

# BLACK PUDDING

## CHAPTER 21

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As the new day dawned, I braced myself for the inevitable onslaught of questions about the events of yesterday. Fucking hell, the last thing I wanted was to engage with anyone. All I wanted was to maintain my cover, perhaps kill a couple of my fellow students here and there while focusing on my studies. You know, just your average American student shit, right?

[Charm] Resisted.

And true to my expectations, as soon as I stepped out of my room, a fucking system notification greeted me, signaling the beginning of my annoyance. Yeah, I do get annoyed quite often, hence the swearing right now, but what the fuck can I say? I'm an antisocial bitch who struggles to be around anyone who isn't a potential meal.

“Miss Pudding, I demand a thorough explanation regarding your baffling survival, for I have been informed that you failed to reappear at the Waystone as anticipated in your Combat Training course. Furthermore, I am keenly interested in how you managed to covertly regain access to your dorm room without arousing my suspicion,” Lady Zephyra Amethyst inquired, or rather, demanded, with a not-so-subtle tone of authority.

“Oh, hey, den mother. It's nice to see you too,” I casually replied, attempting to walk past her, only to find her blocking my path.

[Charm] Resisted.

[Charm] Resisted.

[Charm] Resisted.

“Hey, can we do this later?” I sighed, lacking any desire to engage in further conversation. “I need to get to class. We can catch up another time,” I added, glancing at my roommate, who casually walked by, seemingly oblivious to my silent plea for support.

“Absolutely not,” Zephyra sternly declared, resolutely blocking my path. “You will provide an explanation, and only then may you proceed to class. Just so you are aware, I have all day,” she asserted.

Yep, I was going to be late for my class on the Philosophical History of Magic with Professor Stormrune. Though, for some odd reason, I highly doubted he would mind. He had been the one keen on me joining the academy after I had competed for admission. Still, I couldn't help but feel

annoyed by this momentary interruption. And to be fucking honest, I had zero interest in wasting my damn time coming up with some bullshit excuse for what had actually happened.

After rolling my eyes, I glared at the woman, who seemed rather pissed off that I wasn't under the influence of her spell. I let out another sigh and accepted the inevitable. "Well, you see..."



## Yesterday

The sun loomed high in the sky, its warm rays cascading over the scene as a frostbitten wind howled through the air. I stood outside the city gates, my eyes fixed on a particularly alluring round elf. Oh, how I yearned to possess the Decay Touch skill among my selectable options once again. Hell, I wished I still had a list of selectable skills at my disposal to choose from once again. Regrettably, I had never bothered to learn it. Though, I was certain that Decay Touch would have allowed me to hasten the decomposition of corpses, granting me the opportunity to savor their delectable rotting flavor upon their deaths.

To exacerbate matters, as enticing as it was to unleash my fury upon the guards, I understood it would have been an idiotic move. The last thing I needed was to arouse suspicion among the city guards, leading to a fucking heightened state of paranoia and vigilance throughout my hunting grounds. No, what I needed was to stealthily slip past those pricks and find myself another succulent bastard or two within the city to satisfy my insatiable appetite. And, more importantly, to regain my mass—I had been stuck at the size of a gnome for what felt like an eternity—possibly twenty minutes—and I already despised it.

"Halt, who goes there!" a towering figure of a guard, covered in thick fur, bellowed out.

"Shit," I muttered to myself as I considered my options.

The first stupid idea that popped into my head was to morph into a spider and crawl up and over the wall. But sadly, my Spider Walk skill was no longer at my disposal, and there seemed to be some kind of protective ward blocking that way into the city. Besides, who needs the Spider Walk skill anyway? Turns out, us Black Puddings have a natural stickiness that renders it redundant. Although it did make things slightly easier. I do wish I had realized that before wasting a skill point on it. Not that it mattered now. It wasn't on my skill list anyways. No, what I needed to do was something I was exceptionally skilled at, a talent that I had long ago in a past life perfected—I was going to bullshit my way through this!

As I stepped out into the open, my path was abruptly blocked by six guards, each one pointing their weapons in my direction. The air crackled with tension as they assessed me. "What manner of monster are you?" the human guard blurted out.

"Rude," I shot back. However, my retort quickly turned into a moment of realization. I hadn't bothered to coat my skin in silk, leaving my true Black Pudding form fully exposed to the guards. *Shit!* Thinking quickly, I fabricated a story to divert their attention. "I've had a long week," I lied smoothly, hoping to garner sympathy. "I've been lost out in the woods, covered in this filthy muck," I continued with my lie as I pointed at myself. "I just want to find a warm bath and a soft

bed,” I added, hoping to play upon their pity. At the same time, I let my shoulders droop as I lowered my head forward, and as I had always done when I wanted to get out of trouble as a small child, I mustered up the most pathetic sniffles I could.

“I think she’s a gnome,” I overheard one of the guards whispering to the others. Despite their stupidly misguided speculation, I managed to maintain my facade, though it was a struggle not to burst into laughter. Oh, and an even greater struggle not to lunge at them.

“Alright, alright. You can stop the crying,” the furry guard grumbled. “If you don’t have any coin, I’m sure one of the churches will help you. The healer’s church of Asherah is big on charity and shit,” the big guy continued to grumble as he and the other guards stepped aside, allowing me to pass through the gates.

“I would advise heading straight there. A lone gnome girl like yourself might attract the wrong kind of attention,” the delectable-looking chubby elf added, a hint of concern in his voice.

*Ah, they care... That’s hilarious!* “Thanks,” I beamed, suddenly dropping the act as I began to skip past them and into the city, a triumphant smile on my face. I overheard the guards muttering to one another, but I paid them no mind. My focus was now on finding a quick meal. However, before I disappeared from their sight, I couldn’t help but cast a longing glance back at the round elf one last time. “Oh, I shall be back for you,” I whispered ever so softly.

I found a secluded dark alley and took a moment to coat my entire body in silk, including a cute little white dress. Though I must admit, it was quite a challenge to make anything look flattering on a gnome-sized body. I couldn’t help but feel like a freaking toddler. Once I was done, I emerged from the alley, looking like a little flower girl on her way to a wedding. It was rather sickening. With my silk-coated form, I confidently made my way deeper into the city, intentionally attracting the wrong kind of attention, hoping some fool would lead me back into a secluded alley.

And sure enough, it took less than three freakin’ minutes before some creepy bastard snatched me up and hauled ass. I could hear a few people screaming for a guard as I was yanked off the ground and carried like a sack of potatoes under the perv’s arm. And yet, I didn’t resist. There was no kicking, biting, or fight coming from me. Nope, I wanted to see where he was taking me, hopefully, to meet up with some buddies. Although it was difficult to resist the urge to kill him immediately, I knew it was better to use him as bait and catch a bigger haul.

As we came to a stop, I heard my captor start talking, though I couldn’t see him since I was facing the wrong way.

“I’ve got me a bleedin’ gnome child this time,” he hissed.

It was at that moment I noticed his peculiar green scaly skin, but I didn’t give it much thought. Perhaps back on Earth, that detail might have stood out, but in a fantasy world filled with diverse races, such details didn’t matter much to me—not that they did before! Ugh, that came out wrong.

“You bleedin’ idiot,” a deep raspy voice uttered in exasperation. “Those snobs are payin’ for street trash, not fuckin’ gnomes! A missin’ gnome child is only gonna bring unwanted attention and

jeopardize our entire operation, you fool. Take the kid away from ‘ere and leave ‘er corpse in a gutter for the guards to find. You’ll be lucky if the boss doesn’t skin ya alive for this blunder.”

Yeah, I’ve heard all I needed, and I was beyond fucking bored. There may not have been any rotting corpses for me to feast on, but it didn’t mean I couldn’t spice up these assholes with a little zest before savoring them. With a wicked grin spreading across my face, I unleashed my attack. A dark cloud billowed out from me, enveloping the dimwit holding me. His screams of agony were like sweet music to my ears. Unfortunately, in the midst of his torment, he also dropped me flat on my face as Blight spread out through the little alcove within the alley.

Now, Blight wasn’t exactly the type of spell you use to outright eliminate an opponent. It’s more of an extreme debuff skill, showering its victims with a plethora of diseases within its dark cloud. Judging by the pathetic whimpering of the idiot curled up in the fetal position, I’d say it’s quite effective. Or at least that’s what I would have said if it weren’t for the other bastard standing over me, completely unaffected by my spell. He had the physique of Dwayne Johnson if Dwayne Johnson happened to be a colossal, muscular fucking elf.

“Shit,” I breathed out.

“Shit indeed,” he retorted.

In a split second, he unleashed a devastating kick that hit me with such force it felt like everything inside my silk-coated body liquefied. Yeah, technically, it already was liquid, but fucking hell, that impact was intense. I was sent flying out of the alcove, soaring through the damn air until I crashed brutally into a solid stone wall. The collision left me disoriented and dazed, my senses reeling as I struggled to regain my composure. But before I could even gather myself, this rock of an elf seized me by the neck and hoisted me up to his face, his grip firm and unyielding.

“I’m surprised you’re still bloody breathing with ‘alf your skull caved in,” he grinned, revealing a row of jagged, filed teeth. “Maybe I should take you to the boss and ‘ave you turned into a bleedin’ soul stone before your soul departs for the void. It would be such a bleedin’ waste, ya know. Besides, it’s not every day we get someone with enough mana that their eyes glow.”

I tore my eyes away from his grimacing teeth and locked my gaze into his. He froze for a moment, seemingly perplexed that I was not only still alive despite my skull being caved in but also completely unfazed by it. The truth was, such injuries weren’t a big deal for me. Beneath my silk-coated exterior, my Black Pudding form remained unharmed. I couldn’t help but let out a soft laugh, further bewildering him, before I made my move. Black tentacles erupted from my body, shredding the silk skin that concealed my true form, revealing my full pudding glory.

Tendrils and tentacles coiled tightly around the bulky elf, his futile attempts at ripping them apart proving...well, futile. You see, the beauty of my pudding form was that it was incredibly easy to reattach any severed parts. So, as he tore at my tentacles, I effortlessly reattached them, rendering his efforts pointless as I spread out more of my gooey form over him. However, a few seconds into the encounter, a realization struck me—I had forgotten a crucial part of my attack. *Stupid, Blake!*

Activate [ <b>Corrosive</b> ]?
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Yes / No
Activate [ <b>Venomous</b> ]? Yes / No

With a resounding yes in my mind, I swiftly reactivated my two passive attack skills. While they weren't particularly effective against spellcasters in ranged combat, they proved to be formidable in close-quarters physical fights. The massive elf bellowed in agony as my acidic body seared and poisoned him, causing immense pain. His scream provided the perfect opportunity for another attack, and I couldn't resist the urge to unleash a sadistic laugh of glee as I thrust a tentacle down his throat. Oh, how I delighted in such perverse acts of cruelty against my victims.

His body convulsed a few times as life abandoned him, and that was only after both of his arms melted off at the shoulders. The sensation of killing, I had almost forgotten how much I loved it, perhaps even more than the subsequent meal. Well, unless it was a decaying undead, those were simply too damn delectable. But when it came to a living, breathing adversary, the thrill of the kill was a close second to none, almost surpassing the pleasures of sex.

With my opponent, whom I had named Rock, now lifeless, the rest of his being dissolved rapidly, consumed by my unforgiving darkness. The feast was over, and I was ready to embark upon my next grisly endeavor. With a grotesque emergence, an appendage of inky blackness emerged from the depths, followed by the rest of my terrifying form. From the horrified gaze of my trembling victim, it seemed as if I materialized from the very depths of a sinister abyss, a creature born of nightmares and fueled by an insatiable hunger. The air itself grew heavy with dread as my polymorphed form exuded an aura of malevolence, poised to unleash further terror upon this wretched realm. Or was that my prey pissing himself? I honestly couldn't say.

I reclaimed my human form, forsaking any semblance of silk or garments. Instead, I became a silhouette, an entity shrouded in pure darkness. But that was not all—I adorned myself with six sinuous tentacles sprouting from my back, grotesque wings from one's nightmares serving as a testament to my cruel nature. The wretched soul who had dared to abduct me was now reduced to a pitiful creature, riddled with oozing sores and festering lesions courtesy of the Blight I had unleashed upon him. And yet, my hunger was far from sated.

With each deliberate step, darkness spread like a sinister mist, carrying with it a palpable aura of disease and despair. The trembling prey, driven to desperation, sought refuge at the door from whence Rock had emerged, his pleas and cries for help falling upon indifferent ears. Though I could have easily put an end to his misery, my insatiable appetite craved more. I slowed my approach, each deliberate stride causing my hips to sway seductively, a wicked dance of temptation. And as I had so fervently desired, the door creaked open, revealing four more unsuspecting souls, oblivious to the nightmare that stood before them.

The alleyway was already engulfed in the suffocating grip of my Blight, its malevolent essence consuming the air around us. The newly arrived quartet of victims were immediately ensnared in the grip of agony, their screams of torment echoing through the tainted atmosphere. Sores and

lesions erupted across their flesh, festering and spreading like wildfire. Two of them convulsed violently, their bodies succumbing to the urge to vomit, while another's eyes welled up with a deluge of blood. It was as if the very essence of Blight was feeding off their suffering, thriving in the wake of their despair.

Amidst the chaos, one of the men, driven by fear and desperation, raised a trembling crossbow and fired a bolt in my direction. In an instant, my head jerked back, halting the seductive sway of my prowl. Slowly, deliberately, my head repositioned itself, my gaze fixing upon the assailant with eyes glowing with hunger and malice. A sinister grin spread across my face as a sinewy tentacle emerged from my back, its appendage snaking forward to retrieve the projectile lodged between my eyes. I couldn't help but release a soft giggle, a melodic sound that betrayed the dark pleasure that coursed through me.

And then, with a feral instinct, I pounced.

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“Let me make sure I understand correctly,” Lady Zephyra verified. “You materialized outside the arena and then chose to sneak back to your bedroom, as you mentioned.”

“Yep, that's exactly what I said,” I confirmed to the den mother. “After finding myself unexpectedly teleported outside the arena, I thought it best to sneak back to my bedroom without drawing any unwanted attention.”

“I see,” she muttered as if trying to decipher the logic behind my bullshit.

“May I go to class now? I'm already running late,” I asked, hoping to get the hell away from her.

“Oh, yes, of course. But if something like this happens again, make sure to come and see me,” Lady Zephyra insisted, her tone firm.

“Sure thing, den mother,” I chuckled, giving her a mocking nod.

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| [Charm] Resisted. |
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