

# BLAKE PUDDING

## CHAPTER 33

### THE EPILOGUES

In the courtyard of the vampire's stronghold, Heather was engrossed in a deep, devout prayer. Nearby, a vigilant presence lingered at the periphery—a succubus, ever watchful and protective of the dark elf. Their passion for one another was profound, yet both harbored fears about what their relationship might face upon Lord Demidicus's return.

The stronghold itself, a gothic castle of dark stone adorned with skulls, stood imposingly atop its mountainous perch. Softly blanketed by a gentle snowfall, its formidable presence was tempered, lending a tranquil beauty to the otherwise menacing structure.

To the untrained eye, Heather might have appeared merely lost in meditation. However, as the Priestess of Dreams, her true essence transcended the physical realm. Her consciousness, her very soul, resided in a different plane—a cozy, quaint cottage in the ethereal Realm of Dreams, a place some referred to as purgatory, existing within the veil.

In this serene dwelling, Heather sat with a warm cup of tea in hand, gazing at Duskara, the Goddess of Dreams and Nightmares, more commonly known as the Crone. Duskara took the form of a skeletal figure cloaked in shadows, her face hidden within her hood, revealing only her gracefully poised, skeletal fingers stirring her tea. Despite her daunting appearance, Duskara exuded benevolence. Heather, keenly aware of the layers beneath this exterior, knew Duskara embodied both dreams and nightmares. Although Duskara had never revealed her darker side to Heather, its presence was undeniable in her daughter, Blake, who epitomized the more ominous aspects of her reformed, incarnated lineage. Heather realized, upon reflection, that Blake had been a monstrous figure even before Duskara had rebirthed her soul.

This wealth of insight Heather now possessed had been imparted by the Crone herself. Their meetings over tea had commenced after Rob and Yua's departure to the Kingdom of Slaethia, an event that had even taken Duskara by surprise. This indicated that their actions were concealed by another divinity, one so formidable that even the goddess refrained from mentioning their name to her priestess. Despite these unsettling revelations, each encounter with Duskara had seen Heather grow increasingly at ease. The once overwhelming aura of divinity that surrounded the goddess was gradually diminishing. Now, Heather felt a deep sense of kinship with Duskara, perceiving her not as a distant, untouchable deity, but as an older, wiser sister.

"How are things going in the coven?" Duskara inquired.

"Jeremy and Sophia are constantly training," Heather replied, pausing to take a sip of her tea. "And Jason is still a dick. I'm honestly surprised you chose him as your Champion," she added with a hint of disbelief. "Though, we're all grateful you sent him on a quest."

“Ha-ha,” Duskara laughed cheerfully. “It is always best to keep those you do not trust on a tight leash,” she teased. “By naming him Champion, I have far more control over him.”

*"Huh, like a pet I suppose,"* Heather mused silently.

“Precisely,” Duskara responded, as if reading her thoughts. The goddess then lifted her teacup to the darkness where her lips should be. As she did so, she proclaimed, “My daughter should be arriving to you soon.” Then, she took a sip from her cup, the movement graceful and deliberate.

“B-Blake?” Heather nearly choked on her tea in shock.

“Yes,” Duskara responded gently. Then, in a sudden, unexpected move, she dropped her teacup, the porcelain shattering as the Goddess abruptly rose from her chair.

Blinking in surprise, Heather found herself back in the courtyard of the vampire's keep. She quickly realized she was not alone, her heart pounding as she grasped the reality of her abrupt transition. Standing over her was a young woman with raven hair and pale skin, a sight of ethereal beauty, as if conjured from a dream. In that moment, Heather sensed her goddess's presence. She looked skyward, her expression a mix of alarm... and reverence?

Suddenly, the sky burst open in an explosion of pinks and blues, followed by a second, even more vibrant blast. Amidst this celestial spectacle, Heather heard the faintest whisper escape Duskara's lips, “I can feel her.”

A loud scream from Heather's periphery abruptly redirected her focus. Niamh, the succubus, was on her knees, clutching her horns with both hands, writhing in agony. Heather, her heart racing, stumbled and fell on the slick snow as she scrambled over to the other woman as quickly as she could. Meanwhile, Niamh's form seemed to contort and flicker, as though she were two separate entities trapped within one body, battling for dominance. Tears streamed down her face amidst her screams.

“Niamh! Niamh, what's wrong? Please, talk to me?” Heather frantically pleaded with the succubus as she attempted to offer help. Turning her gaze to the goddess who now stood within the physical realm, she implored, “Please, help her!”

Duskara bestowed a sad smile upon her priestess. “Her race is quite unique, unlike any other that has graced this realm before. Her kind's souls have always been able to form a bond with a body in this realm, without ever actually entering it. Now, as a convergence to her home world is forming, her body and soul are being pulled here, all while her soul maintains a link to that body. The most I can do for her is to sever the link. It will ease her pain, but I cannot guarantee it will save her life.”

"Will she die if you don't?" Heather asked, tears now streaming down her own face.

"Yes," the goddess replied quietly.

"D-Do it," Niamh managed to utter between her screams.

With a sad smile, Duskara nodded, and in that moment, Niamh's screams came to an abrupt halt. The succubus that Heather had been clutching transformed, revealing a peasant girl covered in blood, her wild hair also drenched in it. Despite her naked and startling appearance, the girl's heavy breaths gradually evened out as she entered a deep sleep, seemingly untroubled and at peace in Heather's embrace.

Staring up at the goddess, tears continued to stream down Heather's dark gray cheeks. "Where's Niamh?" she asked, her voice trembling with emotion.

The goddess, however, did not respond. Instead, she turned her gaze back to the sky, her expression unreadable and distant.



Enveloped in the encompassing darkness, Lord Demidicus stood gazing up at the night sky. A sinister smile, revealing his sharp fangs, slowly spread across his face. With a sense of malevolent anticipation, he hissed out, accompanied by a cold, cruel laugh, "It's about time. Now, the real war begins."

He glanced back down, surveying the expanse of a frozen wasteland that stretched out before him. With a resolute step, Lord Demidicus continued his march toward the north, drawn to a burgeoning source of unknown necrotic power. This force, growing stronger and more ominous by the day, had already begun to garner whispers among those few who had encountered it and survived. They spoke of it in hushed, fearful tones, referring to it by a name that had begun to resonate with dread: "Lord War Mist, The Goblin Lich King."



Stepping outside after what seemed like an eternity indoors, Rob stretched his arms wide, basking in the warm embrace of the sun. He tilted his head back, his eyes widening in awe at the extraordinary spectacle unfolding above. The sky, he had been told, was showing signs of an impending convergence, but nothing had prepared him for the breathtaking sight now before him. Pinks and blues danced together in the heavens, swirling in a surreal display far surpassing even the ethereal nebula images captured by the Hubble Satellite. This celestial tapestry stretched across the entire sky, centered around two distinct circular focal points situated in opposite corners of the expanse.

Rob let out a nonchalant shrug, deciding not to dwell on the cosmic phenomenon. For the first time in what felt like forever, he felt a sense of liberation. There was no impending doom, no vampires or necromancers subjecting him to torment. He was simply a man taking a leisurely stroll through the lively streets of a bustling medieval fantasy city. In this moment, life seemed as good as it could possibly get.

Even Yua appeared unusually lively, though she tended to stay within the confines of the chambers provided by the church. Overall, the Kingdom of Slaethia had welcomed them warmly, especially

after they had openly shared all they knew about the darker races. They spoke of Aurelia's efforts in building an army, the inhabitants of the dungeon, and even about the Crone and her daughter. They recounted the dramatic incident in the dungeon ruins of the Grotto of the Betrayed, where the goddess's daughter had met her end in a violent explosion. This candid sharing of information only deepened the kingdom's hospitality towards them. Now, Rob enjoyed the benefits as he freely strolled the open streets, happily ignoring the escort that discreetly shadowed him.



Lurking in the shadows, Duke Lysander was a figure of solitude and resilience, an outcast within his own coven. His days and nights melded into a torturous continuum under the relentless tyranny of his wife. Each day brought the same horrific ritual: her savage claws tearing at his flesh, stripping away his manhood in a vicious cycle of pain and regeneration. The humiliation was not just physical; whispers about his plight rippled through the coven, transforming from surreptitious murmurs into overt ridicule. He was reduced to a figure of mockery, a vampire stripped of his dignity, a once-powerful being now seemingly impotent.

Despite the disgrace, Duke Lysander harbored a simmering retribution. The indignities he suffered were not the end but a prelude to a dramatic resurgence.

Descending into the wailing depths of the castle's dungeon, Lysander strolled past the cages and cells, noting their emptiness compared to the times when he had been at the helm of the coven. Now, they housed murderers, predators, rapists—individuals he found rather appealing. To him, the change was a lamentable shift, one he couldn't quite comprehend. Aurelia, arguably the most powerful vampire ever to exist, had transformed the very coven—no, vampiric morality.

Lysander held onto the hope that Lord Demidicus, an ancient vampire of immense power, would return to usurp and quash his daughter's seemingly absurd ideals, whatever they might be. Yet, he was no longer certain that would ever transpire. It was this uncertainty that had brought him here, to the depths of despair and dark planning.

Past the gloomy confines of the dungeon, a seemingly ordinary corridor stretched out, its walls punctuated by a singular, unlit torch—a curious anomaly in a place where glowing crystals typically banished the shadows. Duke Lysander made his way towards this torch with a purposeful stride. In this realm, light was more often cast by the luminescence of crystals than the flicker of flames. Reaching the torch, he deftly grasped it, executing a precise twist and pull. The resulting click resonated through the corridor, momentarily drowning out the distant echoes of prisoners' moans and sobs. This subtle manipulation of the torch revealed its true purpose: a hidden mechanism. The wall before him shifted with the sound of stone grinding against stone, unveiling a concealed chamber illuminated by the soft, pale blue light of a mana stone.

As Duke Lysander stepped into this secret chamber, his gaze was immediately drawn to a striking figure. A vampire woman, youthful yet exuding an air of timelessness, stood before him. Her short gray hair and matching cat ears added to her unique allure.

"Lady Hikari, always a pleasure," Duke Lysander greeted her, offering a respectful nod. Without delay, he dove into the heart of the matter. "Why have I come here?" His voice carried a hint of urgency, and despite his efforts, a faint glimmer of hope seeped through his tone.

"This way, My Lord. I've got someone to introduce you to," Lady Hikari responded, her voice a smooth, enticing purr.

"Very well," Duke Lysander responded, his voice carefully cloaked in a facade of regal indifference and controlled passion.

Lady Hikari led the way to another concealed passage, guiding Duke Lysander through a labyrinth of secretive corridors and into the depths of hidden chambers. Eventually, they reached a room shrouded in such impenetrable shadows that even their vampiric eyes struggled to see through the darkness. The eerie stillness of the chamber, seemingly void of any presence, ignited a flicker of suspicion in Lysander's mind. Was this a carefully laid trap?

Just as this thought took root, a solitary light emerged, floating eerily in the void. It expanded slowly, outlining the edges of a mysterious portal, with an even deeper darkness lurking within. Within this abyss, two figures were faintly discernible. The first was a young woman, her dark skin a shade elusive in the dim light. She radiated a distinctly human scent intermingled with a powerful, almost tangible aura of magic that seemed to ripple around her. The second was a man, a silhouette of impenetrable darkness, his features obscured to the vampires' sight as if he were a void in their perception.

"This is the one," the male figure's voice resonated deeply, vibrating with an underlying force that seemed to resonate with the very essence of magic.

Lady Hikari inclined her head in a deferential bow before responding, "Yes, he is, My Sovereign."

Duke Lysander, maintaining a composed demeanor, turned to Lady Hikari. "Hikari, who are these two?" he asked, ensuring his voice remained free of any overt hostility or demanding tone. Internally, however, a trembling fear stirred within him, as if he stood in the presence of something far more formidable than any god.

"I am someone who shares a common enemy with you," the dark figure spoke, his voice echoing with a depth that seemed to resonate with the very air around him. "However, the time is not right for me to reveal myself," he paused, the swirling well of magic around him pulsating with each word. "Serve me, Duke Lysander, devote yourself to me, and I will eradicate both of your problems—the Black Pudding and your wife as well," he concluded, his words carrying a promise of power and retribution.

The duke immediately dropped to his knees before the portal, before the enigmatic figure shrouded in darkness. "I will, My Sovereign," he vowed, uncertain of how else to address this seemingly omnipotent being. In that moment, Duke Lysander recognized a force capable of annihilating him, a force that might even surpass the god who had seemingly condemned him to a cruel fate through his marriage, reducing him to a mere pawn in a ludicrous harem. The humiliation he had endured

had reached its limit. If this mysterious source of power before him offered even a glimmer of hope, he was willing to grasp it.

"You'll have your coven back soon," the figure spoke in a dark, ominous tone. With what seemed like a nod of approval, he began to turn away, his form gradually disappearing into the deeper darkness. As he did, he instructed the girl, "You may close the portal, cousin."

The girl, however, lingered a moment longer, her gaze fixed on the two vampires. Whether her stare was borne of curiosity or disdain, neither vampire could discern.

"Come, Mara," the male figure called out. At his summons, the girl turned to follow him, and as she did, the portal seamlessly closed behind her, swallowing both figures into nothingness.



In the very heart of the Empire stood an imposing citadel, a radiant beacon where the council of the Gods of Light held dominion. It was within these hallowed walls that Jörmun, the Serpent, moved with ease among them. Unlike the ascended deities who declared themselves gods, Jörmun was born of Death and Life, a genuine deity. His presence among the ascended gods was a carefully guarded secret; for if they were to discover that he was not one of their kind, but rather an ancient, true god, he would find himself in a relentless battle against their collective might. While Jörmun possessed power surpassing any singular false god, the ascended were known for their tendency to unite, harnessing their combined strength to overpower the old ones.

Jörmun, therefore, donned a mask of deception, hiding in plain sight among those he deemed adversaries. He derived immense pleasure from subtly sabotaging their plans and objectives, taking delight in every opportunity to disrupt their endeavors. Yet, his ultimate ambition reached far beyond mere interference. Jörmun yearned for the destruction of the system itself, the very foundation of the ascended gods' power. He knew that without the system, these self-proclaimed gods would lose their magic, their might, their fabricated divinity, rendering them powerless.

However, achieving such a monumental task required a force greater than even an ancient god like himself. Fortuitously, Jörmun stumbled upon a unique amalgamation: a fragment of eldritch origin, housing the soul of a Titan, and bound together by the essence of a goddess. He believed that this abomination, once it reached its full potential, might just possess the potential of destroying the system, fulfilling his deepest desire.

The citadel reverberated with the roar of Zarathos the dragon, signaling yet another of his infamous tantrums. Jörmun, unable to suppress a smile, sauntered into the council hall to observe the proceedings of the ascended gods.

"We lost a Champion on that infernal moon of Nyxoria, and now some of you propose we withdraw our support from the Kingdom of Slaethia?" Zarathos bellowed. His scales, shimmering like emerald fire, flickered intensely as he unfurled his massive wings. They were like dark tapestries etched with celestial despair, their presence seemingly leaching the light from the room.

"Be reasonable," implored Lyzara, her voice a calming contrast to Zarathos's fury. Ethereal in appearance, with hair like liquid silver and skin aglow with moonlit radiance, she continued, "A double convergence is underway. One involves that horrendous demonic world, which will undoubtedly unleash horrors and wars upon us. And, to our greater concern, we know nothing of the other planet that is to join the Moons of Völuspá."

"She's right," Khyron, an imposing figure resembling a statue carved from the very shadows of the void, interjected, his voice laced with a sense of resignation. His agreement with Lyzara seemed to mollify Zarathos's fiery temperament more effectively than any other argument or reason.

"Would you truly stand by after your own Champion was slain, and do nothing?" Zarathos sneered, his tone laden with contempt.

"This wouldn't be the first Champion I've lost, nor would it be for any of us," Khyron replied.

"And what of Slaethia?" Zarathos bellowed, his frustration evident.

"What of it?" Lyzara sighed, her interest waning amidst the ongoing discussion. "It's a minor kingdom on some dark, outlying moon. We really shouldn't concern ourselves with it."

Demoros, an awe-inspiring god swathed in otherworldly robes and crowned with gold that shimmered ominously, spoke from his throne within the citadel. "It's clear the double convergence alters our plans. We must focus our full attention on these two new worlds. Our strategy should be to extract whatever we can from them, and if they refuse to submit to our will, we should not hesitate to eradicate their entire populations."

At Demoros's declaration, there was a collective nod of agreement from all the gods present, including those relegated to the seats above, too weak to have a voice on the council itself. An unspoken understanding hung in the air, especially regarding the fate of Thanatoria's various demonic species. It was a foregone conclusion that they would face the blade, irrespective of their submission.



Death found herself quite amused by the spectacle orchestrated by her daughter's offspring—she adamantly refused to use the term 'granddaughter.' Despite being older than creation itself, she rejected the notion of being a grandmother. Her child-like appearance, which she had deliberately chosen and cherished, was more in line with her philosophy. Death was not meant to be seen as cruel or heartless, but rather as an innocent force, a reminder for all creation to cherish their time. Adopting the guise of a child had been a decision made long ago, and she relished it, especially after her beloved had been exiled from the realm.

With a joyous skip she hadn't felt in eons, Death returned to the Realm of Dreams. She bypassed her daughter's cottage, instead venturing into a dream, a cherished memory of her lost love, the Primordial of Life.

Settling herself down, Death gazed at a moment suspended in time. Before her stood a figure radiant and luminous, as if woven from pure white light. Life, in all her splendor, glowed from her skin to her hair, even her eyes shining with brilliance. Death was captivated by her magnificence, feeling a profound sense of longing.

In the dream, the memory captured the very first instance when Death witnessed Life creating her initial offspring, the Titans. However, Death chose not to let the dream progress. Instead, she lingered in that frozen moment, with Life standing above her, a figure of sheer radiance and awe. There she stayed, gazing longingly at the image of Life, lost in a moment that spanned countless eons.

Sensing an unexpected movement, Death felt a rare wave of surprise and confusion wash over her—a sensation she seldom experienced anymore. Curious and intrigued, she stepped out of the precious dream, her form drifting as she followed the sensation that hinted at something once broken now stirring again. Moving beyond the dreamscape and into the heart of the veil, she found herself gazing at a large, circular wheel. More metaphorical than physical in this plane of existence, the wheel hadn't turned since Life's banishment by the eldritch abominations. And then, astonishingly, it moved again; the wheel turned.

"The cycles of reincarnation," Death whispered to herself.

In that moment, she sensed something—or rather, someone. Life's essence, unmistakable and familiar, wafted gently over the wheel. With its touch, the wheel began to spin, signaling both a reincarnation, but more significant, the creation of a new soul for the first time in eons. Death's eyes, black as the abyss, widened in shock, and her still heart fluttered with a spark of hope as she felt the presence of her beloved Life.



The Primordial of Magic, known recently as Circe, clenched her eyes shut, her entire being concentrated on maintaining the dual convergence. “No. No. I wasn't ready yet,” she hissed through gritted teeth. “It's too soon.”

Power surged around her in waves as she stood alone in the vast emptiness of space, arms outstretched with a tether of mana in each hand. She was in a fierce struggle to prevent reality itself from tearing apart. Her essence, the very embodiment of pure magic, rippled outwards, intertwining with the fabric of the cosmos. She strained to control the two planets as they slowly, but inexorably, merged into the realm surrounding Völuspá.

Her brows furrowed in deep concentration, pondering her next move. Earth was not prepared for this abrupt integration, unlike the demon world of Thanatoria. The latter had been gently coaxed into the realm over centuries, a gradual process that mirrored the method she had used with countless other worlds. But something had gone awry; Thanatoria's convergence seemed to have inadvertently triggered Earth's. Part of this was a relief—Magic no longer needed to obliterate the souls of the Titans summoned into the realm to strengthen the path to Earth. However, the rapid pace of Earth's merger posed a dire threat; the planet could not withstand such a hastened process.



The magnitude of the events unfolding on Earth was largely unknown even to the Primordial, though she could speculate.

Now, faced with a dual convergence, both planets teetered on the brink of destruction, a predicament that demanded immediate and decisive action from her.

The flow of time on Thanatoria had decelerated over the last few centuries relative to Völuspá, giving its demon inhabitants the illusion that the convergence was a matter of mere days, perhaps months, when in reality, it spanned centuries. Earth was entangled in the opposite scenario. On Earth, what might feel like years, decades, or even centuries could transpire in what was only a handful of days in Völuspá. Magic knew she had to address this imbalance; the prospect of Earth falling victim to such a rapid and catastrophic merger was unacceptable. Even more alarming was the possibility that the time dilation and accelerated fusion could cause the planet to fracture and disintegrate into cosmic dust.

A single tear of joy escaped Magic's eye as she sensed a familiar presence gently permeating the realm—the essence of Life, her sister. It had been eons since she had last felt this presence, and it filled her with an overwhelming sense of joy, invigorating her efforts to manage the merger. Yet, despite this newfound strength, the situation continued to spiral beyond her control.

A thought, dubious and exceedingly cruel, flickered through her mind. Implementing it might prevent Earth from total annihilation. But for Magic, who had traversed countless eons and undertaken numerous regrettable actions in a bid to amend her past mistakes, what was one more? It was a harsh choice, yet potentially necessary.

Tilting her head, Magic focused intently on the spiraling essence around the convergence point of Thanatoria. "May you forgive me, my sister," she whispered into the expanse, her voice a poignant blend of resolve and sorrow. Shifting her attention to the tether she grasped, the crucial link preventing the demonic world from disaster, she hesitated, enveloped in a wave of sadness. With the weight of her decision pressing heavily upon her, Magic reluctantly released the tether, resigning herself to the perpetration of yet another atrocity in her long history.

Refocusing her attention on Earth, Magic employed both hands to stabilize the convergence as best she could. Despite her efforts, she knew the result would be far from perfect. However, in this moment of somber realization, a surge of joy unexpectedly washed over her. The essence of Life, her sister, continued to permeate the realm, resonating as if it were a call emanating from Earth itself. A smile cracked across Magic's face, a rare moment of warmth breaking through her struggle to prevent Earth's destruction.

TO BE CONTINUED!