

The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 167

Sixty: Tobias

Tobias's P.O.V.

She had been hunched over the table for hours, staring at a smaller map covered in pins from the list of locations, trying to find a connection.

Everyone who had been helping had long since gone to bed, deciding it would be safe to take a break for the night and come back with fresh eyes tomorrow.

Joselin didn't.

So we sat together, looking for a pattern or reason for why Cora was visiting all these places. Her motive was hidden in there somewhere. We just had to find it, and the puzzle would drive Joselin mad if she didn't get some sleep.

"Please get some rest," I whispered, taking her hand in mine and pulling on it gently to get her to face me. She glanced my way before turning back to the list of locations.

Joselin still had dark circles under her eyes, and I knew she was running out of energy. My worry for her only increased when I saw her find that hair in Rona's room. She had slipped it into her pocket and went on her way.

After seeing that, I knew Rona wasn't cursing her as we thought. But she still felt like shit, and it was obvious. Her movements were slower, and her appetite was still suppressed.

Her face would flush every now and then, and I could hear her swallow hard when a bout of nausea would hit her. Something was wrong, and I could only support her until she was ready to open up to me about it. With the stress of Cora running free, there was no way she would be honest with me right now if I asked her.

She would probably tell me it was nothing to worry about and go on pretending that she was okay. But she wasn't okay, and I watched her like a hawk.

"There has to be a reason," She muttered, her fingers lacing into her hair as she rested her elbows on the table. "I feel like it is right in front of me, and I just can't see it."

"Even if it is only one hour, let's get some sleep, and we can come back to it with fresh eyes." My insistence went in one ear and right back out the other. She was either intentionally ignoring me or was so lost in thought that she really didn't hear me when I spoke.

The food I had asked to be brought to her tower sat untouched, but she drank the glass of water. It was a small win and a lot of worry.

"Josie," I said, urging her again to look at me, but her hand was limp in my hold. My frustration grew, and I was ready to snap at her because I was worried and wanted to be heard. I wanted to know she was okay, but she didn't deserve me snapping at her. She was clearly burnt out, didn't feel good, and was stressed.

Yet, I couldn't help myself as I stood, my chair sliding back loudly before I slid my arms behind her knees and back. Joselin struggled as I carried her away from the table, but she was no match for me.

As much as I wanted to make her happy, her well-being also came first. I was doing this for her own good.

"Let me go. I was on to something!" Joselin shouted, her body twisting to break out of my hold.

"You stubborn woman! We both know you have no idea what the connection is between those locations. Right now, no one does besides Cora. You cannot fight her without being well-rested, so we might as well return to this once you are stronger." I brought her to the bathroom, setting her on the counter with my body between her legs, keeping her in place as I leaned over and grabbed a washcloth from beneath the sink.

She watched me closely as I got it wet and wiped her face slowly and carefully. The fabric slid across her smooth skin, and her breath fanned my face as she sighed when I moved it down her neck and across her chest.

"Baby, I really don't have the energy to fuck tonight," She whispered, and while I had no intentions of having sex tonight, the way the name 'baby' rolled off her tongue sent a shot of pleasure right through me.

"I know, sweetheart. I don't want to tonight, either. I just want to take care of you." Her hands rested on my hips, gripping my shirt as her lips parted as though she wanted to say something, but she snapped them shut.

My eyes narrowed. "What's going through that pretty little head of yours?"

"Nothing." She turned her head to look away from me. I wiped the cloth over her collarbone once more before letting it fall on the counter and grabbed her chin to turn her to face me.

"You're lying to me. When did you start doing that?" My eyes were locked on her lips, and my thumb moved up from her chin to run along her plump bottom lip. It moved with me as I pulled it down slightly, and I leaned in and stole a light peck before pulling back to look into her eyes.

Her long lashes fluttered as she opened them slowly as if dazed from my kiss. Goddess, that kind of reaction from such a small touch made me feel like a fucking king.

"Nothing has changed," Joselin replied, her fingers pinching and gently pulling at my shirt as she stared down at my chest. Her shoulders were hunched forward, and she leaned into me with her cheek on my chest. "I'm just exhausted. We should leave when this is over and go on a vacation. It could be just the two of us. No stress, no distractions."

I leaned down, pressing my lips to her head as I spoke into her hair. "I had been thinking the same thing."

Her smell was intoxicating, and something about it drew me in more than usual, making me want to wrap myself around her and never let her go. After a few more deep breaths, I turned to rest my cheek where my lips had been.

"Where would you want to go?" She asked, excitement in her tone as her arms wrapped around me.

"I would go anywhere with you."

Joselin is silent for a long moment before turning her head and kissing my chest. I leaned back to look down at her. She had been slowly blocking me in our mate bond over the past few days, keeping me at a distance to prevent me from being able to feel her.

As of an hour ago, she had built a wall between us so tall that I couldn't reach her at all. It wasn't just her emotions she cut off. She had silenced me. If I wanted to talk to her, I had to do it out loud.

I had no problem with that in private, but I still wasn't a big fan of that when we were in public.

"Please tell me what's going on in your head. Why did you shut me out?" I felt sick with the distance between us, but I knew she was feeling even worse.

Her eyes widened, and I watched the realization drop over her face that he had shut me out. Joselin shook her head before quickly apologizing as the wall crumbled slowly. "I didn't mean to do that! There's just so much going on that

She let out a sigh, looking terrified and guilty. So very guilty.

My confidence in us was strong, and I was sure we could make it through anything, but seeing how she looked at me right then made my heart clench. We could survive anything, but that didn't mean it wasn't going to hurt.

Whatever she needed to tell me, I could see on her face that it would knock me off my feet.

"Tobias, please just trust me." Using my name made her plea for understanding and patience sound like an ominous threat.

I closed my eyes, unable to look at the pain on her face any longer if I was going to push aside my doubts and trust her. "I need you to tell me that we are okay. That whatever is going on has nothing to do with our relationship, at

My lips pressed together as I wished I could bite back the words. I did trust her, but I was also scared of losing her. Admitting my fears made me sound weak, and I hated feeling that way.

"No! We are okay, I promise! We are more than okay!" Joselin's hands were in a vice grip on my shirt, and I let her pull me into her closer. Her thighs were on either side of my body as she sat on the bathroom counter still, her back straight as she lifted her chin to look at me.

"You'll tell me if you're ever unhappy?"

That question seemed to break her, and water filled her eyes. "Of course! I am so happy with you, Tobias. You are a dream come true for me. It really is just me. I don't feel well, but there is nothing I can do about it until this is over. I'll deal with it then."

My thumbs slid over her cheeks, wiping away the tears that slipped free." Then why do you look so scared? Why are you crying? There are medicines that can help with whatever it is. If it's not a curse, we can go back to the healers, and they can check if they see anything now that they missed before."

When her lips parted, I stared at them, desperate for words to come out. I wanted her to share with me and trust that she could confide in me.

"It's nothing that we need to worry about right now. Let's face Cora, and then I will go back to the infirmary and let them run their tests." She pulled me by the grip she had on my shirt, pressing her lips to mine before pushing me back a step and hopping off the counter.

"I'm going to hold you to that," I threatened, knowing she would hear the underlying threat in my tone. Either she sought help, or I would throw her over my shoulder and take her back to the healers myself.

She didn't bother to turn to me when she spoke, but I followed right behind her as she walked away. "I think I know what it is anyway, and there is nothing we can do about it right now, so there is no point in dwelling on it when we need to focus on Cora."

"Oh, sweetheart. You should know by now that I am really good at multitasking." I chuckled, wrapping my arm around her waist and pulling her back against me. Her hand gripped my forearm tightly as she gasped, but it wasn't the excited sound I had expected. It was scared.

I released her immediately. "What did I do? Are you okay?"

Joselin forced a smile before turning and kissing me. "I'm fine, just inhaled weirdly from the movement. I will get dressed and join you in bed for an hour. Only an hour."

I pulled my clothes off and slid beneath the covers, used to sleeping naked at this point. Yet, my eyes stayed locked on the crack of the closet door, and my heart sped up at the sight of Joselin holding her hand over her stomach and taking a few deep breaths.

Holy shit