

The Gambler: Chapter 12

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Crawling through the tiny doorway with his sopping diaper squelching with each shuffle forward, Blake's expectations for what this so-called "reward" was weren't exceedingly high. Given how horrible everything else in this facility had been, it was probably something infantile, like free time to play or something.

However, when Blake emerged from the doorway, his jaw hit the floor as he looked upon a giant buffet table filled with mountains of delicious-looking food. Given that he hadn't eaten solid food since before his awful bet with Clara, he was head over heels for the plates of expertly designed dishes. The only downside was that, as far as Blake could tell, everything on the grand buffet line was dessert. Cake, cookies, and pies galore! If you could think of a dessert, it was probably somewhere on this table.

"W-Who made all this?" said Blake to himself as the sheer scale of the dishes in front of him appeared large enough to feed a giant. Normally, the professional gambler wasn't really one to go in for sweets, preferring not to overeat whenever he could help it. As his tummy grumbled with insatiable hunger, he figured he might as well have a little something. Not to mention that it was the first act of kindness that he'd received since being dragged into the depths of the Auction House, so it would be rude to stick his nose up at it entirely.

Approaching the table, Blake casually went to grab one of the chocolate muffins off of the platter nearest him. However, as he reached out to take hold of the tempting treat, an authoritative, robotic voice spoke up, abruptly stopping him in his tracks. "Hello, and welcome to the After Dark Dessert Club!" said the voice in an aggressively chipper tone. Blake wasn't sure where the voice was coming from but he had a bad feeling that he would find out very soon, "If you're here, that means you were so well-behaved today that your designated caregiver decided to reward you with an extra special snack time."

All of a sudden, Blake was swept off of his feet by a pair of robotic arms that descended from the ceiling. He groaned as he struggled to free himself from their grip. Sadly, having already dealt with a mess of mechanical arms early in the evening, he knew that his efforts were futile. After briefly fighting against the will of the arms, he gave up and let them take him wherever they wanted. He'd have a better chance of escaping when they put him down anyway.

At least, that's what Blake thought until he was dropped into a giant high chair and locked in place behind a wooden tray. Instantly, he tried to pry the seat open in hopes of making a break for the tiny door he had entered from. Though, much like the arms, everything in this facility had been pre-conceived to be inescapable. "I hope whoever made this place gets stuck here forever," he scoffed, sighing heavily as he waited for whatever this automated system was to get started with his "reward."

Speaking of the devil, a third arm came down from the ceiling, this one carrying with it a small tablet. The white-gloved hand placed the tablet down in front of Blake. The hand then patted Blake on the head in a comforting manner, something that ironically brought him no comfort whatsoever. He swatted away at the puffy, gloved hand before turning his attention to what the hand had left behind.

Cautiously, Blake picked up the tablet. As he turned it on, a part of him hoped that it had internet access, giving him some way of contacting the outside world for help. Sadly, he discovered it to be nothing but a long list of desserts with no way to back out of whatever program was open. It didn't take long for him to figure out that the tablet was practically a menu. He eagerly scrolled through the list, his eyes growing bigger as he looked at the seemingly endless amount of food at his fingertips. When he finally got to the bottom of the list, he noticed that there was a big red release button, meaning that for once, he could leave whenever he wanted to.

Initially, Blake considered pressing that button outright, still a bit weary to trust anything in a baby slave training facility. However, if he really was free to go at any time, then why waste this perfect opportunity to unwind? Throwing caution to the wind, he scrolled back up to where he had spotted that same chocolate muffin that he'd been drooling over only moments prior. Licking his lips, he tapped on the image of the muffin, opening up a mini-menu where he could select a quantity. Not wanting to be too greedy, he only added one to his order before submitting it.

Within seconds, the army of arms got to work as they selected a muffin from the top of the large stack, setting it down on a small, plastic dish. The muffin was then ferried across the room, making its way to Blake as quickly as it could without allowing the muffin to fly off of the plate. He rubbed his hands together cheekily as the plate was set down on the high chair's tray. "Oh, I think I could get used to this," he said as he moved to take the muffin.

Before Blake could wrap his fingers around the scrumptious treat, one of the hands smacked him away as the machine spoke for a second time, "Babies do not feed themselves. Please keep your hands inside the high chair at all times."

Rolling his eyes, Blake wasn't exactly thrilled that he couldn't feed himself. Moreover, he was disappointed that his one brief glimmer of autonomy was nothing but smoke and mirrors. Still, as his tummy sounded off yet again, he realized that he didn't have much of a choice. Begrudgingly, he opened his mouth and waited for one of the hands to feed him his first bite.

As soon as the crumbly muffin made contact with his tongue, Blake's ravenous hunger leapt into action. Chocolatey, moist, and warm, it was perhaps the single greatest muffin that he'd ever eaten in his entire life. Tiny flakes of muffin fell from his mouth as he continued to chow down, making a small mess of himself in the process. Much like an actual toddler, though, Blake thought little of the crumbs that were getting all over the place, too enthralled by the pillowy pastry.

While the muffin was delicious, Blake was thankful that it wasn't extremely huge. Considering how good the first treat was, he was giddy to sample a wide selection of sweets. Scrolling through the menu, he began tapping on multiple different items, keeping the quantity on each low so that he wouldn't fill up too much. The last thing he needed was to ruin his physique with too much junk food.

Much like an all-powerful King, Blake sat back and allowed the robotic hands to usher over the food of his choosing. Having selected a couple dozen options to sample, the mechanical arms were lining up to slide a bite into his mouth. He barely had enough time to chew and swallow before a different dessert was placed in front of his pie hole. Every time a new confection ran across his taste buds, it instantly became the single greatest bite of food he'd ever had.

By the time Blake had managed to taste everything he had selected, his stomach was pooching out, creating a small belly bump on the waist of his princess dress. "Woof, I don't think I could eat another-" he said, unable to finish his sentence before another hand swooped in and placed a small, frosted cookie in between his lips. Rolling his eyes, he slowly chomped down on the delectable dessert, stalling for time as he scrolled down to the bottom of the menu and pressed the red release button. While his brain was buzzing a bit from all the sugary delights, he was satisfied that his gut was no longer aching. However, that same gut was sent into summersaults as a pop-up message appeared as soon as he tried to release himself:

Error: Meal incomplete. All selected food items must be consumed before release is granted.

GULP!

Swallowing the doughy cookie, the terror that had a death grip on Blake's soul ever since he'd lost that stupid bet with Clara returned in full force. His eyes widened as he looked around at the dozen or so hands that still held unfinished desserts. His tummy trembled, realizing that unless he found a way out of the high chair on his own, he would soon be forced to consume every last morsel of food he'd selected. Seeing his next bite incoming, he knew that he'd need to act fast on whatever he came up with at a moment's notice.

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