

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 1

As mine bewitching dream doth wane,
Dark pleasures and beauty stake their claim.
Swathed in fiendish glee, dread I relish,
The divine quail, their fates I embellish.

In this cryptic realm, macabre delights bind,
I skulk with my shadowed indulgences, nightmares unwind.
For I am the subtle terror, arcane and profound,
I am the Daughter of Nightmares, in a sphere both haunting and renowned.

I stirred from slumber, shrouded in utter blackness, leaving me delightfully disoriented as though my delectable nightmare persisted. Visions of my recent demise danced through my thoughts as if saddened. *Ah, that's right. I died again, didn't I?* Frustration swelled within, exasperated by the notion of death as a dreadful occurrence. *How absurd, considering death is a haven in which dear mother resides.*

My eyes flared with an arcane orange luminescence, dispelling the darkness and revealing my surroundings. I found myself in a large chamber made of chiseled stone, with a portal above revealing an enchanting view of the sky. Ethereal clouds swirled around a Jupiter-esque vista within a celestial expanse while crystalline snowflakes twirled through the opening. The sight above was mesmerizing.

After gazing upward for what felt like an eternity, I finally lowered my view and caught a glimpse of myself. My liquid form lay upon a crude altar, a black blob-like mass of tar perched atop a jagged stone slab that precariously balanced upon two boulders. It took a moment to sink in that I was not in the shape of a human. *Ugh, why is it always the pudding?! When will I ever get to wake up in a normal, human-ish form? Or at least something close to it?!*

Suddenly, a wave of despair crashed over me as I grappled with the realization that Aurelia wasn't here. Worse still, I didn't even know the name of the moon she was on, let alone how to reunite with her! The heartache of our separation clawed at my soul, and the crushing emptiness of Aurelia's absence threatened to consume me.

I let out a deep sigh and muttered, "Ugh, [**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]

Looking at my status screen, frustration and anger filled me. *What the hell?!* “Why is my name changed, and why isn’t Daughter of Nightmares listed as a title? **Ugh, and where did all my skills go?!**”

I couldn’t help but feel exasperated as I stared at my status screen. *Seriously, what’s happening? I’ve lost all my spells and abilities, but all my weaknesses are still there!* I continued to mentally complain to myself, frustration mounting. Glancing at the screen from the corner of my eye, I sighed in defeat. *Well, at least I still have my immunities...* Though the worry of my losses lingered.

I grew tired of lying there as a pool of goo, so I started reforming my body. I extended upward to my dream height of about five foot seven. The black tendrils of my Black Pudding body were woven into sticky muscle fibers that formed my body as I gave it all the curves I desired. Ghost white skin of interwoven spider silk formed over my dark gooey body. With that, my face appeared like a gorgeous masquerade mask of pure white, which flexed and moved as if it were a real face made from skin. To be honest, I now consider it to be my flesh, even though it was a beautiful lie. I did the same for my teeth. Although they were for appearance’s sake, seeing as they couldn’t bite into anything. The pearly white teeth, standing out like a beacon in a pitch-black night, contrasted with the black gums and the writhing black tentacle masquerading as a tongue. It was as if a malevolent entity had taken control of my body, and the eerie teeth and tentacle tongue were but a small indication of the nightmare that was me.

Finally, I had a human shape, and I loved it! Still, as I stood there stark naked, looking like a nude Barbie, I couldn’t believe how much Black Pudding I had left to mold and shape. It was strange that I could still extract more pudding from Stellar Void, as I had no recollection of storing any before my demise. Maybe it was a gift from my mother, the Crone? With that extra bit of fluff, I created my gorgeous gothic-style dress. The dress was a nightmare brought to life, its intricate

detailing like the gnarled roots of a cursed tree, the embroidery writhing like a thousand black worms. It clung to my body, a second skin of goeey darkness, concealing the true horror lurking beneath.

Realization hit me at what I had just done, and I fought to suppress a chuckle as I raised one hand. Maintaining unwavering eye contact with my fingers, I gave them a crisp snap. Necrotic Flame ignited, and a vibrant purple flame danced in my palm. My eyes widened in astonishment as I observed the purple flame flickering within my hand, and a sudden understanding washed over me.

Glancing down, I stared at the spider silk – a unique ability called Spider Webbing that was absent from our current list. In fact, it shouldn't have even been possible for me to form a hand without the aid of Polymorph. My vision, too, was a product of Mana Sight manipulation. It was apparent that I hadn't used the spell correctly when I first unlocked it, but it had enabled me to see, nonetheless.

“I can still wield magic and abilities beyond the system's limitations!” I excitedly exclaimed as I continued to gaze at the purple flame.

Panic surged through me as I suddenly remembered I had been wearing something precious when the dimensional ring exploded. Without a second thought, I plunged my hands deep into my chest, ripping my dress and silk flesh open as I rummaged through Stellar Void, desperately hoping that what I sought was still intact. To my surprise, my fingers brushed against several hard, metallic objects. Grasping a handful of these circular items, I pulled my hand out, and dozens of gold coins tumbled from my grip, their metallic clatter echoing throughout the stone chamber.

I continued pulling out an assortment of rubies, coins, and the like. However, I heard a sizzling noise when I retrieved a peculiar cube. Yelping in surprise, I promptly hurled the mysterious object across the chamber.

“Holy crap, that really hurt,” I groaned, shaking the pain out of my hand.

A significant portion of the spider silk covering my fingertips and palm had been singed off, revealing the Black Pudding that made up my true form underneath. Even though the sizzling had stopped and my wound was healing, a lingering pain persisted. I had only experienced such torment before in the company of Paladin Anlyth, which led me to surmise that the cube was probably infused with Holy magic. Nevertheless, I couldn't help but wonder where all these coins and jewels had come from. However, my pondering was instantly replaced by the realization of the dimensional storage ring!

As I continued to dig my hands into my chest cavity – a somewhat unsettling sight that I found amusing – I suddenly burst into a dark, sinister fit of laughter. I pulled out my scanty black lace trophy, Aurelia's panties! I wasn't sure if I had stored them away before the dimensional ring exploded, killing me. The cock ring, as it were, was originally hidden on Paladin Anlyth's husband. He was quite well-endowed, allowing Aurelia to wear the thing as a bracelet, but the General met his end when I first freed Aurelia from her prison cell with a swift snap of his neck. *Good times!*

I held my most cherished possession close to my cheek, delighting in its softness, but the sound of hurried footsteps approaching grabbed my attention. Suddenly, a large rat appeared and dropped to its knees, bowing its head to me. A sense of joyous anticipation filled me. My lips curled into a smirk as my acidic saliva pooled in my mouth, craving the taste of the rodent's flesh. The craving sent a shiver of madness down my spine, but I couldn't deny the twisted joy it brought me.

In my former life as a human on Earth, the thought of eating a rat would have been repulsive, even more so if it were human-sized. But now, reborn as a Black Pudding and as the Daughter of Nightmares, I had acquired a taste for flesh. And any would do, even humans. Of course, the rotting variety was the most delectable, but fresh intestines and eyeballs were a close second.

I stood on the altar I had awoken upon, staring down at my soon-to-be meal. The rat remained on his knees with his head firmly pressed against the stone floor before me. My hunger was palpable, with a yellowish corrosive drool dribbling down my chin. The scent of the sewers on the rodent's fur only made me hungrier. But I knew I had questions to ask before indulging in my dark desires.

With a cold and calculated voice, I addressed the bowing rodent. "Tell me, creature, where have I found myself?"

Now trembling in fear, the creature stupidly asked his question instead of answering mine. "G-Greeting, My Lady, but are you truly the Daughter of Prophecy? The Daughter of Nightmares?"

As I gazed at the pathetic rodent, a sense of glee bubbled up within me. The thought of devouring him whole was almost too delicious to resist. But I couldn't let my hunger get in the way of my quest for answers. The rat before me might have some answers, and I would waste no time demanding them! My name had been altered to Daughter of Nightmares on the status sheet, and it was time to find out what that meant.

My voice sliced through the tense silence. "What do you mean, Daughter of Prophecy? What prophecy?"

"Upon an altar of Dreams and Nightmares, 'twas foretold a daughter shall appear! Her hunger shall be endless, consuming all who dare to steal the dreams and terrors of those taken from realms beyond. Flesh and bone shall she devour, as her might grows hour by hour. For she is the fearsome Daughter of Nightmares, a force that none may compare." The rat stayed on his knees, but his posture was rigid as he finished reciting the supposed prophecy, as if he had recited it countless times before.

"Yep, that sounds like Mother's doing?" I quietly mused. Acceptance seemed like the only option. After a short pause, I began muttering, "Since he's a follower of Mother, I probably shouldn't eat him."

The rat gawked up at me in disbelief, seemingly unaware that sparing his life was ever an option. But as he continued to stare, a strange excitement coursed through me. *Maybe I will end up indulging in his flesh anyway.*

The rodent's voice was still shaking, but his words were beginning to sound more confident as he spoke to me, "My Lady if you wish, I can have a feast put together in your honor. Do you have any preferences?"

With too much enthusiasm, I exclaimed, "ROTTING CORPSES!" I couldn't ignore the drool pooling in the corners of my lips.

"We have an n-necromancer among us, so that shouldn't be a problem, My Lady," the rodent replied, bowing his head again.

"I'm not a lady," I corrected him.

"Forgive me, but could you please tell me how you would like to be addressed?" he inquired.

"Blake," I replied, feeling satisfied with my original name. Of course, I liked my new name, Daughter of Nightmares, but it felt more like a title than a true name.

"My Blake," he repeated, eager to please. "If you come with me, I can lead you to the city for your meal."

The rat's subservience amused me, which caused me to let out a chuckle. Still, I let out a deep sigh, my eyes drifting toward the vibrant gas giant that filled the sky.

"Before we go, I have two questions," I stated, "Where are we, and does the prophecy mention Aurelia?!"

"Please forgive me, My Blake, but the prophecy doesn't mention an Aurelia—."

"Lady Aurelia," I growled at him.

"Of course, I apologize," the rodent said hastily. "As for our location, you're on Yaddith, the origin moon of the Gnomes."

~~~~~

The inevitable had finally come to pass, and the prophesied demon had emerged. Once a loyal servant and acolyte of the Crone, Razzle now served the Gods of Light. Though their followers despised his kind, they would protect his family and his large brood of seventy-three children – the latest litter of which added fifteen new hungry mouths to the mix.

Razzle reluctantly bowed before the fearsome entity that appeared on the ancient altar. He inwardly lamented his ill fortune. He couldn't help but question his chances of survival. Among the countless shadowy altars and numerous Moons of Völuspá, he happened to have the misfortune to confront this nightmarish woman.

"My Blake, kindly come with me. I'll lead you to the city where a necromancer has prepared a feast in your honor," Razzle declared, carefully concealing the truth. There was no feast, only a small battalion of city guards. He could only pray they were prepared to confront this dreadful creature of nightmares.

“Was the necromancer expecting you?” asked the woman, her tone subtly revealing a growing suspicion.

“If it’s decaying flesh you desire, the necromancer is always well-stocked for a feast, M-My Blake,” he hastily reassured, fervently praying for survival in this harrowing predicament.

“Hmm... lead the way, rodent,” she said, her voice almost a coo.

Razzle couldn’t suppress a terrified squeak, but he was determined to see this through, regardless of the consequences. He knew that any betrayal of the Gods of Light would inevitably bring suffering to his children. Having seen similar fates before, he had no doubts about the grim outcome that awaited his children if he aided this abomination of a woman. With a resolute nod to the monster, he rose to his feet, ready to guide her directly to the city guards and bring this dreadful day to a close.