

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 4

Dragging the unconscious rat lady back to her home was a chore. Well, at least it wasn't for me. I sauntered behind Olin at a leisurely pace, enjoying the sight of him struggling under the weight of his new wife. *Faelwen, was it?* This was a chore for him, but it was a delightful stroll for me. The horde of tiny, horrified onlookers didn't escape my attention. Their curious terrified gazes followed us like flies to manure. *Can't they see we're busy here?* The idea of devouring the rat lady popped into my head. Still, with their innocent, wide-eyed stares, the little mice gave me indigestion. *Ugh, so annoying! Curse those adorable little things.*

Turns out Faelwen's place was just a hop, skip, and a jump away from where we were, which Olin seemed relieved about. *Who would've thought liches got tired?* But enough about him. The place was a disaster, covered in rubble as if it was hit by a natural disaster and then set on fire. And to top it all off, Faelwen and her brood were living in the basement, or as I like to call it, the sewer. But hey, at least it was spacious, right? Surprisingly, the putrid smell seemed to soothe my indigestion.

As we settled Faelwen into her bedroom and Olin tucked her into bed, I stumbled upon an unexpected sight – a mirror! It was the first one I had seen since being summoned into this magical realm. I stood there, captivated by my reflection. Sure, I could always use my Mana Sight to get a good look at myself. Still, something was mesmerizing about gazing into a mirror. In my past life, I was just a short, curvy goth girl with dyed green hair. But here, in this magical realm, I had the power to be anything I wanted, and I was stunning! I couldn't help but revel in my slender form and how my luscious locks cascaded down my shoulders. Of course, my hair length was always changing, but that was just the perk of being a shapeshifting monster of nightmares. As I gazed at my dress, I accepted it was the real me – not the flawless silk skin everyone else saw, but the black goo itself. And boy, was I exposed in this scorching heat!

As if on cue, my black dress began to shift and contort, morphing into a summery little number that still managed to retain its dark, slimy appearance. It reminded me of latex but without the cling. Now, upon the soft exterior of my silk skin lays my true form, compact and pretty. But appearances can be deceiving, as the tendrils that used to squirm and writhe on my dress still lurked beneath the surface, poised to strike at any I perceived as a threat or delicious.

Polymorph may have been taken off my skill list, but that didn't mean much. Stellar Void remained, and I didn't even bother using the system commands to wield it. Using either skill was like breathing – it just came naturally to me now. As much as I tried to avoid it, there was one skill that I couldn't put off using any longer. There were a couple of pressing questions that needed answering. So, with a deep sigh, I mentally called out, **[Status]**.

Name: Daughter of Nightmares

Race: Black Pudding Class: None Level: Restricted <u>Titles</u> [Hopeless Crusader] [Scion of the Crone] [Restricted] [Restricted]		
<u>Racial Skills</u> [Corrosive] [Stellar Void] <u>Spells</u> <u>Abilities</u> [Veil Polyglot] [Venomous]	<u>Vulnerabilities</u> [Fire] [Holy] <u>Immunities</u> [Acid] [Charm] [Darkness] [Disease] [Poison] [Sleep]	<u>Unique</u> [Oracle] [Restricted] [Restricted] <u>Selectable</u>

I couldn't help but feel disappointed as I looked through my list of skills. Some of my favorite skills, like Necrotic Flame, Blight, and Mana Sight, were missing from the list. Sure, I had become so accustomed to using them that I didn't really need them on the list, but I still hadn't mastered all my skills. Life Drain was still a mystery to me, and Absorb – well, let's just say I never quite figured out how to steal skills without the system's help. *Ugh!* Absorb's loss was what truly upset me. But enough about that. I wasn't here to cry about my lost skills. No, I was here to bitch at someone about it! Taking a deep breath, I reluctantly used the one command I had been avoiding: “[Oracle].”

ERROR!
V i r US D e T e C t

<i>E</i>
<i>D</i>
!
ERROR!
DOWNLOAD DETECTED!
ERROR!
WARNING SYSTEM HACK DETECTED!
ERROR!
OUTSIDE OVERRIDE INITIATED!

“What the shit?!”

Olin’s voice lacked any hint of concern as he asked, “What’s the problem?”

I held up a finger to Olin, who sat in a little chair in what could only pass as a living room. As for the horde of mice, the adorable little shits had the good sense to stay outside, mostly out of fear after witnessing Olin strut around in their father’s lifeless body. *Oh, the horror! Pfft.* Still, I couldn’t even imagine watching my own father get murdered by my mother, only to see him rise from the dead and start walking around like nothing had happened. Well, maybe I wouldn’t mind seeing the first part with my stepfather, but that’s a whole different can of worms. Of course, I was the one who killed him, but that’s our little secret!

“That’s quite the mischievous grin you’ve got there. What devilish thoughts are going through that gorgeous mind, I wonder?”

“What the fuck did you just say to me?!” I hissed.

“I didn’t say anything,” Olin grumbled.

My back snapped to attention as I whipped around to see a man I didn’t recognize leaning against the wall like he owned the place. *Who the hell invited this guy?* I instantly hated him. To make matters worse, he gave me a stupid smirk that I wanted to rip off his face and use as a coaster for my coffee. But alas, I didn’t have any coffee, so I’ll settle for a useless coaster instead. Though, I suddenly had a craving for coffee.

The man before me towered over me, his lanky figure adorned with what appeared to be a mage’s robe made from snake hide – *classy*. The robe hung open, revealing a gaudy gold silk button-up pajama outfit. His elf-like facial features weren’t the only things that caught my attention. There was something else lurking at the surface – maybe it was his unsettling gaze or those slitted pupils.

Or maybe it was how he caressed his pointy chin with a long, sickly finger. But, hey, who was I to judge? I'm sure everyone loves a good snakeskin ensemble paired with gold pajamas. Whatever his deal was, he stared at me as if I were a delectable treat he couldn't wait to sink his teeth into.

"You may have the delightful pleasure of calling me, Jör—."

It was like a slap in the face, but I quickly realized where he came from. "Oh, for the love of devouring rotting flesh, hell no!" I exclaimed, cutting this dick head off mid-introduction and mentally commanding the deactivation of [**Oracle**].

The last thing I saw was the look of pure shock etched onto his face as he vanished into thin air. I may not have known who he was, but dealing with Circe was bad enough – the last thing I wanted was to put up with some new asshole god. *Ugh, no, thank you!*

As Olin stared at me, I couldn't help but feel like he was sizing me up for a straitjacket – which, let's face it, wouldn't be too far off. I mean, who talks to imaginary people only they can see? But, hey, at least when I used Oracle to chat with Circe, I knew that it was just her and me. *Even if she's a total bitch.* Or, at least, that's what I thought until that ass decided to hijack my unique skill. *What a complete and utter dick move!*

The creaky wooden door to Faelwen's bedroom groaned open, interrupting my thoughts. I turned to see her peering out at us, her big tear-stained eyes filled with terror. "Razzle? How?" she stammered in disbelief. "I thought I accidentally killed you. I'm sorry. I just get so mad when you run off with other women. Please forgive me," she finished, sniffing like a drowning rat trying to clear its nose.

"Congratulations, you killed your husband. Now, here's the deal, lady. My 'friend' Olin is possessing his corpse, and I want to buy it off you. I'll throw in some extra gold if you don't ask any questions. How does a hundred gold sound?" Better to blame her for her husband's death than admit the truth. As I took in the disgusting accommodations, worse than a crumbling orphanage from those sad Christmas movies, I couldn't help but feel a twinge of... indigestion. *Damn it, I have a soft spot for kids. I suppose this counts as my one charity case this year!* However, I can't let anyone figure out my one vulnerability. I mean, I have a reputation to consider. "Oh, and by the way, can you get me a glass of that delightful-smelling liquid over there?" I shamefully pointed at the visible section of the sewer just outside the room.

With a sudden burst of energy, she exclaimed, "**Deal!**" and darted towards a glass, filling it with water from the roaring sewer. *Huh, she took that remarkably well.*

Olin looked at me with an expression of disgust as I drank the wonderful liquid, all while humming in delight. As I did, all sorrow disappeared from Faelwen's face. She practically bounced with eager anticipation as she waited to receive payment for her husband's corpse.

Faelwen's face went from joy to horror as I reached into my chest cavity to retrieve her payment. It was starting to become a little party trick of mine that would never get old, watching their reactions when I pulled out an item from my personal storage space. As I rummaged through the various objects inside, my fingers brushed past trinkets, weapons, and who knows what else. But

it was the sound of coins that I was after, and I grabbed them by the fistful. I dropped them onto an old wooden table with a clatter, enjoying the satisfying jingle they made. *How much money did that General need, anyway?*

“Have you heard of a moon called, Nyxoria?” Olin asked.

The woman shot Olin a fleeting glance before responding to her former husband’s corpse, “I’m afraid not. We are quite isolated on this moon, and airships often overlook us. Though you can still find transport off Yaddith, the next available one I know of won’t be for a few months. And it’s quite expensive.”

“**What?!**” I blurted out. f

“I see, and do you happen to keep the Völuspá year on this moon?”

“Y-Yes... we’re in the Third Year of Slumber, during the Ninth Eon of the Shattered Realms.” She said with a note of caution.

Olin sighed, “We’ve been gone for eleven years.”

Collapsing onto one of the dingy chairs in the dilapidated room, I was overcome by a wave of shock. Even though it had been only a few hours for me, it had been eleven years since Aurelia last laid eyes on me... *Would she even wait that long for me?* The thought pained me more than any of my past deaths.

“And what about the necromancer?” Olin asked.

“I can take you to her,” Faelwen muttered as she collected the coins on the table, smiling broadly as she did.