

# The Beast And The Blessed

Chapter 186

Ten: Charlie

Charlie's P.O.V.

I used to think that redheads had the shortest tempers. That was until I watched Paxton throw a fit when he thought his favorite pair of pants had blown away from where they had been hanging. He had a terrible habit of never putting his clothes away after they dried and would get angry when the wind took them.

It became a running joke. When it was time for Paxton to do his laundry, we always expected to find them strewn about the forest floor at some point. Sometimes, even with no wind or storms, Diego would take something and hide it just for the hell of it.

Paxton never learned his lesson. It was hilarious.

I had never stolen his clothes myself, nor had I hidden them before. That was all Diego, so Paxton didn't bother to accuse me when the men returned to camp, and he saw they were missing.

He had been searching the woods around the camp for over an hour before giving up, cursing and grumbling under his breath. It wasn't an attractive look, and if any of his countless women saw it, they would probably change their minds about him. But it was hilarious.

I was grateful that Damien walked off in Paxton's pants, ill-fitting as they may have been. After what I had done with Damien in them, I wouldn't have been able to meet Paxton's eyes while he wore them.

The next morning, it seemed that Paxton was still on the hunt as his loud cursing had woken me up.

"This is such bullshit!" He sounded put out, immediately bringing a smile to my face as I pulled my sleeping roll closer to my chin. Only it wasn't my sleeping roll. The blanket was thick and heavy, and I tried to keep things light since we traveled with so much.

I opened my eyes to see the unfamiliar brown fabric draped over my body and smiled even wider when Damien's scent hit me.

Had he brought me a blanket? How did I not hear him entering my tent, and where was he now?

The sweet gesture warmed my heart, and I clenched the blanket tightly in my fists as I held it to my chest. The sun had been up for a while based on how warm it was, and it had to have been the longest night's sleep I had had since living in the castle.

I enjoyed it for one more moment before getting dressed and tripping over myself to get out of my tent. My foot snagged the bottom of the blanket as I tumbled out of my tent. Arms wrapped around my waist, catching me before I could hit the ground.

"Easy there, girl," Neil said, spinning us around fluidly like a dance before letting me go and walking toward the fire. "Running a bit late today?"

I nodded, rushing to make myself some coffee and grab breakfast to head out. I had already lost so much time from sleeping in and wanted to see Damien. After what happened yesterday, I needed to know if his showing up here and what we did was his way of giving me a chance.

Maybe I had been too bold, I tended to do that, but no one had ever had a problem with it before. If they did, they didn't say anything. They couldn't. They had no right to address the actions of the princess. Only Killian had ever spoken against me. When he did, it was always so direct and almost cruel.

I looked forward to the day Killian found his mate and could stop being such an ass.

"Slept in, but I have to get going." My words were followed by my chugging the hot cup of caffeine, although I probably didn't need it with how much sleep I had gotten. I was running on pure adrenaline.

"Off to see our late-night trespasser?" Neil pulled out a deck of cards, bending and shuffling them faster than my enhanced eyesight could follow. Diego had rolled up his bedroll and sat a few feet down from him, straddling the log as he waited for Neil to deal.

"He is bold. I'll give you that. I sent Roman after him last night, and the guy still came back an hour later, walked right into our camp and to your tent." The smirk on Diego's face made me blush. They had known he had been in camp while they were gone yesterday. Not only could they smell him, but the stew I had been making had boiled over when Damien and I had walked away from the camp to part ways by the river, and they laughed at me for getting distracted. I was slightly disappointed that Damien didn't even stay to eat it, but I was too happy about what had happened between us to let it bother me.

At least, they did until Paxton noticed his favorite pants were missing.

"So he did," I mused with a small smile as I considered his visit and what it could mean. If anyone approached him last night, I was glad it was Roman. The man was the most level-headed and collected of the group.

Between him and Barley, it was a toss-up for which one would remain the most civil. Barley was the Papa Bear of the group, but Roman was the calm and civil protective brother who would support me to take on any challenge I set my heart on.

Neil dealt the cards between him and Diego.

"Make sure you thank him properly for the blanket when you see him. The man risked his life coming in here to keep you warm." Diego said, wagging his eyebrows at me.

I wrinkled my nose at him and hid my blush by turning around and grabbing some food.

"Please," Neil muttered, "The man didn't risk shit. Even if you had been standing and fully armed, he could have just stepped on you."

Diego let out a growl, and I heard a grunt as he launched himself onto Neil. Short jokes were the easiest way to work Diego up. He was like a little stick of dynamite. You only had a few seconds after lighting his fuze before he blew.

I turned back, ripping into a chunk of bread as I turned back to face them, finding the cards strewn on the ground and the two men wrestling behind the log.

"Where did the others go?" I asked and received a curt grunt of 'hunting' in response as Neil got Diego into a headlock. "Alright, you two have fun."

They didn't bother saying goodbye when I left, and I had rushed away so quickly that I didn't really give them a chance.

It was the closest I had ever gotten to Damien's den, and I slowed when I heard the distinct sound of wood being chopped. I was waiting for him to stop me, to tell me that I needed to turn around and leave. But he didn't.

As I broke the tree line, my breath caught in my chest. There was a beautiful cabin that, had it not been in the woods and made out of logs, rivaled the size of a small house. The strangest thing was that he had a large fenced-off garden flourishing with fruiting plants.

It was beautiful and not what I had been expecting from him, but it was exactly the kind of place I had dreamed of living in as a teenager. The small, quiet life in nature where I would grow my family and live in peace.

I had almost expected him to be one of the bears that preferred to live in a cave. Many of them lived that way, and I was pleasantly surprised that wasn't the case.

Damien's voice sent a chill down my spine, and I had to force my gaze from his incredible home to the man standing by the front corner of the house with an ax on his bare shoulder and his shorts hanging low on his hips.

"Charlotte."

My eyes closed as I let out a breath of relief at how happy he sounded. A small part of me had been expecting him to be angry that I had come here after he had made it clear that he didn't want me near his den.

"Damien," I whispered, forcing my eyes to stay on his face and not drop down to his chest, which was glistening with sweat. "I wanted to thank you for the blanket last night."

I hadn't brought it with me, and unless he asked for it back, I wouldn't return it. I liked having something that smelled like him and proved that he did care for me, no matter how resistant to the mate bond he was. [novelxo.com](#) fast update

"You're welcome," He said, looking uneasy before spinning around and moving back behind his home.

Stunned, I waited a few seconds, and when I heard him resume his wood chopping, I followed him. It sure was a sight to behold, and my thighs pressed together as I watched his muscles flex and move beneath his skin as he grabbed another piece of wood, placed it on the stump, and sliced his ax through it.

I didn't want to leave it at that, so I moved forward to help. Damien eyed me wearily, but then surprise covered his face as I picked up the already chopped sections of wood, carried them over to the open shed several paces away, and began stacking the wood with the rest.

There was a lot in there already, but I imagined he would add a lot more as he prepared for winter. I bit my lip and hid a laugh, and let the thought slip from my lips as I gathered the next armful of wood.

"Do you hibernate in the winter?" My smile broke free. I had intended it as a joke, but his cheeks and ears turned pink.

"No," Damien said, grabbing another log and placing it on the stump before mumbling, "I just sleep a lot."

My laugh broke free, and he paused with the ax over his head, staring at me as I covered my mouth.

"Well, what about you? Do you spin three times in your bed before settling down to sleep?" His offended tone made me laugh again as I stacked the wood in the shed.

"Of course, I'm a very restless sleeper."

He hummed, and when I turned, his head was tilted to the side as he stared at me with evident desire.

"If you keep looking at me like that, I'll assume you're thinking about what it would be like to have me tossing and turning in your bed all night, keeping you awake." My joke fell flat when he licked his lips and nodded.

"I was."

My hands shook when I approached him before reaching down for more wood. I would lose my mind if he continued to say things like that. The man could make me melt with two words. How was that even possible?

I wanted him to drop the ax, grab me, and take me inside to show me exactly what he wanted to do to me. Instead, he shook his head and went back to work. "What is your favorite place to have traveled?"

His question caught me off guard, and I choked out the immediate response, "Here."

"How long have you been traveling?" Damien eyed the wood by his feet before looking back up at me, and somehow his silent command to get back to work made me feel better. It made things feel more normal between us.

I was positive he just wanted me to be busy so he wouldn't have me just staring at him. From the red in Damien's cheeks and how unsure he sounded when he asked me questions, I could tell he was uncomfortable holding conversations, or maybe he just didn't know how to talk to me.

But his wanting to learn more about me made me so happy that I would cut down the whole forest if it meant he would continue talking to me.

"For a few years now. The men call us bounty hunters, but I prefer the term mercenaries. It just sounds better to me. My brother hated that I left home, but I needed to. Out here, he cant control me."