

BLAKE 3 PUDDING

CHAPTER 14

THE POWER

As dawn crept closer, the horizon blushed with the soft glow of the rising sun over Völuspá. Its pink and blue hues contrasted with the matching auroras in the darkness of space, illuminating the sky as the sun edged around the crest of the massive gas giant. Amidst the dim light, a deafening, mighty roar erupted from the towering chimera, sending shockwaves through the battlefield before the castle's portcullis. Engaged in fierce combat, vampires faltered at the sound, their movements momentarily disrupted.

In response, I unleashed a mighty roar of my own—well, it was more of a yawn followed by an even mightier arm stretch behind my back. You know those arm stretches where you pull your arm across your chest, using your other arm to pull it tighter against your body for that extra stretch? Yeah, I did that, but behind my back. It turns out that even with these new bones, I'm still quite flexible. I can even put my legs behind my head without any issues...

I hope Aurelia appreciates that extra detail.

Why? We can always discard them like a pair of panties.

Well, yeah, but I like the idea of giving her the bone.

Oooo, that's a good, solid, hard point, but I'm still a fan of the tentacle.

...Yeah, me too. It wiggles.

Gazing at the chimera, my old nemesis, I rubbed my hands together, giddy with greed, contemplating gaining two more phylacteries. However, as my eyes roamed to where the two jewels should have been dangling, I saw— “Umm, did someone neuter him?” I asked, my shoulders slumping.

“What?” Von Von cocked her head at me as if I were insane. In fairness, I was.

“Never mind,” I grumbled. “Well, should we tap out the vampires?” I asked, glancing back at the approaching dawn. “They don't have much time left.”

Vonya sighed, “No, I'll take care of this.” She tilted her head, briefly staring up at the sky, before adding, “The last thing I want is to piss off that woman of yours.”

I froze, mid-reverse toe stretch, which might have looked a bit awkward. I was bent at the waist, the wrong way, but testing these new bones with a full routine of stretches before leaping into action seemed like a wise choice, right? Besides, I was curious about how these bones would bend and move, especially since I had absolutely no background in human anatomy. That said, having picked a ton of meat off bones, I like to think I have a decent grasp of humanoid bone structures.

But that’s all beside the point. My sudden halt in movement wasn’t due to my stretching curiosity; it was because my champion was, for lack of a better term, being a dumbass.

“Umm, you’re joking, right?” I asked, slowly righting myself up in a manner akin to a horror monster poised to pounce.

“I’m being serious—”

I didn’t give Von Von a chance to finish her sentence before I erupted into a fit of uncontrollable laughter, activating [PHANTASMAL SURGE] in the process. With a burst of speed, I shot out at the lion’s head, slamming into the side of its face with the force of a freight train hitting a stalled car. Only, it turned out I was more like the car in this scenario. The chimera’s face did react, albeit more like it received an insultingly light slap rather than a blow worthy of a slap fighting championship—a contest I had always wanted to try in my previous life, but, well, you know, the whole dying thing.

Defying my expectations of turning into a smear on the chimera’s brick-like face, I remained intact—a testament to the sturdiness of my new skeletal structure. However, I immediately collapsed to the ground following the collision. Oddly enough, the world around me started to look bizarre, as if I were peering through a funhouse mirror—everything was distorted and strange.

Umm, Nightmare? I think our face has been rearranged the wrong way on our skull.

Oh, shit, you’re right.

With a hook of my finger through my cheek, I felt my face peel away from my skull as I tugged it back into its proper alignment, only to look up into the furious face of the lion chimera. A moment’s urge to say something clever or absurd flashed through my mind, but there was no time for wit, just a nervous chuckle as the beast opened its gaping maw and unleashed a torrent of yellowish puke over me. The sizzling sound of the acidic vomit lingered even after the deluge had ceased, accompanied by the agonized screams of a few vampires caught in the corrosive downpour. I blinked in confusion a few times, even casting a glance at Von Von, who looked horrified. I wondered, was she worried about me, or concerned about what Aurelia might do to her if I were to die again?

I licked the yellow bile from my lips with my black tongue. “Not bad,” I commented, smacking my lips, oddly delighted by the taste.

As I sat up, I lifted my finger to my mouth for a second taste, and that’s when I noticed the snake tail of the chimera lowering its head towards my face. You might be asking if I have any sense of self-preservation, and no lie, not really. Thanks to my dungeon core, I’ve got unlimited respawns, though I suspect I’ll have to deal with random monster spawns as long as I hold onto it. But to me, that sounds more like an opportunity for fun than a downside. However, I doubt my enchanting vampiress will be thrilled about these random monsters appearing unexpectedly.

Now, about my apparent disregard for self-preservation, what can I say? My pain threshold is practically non-existent unless we’re talking about fire or holy magic—that stuff is the worst. But everything else? Well, let’s just say, don’t threaten me with a good time.

Regarding the snake head—or tail, rather—I tilted my head from side to side as I stared into its large yellow and green eyes, all the while savoring the last morsels of taste from the delicious bile. I licked each of my fingers clean, noting that the chimera didn't look as undead as it did the last time I fought it; in fact, it looked alive. Just as those thoughts crossed my mind, the creature emitted a monstrous hiss. This hiss was quickly followed by a wafting wave of green gas that hit me right in the face. I could feel the black tendrils I was using as hair fluttering frantically in the breeze created by the beast's poisonous vapor.

Holding one hand to my mouth, I waved the other in an attempt to clear the air as I let out a few annoyed coughs. Why was I coughing? Well, my stupidly sexy ass likes to subconsciously give myself lungs all the time. Do I need them? Absolutely not! So, why do I keep doing it? My subconscious(es) are real cunts.

Hey, what the fuck!

Yeah, what she said!

Thankfully, I was immune to acid and poison, as well as charm, darkness, disease, and sleep effects. I mean, I'm pretty much a badass except for my vulnerabilities to fire and holy magic, but those two aren't concerns in this particular fight. So, I had nothing to worry about—wait, what's it doing right now? The lion's head bit down, its teeth clamping around my neck as it lifted me off the ground.

As my feet dangled off the ground, kicking frantically in search of solid footing, I weighed my options. Mostly, I was cursing up a storm, wondering where in the world my champion had vanished to at this critical moment. Thankfully, although the lion's jaw applied considerable pressure, it lacked the strength to break through my neck bones, eliminating the threat of decapitation. Unfortunately, its bite wasn't strong enough to behead me, leaving me trapped in the giant kitty's mouth like a caught rat. Speaking of a rat, I suddenly thought I was forgetting something... *If it's important, I'm sure it will come back to me.*

Hmm... I often pondered the difference between my old Corrosive skill and the new Disintegration skill that replaced it. It turns out, Disintegration was way stronger! The chimera should have had some kind of acidic resistance, or partial immunity on certain portions of its body, considering I was able to use my acidic body against its insides the last time I fought it. But its teeth, well, they should have been fully immune, given it belches out acidic vomit. However, I found myself laughing hysterically as I fell from its closed mouth and landed on my ass after dissolving straight through its now-missing front teeth.

Like all annoyed cats, the chimera lifted a paw that came swiping at me with enough force to crush a car—yeah, I know, it's my second car analogy in one chapter, but I have a thing for using crushed and destroyed cars for my descriptions, so sue me. Where was I? Oh, right, swipy, no swiping! The paw came crashing down at me, only to collide with a glowing golden-yellow shield. Blinking, I found my champion standing over me, looking either exasperated or perhaps pissed?

“Hey, this one is mine! I tried to share, but you wanted to bench me,” I pointed my finger at her accusingly.

“You can’t be ser—”

Von Von’s words were abruptly silenced as a second paw slammed into her side, sending her into a flying tumble back through the castle’s portcullis. The last of the vampires were retreating through it as the sun’s glowing light began to bathe the area. And there, standing at the threshold where darkness met light, was Aurelia, her eyes filled with concern.

Well, shit, now we have to bring our A-game.

...Yep.

With a grin, I wove a fancy sword from my Web of Whispers. Its strength, sharpness, and craftsmanship as a blade surpassed what even the most skilled blacksmiths could achieve. Did I know how to use it? Nope. Was I going to wield it? Nope. So, you might ask yourself, why did I make myself an amazing sword? Because I wanted to look amazing when I pulled off my killing move in front of my woman, duh!

The chimera unleashed a massive roar, and its tail whipped around at me. With a burst of mad laughter, I flipped up and out of the way, narrowly avoiding the strike. Mid-air, I twisted my body, landing with the grace of an Olympic gymnast aiming for bronze. Now, remember, this chimera was the size of a monster truck (yes, another car reference), and it towered over me as if I were, well, a rat before a cat, I suppose (oops, I’ve used that analogy before). The beast took another swipe, but I rolled out of the way before flipping back to my feet. It turns out I’m quite agile when I want to be, especially when I’m in the mood to show off a bit.

With another roar, accompanied by a wave of yellow vomit and green vapor, I activated [PHANTASMAL SURGE], launching myself beneath the beast. The last time I did this, I ended up smacking my face against its incredibly solid nuts. Thankfully, no such nuts existed now, so no teabagging for him.

As I stood beneath the monster, continuing to vomit acid and spit poison, with one arm, I lifted my sword high into the air, piercing it straight into its abdomen. This was the moment I wanted the sword for, the entire reason I needed it.

With a roar of my own, I screamed out, “I’ve got the power!”

Yeah, corny, I know, but when you’ve got superpowers and magic, you’ve got to lean into the silly stuff. I mean, a second life isn’t worth living if you’re not willing to have fun with it. Anyway! As I screamed my war cry, channeling my inner She-ra, I cast my desired skill, dreaming of flying straight up through this beast like a war goddess. As [ASTRAL GRAVITON] activated, I felt the power of gravity manipulate, grow, and come crashing down on me with enough force to annihilate a mountain. I had anticipated this might happen, which is why I positioned myself directly beneath my foe.

As the force of my skill slammed down upon me, everything went black. Well, except for the glowing translucent writing that floated before me.

YOU HAVE DEFEATED [KING CHIMERA]

[DEVOURER] [DUNGEON BOSS, KING CHIMERA] SUCCESSFUL.

SELECTABLE
[ACID BREATH]
[POISON SPIT]