

BLAKE PUDDING

CHAPTER 19

Hovering over Olin's brand new and still-warm corpse, I was totally channeling some grim reaper vibes. I deftly latched the phylactery onto him, funneling his soul into its new digs. Okay, I admit, that's my [**Spirit Vessel**] skill showing off, but, hey, I'm more than happy to soak up any praise. With both fragments of my oh-so-broken soul understanding the ins and outs of this skill, I'm thinking... maybe I could do it without the fancy skill? Out of all the wild tricks up my sleeve, messing with mana and souls? *Pssh, easy-peasy!*

While my skill conjures its sorcery, my dual personalities of my souls — Blake and Ava — plunged into a whirlpool of self-reflection. Who's calling the shots here? Blake? Ava? And, for real, Blake needs to consider a name swap. It's dizzying enough juggling two souls in one body, compounded when one's downright adamant about naming rights. But, whatever, for now, we've settled on the notion that we are, weirdly, Blake. By not pegging myself solely as Blake or Ava, things feel a touch less muddled for us — or so we'd like to think. But hold up, backpedaling a bit, that's a total brain-twister. Could I be grappling with some eccentric mix of dissociative identity disorder with a side order of schizophrenia? Nah! But still, my emotions are like a pendulum, swaying based on which "me" is feeling feisty. Soul fragment Blake radiates a dark, sinister vibe, while Ava leans more towards the affable end — albeit by a hair. But hey, at least there's a bright side! They're playing nice right now, so no sassy sister feuds... at the moment. *Tee-hee!*

Oh, and let's not forget, ever since that wild run-in with the Crone, everything seems off-kilter, like a crazy dream where everything's both familiar and freakishly strange. It felt like I'd been chucked into some parallel universe (yep, again), where stuff kinda clicks, but also... nope? And the weirdest part? Amidst all this chaos and looming nightmares, I'd never felt so dang zen. Go figure!

Pulling my attention from Olin's soon to be new corpse body, I was captured by a sight of sheer elegance. *Geez, how did the dueling bitches in my head make us so spacey to lose track of the here and now?* My focus locked onto Aurelia as she sashayed over to the amphibious dude, her every step echoing the fluidity of a feline. A swift movement of her delicate finger, and the leather binds holding him snapped. Oddly, he appeared more disgruntled than relieved by his release. But who cares about him? All of my — or should I say 'our' — attention was riveted on her!

“Vorigan,” she commanded, her voice like music to my ears, “release the others from their cells.”

“Others?” I asked.

Had I still had a beating heart in my chest, it would've definitely hiccupped in that moment. She swiveled towards me, blood red eyes sparkling with a cheeky glint and her lips curved in a teasing smirk. It was the kind of smile that whispered tales of both thrill and threat. And man, both of me were utterly ensnared by her magnetism, as if caught in her enchantment.

“**BLOODY BITCH!**” Olin bellowed as his soul reanimated the General's corpse.

Aurelia paused in her elegant gait, her gaze piercing the undead lich. A hint of recognition flashed in her eyes, and that previously playful smirk transformed, becoming more ominous, as if she was in on a secret joke. She held her silence, lifting just one finger, that same malevolent twinkle evident. Olin, sensing the underlying threat, swallowed his impending tirade of curses.

“My apologies, my mistress,” Olin stammered, his voice quivering with fear. “I was momentarily disoriented. It won’t happen again. It’s a relief to see you again, my lady.”

Instead of responding, Aurelia elegantly strolled past him. Her eyes turned back to me, containing a mesmerizing gleam like a blood moon, a wicked invitation to hidden dangers. She had bewitched and captivated my very being. I reveled in her darkness, like a delicate rose flourishing amidst a garden of thorns, ready for her to pluck. It funny how it seemed to me I had once considered myself to be the monster to be feared. Oh, how wrong I was!

Aurelia continued her approach, still moving with that uncanny feline elegance. Every step she took was a breathtaking fusion of beauty and allure. The sway of her black robe, trimmed with dark red, hinted at the mysteries hidden beneath. She was like some ethereal runway model, each stride commanding attention and admiration. And, oh boy, the remnants of her crimson feast smeared across her face only added to her lethal allure. *So damn hot!* Though my true form was that of a slippery, sticky, gooey tar monster, a Black Pudding, I found my mouth going dry with a mixture of nervousness and yearning.

She moved towards me, every movement dripping with seductive grace. Her hand reached out, curling towards me as if it were an enchanting dark tendril. As she drew near, our eyes meshed in a magnetic pull, hers holding a depth that threatened to swallow me whole. Before I realized it, she had eased me back, cornering me against the wall, her hand poised delicately yet assertively between my breasts. I felt like a lovestruck girl, ensnared by a captivating and perilous lover, utterly captive by her beauty.

“Oh, fuck, I want her to take me right here!”

“Us!”

“We’ve already settled that I am us. Hush now, me!” I believe... my Ava half mentally scolded my other half.

“Oh, my beloved,” Aurelia purred, her voice both ethereal and angelic. “What have they put you through?” The cold draft of her breath graced my lips, sending shivers down my core — a feeling so peculiar, yet so thrilling. Her eyes, deep blood red pools of intrigue, delved into mine, searching for answers amidst the shadows. “Your very soul, it’s been torn asunder. The divine be damned for such cruelty!” There was a venom in her tone, but her affectionate gaze towards me remained unaltered, ensuring I understood none of that anger was for me.

“We’ve, erm, come to grips with it rather quickly,” Ava, or perhaps the fractured soul Blake, admitted, our voice tinged with hesitant longing. It was peculiar, for I’d always pegged myself as more of the assertive type. Yet, at this moment, I felt as wobbly as a gelatinous cube. Maybe it’s

just the sheer intensity of the situation? It's a fleeting sensation, surely. It'll pass, and I'll be back to being the pegger—I mean, confident!

“We?” Aurelia cooed, her voice dripping with intrigue. “So, my quest to find you, darling, has resulted in not one, but two treasures?” She bridged the slight distance between us, her form melding against mine, her hand resting at the small of my back, drawing me nearer and ensuring our pelvises met in a dance of tension. “Such an intriguing turn of events. Tell me, with your unique form, might you have the capability to split, even briefly?”

Her other hand swept across my breast, trailing across the writhing tendrils of my dress, until it came to rest under my chin, tilting my head up. To my surprise, she was slightly taller than me. Her touch was electric, her thumb tracing the curves of my lips with a seductive hunger that seemed to ignite a fire within me. Her intense and passionate gaze held me captive as she continued to peer into my eyes with a ferocity, which I had never experienced in either of my lives.

“Is this love?”

“It must be!”

The magical moment was shattered by the frog fucking nuisance. “Lady Aurelia,” he croaked. “I have released all of the captives down here. What is our next move?”

“Please let me kill him,” I moaned with a sigh of desperation.

Her laughter, melodious and tantalizing, sounded like whispers of temptation, an otherworldly song that hinted at unparalleled pleasures. Her gaze, unwavering and captivating, was infused with a seductive danger that left me both breathless and aching for more. Perhaps I truly am a switch, or could it be Ava's more yielding nature swaying our shared emotions?

Aurelia's entrancing red eyes remained locked onto mine, their depth pulling me in even as she relayed commands. “Vorigan, assemble those less skilled in stealth and proceed to the ruins. Scour the area for remnants and bodies we can reanimate. The rest of you, focus on undermining the army's leadership where possible. We'll regroup at the ruins before the first light of dawn. Given the absence of the Dungeon Core within the dungeon and our drained magical resources, we don't have the means to open a portal. Thus, we must navigate the deep roads as we make our way to the western covens.”

“As you command, my lady,” the frog said, bowing respectfully.

I hesitated, not wanting to add to her worries, especially with that frog debacle and the added stress of the others around. “Why not just yonk the core back?” I whispered, careful not to break the spell while Aurelia's thumb lightly danced on my lips.

“Shit, when did we become so timid?” I mentally groaned to myself.

“I think she's charmed us!”

“You're probably right, but right now, I don't care!”

“Would you happen to know where they’re keeping it, my beloved,” Aurelia asked with a deep purr that sent another thrill through my core.

“Within the center of encampment just outside the village is a large tent under heavy guard. If I had to guess, I would say within there.” I replied, my eyes darting back and forth between her lips and her eyes, silently pleading for her to close the gap and make my wish a reality.

“Olin, how’s that new suit?” Aurelia asked.

“Mistress,” Olin reported, “it appears to be a physical augments type. I highly doubt I’ll be able to wield magic through it. Still, it’ll be useful in close combat against elemental benders.” Olin struggled to stand, both hands clutching his head to prevent it from hanging from his shoulders. “Ah, my lady, it seems my neck is broken.”

“They had more prisoners locked in cages around that t-tent.” I panted out as Aurelia’s thigh slid between my legs, sending me to my toes. “I-I wasn’t certain if they were from your group or this village.” Yeah, that confirmed it, I’m a switch!

“Oh, gods, which one of me reshaped our body to be anatomically correct beneath this dress?!”

“That wasn’t you? Oh, whatever, shut up and grind that thigh!”

“Lady Aurelia,” a small woman with gray cat ears stepped forward, ending my inner discussion I was having with myself. “Those must be refugees from The Order. If we have the chance, we should take them with us.”

“Ha! Who cares about those good-for-nothing refugees? And who the hell appointed Aurelia as the leader?” The grating voice of a familiar figure echoed through the room, striking a nerve with every word. “And, who is that woman you’re eye fucking, Aurelia?”

“Did she just talk shit to my woman?!”

“Oh, she’s dead,” I stated to myself.

My longing gaze was torn from my Aurelia as I set my eyes upon an all too familiar face. One that filled me with a sense of eager delight. At the thought of murdering her, once again! The succubus approached with an overaerated sway of her hips that did the demon no favors.

“Niamh,” Aurelia said with a hint of disappointment and annoyance as she pulled away from me to face the succubus. “I’m surprised our captors didn’t return you to the nether.”

“Well, it may have been better if they had sent me back,” Niamh sneered. “I can already sense your father’s beckoning summon ritual. But alas, I cannot go to his side while I am stuck here with his pathetic daughter—Gaaak!”

With a flick of my shoulder, my arm transformed into a writhing monstrosity of black tendrils of terror. They shot forth like a bullet from a gun. Before anyone knew what happened, Niamh included. My tentacles had smothered her head, forcing their way down her throat, ears, and nostrils.

I was just beginning to realize this world was filled with powerful beings, most I knew I couldn't fight, but I was quickly finding out they were nothing when caught off guard. And what better way to catch someone off guard than with a slithering, tar-like appendage being rammed down their fucking throats and forced out their asses! It was a staple of my arsenal, a tool of destruction that left my enemies writhing in agony as I devoured them from the inside out. Sure, I could scorch them with Necrotic Flames, cover them in Blight, or spit Poison, amongst other things. Still, there was something truly satisfying about this method. The taste of their terror as they struggled to escape my grasp, as I feasted upon their entrails from within, was a delicacy I could not give up. If only I could find a means to decompose their flesh as I devoured them.

I cast a glance around, observing a group of onlookers who gaped at me with dread-filled eyes. I couldn't be sure, but I doubted that all of them were of the undead persuasion, namely vampires. Though their numbers were few, I roughly counted fifteen pairs of eyes fixed upon me. Niamh flailed and thrashed in my grasp, a pitiful sight of fear and delight. Suddenly, Aurelia glided up behind me, her arms encircling me just below my chest, her breath cool against my cheek. Her piercing gaze swept over the room, daring anyone to say or do something. I couldn't say whether it was to protect me from harm or assert her claim over me. But one thing was clear, nobody said a word as Niamh stopped her useless flailing.

You have defeated a [Succubus].
Do you wish to [Absorb] [Succubus]? Yes / No

"Well, that's a heck yeah!" I mentally responded to the notification.

[Absorb] [Succubus] Successful.
<u>Immunities</u> [Charm]

"Score! An immunity without burning a skill point," I mused inwardly, on the verge of breaking into my gleeful pudding jig. But given the audience – particularly with Aurelia's watchful eyes – I thought better of it.

Aurelia breathed a hushed whisper into my ear, dripping with lust. "Oh, you truly are a sight to behold, my love. And to think, you managed to withstand her Charm's temptations, it only fuels my desire for you. If she had succeeded in ensnaring you, it would have been a cruel blow to my heart, and I would have taken great pleasure in ending her life myself. Though, I have no doubt that she'll be resummoned before Lord Demidicus within the hour. Heavens forbid he go without his pet."

"She used Charm on us?"

"Probably? I'm guessing we're so lost with Aurelia's presence that it didn't take effect?"

“Huh...”

All eyes lingered on Niamh’s corpse as I dragged her body toward me. I didn’t want to give the impression of devouring another woman in front of Aurelia, who held me close. Her breasts were pushed snugly against my back, so I had several tendrils pull the succubus beneath my dress, where she vanished from sight. Much more dignified and presentable, I thought to myself.

“Vorigan, take the defenseless to the ruins,” Aurelia ordered again. “Hikari, pick out the necessary individuals and take out the army’s commanders.” The small cat-eared woman gave a nod of acknowledgment. “And you, Olin, shall join me and my beloved as we deal with a tent and some cages.”

<p><u>Notification</u> System Access Suspended</p>

I froze with sudden horror dawning on me as I read the notification. “Fucking Circe,” I spat, much to everyone’s surprise.



The proclaimed Dark Champion, a title that was nothing but a cruel insult. Jason remained haunted by the nightmare of that psycho sludge girl’s tentacle ramming its way down his throat and throughout his body. The memory caused him to clench his ass cheeks. It had violated him in the most grotesque manners before tossing him like damaged goods to suffer a slow and painful death. He shuddered thinking about it, but still, he stealthily followed her, remaining unseen to all. Life was a sick joke, and Jason was the punchline! Trapped in a never-ending dance with death in the form of a Black Pudding. It was already dawning on him that he was merely an errand boy, a lackey for a goddess who favored the very monster who had taken his life.

The monster’s arrogance was almost as lethal as her abilities. She had carelessly blown her cover, drawing the attention of no less than nine soldiers. Nine! Worst of all, she was completely oblivious to all of it! Thankfully Jason had trailed after her. Only through his quick and deadly precision did she avoid alerting the entire encampment.

Despite Jason’s success in eliminating the soldiers who had spotted her, he couldn’t help but curse himself for not allowing them to deal with her. The haunting whispers of the Crone crypt in his mind were a constant reminder of his twisted fate. Those dark voices had forced him to follow the very monster who once had taken his life. He wasn’t a champion. No, he was a damn bodyguard! He was a guardian sent to protect the homicidal psycho that had killed him. It was a cruel irony!

Amidst his covert assassinations, like a deadly ninja or a rockstar, as Jason saw himself, he had collected a few delicious hearts. He took great pleasure in savoring them as he sat in the shadow of a chimney stack overlooking the building that housed the sludge bitch. When it came to hiding the bodies, he stored them away within his new storage spell. But his brief respite was cut short as the monster that Jason loathed so much emerged, accompanied by some new savory friends. Jason

longed to rip their hearts out, but the cruel dark whispers of what would come if he acted upon his impulses prevented him from doing so.

With a twisted twist of mother fucking fate, Jason's title as the Crone's little bitch brought some hidden blessings in disguise, including new skills and a complete overhaul of his Abilities and Spells. The cherry on top was a sudden surge in his level, now proudly reaching level sixty-nine! However, the inner workings of the leveling system left him with more questions than answers. He couldn't see any real gains apart from the new racial skills and immunities.

He started to speculate that levels simply measured his overall lethality and capabilities, with each level unlocking more potential for destruction. It might explain the lack of experience points. His health, magic, and stamina bars seemed more of an estimate than a tangible stat. He even noticed the numbers were often off. Jason's best guess, besides more capabilities and magic, there wasn't much of a big difference between a level one and a level one hundred if caught off guard. Still, a higher level was something to fear if allowed to use their full capabilities.

However, the system didn't concern Jason in the slightest, nor did all its flaws. Jason only cared about the Spells and Abilities he had earned. With them, he had become a terror to be feared, a shadow of death more deadly than even Yua, the so-called assassin. At least, that's what Jason hoped was the case.

With his stealthy grace and the power to slip into the shadows, Jason was a force that couldn't be contained. And with his spells, allowing him to teleport behind his foes and strike with deadly precision, he was a harbinger of death, a true Grim Reaper. It was almost comical how the system had accurately labeled his race as such after respawning. Jason couldn't help but wonder if his gaunt appearance resulted from those changes. He seriously hoped he wasn't being turned into a skeleton! Thankfully, none of the others had noticed it, or they would have surely said something, even mockingly.

Jason glared at the sludge girl he was stuck watching after. He found himself feeling jealous as the girl interlaced her fingers with a seductively gorgeous woman. "Why does she always get the good stuff?" he muttered in frustration.

A portion of the ragtag group split, with eleven led by Vorigan, the frog-faced freak who had summoned him, slinking off to the west, apparently back to the dungeon. Jason couldn't decide whether to call the sniveling coward his summoner or the ritualist who gave him his body, but one thing was for sure, he couldn't stand the sight of him. Something about Vorigan's very existence made Jason's blood boil. The frog's presence incited a desire within Jason to peel back the bastard's flesh and extract every last drop of blood as he dined on Vorigan's still-beating heart.

Jason cast a sideways glance back at the group that remained behind but only saw three of them. The other four had vanished into thin air, like phantoms in the night. Then he felt them, the razor-sharp claws that had encircled his throat, pressing snugly against his flesh, a silent promise of death if he so much as twitched.

"Well, well, well," a cold breath whispered in his ear, "What do we have here?"



Due to his broken neck, Olin was forced to hold his head upright, but he managed to make it appear as if he were deep in contemplation as he gripped his chin. However, his ruse would easily be exposed to anyone who got too close. Nevertheless, he was with his mistress. With enough death and destruction, she was sure to conquer the entire army, her power growing stronger with each corpse she claimed. The night was their ally, but it was also their enemy, as they only had this night to accomplish their task. Their tasks were straightforward. Retrieving the Dungeon Core. Liberating as many refugees as possible to increase his mistress's political power. That part wasn't said aloud, but the reasoning seemed obvious enough. And lastly, opening a portal to the western covens. Simple, right?

With a twisted sense of fate, Olin found himself in the body of the army's leader, General Ezad, towering over his mistress and her reclaimed lover. The Black Pudding, with her sadistic smile and thirst for torment, was a truly frightening sight to behold. One glance from her piercing orange gaze and Olin knew their cover would be blown. Though his mistress was a powerful force to be reckoned with under cover of night, she was not fit for the art of subtlety. Aurelia was too beautiful of a sight to go unnoticed. No, navigating them through the heart of the enemy camp fell solely upon Olin's shoulders.

"My mistress," Olin spoke with a touch of trepidation. "We must find a way to keep the two of you concealed. Our task will be cut short if you're seen with me, especially with your companion's unique eyes." He silently prayed to the Crone that Lady Aurelia had a firm grip on her heart's obsession, this Blake.

The sinister monster in human form leaned in close to his mistress, resting her head on her shoulder as she gazed up, giving off a pathetic innocent look. Olin found the display revolting. However, Lady Aurelia seemed to be smiling as her eyes traced the woman's lips.

"If I'm too revealing," the monster cooed, "you could always wear me."

Olin thought he was going to be sick. He couldn't help but roll his eyes as he watched Lady Aurelia's eyes light up excitedly. Her red irises shined with a sinister gleam. He couldn't help but wish for these two to find a secluded corner to get it over with so they could focus on the task at hand.

"Well, my beloved," Aurelia purred, "what will happen to the clothes I'm already wearing?"

The black pudding creature replied with a sly grin, "Don't worry, I'll store them safely within us. Nothing will get in the way – I mean, ruined." Then, she removed her head from Aurelia's shoulder to gaze into her eyes, "May we ask why you keep calling me beloved?"

With a sense of resignation, Olin watched as his mistress, Lady Aurelia, caressed the cheek of the monster in the human form beside her. Her eyes lit up with a fiery passion, and her voice dripped with desire as she spoke. "That's a conversation for another time, my beloved. For now, do what you must to hide. If you can disguise yourself as my clothing, even better."

Olin gave up, dropping his hand holding his chin and letting his head fall back into the most unnatural of positions. He stood there, his head facing upwards towards the darkness of the night filled with the stars and countless other moons shining above.



Aurelia was filled with such elation as her beloved wrapped her arms around her. She basked in the blissful embrace of her beloved. Aurelia finally gave in to her desires and pressed her lips against Blake's. Her dark heart fluttered with delight as Blake's tongue slithered into her mouth like a tentacle monster, eliciting shudders of pleasure. A hunger that had been buried deep within her for nearly two centuries. Sure, she had a few unsatisfying conquests in that time, but they were all meaningless. This was the moment she had yearned for what felt like an eternity. And as Blake's hand possessed her flesh, gripping her ass with a force that threatened to tear her asunder, she was lost to the world, consumed by the fiery passion that burned within her. She reached up, grasping Blake's breast. Her other hand slid down into Blake's dress, finding her thighs with a voracious hunger. Aurelia's finger slid into a putty-like substance that leaked between her fingers.

Blake's body began to liquefy at that moment and spread out over Aurelia's body. At first, it was like watching a tsunami coming crashing down, but there was no malice or anger within that dark wave, only love, and tenderness. The tar-like form ran over Aurelia's body, coating her skin and clothes. Aurelia felt a spell activated from her beloved and noticed that her robe and undergarments had vanished. Everything had been replaced with the Black Pudding that seemed to find its way into every nook and cavity.

Aurelia was swathed in darkness as her beloved reformed around her, unable to contain the malevolent lust-filled desires seething within. Before an outfit could fully be formed, Blake erupted into a tangled, writhing mass of silk threads. A sensual and sinister silk dance embraced Aurelia, obscuring all but the gleam of her gorgeous face as they wove together. The pure white headdress and outfit that settled upon her was a cruel parody of the priestess garments that Ava had spotted within the encampment, a mocking whisper of their supposed purity. But the true horrors of Aurelia's new attire lay hidden beneath the shimmering cloth, a forbidden secret of squirming tendrils and pulsating tentacles.

"Oh... Oh! Mmmm," Aurelia struggled to contain her passion and keep her ecstatic screams from reverberating across the land. She was a vampire elder, a regal princess of a once powerful coven, and she would not let such a trivial thing as pleasure break her focus. Aurelia would submit to her lover's carnal desires, for this was what she had wanted for so very, very long. She surrendered her body over to her dark lover's embrace, for Aurelia knew she could still decimate her enemies with her orifices filled. She was a vampiric necromancer with so few equals, an unstoppable force of the night, and nothing would stand in her way. It didn't matter that her beloved had just found the spot that sent shudders through her stomach. No one could stop her and her beloved now!



Riding the high of the moment, Circe's shenanigans slipped to the back of my mind. Instead, I was all-in, letting myself merge and flow over Aurelia, taking the shape of a sleek black dress. Gotta love the perks of polymorphing!

“Oh, gods, her body is so tight and amazing!”

“Holy shit, she’s got fucking abs!”

“And not the overly masculine kind either, the cute sexy ones!”

“She’s built like an Olympic pole vaulter!”

“Oh, my gods, her skin tastes so good!”

“Just like blood and death!”

“She’s delicious!”

My two halves engaged in a mental back-and-forth, much to our mutual amusement. I admit, I'm known to let my thoughts wander when I'm feeling, well, a bit frisky. And damn, was I revved up now. Who could blame me? Pressed against Aurelia's tempting curves, my inner deviant wanted nothing more than to see just how far I could push our boundaries. Each moment pushed me closer to crossing a line, and with every sultry look she shot my way, I thought, "*Screw it, why not dive right in?*" I mean, who wouldn't want a taste of the forbidden, especially when it's served on such a delectable platter?

“You go high, I’ll go low!”

“No way, you get the front, I’ll get the back!”

“Deal!”

I've always had a knack for multitasking, but after my soul split, it became even more pronounced. Still, amidst my oh so titillating meal, I was only vaguely conscious of us transitioning from the village outskirts to the heart of the enemy camp. Any brave souls who risked approaching Olin were swiftly discouraged by a mere gesture from him — the advantages of having his soul occupy a General's body. And even if the sneaky bastard ever thought of escaping, well, I had his phylactery as an insurance policy.

Speaking about putting things in someone's body, I return to our depraved delights. As I basked in the blissful sensations of Aurelia's tight body and firm ass, the outside world was a distant, meaningless place. The tremors in Aurelia's thighs were a symphony of pleasure. I was awed by her mastery of self-control, hiding our sexual acts from prying eyes. Her delicate fingers occasionally wandered down, offering a tantalizing touch. I was impressed her expression remained serene, a mask hiding the storm of pleasure within, but her gorgeous eyes could not lie. I was lost in the twisted, erotic world of her ecstasy, and nothing else mattered.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end. I withdrew from Aurelia's innermost places as we approached the carnival size tent. I spotted all the cages along the outside of the tent, and that little bunny kid. I couldn't help but feel a sense of dread settle into me.

“It would be so much easier if we could ditch them. Or even better yet, we were allowed to eat them!”

“BLAKE?!”

“What? When did we get a conscience?”

“Ugh, I’m our conscience,” Ava sighed mentally in our head.

“You really are a subpar conscience,” Fractured Blake mused with mental amusement. Yeah, I've just now decided to dub this other piece of me "Fractured Blake." She's been avoiding settling on a separate name, probably in light of the fact she's gotten a double dose of our stubbornness.

“Oh, crap!” The light bulb just went off in our head. With Circe kicking me out of the system, does this mean Oracle's stuck in the always-on mode? I mean, I knew I could've silenced this mental twin banter any time I fancied, but it was kind of entertaining when I thought there was an off switch. *“Oh, Fuck!”* both halves of me chimed in as one. Note to self: cursing the day our new "mom" tweaked Oracle to give voices to my split psyche. But as ticked off as I was, it wasn't the Crone who I was truly pissed at.

I shoved my irritation with that godly bitch Circe to the side and focused on the towering tent before us. It stood guarded by an assortment of stone-faced soldiers, some kitted out in shiny metal while the others were... well, let's just say they were letting it all hang out. Seriously, I realized bare skin aids with ambient mana manipulation or some mystical crap, but fighting with your junk almost exposed? Seems like a one-way ticket to a world of pain. But hey, different strokes.

When they caught sight of Olin, their so-called 'General', they instantly banged their chests in some sort of unified salute. But Olin? Dude just breezed right by them, making a beeline for the tent's interior. I wonder if any of the guards raised an eyebrow at the snub. Though, in Olin's defense, giving a salute would be a tad tricky when you're using one hand to stop your head from toppling off to the side. Just a tad.

“Perhaps it wasn't the best idea to snap his neck.”

“Yeah...”

From the outside, the tent seemed massive. But stepping through its entrance was like diving into a rabbit hole, only to be met by a scene straight out of Alice's trippiest mushroom high. The inside sprawled out way larger than what the exterior hinted at, like some wacko architect decided to build a stadium inside a tent. No weapons, no magical doodads, no damn Dungeon Core – just an endless stretch of... well, death. If someone had told me they were hiding their fallen comrades in there, I would've laughed. But seeing was believing, and what I saw was a freakin' morbid treasure trove, and I was clutching the perfect ass of not only a vampire, but a necromancer!