

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 27

With a guttural groan, Jason felt like he was about to collapse onto the ground. Pulsating agony snaked through his veins, devoured his strength, and left him powerless. His arms and legs trembled and convulsed with pain. His muscles felt as though they were being torn apart from the inside out. Despite his valiant efforts to remain standing, he couldn't muster the energy for much longer. And then, in that moment of utter exhaustion, the darkness creeping in was blown away with a violent explosion!

In an instant, the night was shattered by a devastating blast from the knight's encampment in the distance. Like a beast unleashed, the shockwave barreled through the forest, snapping trees in half and tossing debris like flimsy matchsticks. Jason was momentarily thrown by the sudden gust of wind before suddenly being yanked back in the opposite direction. Chaos erupted as panicked cries filled the air, but amidst the madness, a few shadowy figures stood tall and defiant, holding up their hands as if daring the very heavens to stand against them as they blocked the worst of the blast wave.

Exhausted and spent, Jason lay prone on the ground where he landed when a hand descended upon him, each fingertip containing razor-sharp claws. Delicate yet deadly, holding out a vial of blue liquid, beckoning him to drink. Gazing upward, Jason beheld the eerie beauty of the gray-haired feline, Hikari.

"Thanks for volunteering to help recuse the prisoners! You truly did well, Champion," purred Hikari, offering the blue vial with a sly smile.

"Volunteering," Jason spat, snatching the vial from Hikari's fingers. "Piss off!"

A sinister silhouette suddenly stopped beside the feline woman, bowing low in reverence. Jason paid the man little mind, assuming he was just another bloodsucker in their little horde of escapees.

"Lady Hikari," the figure gasped, his voice rife with urgency, "unknown forces are advancing from the west!"



Aurelia spun, swayed, and danced with wild glee. Her fingers roamed over my form with reckless abandon, as if the soldiers rising from the wreckage of the encampment were not even there. It may have appeared that she was fondling herself over her dress to them. But in truth, she was fondling herself and me! Aurelia was lost in her own world of pleasure. In return, my tendrils caressed her every curve, heedless of the onlookers. We continued our waltz, in full view of the audience, despite my growing unease as more and more knights emerged from the wreckage. I had already learned that I was no match for Anlyth's holy magic, and even a glancing blow was enough to send me reeling in agony. But I was grateful for Aurelia's protection as she shielded me from

the elf's last devastating spell, which reduced the tent to ashes with the force of a miniature Little Boy detonating.

I couldn't help but feel a twinge of admiration as I glanced at the elf who had caused such destruction. However, as I stared at the paladin, I couldn't help but smile. Seeing her tears, as she watched in agony as Olin pushed aside some rubble and rose to his feet with a gaping wound in his chest, was priceless! It was a fitting punishment for someone who had taken my kid's life – **I meant my potential prey!**

No, you didn't.

Shut up. Yes, I did.

Ava and I stopped bickering as Aurelia approached Olin and slid her hands down his pants. I was a bit horrorstruck when she grasped his manhood in her hands in front of us, Anlyth, and the entire army.

Umm...

What's she doing?

"I'LL KILL YOU," Anlyth screamed!

Aurelia, on her part, only smiled with that dark grin that sent a quiver of delight coursing through me. She pulled out – a large golden circular ring and slid it over her wrist.

Dang, Olin's packing!

No kidding!

With a fierce battle cry, Anlyth let out a deafening scream, her voice resonating like a thunderclap, **"BY THE GRACE OF THE GODS, LET MY HOLY LIGHT BE MY GUIDE!"**

Following her scream, Anlyth unleashed a barrage of holy light, a raging river of divine energy threatening to reduce everything in its path to ashes. Undeterred, Aurelia effortlessly swatted the spell aside casually as if shooing away a pesky fly. Meanwhile, I was writhing in agony, my body unable to withstand the searing heat and divinity radiating from the spell. Despite my excruciating pain, it paled compared to the look of furious wrath that twisted Aurelia's attractive features. She appeared as if a herald of retribution was about to be unleashed upon Anlyth, who dared to harm me. Unfortunately, before Aurelia could deliver her unsaid promise of death, she was surrounded by a group of charging knights, weapons drawn and ready for battle.

The first knight brought his sword down with a ferocious overhead slash. At the same time, another lunged forward with a deadly thrust aimed at Aurelia's chest. But she was unshaken, skillfully dodging the first attack and sidestepping the second easily. With a flick of her hand, her razor-sharp nails sliced through the knight's armor as if it were nothing but thin aluminum, peeling it away with ease. The other she kicked in the leg, shattering his knee with a sickening crunch and sending him tumbling to the ground in a pitiful heap. Meanwhile, I unleashed my wrath with a barrage of deadly tentacles, lashing out from Aurelia's back with indiscriminate fury.

Stick with physical attacks. I'll stick to magic!

Got it!

The knights descended upon us in a relentless barrage. Arrows whizzed past, but she easily dodged them or swatted them away with a flick of her wrist. Spells were cast, bolts of lightning, and balls of fire. Still, they were no match for the red mist that surrounded her. Aurelia's barrier absorbed the magical assaults and left the knights with no choice but to engage in more traditional means of combat. Some fell easily, their bodies crumpled by a single blow, but others were more resilient, repeatedly rising to continue the fight. Meanwhile, Olin fought like a berserker, raining punches and kicks down upon the enemies, but he was soon outnumbered and outmatched.

I was using every weapon in my arsenal. Still, the knights kept rising to their feet as if there were healers among them, rendering my efforts useless. I flailed my tentacles wildly, snatching knights by the neck and hoisting them into the air. But with each strike of their swords, my grasp was broken, and another foe was freed. I managed to jam a few tentacles down my enemies' throats, but they were swiftly sliced off. Despite my Corrosive and Venomous touch taking down some soldiers and my Paralysis leaving others frozen in place, the tide of the battle seemed to turn against us. A miasma of death wafted out from beneath Aurelia. A black cloud of Blight and purple Necrotic Flames, a noxious yellow cloud of Acid Breath, and haphazard splatters of Acid Spit were not enough to stop them.

Aurelia hummed a dark melody as she cut soldiers as if it were effortless, but I could see the strain in her eyes. To my dismay, the soldiers that proved the most difficult to defeat were the ones that pranced around mostly naked. Some had a visible magical barrier that shimmered with each strike, while others were blessed with skin as hard as steel. Apparently, gender wasn't an issue, as both men and women dressed like skimpy barbarians charged us. I couldn't help but be in awe of their resiliency. Unfortunately, I wanted them all dead, and their durability impeded that desire.

Aurelia's once fluid movements were now sluggish as she battled against an endless horde of knights. Her grace and skill were undeniable, but she appeared to be reaching her breaking point. She could not avoid the fatal blow as a knight's sword arced toward her neck. In a split second, I forced my body to constrict along her abdomen, causing her to bend over and duck just in time to avoid the deadly swing. I followed up with a wave of Necrotic Flame, incinerating the knight's face. Despite the worry I felt, I was struck by the look in Aurelia's eyes as she dropped to her knee, panting. There was a glimmer of determination as if this was exactly where she wanted to be.

Thankfully, the soldiers ceased their assault, instead deciding to encircle and trap us in their tight grip. They stood just beyond the reach of my tentacles, taunting me with their proximity. The dwarf woman, whom I had encountered in the deep roads on the day the elf paladin had killed Wartie, stepped forward with Anlyth, blocking any chance of escape. My heart sank at seeing them. I realized I would not be granted the satisfaction of causing them additional pain before they inevitably ended me. Worst of all, Aurelia was about to either be recaptured or slain. Despite bracing myself for the inevitable, Aurelia's eyes still showed a glimmer of excitement, giving me pause.

“Would ye look at what we have here? It’s the little lady herself, back in our clutches once more,” the dwarf sneered.

“It’s apparent to me we don’t have the means to restrain her,” Anlyth declared.

Anlyth advanced with her sword drawn, and her thin cloak flapped in the wind, exposing everything underneath. Then, chaos erupted among the knights as two of their own fell, one after the other, to an unseen attacker. Their focus shifted from Aurelia as they frantically searched for the source of the sudden attack. Anlyth, undeterred, stepped forward, her blade ready to deliver the finishing blow. However, she was forced to redirect her strike, deflecting a sword that materialized out of nowhere and aimed straight for her neck.

“Oh shit,” Jason uttered as he vanished into nothingness, just as the dwarf woman charged towards him.

Jason’s sudden appearances and disappearances made the remaining knights cry in alarm and confusion. Despite the carnage, destruction, and death from the explosion combined with Aurelia’s attack, thousands of knights still stood. Yet, the bodies of their fallen comrades littered the ground. It was then that I noticed Aurelia’s beautiful laughter ringing out like music as the undead rose from the remains of their friends and comrades. What happened next was madness!

Despite the knights now being preoccupied with the reanimated corpses of their fallen allies, the dwarf and the elf maintained their focus on Aurelia and, by extension, me, whether they knew what I was or not. Though, I felt a bit out of my league in the impending fight about to be had. Sadly, despite how powerful Aurelia was, both to my surprise and arousal, it was apparent she was at her limit.

Any ideas?

No...

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“I am sorry, my beloved, but you must escape,” Aurelia whispered before launching into battle.

The hell with that!

Damn straight!

Anlyth lunged forward, her sword aimed at Aurelia, but the latter easily sidestepped the strike. The dwarf, on the other hand, delivered a powerful right hook aimed at Aurelia’s side, but I was able to shift my mass to absorb the impact. I felt as though a thunderbolt had struck me as Aurelia was sent flying back. Yet, she continued to fight on despite the disorientation I was experiencing. The dwarf continued to pummel us with relentless blows that sent pain through my body with each hit.

Meanwhile, the elf stood back, her hand raised as if she were about to unleash a powerful spell. A brilliant blast of light shot out, striking Aurelia before she could put up her barrier or deflect the attack. The spell struck Aurelia with unyielding force, sending us tumbling across the battlefield and into the midst of the soldiers battling the undead. Despite the brutal beating she was taking,

Aurelia fought on. I screamed in agony as I felt my mass being burned away. I couldn't tell if it was Ava or myself, but a portion of me was severed and discarded, leaving a pile of black, smoldering goo on the ground. I frantically drew from the Stellar Void, replenishing my mass from my reserves, but the relentless attacks from Anlyth and the dwarf left me struggling to keep up. Before I knew it, my reserves were depleted.



Gimona was having the battle of a lifetime, enjoying every moment! Though it may not have been considered honorable to wear down the vampire with soldiers before engaging in a fight, Gimona faced off against the legendary Aurelia. At this moment, victory was the only thing that mattered, not honor. The vampire struggled to evade the attacks, but her dress constantly shifted, absorbing the brunt of the blows. Gimona had never seen enchanted clothing of the like before. Still, as Anlyth continued to unleash her magic, the long flowing gown gradually reduced to that of a slip nightgown. It wouldn't be much longer before the article of clothing was reduced to mere undergarments, like those found in the more unsavory brothels.

As the battle raged, Aurelia unleashed a barrage of spells commanding the undead. What Gimona found strange was that the dress expelled its own unique magic in the form of toxins, acids, and purple flames. But Gimona, being a seasoned dwarf, could easily withstand the weak magic wafting off the dress. Though, it would have surely overpowered many of the knights. The true thorn in her side was the jagged-toothed abomination that teleported around the knights, chipping away at their numbers. Gimona could sense that the fucker's mana was starting to wane, which brought a smile to her face. Victory was near! It was only a matter of time before the last undead was destroyed, and Aurelia was finally slain.

Gimona unleashed a barrage of powerful blows upon the weakened Aurelia, reveling in the sound of the vampire's bones cracking under her might. The dwarf's internal magic surged, coalescing into a single, devastating punch aimed straight at the vampire's gut. The vampire was sent tumbling across the ground, leaving behind a trail of blood and broken earth. It was evident she was no longer healing, a clear sign she needed to feed. Gimona leaped into the air with a triumphant cry, her foot about to slam down with the force of a detonating mana crystal toward the vampire's face. But just before the fatal strike could land, a surge of energy swept across the battlefield as if a tear in the fabric of reality had erupted once more, tossing Gimona off course and sending knights and the undead alike tumbling like leaves in a tornado. The dwarf rose to her feet, her heart sinking as she gazed upon the tree line. Her sight stopped at the army that had formed there, led by an ancient-looking Warg, brandishing a staff crackling with intense magical energy.