

# BLADE BALLAD



THE BLASPHEMER

*This is a work of fiction, and the author does not condone hate speech or hateful ideology.*

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# Caligae

He sat in quiet, looking at the floor, littered with trash, oblivious to his surroundings. It was approaching noon, and he could feel the floor beneath his feet warming up to the summer heat. In his left hand, a half finished cigarette. The premise was mostly empty, as many of the other inhabitants, many of which are migrants, had already left to see the games. It was the weekend, after all.

He had nothing to do during this time, with no friends or real interest in making one, his time was spent rotting in bed wondering about meaningless metaphysics, like a sick animal. A favorite past time was to spend this time simmering in loathing, projecting his impotent hatred for every being that he could think of.

This time in particular, he directed his anger towards his migrant neighbors.

There was always some trouble with the migrants, a problem endemic to every corner of the empire. They were always shouting at each other, but this was no surprise as his residency in the town of Muttium, who bordered the Cartel states, is always bringing in all sorts of folk from the other side of the wall. Such troubles are distant from him however, so he paid little mind to it. He took this thoughts on a tangent and reflected on the nature of cultural dissonance and state of belonging:

I always hear of the Empire's great achievement of unifying much of the known world and placing their ideologues throughout, and with this has created widespread peace and unity for many. But it was not the truth, and the impunity of them to lie on such a matter vexes me greatly.

*The migrants find themselves unwelcome for reasons of their own doing. Chaos and violence pervades the community, only buried and hidden from the public. They hold those outside their tribe with contempt and even those from within. It is apparent that their demeanor stems of realization of their own place, and the guilt of being responsible for putting themselves in that place, after all, it is they who came here of their own volition.*

*And what is the justification for their animosity? Some are driven to the outlines of society through crime and vices of course, but many are no more than simple laborers. They contribute their fair share and in return get their fair share, but is it not enough? Are they missing something else which a salary cannot afford?*

*They adopt the same religion, the same customs, and the same ethics as the host, yet they remained separated. To me I saw nothing more than a pretentious act, maybe even an insult; a parody to a sacred tradition by foreign interpretation. Or perhaps it is truly not in their power to assimilate, and thus can only go as far as to mimic it?*

*Then what separates a citizen to an immigrant? It is perhaps not a question of oppression, nor a question of wealth, but moreso a lack of human spirit.*

He then headed to the Forum, which was just a small courtyard with a series of columns decorating its corners. The amphitheater in the west wing was exceptionally wide and was open to the public, and you

often found aspiring scribes or the unemployed sitting around arguing anything from politics, to religion, to economics, to which woman they would like to lay with.

“No you fool, why should oracles have any say in state affairs, would you allow your mother dictate the rules of your household?”

“Oracles do not dictate anything, their role has always been advisors, and the empire have only been making talks about integrating their prophecies into state policy, but nothing official.”

“And? They advise plebians like you on the most ridiculous matter, like pissing on your bread for good luck, worst part is you eat it up with eagerness like swine to their own shit.”

“Your contempt for women and patronizing of them is why they will never even glance at you.. well, perhaps with disgust.”

This was generally the discourse found at the Forum. Someone would instigate a topic with a reasonable premise, and it would end in vulgarity and baseless attacks, but it was certainly active and welcomed people from all walks of life.

He spent considerable time at this Forum, really most of his free time had been loitering the grounds here, and before he knew it evening had arrived, and most of the forum participants have left or continued their conversations elsewhere.

It was a chilly day, so you went for a walk in the chaparrals, wearing an old pair of caligae issued from your service in the Legion. The mountains were empty, and the only sound he could hear was his footsteps against the dusty trail. You were by your lonesome, yet felt that you were not truly alone.

Indeed, in the distance he saw a campfire. Could be anyone, could be a group of bandits, or just people who wants to be left alone, but there was little sound from the campfire, and he could make out a silhouette of a single man draped in a cloak.

“What brings you here?” The man asked, staring intently still into the campfire, focused on the flame and nothing else.

“Nothing”, I responded, “I was just out exploring my thoughts.”

“What kind of thoughts?”

“Nothing particularly interesting.”

“I explore quite a number of thoughts myself, mostly though, I have grown sick of the world, and would like nothing more than to be as far away from it.. But these are dangerous thoughts, and I should refrain from talking about them.”

“How could a thought be dangerous?”

“Because we entertain the thought that the world is impure, and must be cleansed, to be purified of unworthy seed, like removing weeds from a garden.”

You stay quiet for a moment, then respond.

“I can’t say I understand your sentiment — not entirely.. But I’ve often asked myself the same question. There’s something deeply wrong with this world. But as disillusioned as I am, I find myself too misguided to do anything about it. I see it all as a lie, but I do not delude myself, and have come to accept it, for this lie is my reality.”

“I ask you to look again, for what you hold in such high conviction to be the truth, may not be after all.”

“And who are you, so bold as to believe your convictions surpass that of the material world?”

“... I am a Disciple, Disciple Jaqub”.

“Disciple, of what?”

“The Awakened. we are preachers, messengers and teachers. Here to spread the teachings of one who calls himself The Blasphemer. ”

“You’re not exactly welcomed around here.”

“And neither are you.”

The disciple was right. Despite your service to the empire, your considerations for social etiquette and your tireless due diligence to taxes, you were never granted a true sense of belonging, nor gave you the spirit of what every person should be entitled to after their labors. It was dehumanizing, as if you existed only as an imagination, like that of an actor summoned on stage, only to be pulled back behind the curtains and quickly forgotten.

“I suppose.” I responded.

“Do you seek something else beyond material needs?”

“I look for something beyond what this world can offer me. A purpose, a reason to live, but what I seek most is the truth. For my whole life I saw the world as a lie, and despite the ridicule, I found it to be undeniably right, but could never prove it.”

“You seek a soul, stranger.. The Awakened movement teaches us that there is a single, eternal soul, which reaches out to those who seeks to ‘wake’ up. To, as you put it, see the lies and what’s beyond it.. We can offer this to you, we can help you attain a soul and reach the truth, but you must accept the price.”

“And what is the price?”

“Rejection.”

You thought for a moment, wondering what this meant. [Introspection]

Rejection, as if that was such a damning fate for a lowlife like me.

“I will accept your message.”

“It was a blessing that I came across you, or perhaps you came across me? Or maybe, neither of us had a say, and it was divine intervention. In any case, if you truly wish to become a Disciple, you must undergo a ritual, a Holocaust... The ritual will let you see what life really is, then you can decide what life means.”

“Choice, you say? Who am I to choose my own destiny?”

“Everyone has a choice.”

You nod.

“We have set up a Tabernacle nearby, arrive by nightfall, and we shall begin the induction. You shall see the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

A few days later, you wake up to a loud pounding on your door.

“Open up”.

“What’s going on?” You respond.

“You tell me, I keep hearing rumors of you going about fraternizing with a certain known terrorist to the empire. Does that seem familiar?”

“Terrorist? No, I wasn’t, I mean, I didn’t know I talked to a terrorist.”

“But you were talking to someone in those woods not long ago, were you not?”

“Well sure, I won’t deny it. I did happen across some stranger who introduced himself as a disciple.”

“A disciple, I see, and who is he a disciple of?”

“They call themselves Awakened, but it was just a casual encounter, I had no idea th-.”

“I’m going to stop you there. On order of the Empire, you have committed the crime of treason and conspiracy. From here on forth, you are to vacate these premises. You are no longer permitted to dwell within the boundaries of Imperial-guarded settlements.”

You are given a short amount of time to pack whatever belongings you can carry, before the imperial investigator’s guards drag you out of what was once your home.

“And if you are to return here, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

With nothing left, and no reason to continue working in the mines without a roof over your head, you begin making your way to the Tabernacle.

# Holocaust

You walk westward, according to the disciple's instructions, and by nighttime, you come across a clearing where a Tabernacle had been set up. You approach it and see cloaked figures, much like the one Disciple Jaqub was wearing, huddled around inside a tent, inside of which was a large fire pit.

As soon as you step foot inside the Tabernacle perimeter, which was poorly lit to reduce detection, all the cloaked figures turn to look, but very slowly, as you assume, to indicate passiveness. They seem to have anticipated your arrival, as one begins to approach you, but like all the other cloaked figures, he kept his head down, which made it impossible to discern who he was.

"Welcome." then showed you the way to the tent. The other disciples stare at you, and while you had the initial impression that they are friendly and docile, upon closer inspection you realize that all of them had concealed blades under their cloaks. They explained little and only expected your blind trust.

"Why do you seek the truth?" The stranger asks.

For a short moment you thought about this, as you both make your way to the tent.

*The truth means a lot to me, yet I can never understand what or why it is. It is a tether to reality, but reality itself is not ideal. It is self harming, for it does not concern me in its matters, often at my expense, yet it is never self contradictory. For this, I often hate the truth, yet cling on to it.*

*And every day I made a choice, a conscious voluntary choice, to adhere to the truth instead of straying to whatever else besides the truth has to offer. I thought that staying true is the noble path, but everywhere I go I am told otherwise.*

*It seems society has made it very apparent that this is the wrong choice. That instead of indulging in the many vices and delights civilization has to offer, I instead want to be away from such pleasures, because I saw it such pleasures as a trap, that unbeknownst to many, was a carefully engineered lure by the empire designed to entice outsiders into its borders, which became their cage, in a figurative sense. It was all a kind of test, I suppose.*

*The reward never came directly, that was one thing he always noticed. He did not receive admonishment, props or praise for the deed, nor any kind of satisfaction. To me it was medicine, an antidote to madness, and that was itself the reward.*

*That is not to say I do not enjoy pleasure. But my pleasure is not one which anyone can offer, because this pleasure, like the Disciple had mentioned, was dangerous, harmful, and as he will soon become, heretical.*

*But the truth, above all, was power, which challenged those who those above the masses. To exercise power is to exercise humanity, a drive to overcome weakness and become something greater, a higher being. But in doing so, I opposed those who already held that power.*

*Then at its roots, I knew that I was selfish. I sought truth for truth's sake, with noble intent, but I did it in the name of power, of exerting the truth over others, to potentially wield truth not as a tool, but as a weapon, a weapon to destroy deceivers.*

“Because I am a selfish man.”

“Hm. I see... We will show you the way, but you must offer a sacrifice.”

“What kind of sacrifice?” They were standing in the tent now, in front of a large fire pit.

“Step forward.”

Ahead, a burning fire pit, with flames reaching his height.

“If you wish to turn back, this is your final chance, for when you step foot in the flame, you will be reborn anew. The world as you know it will no longer be the same, and you will wake up, with newfound knowledge and ideas..”

You look in front of you and you see a large, horrible fire which consumes all, and behind you, the life you used to have. But what kind of life was it? It was a life for cattle, a miserable life where the misery is rooted in self loathing, one where pain was self inflicted, the looming sense of meaninglessness and mediocrity was, in your mind, a fate worse than death.

“What will become of me?”

“You will become disciple of The Blasphemer, the symbol of truth. You shall erase your name, taking instead the title of Messenger, for you will carry His message.”

And so you stepped into the fire. First you felt nothing, then slowly his your became more and more charred. Then slowly began to peel away, first in layers, then in chunks, until you saw your own charred bones.

It was not as painful as he had thought, and as he stood in the fire his vision slow to black, until it was pure darkness.

He awaited for a great sense of relief to wash over him. That the ritual will transport him to another, more just and beautiful world, to be truly free. But it never came.

Then he opened his eyes, and saw that he was in a courtyard. It was sunset and cloudy. You realize you are wearing something, a hooded cloak, and holding something as well: A katana.

Across the courtyard, you saw another figure looking away, he had his hands resting on a sword, his left shoulder draped with a red cape, and he wore an emblem on his neck.

“You have made a terrible choice, Messenger.”

“Why is that?”

“Because you have chosen a futile path.”

You say nothing.



“You see messenger, what you have yet to realize, is that you have become a vessel of chaos, an agent of destruction, and you have doomed yourself to spread their blasphemy like a disease across the world.”

“There has been some confusion. I am only a disciple, a student of the truth, nothing more.”

“No, there isn’t. You are not just a disciple, but one who will carry the very essence of the truth... The message of The Blasphemer, and I cannot allow that.”

“Tell me who you are.”

“I am a bounty hunter, under the service of the empire.” – Add extra stuff here

“And why are you a bounty hunter?”

“Because we must all serve order, peace and stability.. But I do not care for these lofty values, I serve the empire for a simple fact: Because I am a creature of flesh and must live in accordance with the laws of nature.”

“A pragmatist. I tell you, I was once in your shoes, but heed my warning that your comforts will never be sated. A great emptiness will haunt you, and you will never see the truth.”

“I pursue what is available to me, what I must do to survive, which is not always in the name of truth. To pursue what is impossible to grasp, what is impossible to perfect, is madness.”

“Your empire’s idea of peace is madness, bounty hunter.”

He unsheaths his katana, walks towards you, and defeats you by stabbing you through the lungs.

“This will not be the end for you Messenger. You will die a thousand deaths before your spirit finally rests.”

You wake up in the same spot where you had performed the Holocaust ritual, but the Tabernacle has been moved, and you are lying on the ground with nothing but a cloak, your caligae, bracciae and a katana.

You have a pounding headache, and realize that you have bandages wrapped around your head. You unwrap it, and realize that your forehead have been branded with a scar in the shape of the Awakened swastika. You are now marked as a full fledged disciple.

You return to the camping ground where you first talked to Disciple Jaqub, and on the way you notice people give odd and hostile looks at you, particularly at your scar, hearing whispers of “heretic”, “beast” and “terrorist”, so you have your hood up and kept your head down the rest of the way.

# Purity

“Welcome home, Messenger.”

“Why, I was in a dream, and I saw a figure, who called me a Messenger, but somehow, you knew this.”

“You should take your role more seriously, after all, being a messenger is special, as it means you have the potential to dictate the laws of the universe by your words alone, and those words are capable of changing the world.”

“I see, but not much has changed in this world, brother.”

“It’s not the world that has changed, but the potential for which it could change, now that you are one of us.”

“What do you mean?”

“You must be the sculptor of your own destiny, Messenger. The ritual was not to take you away from the tribulations of the world, but embolden you to affect it. You have been given a great gift, but also a great task: To deliver the message of the Awakened, and put an end to all that it rejects.”

“I must tell you, that on my way here, I cannot help but notice fear and anxiety following me. Those who recognize my scar look upon me with disgust, and I am turned away from shops and avoided in public spaces. Who are you people, and what have you done to earn such a disreputable name?”

“Why do you think they judge you?”

Even though they judge me, I cannot fault them, for I was judging them as well, perhaps even more severely than they have. I saw through their masks, their intentions, and their pride, and I was disgusted. My heart has changed, and I saw in their face no longer people, but animals.

“Because I judged them.”

He nodded.

“Every disciple reaches this point, as the truth becomes clear: those people you saw... they belong to something lesser. A different, inferior race, masked by cleverly imitated human characteristics.”

You look with confusion at the term “race”, a concept foreign to you. “Tell me about race.”

“There is a notion, of a deep bond shared between all members of humanity, of a blood that awakens a divine spark that appoints them as the architects of the world. You see, humans are, as we see it, the superior race, whereas all others are inferior. Of course, we do not make this claim of inferiority on the basis of race, but in fact it is Nature’s aristocratic principle which dictates this law; we simply disseminate the truth.”

“So why exactly has your movement caused such an uproar?”

“Race transcends tribe and nation. It is a people bound by blood, an inheritance that unites one across borders, languages and faiths. This means that race surpass nation, which puts the state at risk. This blood, furthermore, have different states of purity, and we are in a time when this blood has been far too muddled. You see, this world is inhabited by many races, but these many races did not come into existence with grace, instead, they are a destructive force, torn between beast and man, where beast has become dominant, and we must purify these beast races lest they take over the world. Our work requires bloody hands, but that’s nothing strange to what the empire inflicts on its subjects everyday.”

“I think, brother Jaqub, that there must be a distinction between blood and character. You say that such things are intermingled, yet I come to believe that such things are separable, and one is not nor should not be judged by their blood alone.”

“I’m sorry Messenger, but you have been misled by decades of imperial lies, propagated only to keep social stability. The truth is, their character is inseparable from their blood, and they can never truly be the ideal human that they yearn to be. They will reach, they will train, and they will fight for admission, but it will never come to their grasp, for they do not have the birthright nor the will.”

“And, how did these races come to be?”

“A long time ago, as The Blasphemer says, humanity was pure, and lived within their own self sufficient means, but as they got more clever, become more hedonistic and lazy, and so, conjured up a counterfeit race of humans created from mud to be their servants. These mixed human creatures came to be called Muts, distinguished by absence of a soul, which only we can see.”

“Of course, it was always there, but I never saw it. Their demeanor, their stench, there was always something off about them. But they’re everywhere.”

“We must undo humanity’s folly and arrogance. They have been disillusioned by their own ideals of acceptance, that humanity can be unified under belief alone. But the impurity festers, and we have no choice but to be the purifiers.”

“But it’s cruel. You suggest that we displace them, destroy them and their families as well. To eradicate them.”

“I do not call for their destruction, at least, as long as they don’t call for ours.. but only their separation from humanity. We will provide them a homeland, reclaimed from the Empire, where they can return to their natural forms, no longer be forced to live in a foreign habitat.. Most importantly, they will no longer endanger the bloodlines of man through continued interbreeding.”

You now understood why the Awakened movement was considered so dangerous. It was not a mere religious movement, but a force. Composed of warrior monks and spiritual fighters, becoming a disciple was a right, a right to struggle against beasts hidden in plain sight. To struggle against the state and wrestle it’s clutch of the world away from them.

But it’s a heavy price to pay.

# Exodus

“In any case, I feel strongly that I have overstayed my welcome, and must depart for a new pilgrimage.. Messenger, I ask that you join me, so that you may learn more about us.” Disciple Jaqub said.

“What is the purpose of your pilgrimage?”

“I must travel to Fajjarah to deliver a terrible omen. That for their greed and corruption, the people there shall face a famine unless they repent and turn their hearts to the Awakened.”

“But our agenda is to stop racemixers, what does greed and corruption have anything to do with that?”

“Because they use it to further their race. You see, one of the ways the muts spread their kind is through control of finance, but they employ wicked tactics and immoral ways to achieve those ends. Of course, we cannot speak of this openly, but the crime of usury must not go unpunished. It is time that the moneylenders and moneychangers in that forsaken city face their reckoning.”

“I see.”

“There’s an extra travel bag stashed nearby, belongs to a now gone disciple. You can have it.”  
You pitch a tent from the travel bag and fall asleep, in the morning you begin your journey to Fajjarah.

You learn that the old city is home to a large population of migrant belonging to an ethnic group called the Khainities, a particularly greedy race who have managed to dominate as financiers and merchants through guile and trickery, which translates to “cleverness” and “wit” from their perspective.

You and Disciple Jaqub make your way to the town square, where Jaqub begins to talk.

“The splendor of this city sickens me. It’s superficiality and advertisements gives my soul no solace. I shall show you the selfishness of this place, so you can see for yourself.”

You and Disciple Jaqub begin begging on the streets, and there are many beggars, but no one gave anything, even the fat and rich with plenty to spare. You realize everyone here is self serving and wholly inconsiderate of their neighbors, but you thought as to why.

Wealth, in itself, is not shameful. Great men should deserve wealth, but are all wealthy men great and honorable? What of the man who deserves it, yet spurns it, or has it taken from him? Clearly, to deserve wealth is not the same as to possess it.

A wealthy man is not obligated to share what he has—but he is bound to serve the hand that grants him access to it. And every wealthy man, whether he admits it or not, has a master, the master being an invisible force which compels servitude.

Thus, I no longer see these as wealthy men, but sickly slaves dressed in finery, impoverished creatures in golden cages. It is better for me to be a poor man with dignity than be rich in chains.

“These people have been corrupted, brother. Not with wealth, but with a heavy debt that their wealth has incurred upon them. I pity them, not envy.”

“I should tell you a tragic fate of these muts, Messenger. As they do not possess a soul, they continue to be misled on how to live with kindness, deceived by false virtues, falling into cruelty. I can’t fully blame them, for it is in their blood to be ignorant.”

“I tire of begging and looking upon these pigs with pity brother. I hope your sermons are more than just empty fearmongering.”

“The Blasphemer tells us that we are to shape our own fates, and indeed, this famine shall appear as divine punishment to the swarthy mass, but we will be its creator. So, you shall assist me in awakening the people by invoking the famine, one which will drive the Khainites away from this place.”

“But what of the non Khainites?”

“There’s nothing to do about them. They have little possessions, little attachments to this world, and so they will find little difficulty in migrating elsewhere. The Khainites however, with their splendor, will be undoubtedly apprehensive, and their attachments will be their death. Perhaps this shall be a lesson in being humble with worldly things, Messenger.”

“Hm.”

You and Disciple Jaqub, every night, would sneak off to poison the well and spread blight on the crop, fleeing into the woods when spotted.

You have small doubts against the ethics of such an action, to deceive the public for a “greater cause”, but was reassured each time you were mistreated by the Khainite and had what little you had was ridiculed. They were not innocent, and these actions were justified.

Over time crops started to wither, and livestock fell to disease. Blight becomes a common sight and destroyed acres of farmland. Many residents of Fajarah saw this as an omen of the Awakened, and many converted and left the city. The Khainites however, become embittered and tensions between lost property, repaying debts and trading of personal possessions got worse as the famine progressed.

Starvation and violence ensued, and a few Khainites learned to accept The Awakened, but many have started a witchhunt.

[Skip to next plot]

You return to your home, Muttium, taking care to hide your identity, knowing the consequence that would incur if you were caught loitering around as an unwanted pariah, let alone socialize with the citizens here and divulge your teachings.

But the strangest thing came over you: The town is the same, and the people are the same, yet you feel diametrically opposed to them, with a burning desire to exact vengeance for an evil which you could not fully conceptualize. What you were taught, and the soul that was imbued within you as an Awakened, allowed you see through a person's being, and you saw those with a soul, those without, and most particular, those who have replaced it with something else.

[Introduce antagonist]

The dark energy that this particular person emanated was caused not of an absence of a soul, but a clear rejection of it. You noted a noticeable coldness in their presence, and their words, when heard even from afar, gave you a pounding headache.

You realized that this person was not human. This was the bitter truth that all Awakened disciples shall bear. You knew it in your soul.