

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 26

Prince Rayne casually strolled through the corridors of the academy, emanating an aura of superiority with every confident step. His entourage of newly ordained Paladins of the Church of Light ruthlessly slaughtered students, those they deemed lesser species, a sight that brought a twisted smile of delight to Rayne's face. In his mind, it was a clear demonstration of elven dominance over those foolish enough to consider themselves equals. While it surprised him to learn that the head priest of this religious order was a gnome, the crumbling academy's headmaster had managed to sway Rayne's opinion and lead him to embrace the teachings of the Church. After all, they had offered him, an exiled Prince, the prospect of becoming a King. And though the Church still harbored members from lesser species like humans, Rayne was willing to overlook their defects if they bent the knee to him. However, the presence of humans within every faction unsettled Rayne, fueling his disdain. Admittedly, much could be said about the flaws of elves as well if Rayne were being honest with himself. But today was not a day for such thoughts. Today was a day of joy and celebration in the prince's mind.

"Please, you don't have to do this," pleaded a pitiful minotaur, though Rayne couldn't be bothered to determine its gender, nor did he particularly care. Though, he couldn't help but notice a swelling belly, indicating that the minotaur was likely pregnant.

Just as the sword was poised to descend, the prince halted the paladin's hand with a gentle gesture. His gaze shifted from the perplexed paladin to the weeping minotaur, and a flicker of recognition sparked in his eyes. "Ah, Lady... Furry," he spoke, his voice tinged with a hint of amusement.

"F-Furian, Professor Furian," she stuttered, her words trembling with terror as she clutched her stomach protectively, fear etched across her face.

Rayne's eyes swept across the chamber, taking in the expansive balcony that offered a commanding view of the inner courtyard. From this elevated position, the gruesome spectacle of carnage unfolded beneath his gaze. The anguished screams and desperate cries of the lesser species reverberated through the air, mingling with the thunderous echoes of magical explosions. It was a symphony of chaos, a melody that harmonized with the prince's depraved desires. In his twisted mind, Rayne relished the thought of marking this day as a holy occasion when he ascended the throne and was crowned as King. The anticipation brought a sinister delight to his heart.

Rayne's gaze lingered on the trembling minotaur, a malicious smile curling his lips. With the wand bestowed upon him by Headmaster Thalador firmly in his grasp, he felt the pulsating surge of raw power coursing through its core. In a blinding flash, a searing bolt of mana erupted from the wand, finding its mark with deadly accuracy. The minotaur's eyes were instantly pierced, and her body collapsed to the ground, lifeless and defeated.

A sense of deep satisfaction filled Rayne's being, reflected in the wicked glimmer in his eyes. He paid no attention to his entourage, their presence fading into insignificance. With a tone filled with dark joy, he uttered, "It's always a delight to offer them a flicker of hope before extinguishing it." His grin widened as a few of the paladins chuckled, eagerly moving on to seek their next hapless victim.

The prince was on the verge of joining his entourage when a mighty explosion reverberated through the surroundings, jolting him backward as the ground quaked beneath his feet. Perplexed, Rayne swiftly made his way to the balcony's edge and peered down into the central courtyard, where an infuriating sight greeted his eyes. A formidable gathering of students, particularly those wretched Night Hag students and their matriarch, were fiercely battling a group of soldiers—and prevailing.



With an air of elegance and urgency, Lady Zephyra led the way, flanked by her captivated assailants who now obeyed her every command. Yet, she was well aware that their compliance was merely temporary, as her charm spell would soon fade. Time was of the essence as they had to swiftly pass through the portal and make their way to the capital if they were to have any hope of survival. However, a nagging worry tugged at her heart, for the Queen should have sent a detachment of knights and wizards by now.

A deadly hail of arcane plasma crashed into one of Zephyra's charmed victims just as he shielded her, the impact instantly taking his life. The devastating blast tore through the paladin's body, severing his left chest plate and shoulder in a gruesome display that nearly shattered Zephyra's control over the remaining seven. The strain of maintaining dominion over such a large group of charmed paladins was already overwhelming, evident by the beads of sweat rolling down her face. Yet, she remained resolute, holding onto the spell with dignified composure. Nevertheless, her heart couldn't help but be horrorstruck by the sheer number of Mana Stone-infused mediums possessed by their adversaries.

Zephyra Amethyst, a relatively young vampiric dark elf, had barely reached her second century of existence. The individuals under her care, however, were even younger, not yet having completed their first century of life. Some were merely in their second decade, mere children by comparison. Her paramount concern was ensuring the safety of as many as possible, and that meant leading them through the portal to the main campus within Thule. Yet, Zephyra knew that the portal chamber would be heavily guarded. The impending confrontation would likely result in a bloodbath, and the outcome remained uncertain. The stakes were high, and she felt the weight of responsibility on her shoulders.

Zephyra's gaze lingered on the students as they fought alongside her enthralled paladins, her eyes tracing their every move with a mix of admiration and concern. With each swing of their weapons and each burst of mana, they displayed a relentless determination that sent shockwaves through the corridor. The air crackled with the force of their attacks as the paladins fell before their combined might. Their faces were etched with a resolute focus, their eyes ablaze with a shared purpose that transcended words. As explosions of mana erupted around them, illuminating the

chaos, Zephyra couldn't help but question if their collective strength would be enough to triumph over the formidable threat lurking in the portal chamber.



The ground rumbled beneath me as the whole damn crowd erupted into cheers and stomped their feet at Headmaster Thalador's big declaration. Gotta admit, I was kinda impressed. I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm totally gonna kill the guy, but you gotta give him props for this show. It's not every day you see a politician stand up there, getting everyone hyped about overthrowing a fucking government and talking about genocide like it's a freakin' party, all while convincing 'em to ditch town and start their own damn kingdom. That takes some serious manipulation and charisma, and it both freaks me out and blows my freakin' mind. Okay, maybe it doesn't exactly freak me out. More like I'm just freakin' jealous. But hey, you won't catch me admitting that to anyone else.

However, it was what that bearded elf said next that caught my attention... "We'll rise from the ashes and forge anew the Kingdom of Slaethia on the moon of Nyxoria. It is there that we will thrive, there that we will establish ourselves, and there that we will reclaim the Moons of Völuspá from the filth who have invaded our realm!" The crowd erupted into a frenzy, their voices merging into a deafening chant of "RECLAIM! RECLAIM! RECLAIM!"

Now, I didn't really have much knowledge about the history of this reality I found myself reincarnated into. From what little I had gathered, it seemed that besides a few of the old gods, like the Crone (my new mother), all life in this realm originated elsewhere. Circe, for some ridiculous reason I hadn't yet figured out, had captured entire planets and moons teeming with life and brought them all here. None of these chanting assholes knew or cared about that; they were all descendants of kidnapped immigrants. But to be honest, I didn't much care about their xenophobia. I mean, seriously, I kill for the fact that I seem to enjoy it, so who am I to judge? Still, I supposed it was about time to give them a reason to hate someone, and I was absolutely giddy to provide them with that someone.

Was I outnumbered? Oh hell yeah! Were they eventually going to kill me? You bet your ass! Did I give a damn? Not even a little. Why? Because nestled within the dimensional space of my essence resided a Dungeon Core, the source of my eternal life and unlimited respawns. And I had a few spare meals tucked away as well. So what if they were going to win? I was determined to give them untold nightmares, to make them suffer, and to do it all over again until I found a way off this friggin' moon.

I couldn't help myself. In my typical fashion, a wicked smile spread across my face, the anticipation of the dark and cruel act to come fueling my twisted delight. The crowd was still in an uproar, their chants echoing through the air. Amidst their fervor, I stood calmly and motionless, biding my time. Only one phrase lingered in my mind, a phrase I had been eager to unleash upon this reality: [Nightmares' Domin—. I froze, my mind spinning as a sudden realization washed over me like a tidal wave. The pieces of the puzzle were finally falling into place, and I couldn't help but blurt out, "Wait, what the fuck was the name of that moon again?"

“Nyxoria,” the elf beside me chimed in, his voice filled with excitement as he continued to bounce and holler.

I recognized that name. Nyxoria, the moon where I had been with Aurelia. But the Kingdom of Slaethia... it had already been resurrected, or at least that’s what I believed. I had fought against them to protect Aurelia... No. Something wasn’t right. It didn’t make any damn sense. Unless... unless I hadn’t respawned on this moon in the future, but instead, “a few decades in the past?” I completed my thoughts with a whispered realization.

“*Took you long enough,*” a little girl’s voice said from behind me, and as I turned to face her, I noticed something peculiar. The crowd that had been filled with chants and cheers had suddenly frozen in place as if time itself had come to a halt.

Despite the eerie stillness that seemed to have engulfed everything and everyone around me, I noticed that the clouds above continued their slow drift across the sky. It wasn’t a manipulation of time; rather, it appeared to be confined to the immediate vicinity of the stadium. My attention was drawn to the little girl who had spoken, her presence both intriguing and unnerving. She had dark caramel skin, a wild puff of curly hair that seemed to have a mind of its own, and she was dressed in a little pink dress. But it was her eyes that captivated me the most. They were darker than a Black Pudding, which was saying something.

“Who the fuck are you?” I blurted out, my eyes darting from the little girl to an elf frozen mid-jump.

With a mischievous giggle, the girl responded, “*I can see why Duskara took you as her own.*”

“Who?” I replied, a sense of dread washing over me at the anticipation of yet another bothersome goddess.

“*Not that bright, huh?*” she giggled, her laughter echoing through the silent stadium. And just like that, she vanished into thin air, leaving me standing there as the roar of the crowd engulfed me once again.

“Ugh, what the fuck,” I muttered, shaking my head in annoyance. I quickly brushed it off, knowing I had more important things to focus on. With a sigh, I activated the command I had been planning, “[**Nightmares’ Dominion**],” I declared, determined to make my mark on this fuck up reality.