness. I could still push, pull, press, and curl my normal weight, but I had to reduce my reps to take breaks sooner than I usually liked to.

If I didn't, I felt like the lights would turn off in my head, and I would go down. Passing out twice in one week would not have been a good look for me as the Royal Advisor and the Head of the council. I refused to do it. Mind over matter.

Rona could kiss my ass. I had debated talking to Tobias and getting his opinion on me gutting Rona without evidence or a trial. If I cut her down as soon as she stepped back into the city and was sent to live the rest of my life in the dungeon, would he forgive me and still love me? Would he support my choice, or would he demand that I not do it so that he can keep me to himself longer?

If the roles were reversed, I would tell him not to do it. I was aware of that. It was a stupid idea, but I was bloodthirsty.

I wanted her dead so that I could live. So my mind was playing the game of 'How many ways can I murder Rona, and how to get away with it?'

My eyes kept roaming across the gym, expecting to find Tobias training, even though I knew he was miles away at the border. He had volunteered to help out, getting bored without a fixed assignment. Being on call for the queen to leave the castle was bothering him. While before, he just stood outside the room that Natalie was in for hours at a time; he was still doing something. He still felt needed and helpful. Lately, he didn't.

I wanted him to be happy and to see that sinful smile across his lips.

At one point, between reps, I stood up to stretch and found myself looking out into the training field for his large Lycan. I was desperate to catch even the tiniest glimpse of him as he sparred, but I needed to get used to him being away and busy again like he was before we mated. At least now I knew he would come home to me at night.

Was this how he felt when he had downtime and I was busy? Did he ever look for me out in the crowd?

I was addicted to the man.

"You haven't been yourself." The soft but accusatory voice said from behind me as I remained bent over, hands on the ground and stretching my hamstrings. They were tight from the weights, and I wanted to loosen them before running.

She wasn't wrong, though. I hadn't been myself. My mind was jumbled, my magic felt like it was failing, and my body threatened to quit.

Natalie's brown hair cascaded over her shoulder as she bent down and sat on the mat beside me. She wasn't dressed to work out, and it disappointed me as I missed training with her. Not that I would admit that.

Since she had taken up training her magic, she had cut back on her physical training...unless her activity with Killian counted. If so, she was way ahead of the game.

Her pale green eyes made me feel like a bug under a microscope. For a moment, I debated covering my body with my hands under her stare, like the shirt I wore wasn't enough of a barrier from her calculating gaze.

"Don't worry. As soon as Tobias returns, I'll strip off my extra clothes, jump him, and everything will return to normal." I smirked, sending her a wink. It had been meant to lighten the mood, but that didn't make my statement any less true.

She stretched her legs out in front of her, her palms resting on the ground as she leaned back and tilted her head to the side. Her jeans and light pink blouse screamed business casual, so it was clearly not her plan to come to the gym to work out.

"Funny. Just like your potato joke last night." Natalie crossed her ankles, and I spread my legs, moving to hold my chest against one knee, keeping my back as straight as possible.

Black spots danced in my vision from hanging upside down for so long, and I stood up slowly, not bothering to stretch the other side. My arms swung at my sides for a minute before I crossed one over my chest and held it with my other arm.

"I've always been funny. You've just been too distracted by my good looks to pay attention to it." I adjusted my feet, hoping she didn't notice the slight wobble as I regained my balance. I glanced up at the treadmills. Maybe I should call it a day and come back tomorrow.

"Right, that's it!" Natalie pursed her lips before she clicked her tongue in a feigned moment of understanding. She took a deep breath, and I licked my lips, nervously anticipating her reason for stopping by. "When you finish your workout, can you come by my study? I want to talk to you."

I nodded, my forced smile falling. "We can just go now. I was finishing up anyway."

Natalie looked past me to the empty treadmills with a look of disbelief before getting up. We had worked out together long enough for her to know how strongly I believed in a cardio cool down on weight training days. Even walking would help break up the lactic acid in my muscles to prevent excessive muscle fatigue or soreness the next day.

Even worse would be when my calf would cramp while I was trying to sleep. Those were hell.

I dipped my head in respect as she stood and waited for her to walk ahead of me. Thomas was meandering nearby, dressed in casual wear, but I knew he took his job just as seriously as Tobias did. Even though they had been released from their full-time protection detail, at least one was always close and ready to take a bullet for their queen.

He narrowed his eyes at me in a concerned gaze as he scanned me over when I walked past him. His body was tense and coiled like he was ready to strike.

"What?" I snapped, but he didn't react to my tone. He never did. He was always calm and collected.

"You feel different. Your power... I don't like it." He walked closely behind me and Natalie as we made our way to her study. She opened the door and turned with a crinkle between her eyebrows when she saw Thomas trying to enter behind me instead of waiting in the hall and minding his business.

"I am not a threat to her!" I snapped, spinning around and pinning him with my glare...possibly my smell, too, from sweating so much in the gym. "But if you don't back off, I will be a threat to you!"

Natalie moves between us, grabbing the door and smiling at Thomas, "Thank you, Thomas. We will be fine. I promise. I will call for you if you are needed."

He seemed reluctant at first but eventually turned and placed his back against the opposite wall, giving him a clear path if he needed to burst through the door at a moment's notice.

As soon as the door shut between us, I felt my shoulders drop and made my way over to the couch. Slumping down into the seat, I closed my eyes as she sat beside me.

"What's going on, Joselin?" Talking to her seemed easier than telling Tobias that I had someone actively trying to kill me instead of the empty threats I usually got, and telling Killian wouldn't be an easy conversation because he had said that he was counting on me to handle this. They both already knew something was happening, but they didn't know how serious it was.

"It was the hair she found. I think she's using it to come after me." I rubbed my temples with one hand, holding it there longer than needed, enjoying the shade over my eyes from my palm.

"What have you been feeling?" She asked, her hand reaching out to touch my arm. I knew she could feel the difference in me, just as it seemed everyone had. My magic wasn't listening to me, and I felt like I was losing control of it as it slowly depleted.

"Lightheaded, sick, and like my magic is no longer a part of me. I feel like it is being tampered with." I crossed my legs, taking my hand away from my face as I turned to look at her. "I think Rona might be draining my magic like she did to her mother. I think she was working on Cora but turned to me when she realized I had broken into her house."

Natalie's eyes widened. "You think she is draining two council members and behind the threat to Cyrus? Joselin! We can put her on trial and keep her magic suppressed with a shot until the trial is over."

The excitement in her tone had me feeling like a complete disappointment because I had failed. I had yet to find any evidence. It would be pointless and would only piss Rona off more. Once she was cleared, she would come back with a vengeance.

"We have no proof. This is nothing but speculation."

Her fingers tapped against the back of the couch as she stared across the room to the far wall, lost in thought. "There has to be proof. We can start searching now with her room here, and once she gets back, we can send a team to go through her house."

"I checked her room here already. Nothing was there, but maybe someone will see something I missed." I was sure if we brought in any of the other council members, they would find or plant something on her. If there wasn't a concern about her controlling one of them, I would have gotten them on board a long time ago.

"We can get to the bottom of this. Thank you for telling me." She said, her eyes dulling as someone contacted her through the pack link.

It was a pleasant break in our conversation, a moment for me to relax my tense shoulders and take a moment to breathe.

"I almost wish we could dissolve the council and just have you as Killian's Royal Advisor." She muttered, and I felt my chest lighten with happiness that she kept me around even in the hypothetical situation.

"Please, I hate all the petty squabbles and complaints brought to us as much as Killian does. I'm pretty sure if one more Alpha cries to either of us that someone pulled on their tail, one of us will bite it off myself." I felt my anger rising and took a deep breath to calm myself.

The door slammed open, smashing into the wall behind it as Killian burst into the room. Thomas scrambled behind him to grab the handle and yank it back closed for privacy once the furious Killian was inside.

I hadn't seen him like this in a long time. For him to get this angry meant that I had fucked up, big time.

"You think a member of my council is draining your magic, and you didn't think to tell me?"