

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 3

You have taken multiple clawed strikes for 20 points of [**Piercing**] damage.
Current Health: 77 out of 100

I had completely engulfed Niamh's head as she desperately tried to scratch me off her face. But thankfully, the scratching stopped as I dissolved the tips of her fingers down to boney nubs. It will only be a few milliseconds before the remainder of her hands is corroded away by my acidic body. The two of us were falling deeper into a dark abyss, yet I refused to let go! *I should feel horrible right now. I'm murdering her..., but she tastes like cherries and sex! Fuck, what's wrong with me?*

Niamh's hands were all but dissolved, and in what appeared to be a defiant last stand, she pulled her melted digits into a fist and slammed them into her face, which was me! **Ouch!** After the first blow rattled the two of us, she pulled back and repeated the action with both fists like a boxer on a speed bag. Then it just stopped...

You have taken multiple blows for 45 points of [**Blunt**] damage.
Current Health: 32 out of 100

You have defeated a [**Succubus**].

LEVEL UP!
LEVEL UP!
LEVEL UP!
LEVEL UP!

You are now level 13.
3 Ability Points Awarded.
3 Spell Points Awarded.
4 Attribute Points Awarded.
Racial Skill Unlocked: [**Polymorph**]

Do you wish to [**Absorb**] [**Succubus**]?
Yes / No

That orgasmic sensation of leveling washed through me as my body clenched tighter around Niamh's face, and like a watermelon with too many rubber bands, her head burst. If I could scream in delight, I would, but unfortunately, it seems fate has something else in store for me.

Numbness and gluttony were perhaps my two most common senses, but now it was a sheer pain! The ground from within the abyss suddenly appeared with the force of an a-bomb! There was an

abrupt splash as Niamh's remains liquified across the stone floor, followed by my tar-like body splattering.

You have taken 99 points of [Fall] damage.
Current Health: 1 out of 100

Ugh, they call this a trial? Everything hurt, granted all I was, was a gooey slime. I had no limbs, bones, organs, or even a brain. I was just pudding smeared across a stone floor with bits of succubus mixed in. Maybe the [Absorb] will give me something good. I mentally mumbled, yes on [Absorb] [Succubus].

[Absorb] [Succubus] Successful. New Status Bounces and Unlocks are Awarded.	
+ 0 Strength + 3 Dexterity + 1 Constitution + 5 Intelligence - 1 Wisdom + 20 Charisma	<u>Unlockable:</u> [Soul Sucker] [Soulsense] [Charm]

Slight relief washed into me as I noticed my health had increased by twenty, leaving me at twenty-one out of hundred and twenty in health. My only conclusion was that my health increases by twenty for every point I have in **Constitution**. *I don't know what I'll be facing down here. Perhaps now is a good time to review all my unspent points and unlocks.*

Slowly pulling myself together (literally), I was disappointed to find there weren't any more succubus bits remaining. *Crap, what's happening to me?* Mentally shaking my nonexistent head, I began evaluating the unlockable section of my status sheet.

<u>Unlockable:</u> [Stellar Void] [Venomous] [Spider Walk] [Silk Webbing] [Life Drain] [Blight] [Fear] [Soul Sucker] [Soulsense] [Charm]
[Stellar Void] 1 st Tier – Type: Spell – Cast: 200 Mana Gain the spell [Stellar Void] and call forth a pocket dimension from within yourself. 1 st Tier [Stellar Void] can store items within 5 cubic meters of dimensional space. No cooldown between casts.

Cost: 5 Spell Points
Unlock?
Yes / No

[Venomous] 1st Tier – Type: **Ability – Passive**
Gain the ability **[Venomous]** and inflict **[Poison]** upon all those you touch.

Damage output and duration vary based on the caster's **Wisdom**, spell tier level, and the target's **Constitution** and/or **Wisdom**.

Cost: 3 Ability Points
Unlock?
Yes / No

[Spider Walk] 1st Tier – Type: **Ability – Passive**
Gain the ability **[Spider Walk]** and freely walk on any surface in defiance of even gravity.

Any additional weight carried beyond the caster's mass varies based on tier level.

Cost: 2 Ability Points
Unlock?
Yes / No

[Silk Webbing] 1st Tier – Type: **Ability – Cast:** 1 Stamina
Gain the ability **[Silk Webbing]** and cast the threaded silk webs of a spider.

Quality and quantity vary based on tier level.

No cooldown between casts.

Cost: 1 Ability Point
Unlock?
Yes / No

[Life Drain] 1st Tier – Type: **Spell – Cast:** 50 Mana
Gain the spell **[Life Drain]** and take a portion of your target's health as your own.

The quantity taken varies based on the caster and target's **Constitution** and/or **Wisdom Attributes**.

30-second cooldown between casts.

Cost: 2 Spell Points
Unlock?
Yes / No

[Blight] 1st Tier – Type: **Spell – Cast:** 80 Mana
Gain the spell **[Blight]** and inflict -2 **Dexterity** and -5 **Constitution [Debuff]** upon your target.

Duration is 5 minutes for every +1 **Wisdom** caster has over the target's overall **Wisdom**.

10-minute cooldown between casts.

Cost: 3 Spell Points
Unlock?
Yes / No

[Fear] 1st Tier – Type: **Spell – Cast:** 80 Mana

<p>Gain the spell [Fear] and inflict -2 Strength and -5 Wisdom [Debuff] upon your target.</p> <p>Duration is 5 minutes for every +1 intelligence caster has over the target's overall intelligence. 10-minute cooldown between casts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cost: 3 Spell Points Unlock? Yes / No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">[Soul Sucker] 1st Tier – Type: Spell – Cast: 50 Stamina</p> <p>Gain the ability [Soul Sucker] and take a portion of your target's mana as your own.</p> <p>The quantity taken varies based on the caster and target's Intelligence and/or Wisdom Attributes. 30-second cooldown between casts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cost: 2 Ability Points Unlock? Yes / No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">[Soulsense] 1st Tier – Type: Ability – Passive</p> <p>Gain the ability [Soulsense] and feel what cannot be seen.</p> <p>Gain awareness of every soul and/or mana source within a 3-meter radius. Effectiveness greatly diminishes for every 1 meter beyond the initial 3 meters.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cost: 1 Ability Point Unlock? Yes / No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">[Charm] 1st Tier – Type: Spell – Cast: 200 Mana</p> <p>Gain the spell [Charm] and [Enthrall] a target to your desires.</p> <p>The caster must have more than 10 Wisdom and/or 10 Intelligence than the target to successfully [Charm]. [Charm] ends when the target's Attributes increase above casting requirements and/or the caster uses [Charm] on another target. 72-hour cooldown between casts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cost: 5 Spell Points Unlock? Yes / No</p>

To both my horror and delight, magic was real, but so were vampires, necromancers, and demons. Worst of all, *I'm a monster!* I had only woken up from dying less than an hour ago, and here I was, thrown into the bottom of an abyss. What was most frustrating was that I had no clue what I would face down here.

I have always been an antigun advocate, well, maybe not an advocate, more of a silent complainer, but right now, what I would give for a pistol or assault rifle. *Funny how your values change when you're in danger! Actually, I think all of my morals have been scrambled. Hmm...* The next best option, perhaps better, would be ranged magic! Scanning through my list, the only long-range offensive spell option I could find seemed to be [**Blight**] and [**Life Drain**]. Some of the [**Debuff**] spells seemed nice, but I needed a heavy hitter. *What I would give for a fireball or lightning spell.*

Heck, anything with some serious stopping power would be nice! How many points do I have again?

Unspent Spell Points: 5
Unspent Ability Points: 6
Unspent Attribute Points: 13

I liked [**Stellar Void**], and [**Charm**] would be nice, but each cost five spell points, which was all I had. What I needed was an attack spell. My best-range attack options were [**Life Drain**] and [**Blight**]. [**Venomous**] seemed great, but from the description, it was a touch ability, like [**Corrosive**]. So I would come back to that one when distributing my ability points. However, [**Blight**] drops my enemy's **Constitution** by five; if my math is correct, that's a potential hundred health gone from one spell. *That's huge!* Then there's [**Life Drain**], and while the description was vaguer than most, which was saying something, I needed a healing spell, and one that doubled as an attack spell was a bonus I couldn't pass up.

Next up were my abilities, and I had six points to use. Besides the mana or stamina cost, I didn't see much difference between abilities and spells. [**Venomous**] was a no-brainer! I really want [**Spider Walk**], heck, I might even be able to use it to walk up the pit I was thrown down, but I doubt the cult-looking assholes up there would consider that completing whatever this trial was. No, the ability to replenish mana was more useful than walking on walls. So, [**Soul Sucker**] it is! *I wonder, if I level it up, will I be able to eat souls instead of mana?*

That left me with only one ability point and two options. [**Soulsense**] and [**Silk Webbing**] each had their merits, but I've seen enough comic book movies to know how badass it would be to make my own spider webbing! Besides, [**Soulsense**] seemed pretty similar to [**Thermalsense**], although [**Soulsense**] was a passive. However, it didn't feel necessary to get it just yet. *Honestly, I hadn't even checked what all [**Thermalsense**] does...*

[**Thermalsense**] 1st Tier – Type: **Ability** – Cast: 10 Stamina
Gain the ability [**Thermalsense**] and see what cannot be seen.

Detect temperature differences through sight within a 20-meter radius for 10 minutes.

Effectiveness greatly diminishes for every 5 meters beyond the initial 20 meters.

10-minute cooldown between casts.

Cost: 1 Ability Point

Unlock?

Yes / No

That's it, and only twenty meters? Ugh!

All that was left were my thirteen attribute points. I first put four points into **Constitution**, evening me out at ten, which should be two hundred health. Next was **Wisdom**, which I believed was my spell strength and resistance, so I put six into it and got it up to ten. I put two into **Intelligence**, which was my total mana, and should get me up to three hundred. All that was remaining was one point that I put into **Strength**; maybe it would let me hit harder with my touch abilities

[Venomous] and [Corrosive]. *Hmm... I hope I didn't go too heavily into mana and spell-casting and not enough into stamina.*

Alright, let's finalize this and check [Status].

<p>Name: Blake Race: Slime Subrace: Black Pudding Class: Dungeon Monster Level: 13 Unspent Spell Points: 0 Unspent Ability Points: 0 Unspent Attribute Points: 0 Health: 121 / 200 Mana: 300 / 300 Stamina: 140 / 140 Strength: 5 Dexterity: 7 Constitution: 10 Intelligence: 15 Wisdom: 10 Charisma: 14</p>	<p>Racial Skills: [Absorb] [Corrosive] [Polymorph] [Thermalsense] Spells: [Blight] [Life Drain] [Mana Sight] Abilities: [Veil Polyglot] [Venomous] [Silk Webbing] [Soul Sucker]</p>	<p>Vulnerabilities: [Fire] [Holy] Immunities: [Acid] [Darkness] [Disease] [Poison] Unique: [Restricted] [Restricted] [Restricted] Unlockable: [Charm] [Fear] [Soulsense] [Spider Walk] [Stellar Void]</p>
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My [Fall] damage was still there, but it seemed that adding points to **Constitution** boosted my health. Glancing through my [Status] sheet, I also noticed a **Racial Skill** that hadn't been there before the fall. *That's right, I forgot all about [Polymorph]. While I'm at it, I haven't checked what [Absorb] does either.*

<p>[Polymorph] 1st Tier – Type: Ability – Cast: 30 Stamina Gain the ability [Polymorph] and shapeshift into any previous target Race's form you have used [Absorb] on. Race's spells and/or abilities are restricted to only spells and/or abilities the caster has gained through [Absorb]. Duration ends when canceled by the caster and/or the caster's stamina falls below 30. 1-hour cooldown between casts.</p>
<p>[Absorb] 1st Tier – Type: Ability – Cast: 0 Stamina Gain the ability to [Absorb] 3 highest tiered spells and/or abilities from a chosen target. [Absorb] spells and/or abilities will be offered as Unlockable 1st Tier. Any repeat abilities offered will increase tier spell and/or ability by 1. Rare Bonus: 5% chance to [Absorb] the 4th highest tiered spell and/or ability from a chosen target. 5-minute cooldown between casts.</p>

I was surprised to see the five percent bonus for a fourth spell from [Absorb]. *I lucked out the first time I used it against the spider.* With all that done, I was left with only one mystery remaining.

<p>[Restricted] – Unknown Tier – Type: Unknown – Cast/Passive: Unknown</p>

You have not yet met the requirements to unlock **[Restricted]**.

Well, shit! My frustration with **[Restricted]** ended as swiftly as it came. Glancing around the chamber, cavern, whatever it was, it didn't matter since I couldn't see anything. It wasn't because I was blind once again. I just had been so focused on my **[Status]** that I hadn't noticed it was pitch-black down here. *Well..., I guess now is the time to try this out, [Thermalsense].*

The world came flashing into view in a rainbow-colored vomit before gradually subsiding into a hue of purples, oranges, and blacks. It took me a moment of adjustment before realizing that I had Predator vision, or would it be a snake...? *Semantics! I wonder if this is how Black Puddings normally see, it is a racial skill?* Regardless, to my relief, it was easier to use than my **[Mana Sight]**. *No nausea, sweet!*

I appeared to be in a carved stone chamber. There were even some engravings along the walls, possibly hieroglyphics. Other than the slight temperature difference in the etched surface, I couldn't clearly see them. Most of the walls were purple, with blobs of black mixed in with the carvings. There were also some orange smears and specks coating the floor. Most likely, warm blood marks from where Niamh exploded like a watermelon. *God, I can't get rid of that image or that wonderful taste! I need therapy...* Continuing my scan, I saw a black silhouette in one corner. It must have been over twenty meters away because either my **[Thermalsense]** was off or that was a person. *I guess I'm not alone. Yaaay...?*