

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 37

In the oppressive shadows of their shared prison, Jeremy, Heather, Yua, Rob, and Sophia grappled with their unraveling sanity and dwindling hope. Time became elusive as they languished in their cold, damp cells, and their minds were haunted by eerie whispers and frightening thoughts lurking in the darkness.

Jeremy paced anxiously within the confined space of his cell, burdened by an escalating sense of unease. As the days blurred together in the dim, oppressive atmosphere, the putrid scent of decay assaulted his senses. His thoughts contorted with unnerving whispers and sinister musings. From the very beginning, the stench had gnawed at his sanity, relentlessly tormenting him as he withered in his cell. Their imprisonment remained an enigma, a cruel joke with no resolution. The sweetness of refuge soured as they plummeted into a chasm of despair.

Once meek and timid, Heather had become a beacon of strength since their respawn in the twisted magical realm. She persevered in her prayers, whispering of wondrous possibilities and weaving a tenuous tapestry of hope. However, Jeremy, his spirit shattered and faith abandoned, couldn't shake the nagging doubt that her unwavering conviction was an elaborate fantasy. He recognized the bitter truth in his heart. Hope was merely a fleeting illusion destined to dissolve into the void.

Jeremy's solitary glimmer of hope was a far-fetched one, Jason. However, he knew the asshat would never be their savior. As weeks passed, there was no sign of the supposed Champion. The harsh reality was that no rescue loomed on the horizon. With a heavy heart, Jeremy retreated to the darkest corner of his cell, resigning himself to the crushing inevitability of their forsaken fate.

Yua, isolated from the others due to the prison's sinister design, hadn't seen Heather for what felt like an eternity, perhaps even months. Trapped within her confines, she ached for the sweet release of freedom. However, the prison bars were imbued with strange magic, rendering her powers as Death's Assassin utterly impotent. She was even denied a glimpse of her cherished allies from her obscure vantage point. Each of them had been summoned from Earth, thrust into alien bodies, and forced into a deadly struggle against one another. Yet, Yua found comfort in her former enemies, as they had become her most treasured friends.

As Yua brooded in her cell, she couldn't help but wonder if the elusive Aurelia might come to their rescue. But the mysterious vampire had vanished, leaving no trace since their narrow escape from the knights. Amidst the darkness and despair, Yua's thirst for vengeance against their captors smoldered within her, threatening to ignite at any moment.

Sighing heavily, she remained vigilant, wary of the guards who sporadically appeared to taunt and ridicule them. At least their torment was limited to verbal barbs, unlike the harrowing screams of the Dungeon Folk that reverberated through the air.

Yua gleaned that the Dungeon Folk and escapees had been granted asylum within the vampires' territory. Yet, they were treated as mere commodities—livestock, farmed for their blood. Some, she deduced, were returned, for occasionally, she bore witness to the same desperate soul dragged past her cell, kicking and screaming in terror. As Yua contemplated the horrors inflicted upon her and her newfound friends from Earth, her craving for retribution against these merciless beings only intensified.

As for Rob, he lay listlessly on the frigid floor of his cell, eyes glued to the unyielding stone ceiling above. Once vibrant and lively, his thoughts now resembled a barren wasteland, and his sanity had splintered like fragile glass. The soft whispers of Heather's promises of liberation and a brighter future drifted to his ears occasionally. Still, they failed to rekindle the dying embers of hope within him. Despite the imposing visage of an orc, Rob's heart ached like that of a homesick teenager, longing for the warmth and comfort he once knew.

In stark contrast, Sophia clung tenaciously to a semblance of defiance. She had secretly procured a jagged bone fragment repurposed from the pitiful remnants of her meager meals. With unwavering determination, she toiled away, painstakingly sharpening her makeshift weapon against the rough corner of her cell. This laborious task was a distraction from the chaos that lurked beneath her stoic exterior – a maelstrom of dark thoughts and unpredictable outbursts of tears, ever threatening to engulf her completely.

Bound together by their dire situation, Heather trudged through the terrifying ordeal, desperately clinging to the scant vestiges of hope. She bore the guards' cruel jibes, the tormented cries of the Dungeon Folk, and the unsettling realization that they were merely playthings to their captors. Confronted with such atrocious nightmares, she leaned on the relationships they had built, seeking solace and resilience in their company. Despite the deafening silence of her unanswered prayers, Heather offered words of comfort and promises to her companions, even as the crushing weight of knowing that her goddess had forsaken them threatened to overwhelm her fragile mind.



Jason slunk through the oppressive shadows of the vampires' territory, yearning to escape the horrible place. Still, the nagging goddess in his mind refused to let him go. Instead, he was forced to shoulder the burdens as the Crone's Champion, tasked with amassing power and rescuing the five incompetent bastards who had been captured. To make matters worse, the goddess wanted him to save that sexy-ass vampire obsessed with the goo bitch that had once killed him. He loathed being at the mercy of the Crone's whims and vengeful desires against those who had betrayed her for another god, reducing her once-devoted followers to mere thralls.

Every time he ventured near the vampires' den, the system would fail, disrupting his abilities and muting the Crone's voice. He found the brief silence from the goddess's incessant whispers to be a rare relief from her constant nagging. Sometimes he'd slip near their crypt just to bask in the welcomed silence.

Jason knew he wasn't strong enough to take on the vampire coven alone. Lord Demidicus, the ancient vampire draped in a black cowl, radiated such overwhelming power that even his presence

sent shivers down Jason's spine. So, he journeyed to the southern border of the vampires' domain to hone his magic under the Crone's ever-present whispers. Although he couldn't save the others yet, he remained steadfast in his belief that he would someday have the strength to do so.



Reluctantly, Chief Hensley led a raiding party to the east, towards a community of dryads and pixies living in the forest. The vampires drained most of the nearby lands of all life, leaving them with few other targets. He had no choice but to do Lord Demidicus's bidding, raiding innocent beings to bring back for the vampire's pleasure or risk the safety of his own people. It was a bitter elixir to swallow for the Chief, but he knew better than to challenge the ancient vampire again. The last time he did so, the vampires had taken a large group of their children and a few adults as punishment.

The forest quivered with the approaching footsteps of the Dungeon Folk. Dryads and pixies cowered in their groves and trees, sensing the coming danger. A horde of goblins, orcs, trolls, humans, and other grotesque creatures descended upon them, their weapons glinting in the dim light. The battle was nothing short of a massacre. The defenseless pixies and dryads were completely outmatched and outnumbered. The Dungeon Folk showed no mercy, hacking, and slashing through the helpless creatures. The dryads tried to fight back with their nature magic, but it was useless. Their spells were weak against the overwhelming force of the Dungeon Folk. The pixies, who could barely lift a needle, were no match.

The battle raged on, the air filled with screams and pleas for mercy. But the Dungeon Folk didn't stop. They continued to slaughter the dryads, their blood staining the ground a sickening shade of green. By the end of the one-sided battle, the Dungeon Folk had decimated the entire community of dryads. The few survivors were traumatized, their trees burned, and their loved ones lost. The Dungeon Folk silently wept in their victory.

Standing amidst the pixies' tormented cries and heart-wrenching pleas, Hensley couldn't help but feel a deep sense of regret and disgust. The dryads were nothing but worthless to the vampires, confined to their trees. However, the pixies were another matter entirely. Despite their diminutive stature and small blood volume, their precious crimson liquid was overflowing with mana, making it an irresistible delicacy to the vampire race. The realization made Hensley's stomach churn with revulsion and self-loathing, but he knew there was no other option.

He watched in grim silence as his people imprisoned the pixies, their tiny cries tearing at his heart. But despite the regret and agony, the old warg knew there was no alternative. The journey back was long and quiet, except for their captives' pitiful cries and sobs. The Chieftain couldn't help but regret ever accepting the Crone's deal, which had caused so much suffering for his people.



Three months had passed since his Mummy sacrificed herself to protect everyone from the sinister Kingdom of Slaethia. Only for her beloved charges to become playthings for the wicked nocturnal predators. Devoid of a heartbeat, Wartie had found an unexpected advantage in evading the vampires' grasp. Fortuitously, the vampires struggled to detect him as they could the living,

enabling his escape to the frostbitten mountains up north. Within the icy crags, he began to hone his newly acquired magic—bestowed upon him as both a lich and, more significantly, as the Crone’s grandchild.

Wartie drew a deep, unnecessary breath, finding comfort in the familiar ritual. His lifeless green eyes opened, surveying the growing army of reanimated beings he had summoned from their eternal slumber. Though they were not yet an unstoppable force, he knew that in time, they would become a relentless and unstoppable horde. He vowed to one day become powerful enough to rescue the Dungeon Folk from the vampires’ clutches and, above all, to destroy the Kingdom of Slaethia for taking his beloved Mummy from him.



As he slinked through the coven’s chambers, Vorigan couldn’t help but feel a perverse envy at the thought of Duke Lysander’s upcoming wedding night. Oh, to be in the Duke’s shoes and feel the exquisite agony of castration! Vorigan couldn’t help but feel a twinge of jealousy towards the Duke, not for marrying Aurelia, but for the fate that awaited him on his wedding night. He longed for someone to subject him to the same cruel experience, to feel the intense pleasure of pain and humiliation.

The other vampires may have dismissed him as useless. Nevertheless, Vorigan knew the depths of his own depravity and relished in it. But alas, no one cared enough to indulge his twisted desires. Well, perhaps Hikari, but that was more out of disgust. Instead, he turned his attention to Lady Aurelia, the object of his sick infatuation. He knew the upcoming marriage wasn’t what she wanted, and to make matters complicated, he felt indebted to her.