

69: Tongues

Foxkin on a royal's plate... Samuel is a butcher... A shut-off, starving city... Beatrice replayed in her mind everything she learned in the last couple of hours. *A city constantly on the verge of starvation. To the point that they have to limit their population while distracting them with non-stop, cheap thrills...*

As Beatrice came to terms with what she just learned, her feet got a bit wobbly. Light-headed and on the verge of throwing up, it took all her effort just to stand upright.

Where do they get their supplies from? Beatrice wondered. I thought from some outside farms. It has to be! There would be enough bodies to feed an entire city! They'd literally run out of people!

"I'm a vegetarian and I will not have any of you eat any meat in front of me!" Beatrice recalled her bodyguard's words. The succubus looked at her bodyguard, realizing that even then, despite her often-belittling attitude, she was looking out for their best interest.

Now that Beatrice thought about it, it did seem strange that there would even be any vegetarians in this medieval-like fantasy world, though Beatrice was not particularly educated on the subject. In her past life, she could not imagine depriving herself of the countless cuisines involving seafood, beef, and the like.

What was it that Samuel said? Beatrice tried to recall. No! It was the girl!

"I've just finished cutting some delicious calves", Jenny's cheerful expression flashed in Beatrice's mind. She thought that the butcher's daughter was talking about some young bovine. Beatrice's stomach churned when she realized what Samuel actually meant.

She said 'delicious'! They're both... Beatrice looked at the father with disgust, just before he disappeared into the bowels of his storage, carrying another—what was now apparent—bodybag.

Beatrice looked at the carriage—filled with bags—and finally noticed that many of the bags were damp. The blood of the fallen still leaked from some of the recently deceased, collecting into a dark-red puddle under the carriage. The morbid realization that one of her murder victims would eventually be served on a plate with some sauce, was revolting. Beatrice kept looking at the bags, wondering which one had the foxkin that was so prized by Bernard's group, or if perhaps that corpse had already been strung up on some meat hook by Samuel.

"Wait," Olivia was also struggling to catch up to reality. Beatrice looked at the ninja girl, whose face lost all color from disgust. "You mean... The bodies that we left behind... They're in those bags? Carried in to be—"

"You left those bodies?" Bernard asked Olivia.

Olivia realized she said too much even before the silent wolfkin drew their swords.

"Heh, nice going, dumbass," Ember chuckled and crossed her arms. "You do remember that you're not supposed to confess to murder to the city officials, right? What kind of a murderer-for-hire were you?"

"These are city officials?" Olivia asked with contempt.

Beatrice understood the ninja's scornful disbelief very well. The six beastkin looked more like some thugs for hire—like Olivia—or outright members of some more sinister criminal organization. Combined with the fact that they were literally hauling dead bodies for cannibalistic purposes, it did not make them seem like candidates for representatives of the people.

Then again, considering exactly what impression the powder-snorting king left on Beatrice, she concluded that perhaps it made perfect sense, that these would be the types that the rulers would employ to oversee their city.

The succubus looked up at the wall, where the guards patrolled. It was impossible that they did not know. Even if this section was left to a handful of trusted individuals, there was still a chain of command that had to be involved. There was no way this was some small-time operation.

"Lucky for you, it's below Bernard's paygrade to deal with insignificant lowlifes such as yourself," Ember said to Olivia with an ever-demeaning smile. "Right, Bernard?"

"I suppose she'll avoid getting her butt spanked tonight," Bernard said with a laugh, and the wolfkin sheathed their swords. "Are you sure it's okay for these two to know about this? Can they keep their mouths shut? There's also another one inside the house, and I hadn't decided what to do with that one."

"She's also a part of our group," Ember said. "I know how much you like parting tongues from their owners' mouths, but there's no need for that this time."

Beatrice looked at the silent wolfkin and understood that their silence was not fully voluntary. She then looked at the hyenas, neither of whom could still sit or stand in one place for more than five seconds. She saw that there was not even a hint of a tongue wagging in their half-open, saliva drooling jaws.

It also became increasingly apparent to Beatrice that Ember was by no means below Bernard, and most likely not even on the same standing as him.

Just what the hell is she? The succubus asked herself and wondered how this girl—one who seemed to be knowledgeable in many areas that were beyond the knowledge of the commoners—ended up in a sex cult, following the orders of some deranged lunatic, and eventually as a bodyguard for a succubus.