

Brain Fog

By C. Jade Wyton

Unknowingly cursed with a magical brain-fog to cloud his judgement and break his concentration, Dr Mori struggles to follow even the simplest of instructions.

Unsanitary, implied abuse, child abuse, mentions of violence.

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Dr Mori still hadn't cleaned up his lab, and he couldn't figure out *why* it was giving him so much trouble.

It wasn't the first time he'd had to re-organise himself. Back before they'd settled in Weltaron he'd lost his work over and over with every move. And even after settling, Wonda's unstable magic had given him quite a bit of grief.

*Wonda.*

Wonda....

Wonda?

Something about Wonda.

Something he was supposed to... do. Sometime he was supposed to... due?

Something was due. Something about Wonda was due.

He picked up one of her severed horns off the floor and turned it over in his hands.

*When had he last cut her horn?*

It couldn't have been that long ago, could it? She wasn't showing any signs of it growing. So it must have been recent.

*Right?*

He looked at the scattered notes along his floor and huffed. *He couldn't even check when her last horn-cutting was.*

February? It felt like he hadn't done it since around the start of February.

Right before... Blathe left?

It felt like it was due. But it mustn't have been. He *must* have done it, recently. If the lich wasn't complaining of its growth then it couldn't have been *that* long since he did it!

'Gods, what is wrong with me?!'

He hadn't been able to focus since that brat Leena had blown up his workstation. She'd clearly done *something*, or created *some sort* of chemical reaction that was hanging around in the air and clouding his mind. But he couldn't seem to *place* it!

A sharp, familiar knock on the laboratory door caught his attention and he looked up. That was the lich's knock.... Maybe Wonda *was* due for her horn cutting— Eugh, what was *that* still doing on the floor?

Mori bent down to retrieve the dog's brain (dog's? Perhaps it was a cat's? He couldn't seem to remember) and examined it.

No, no. This was definitely a cat's brain. From that experiment with Mr Chess, where he was... something... with... the... brain....

What was that experiment about, again?

Another sharp knock, and Mori was reminded of the lich's presence at his door. He hurried over to let her in and gave a respectable (fake) bow of his head as she entered; the little Chosen One in tow.

'Ah, if it isn't little trial C-4034, L-1846, I-332, H-B-4,' Mori greeted, giving the child a smile that made her heave as if she was about to be sick. 'My *favourite* little success!'

The child stepped back, her eyes wide and wild as she looked up at the half-elf.

'Aw, now, don't look at me like that,' Mori's grin grew at the child's fear. 'I wouldn't pull you apart. Not when you're doing so well! I'll save that for the other little ones, hm? I'm sure there's a lot I could learn, from opening up that little Miles friend of yours!'

The child heaved again, but didn't say a word.

'Just a joke,' Mori commented, wiping his hands on his coat. 'I've handled enough birdfolk to know what's inside those hollow bones of theirs.'

'I wouldn't push your luck, Mori,' the lich warned. 'Now that your purpose has been served, the others are questioning why I'm letting you stay. I'm keeping them at bay, as an act of good-will for your services, and because I know burning that bridge will do neither of us good, but if you don't watch how you behave around the children, I won't be able to stop the caretakers from whatever actions they may feel emboldened to take.'

'Heh, I'm not scared of the childcare workers,' Mori chuckled. Then, a pensive look overtook him. 'The cooks, however. *Them* I fear. I heard Strilleburg *ate* pieces of Willard when they buried him. Was that true?'

'No, she crippled his leg with her teeth, but spat out the flesh,' the lich corrected.

'One less thing to fear, I suppose,' Mori gave a haughty sniff. 'Or one more thing *to* fear, depending on how you look at it.... Anyway, to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?'

'You know why,' the lich responded with a huff.

And Mori hesitated.

*Fuck.*

They must have discussed it earlier, if she was acting this way. But he couldn't for the *life* of him remember what it was. So, after a long hesitation, he grimaced, bearing his teeth in a clearly-frustrated fake smile. 'Jog my memory?'

'Her heart,' the lich responded.

'Ah!' Mori remembered, now; he was to take samples from her heart, and see if he couldn't fix whatever had gone wrong with it.

Most likely, it had to do with the fact that he had needed to grow it from scratch. Her brain was fine— He'd been able to get direct samples from the lich. But growing the heart without samples from the lich's own had proven much more... *difficult*.

He rubbed his hands together as he turned and made his way over to his table to retrieve his tools.

And then....

He paused, looking at several different notebooks.

*Shit, which one was he needing, again?*

He glanced to the lich.

*Right!*

He didn't need his notebook, he needed his tools.

His.... *What* tools did he need, again?

'I'll leave her here with you and Ashdown, shall I?' the lich asked.

And Mori jumped as he felt Ashdown's presence by his side.

He'd forgotten that corpse was in here!

'Right,' he answered, shaking his head to try and clear it. 'I'll get right to checking her breathing.'

'Her heart,' the lich corrected, flatly. Then, her eyes tightened. 'Is something wrong with you? You're stupider than usual.'

Mori returned her glare with one of his own. 'Leave her with me,' was all he said.

And the lich did; rolling her eyes as she made for the lab's door.

*Finally! Now I can work in peace!* Mori huffed as he pushed past Ashdown to find his....

*What was he doing, again?*

He scanned around the room and, missing that the child had hidden herself behind Ashdown, tried to remember.

'What was I doing, Ashdown?' he asked.

Silently, Ashdown motioned to the mess of Wonda's horns on the floor.

'AH! Right!' he hurried over to clean up the horns.

One, two, three, he picked them up off the floor and then....

'What was I doing again?' he asked Ashdown.

Ashdown pointed to a nearby pile of broken jars, their samples scattered across the floor and Mori clicked his tongue; putting the severed horns on a nearby desk and making his way over to.... Uh....

'What was I doing again?'

Ashdown pointed to the opposite side of the room; to a chart that was half-hanging off the wall. And Mori made his way over, but stopped just short of reaching it.

'That doesn't seem right.... What was I doing?'

Ashdown pointed back to the broken jars.

'Right!'

This process repeated, over and over. And over. And over.

And over.

Again and again.

Until there was a harsh knock on the laboratory door, and Mori hurried over to let the lich in.

'Ah, to what do I owe the pleasure?' he asked, giving a fake-bow of his head.

'What do you mean, "to what do you owe the pleasure"?!' the lich snapped.

'You know *exactly* why I'm here!'

Mori paused. 'Oh... *right*.'

The lich rubbed her temples. 'Well?'

‘Well what?’

‘Well, how did it go?’ she growled. ‘Did she behave?’

‘Oh? Oh!’ Mori clasped his hands together, taking in a sharp breath as he turned to see the little girl sitting on a nearby chair. ‘The samples! Hm.... Well. You see. The thing is. I didn’t take them.’

‘It’s been three hours!’ the lich snapped. ‘What do you mean you haven’t taken them?! What have you been *doing* all this time?!’

He couldn’t, for the life of him, remember how he’d spent the last three hours. So he brushed the lich off and hurried to retrieve his tools. ‘It’s fine,’ he dismissed, knowing full-well that it wasn’t. ‘I’ll just take the sample, now—’

‘Like *hell* you will!’ the lich growled. ‘It’s been *three* hours! Something is clearly wrong with you, and I’m not waiting another *minute* just for you to make a mistake with her! We will pick this up again tomorrow, when the alcohol or drugs or *whatever* hideous chemical you’ve been sniffing has left your system!’

Mori gave an offended scoff as Ashdown helped the child off the chair and ushered her towards the lich.

‘I mean, really, Mori!’ she continued, motioning to Ashdown. ‘I’d expect this sort of scattered behaviour from him! He only has half his brain left! But somehow, half a brain manages to be twice as smart as you! It’s ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous!’

Mori simmered, as the lich grabbed the girl by the arm and dragged her up the stairs; still ranting and raving about his stupidity as she went.

Then, he took a deep breath. *No matter. No matter.*

She was merely a stepping-stone to his greater goals. A soon-to-be *past* colleague, in the search for immortality. Once he delivered Plume to Zalteck, he wouldn’t have to concern himself with the lich any longer, and they could part ways— On good or bad terms, he didn’t really care....

The breath escaped him as a long, frustrated sigh as he looked around the filthy lab.

‘Now... *what was I doing, again?*’ he muttered.

—END—

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