

# BLACK PUDDING

## CHAPTER 20

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Ducking, dodging, and weaving, I narrowly evaded a barrage of flaming projectiles that threatened to roast me alive. My latest adversary happens to be that mole-rat-looking guy, and it appears that he has a fondness for casting fire spells. Damn, silk isn't exactly fire-resistant, just like Black Puddings. Shit's flammable as hell! By my fifth brawl, the rest of the class caught on to my fire-fearing ass. And let me tell you, that scorch mark on the side of my face ain't doing shit to help my disguise. Thank fuck, no one's pulled out any holy spells yet, but if they do, I'm royally screwed.

My cover's still intact, but after nine brutal fights, I'm in some deep shit. Surprise attacks are my specialty. I've essentially mastered the art of the sucker punch, or rather, the sucker spell. But once those bastards saw me unleash the fury of my Blight and Necrotic Flame, every goddamn fight became a fucking uphill battle. Those motherfuckers figured out how to shield themselves from my signature moves!

I've been holding back on unleashing my Corrosive and Venomous skills because they require direct contact with my actual flesh, and I'm dead set on concealing my true nature from everyone. Why? Fuck if I know at this point! Damn, I really wish I had devoted more time to learning to cast Acid Breath or Poison Spit without the system commands. Hell, what I would give to have my Burst spell back. But now, they're nowhere to be found in my arsenal, and all I can do is hope that I'll regain 'em when I finally unlock a new class. Yeah, I did unlock that Crystal Artificer crap, but it ain't exactly the kickass sorceress vibe I'm craving. I wanna be a spell-slinging deva, unleashing lightning bolts on my enemies or any sorry bastard that crosses my path. Is that too much to ask for?

A surge of searing fire erupted behind me, propelling me forward and dangerously closer to the mole-like bastard. The intense heat licked at my silk hair, leaving a singed trail as I tumbled through the air. In that split second, I could almost feel my entire body succumbing to the inferno, consumed by flames. However, to my surprise, my school robe demonstrated some level of fire resistance. Well, I use the term "resistance" loosely, as it managed to withstand the fiery assault without bursting into a full-blown conflagration. Nevertheless, the ends of the robe now smoldered ominously, a potential threat to my silk shell. I found myself in a dire predicament, realizing the depth of my predicament. There was no way I could prevail against the entire class in an endless sequence of one-on-one battles.

A thought gnawed at the back of my mind—what will happen when I lose a fight? Will I respawn here, at the waystone, or will I be whisked away back to the altar where I first awakened on this moon? The prospect of respawning at the waystone carried its own set of challenges. If I were to return here, I would most likely be reverted back to my small pudding form, my cover completely... dissolved? Gooed? Melted? Ah, who cares! I'm getting way too caught up in these puns. *Focus*

*Blake!* To make matters worse, I didn't have enough sustenance stored in my dimensional storage to regain my desired mass. Perhaps I should have exercised more caution and relied on the school cafeteria for my meals instead of indulging in those tantalizingly decayed body parts stowed away within Stellar Void. *Ugh, I'm so screwed!*

Focusing on the swirling ambient mana that enveloped me, I tapped into its power and unleashed a desperate cast of Necrotic Flame, hoping that my own flames would have some damn effect. A wave of purple energy surged from my palm, although it wasn't necessary to cast from my hand specifically—I could have easily unleashed the spell from the soles of my feet. But for the sake of appearance, I projected it like a flamethrower from my hand.

As my spell collided with the target, a translucent white bubble or aura materialized, its existence concealed until the moment of impact. It was as if the collision revealed a hidden barrier that had been there all along. However, I couldn't help but wonder if I could perceive this barrier without the need for impact, perhaps by honing my Mana Sight.

“Attention, you sorry excuse for squirm-puffs! Open your damn eyes and pay attention to what's happening right in front of you! Look at that snow elf over there, waving her fancy-ass attack spells like she's hot shit. Let me tell you, she's all bark and no bite. Too damn reliant on those two spells, she's leaving herself wide open for the vermolian to set her alight. Her casting style might work for some sneaky-ass assassin, but in a real fight with opponents right in your face, it's a guaranteed recipe for disaster! Now, don't think the vermolian's approach is any better, but at least he's smart enough to capitalize on her weaknesses!” the instructor bellowed at the class while I dodged yet another fireball, muttering curses under my breath.

My frustration surged to new heights as I listened to the drake's infuriating commentary on my lackluster performance and witnessed my opponent standing there unscathed. It was infuriatingly clear that my magic had lost its once-potent punch since my enrollment trial for the academy. And the culprit? The damn ambient mana in this arena. It felt weaker, like a watered-down cocktail that couldn't pack a punch. To make matters worse, the onlookers seemed to be completely out of harm's way, as if our spells had no hope of reaching them. *How utterly annoying!*

It became evident that relying on ambient mana casting had a major drawback—it was entirely dependent on the levels of ambient mana present. Unfortunately, the current levels weren't sufficient for my needs. While I could switch to relying on the system for casting spells, the problem was that I didn't have any long-range attacks in that arsenal. If I wanted to secure a victory, it seemed I would have to engage in up-close and personal hand-to-pudding combat. A daunting prospect if I wanted to keep my cover, but it was the only way.

Throwing desperation to the wind, I charged headlong at the piece of shit mole-rat. Deep down, I knew that a single direct hit from one of his flaming spells would ignite me like a bonfire, and I'd soon find out whether I'd respawn right here in this shitty arena or get sent back to the altar. But I had one last trick up my sleeve to bridge the distance, one I hadn't yet resorted to. It was a tad embarrassing to rely on this, considering how much I despised it, but desperate times called for desperate measures. So, without any regard for my pride, I spat out the incantation loud and clear,

just as a massive wall of flames came barreling at me, “Veiled in the unseen, guard me from all fucking harm. Astral Shield!”

I clenched my eyes shut for a brief moment, bracing myself for the searing heat and pain of the incoming flames. But to my surprise, there was nothing. No heat, no pain. Slowly, I cautiously reopened my eyes, only to realize that I needed to reactivate Mana Sight once again. And to my utter disbelief, I found myself right back on that infuriating, cursed altar! *What the actual fuck?!*

Lying there as a small, helpless puddle of goo, I replayed the incantation over and over in my mind, desperately trying to figure out what went wrong. And then it hit me like a ton of bricks—I had added the word “fucking” into the incantation like a dumb bitch. *How could I be so stupid?* I groaned in frustration, feeling utterly foolish for my mistake. Ugh, I couldn’t believe I had sabotaged myself like that.

Thankfully, I had a few spare body parts stashed away to somewhat satiate my hunger, although they weren’t enough to restore me to my desired size. Nope, I looked like a fricking toddler at the moment... or maybe even a gnome? Well, since I resembled one, I figured I might as well embrace the gnome look, albeit with a half-assed attempt. Not because I was lazy, mind you, but because I was seething with frustration. I didn’t bother covering my dark, gooey flesh with white silk. Instead, I fashioned my Black Pudding flesh into a gnome-like form with a dress and long hair, channeling my anger into every step as I stormed down the mountain toward the gates of Thirion.

As I approached the gate, I quickly recognized the sextet of guards I had encountered during my initial entrance with Olin. They were lazily standing at the ready, their diverse species no longer arousing my curiosity – a solitary human, a scaly lizard, a massive fur-swathed creature, and three elves, each displaying distinctive features hinting at their diverse lineages. Though, I couldn’t help but find the chubby elf rather enticing at this moment, like a delectable morsel amidst the company of warriors.



Olin and Kaida had grown remarkably close over the past few days, spending time together, sharing notes, and engaging in discussions about their research interests. It had been a delightful period of tranquility for the two of them. Meanwhile, Nikola had respectfully given them their space and returned to his secluded workshop, fully engrossed in his own tinkering endeavors.

However, as with all good things, the dream-like days eventually give way to nightmarish things. Kaida looked up, her gaze falling upon Blake as the pudding entered her small sanctum. The Black Pudding appeared to be in good condition, with no visible signs of any problems. The monster stood at her customary height, dressed in a pristine short white dress that perfectly matched her flowing white hair. Her captivating signature feature, the glowing orange eyes, remained unchanged.

Before Kaida could voice her question, Olin beat her to it. “Why aren’t you at the academy?” he asked, curiosity evident in his tone. “Did you get the stones?”

“No, I died,” Blake said bluntly, sparking a surge of curious intrigue in Kaida. “Anyway, do you happen to know how to get me back there? The portal to the academy isn’t open at the moment.”

“It reopens a few times throughout the day and night, but let’s circle back to what you just said,” Kaida responded, her curiosity piqued. “You died? You must have some incredible artifact or... be a leveler!”

Little did the revenant woman know, but Blake did indeed possess a potent artifact that granted her the ability to respawn—a Dungeon Core concealed within her dimensional storage skill, Stellar Void. This remarkable artifact, coupled with her status as a leveler, ensured her return from death for as long as she possessed it within herself. As the realization of her slip-up struck her, Blake found herself frozen in place. The pudding tittered mischievously, contemplating whether to dissolve Kaida’s bones as a precaution. However, after a brief moment of consideration, Blake reached a decision. She no longer cared who knew her secret. Keeping secrets had never been her forte, after all. In her previous life, it seemed like everyone knew she was gay before she even realized it herself, although perhaps not that last boyfriend she had before fully embracing it herself. Though, she did have a lot of fun with his mom.

“Maybe,” was the only response Blake offered, a hint of indifference in her voice. She had no desire to delve into explanations with anyone.

“I see, I see,” Kaida remarked, the undead woman’s curiosity only growing stronger. “And what class are you?” Her question caused Blake to freeze yet again.

“What do you know about leveler classes?” Blake asked, her own curiosity now piqued as Kaida set aside her work and started rummaging through a stack of books.



My discussion with Kaida had been enlightening, and I wished you could have been there to witness it. However, as I made my way back to the academy, it was well past midnight, and the concept of time on this moon seemed somewhat elusive to me. I had lost track of how many hours made up a day, but it hardly mattered since I only had one class to attend each day, and its duration varied as needed. My main focus revolved around unlocking the secret of creating Mana Stones, as they held the key to my ultimate plan of escaping from this moon and returning to Aurelia. In addition to that, I was determined to unlock a new class and acquire new skills during my time at this academy. Perhaps, on my way out after accomplishing those goals, I would seize the opportunity to steal – I mean, gather a few Mana Stones. And amidst all these plans, I also hoped to find some free time to immerse myself in the pages of the new book I had safely stashed within Stellar Void, *Unveiling the Ancient Magi Techniques, Known as Classes*.

“You’re alive!” Thalassa gasped, her eyes widening as she leaped out of bed upon seeing me enter our room. “What happened? You’re the talk of all seven campuses. I heard Major Emberblade got reprimanded by the queen herself after you didn’t reappear at the Waystone. It’s all everyone is talking about. So, spill it—what really happened?” the nymph blurted out in a rapid-fire series of questions.

“Seven campuses? I thought there were only two—the one here and the main one in the capital,” I replied, surprised by Thalassa’s mention of additional campuses.

“Well, yeah, on this moon, but we have alliances with a few other moons, though nothing major. They’re all relatively small compared to Yaddith. That’s how we’ve got nobility from other kingdoms. Although I must say, they’re not of any great significance, just some unimportant nobles like Prince Rayne they sent to maintain the peace,” the nymph explained, taking a moment to catch her breath. “But let’s not dwell on that. Now, tell me, what happened?”