

BLAKE PUDDING

CHAPTER 30

GRAVITY

Jason observed the ongoing fight with a hint of confusion, often glancing down at his hand as he opened and closed it, sensing that something was different. It wasn't a bad sensation; in fact, he felt amazing. Although he couldn't see the mana around him, he had a sense of it, like the static electricity that precedes a shock. He tore his gaze away from his hand and returned his attention to the unfolding battle.

A sigh escaped him as he looked at the bloodstain and mangled chunks of meat that marked the only remnants of Vorigan, the little frog bitch vampire. He refused to admit it aloud, but Jason felt a deep ache within himself. He had never believed he was capable of caring about anyone else, but the thought of Vorigan not being able to return from a fatal blow had never crossed his mind until now.

With a deep breath, he nodded to himself and muttered, "Screw this, that prick is mine!"

~

I stared at Einarr, who now firmly gripped my tentacle, as my Disintegration—or should I say corrosiveness—went to work. Well, Disintegration was the active passive, but I was pretty sure Corrosive was in the mix too (same thing, right?). In any case, I could hear the sizzling sound as I burned into his hand, although the dwarf didn't appear to be phased in the least. That being said, he did look as if he had a serious case of leprosy due to all the damage Blight had inflicted on him, with sores, blisters, boils, and blood-filled pus oozing all over him—oh, how it would add a marvelous zest to his flesh when I devoured him. But I'm getting sidetracked again, aren't I?

Not going to lie, I was still feeling pretty damn confident, even with the sadistic smile Einarr was giving off—okay, maybe slightly nervous, but I wasn't going to tell him that. We both stood there, smiling at each other like idiots in an old western-style standoff, waiting to see who would flinch first. The answer? It was me. Well, it wasn't so much of a flinch as it was me launching a burning wave of Necrotic Flame right at his smug, ugly face. This time, he didn't have his hammer to smash his way through it.

My manic laughter echoed over the roaring fire, the orange glow casting a bright hue within the mist of my Phantasmal Mist that enveloped everything. Oh, how he must be writhing in pain and agony within my blaze. Well, he should have been. However, my attention shifted as I gazed at my tentacle, still stretched out. It wasn't pointed towards the fire, but upward, and upward. My head tilted, following my tentacle's path, to see the red-bearded dwarf floating above my destructive orange trail. *Shit!*

"Are you flying?" I grumbled to myself more than to Einarr, who remained silent, probably oblivious to my words—Meh.

The more I studied him, the clearer it became: he floated rather than flew, defying gravity's grip. I attempted to yank him toward me using the tentacle he still held—a mistake. Not only did he comply with my pull, but he also accelerated his momentum, hurtling toward me like a descending meteor, his fist aimed squarely at my face. At least he was unarmed; the ensuing explosion would have been catastrophic if his hammer had been in play.

His fist connected with my jaw, resulting in a cartoonish display of my head spinning and my neck twisting in several unnatural directions. Even before the explosive impact of his landing, I was sent tumbling away, akin to a rock skimming across water. Except there was no water—only a ruined city. I wasn't gracefully skipping; I was hurtling like a bullet train, demolishing everything in my path, with my head facing in the entirely wrong direction.

Miraculously, I hadn't lost any of my pudding mass throughout the entire ordeal, although that streak didn't last as I came to a splattering halt against the final ruined wall in my destructive path.

"Ugh, I'm getting tired of this crap," I burbled from my liquified, smeared state as I gradually pulled myself back together.

What's going on? He was a pushover a little bit ago.

The heck if I know. This stupid Dungeon Core is still working, right?

Well, yeah, there's so much mana around us that it's literally sparking.

Maybe we're not using it correctly.

Oh! Oh! I've got an idea!

What?

Let's split our focus.

...What do you mean?

Nightmare, you focus on the whole physical stuff, tentacles, tendrils, you know, the creepy shit—like when you tried to molest the dwarf a minute ago. I'll focus on the magic!

Huh... Sure—hey! You're the one who tried shoving a tentacle up his—

I don't know what you're talking about.

...

Squinting my eyes, I noticed a dust storm building up within the mist. Perhaps I had contributed to some of the dust with all the superhero impacts and collisions happening everywhere, but this was different. It felt as though something was charging right at me. Oh! Never mind, I figured it out. Einarr was moving at incredible speed, charging right at me like an enraged bull.

"Ah, it's kind of cute to see a dwarf running at that speed—like an enraged toddler," I mused aloud as I braced myself for the umpteenth round.

A few dozen meters away, he leapt into the sky with his fist pulled back. However, this time, I was prepared. After all, it was two versus one, with both of my souls independently strategizing. Well, maybe "independently" isn't the right word since both souls were, in fact, me. So, in a synchronized

harmony that athletes and dancers train for years to achieve, Nightmare lashed out with a tentacle formed from my left arm in an arcing swipe. It exploded into a web of tendrils just before impact. Meanwhile, Dream released a dark cloud of Blight that billowed out from the tendrils, accompanied by an orange blaze of Necrotic Flames. Our intent wasn't to bat him away but to ensnare and overwhelm.

Einarr suddenly halted his trajectory midair, resembling a red-suspenders-wearing plumber, and plunged straight down, evading the little tendril net I had cast for him—seriously, that gravity manipulation was getting annoying. He, of course, maintained that shit-eating grin, which I promptly reciprocated. What? I may be bitching a lot, but I'm having fun all the same. I'll have even more fun once I'm playing with my new jump rope.

With a quick snap of my arm, the tendrils and tentacle yanked back towards me, morphing back into a black gooey arm. I wiggled my newly formed fingers at the dwarf in a teasing wave that promised untold pain and suffering. He returned my wave with a rather undignified hand gesture. *Rude!*

This fight had dragged on for far too long, and it was time to put an end to it. The problem was that he seemed to be growing stronger as time passed. We exchanged blows continuously while I unleashed various types of magic. I even caught him off guard with a Phantasmal Surge, materializing right in front of him with a swift kick to his groin. It's amusing how you can cover a man in burns, lesions, sores, and boils, even punch him through a few buildings, yet one well-placed kick to the nuts can reduce a man to a blabbering mess. The curses he spat out after the fifth time I did that were like music to my ears. However, concerning the battle dragging on, I noticed that he seemed to have reached a plateau while I continued to rise as I familiarized myself with the mana around me—or rather, the mana leaking out of the hole in my chest, which now appeared to be glowing orange as I glanced down at it. *Huh, strange.*

I shrugged as I launched myself at him once again. The intensity of our battle grew to the point where it seemed to affect the very environment, saturating it with mana until an actual storm started forming overhead. Orange lightning erupted and rippled across the sky. I probably should have suspected something was amiss, but honestly, it looked rather cool—there was a layer of mist that had settled around my knees, his thighs, pits of fire everywhere, dark clouds overhead, rippling lightning with occasional strikes—it was perfect! Oh, and apparently, it was too much for that airship that had drifted over to the construction site of our own airship. They seemed to want nothing to do with what was happening and were pulling back, distancing themselves from this place. Squinting, I thought I could spot a few other airships, but they didn't appear to be drawing any closer with all the chaos happening here, which was a bonus if you asked me.

"Aye, lass, ye be a hard fecker," the dwarf huffed out, now appearing to be on his last leg.

"You were alright," I replied with a dismissive wave of my hand.

I imagined he still had quite a bit of fight left in him if he had his hammer, but that was concealed somewhere on the ground beneath a layer of mist, and even I had lost track of where I had dropped it. Nope, it seemed the battle was winding down. He probably would have won if only he had some kind of fire or holy magic, but it really was a bad matchup for him. I wasn't getting tired or injured. Sure, I went splat more times than I could count, but I just reformed and was back as good as new. In all honesty, this really was a battle of attrition, and I didn't tire at all.

Even more, with all the mana leaking out of me thanks to the Dungeon Core, I had an endless supply of mana to wield. My only handicap was that I was still learning how to manipulate only a fraction of it, letting most of it go to waste, which somehow, Einarr had been tapping into. That being said, it seemed he had a limit on how much he could use—or maybe "use" wasn't the right word; "absorb" was more accurate. He was somehow channeling the ambient mana into his internal mana pool, which he was using against me to empower himself. And like any pool, it could only hold so much, whereas I had no pool; my cap was whatever was around me. The more I thought about it, there was always an abundance of mana that I'm sure I could tap into without even needing to rely on the Dungeon Core to go all Super Saiyan-like. It was just that I lacked the skills to do so, leaving me to fiddle about like a child, throwing all that I could grasp at the dwarf. I needed to practice a lot more!

Where was I going with all of this rambling again? Right! The battle was coming to a conclusion, and Einarr was looking utterly worn out. I suppose all the leaking lesions and sores weren't helping. What can I say, I was a bit trigger-happy with Blight during that entire fight.

"Well, looks like it's time to end this," I cooed as I sashayed over to the swaying dwarf.

"Aye, it's been a good feekin' fight, lass, a good feekin' fight indeed," he chuckled. "Just know, I've seen you at your best, and either Galen or Orlaith would wreck you," he laughed, almost sounding bitter as he did so. "At least they'll remember my name," he breathed out as he gazed up.

"Don't worry, I'll always remember it, Wienarr," I said with a comforting smile as I prepared to deliver the fatal blow.

His gaze snapped to me in utter fury. "It's Ein—"

Before he could utter his name, a blade materialized behind the dwarf, emerging from darkness and shadows, slicing through his neck, flesh, and bone. His head twirled in a grotesque spin before landing on the ground at my feet. The rest of the sword wielder materialized, completing the sword swing. With an enraged thrust of his arm downward into the gaping hole, Jason plunged his fist into the dwarf's body, yanking it back out with the still-beating dwarven heart in his hand. With a jagged-toothed grin, he bit into that heart.

"What the fuck!" I yelled, "he was mine to kill," I spat out at him.

"You took too long," Jason said between mouthfuls as he chewed on his prize.

I seriously debate if I should kill Jason right here, right now, but with a few muttered curses, I decided not to kill my mother's pain in the ass, kill stealing, asshole of a champion. That didn't mean I wouldn't give him the stink eye for a few days—make him wonder if I would snap his neck or not.

As I continued grumbling, I approached the corpse, liquefied myself, and slipped into the opening that Jason had so inconsiderately created for me. I savored the taste of my meal before activating [DEVOURER]. Unlike Absorb, I felt like I had a bit more control over this skill. I didn't need to consume everything; instead, I could use what I had eaten to see if I could gain any skills from it. This was especially helpful at the moment because I had an edible jump rope I didn't want to consume—yet.

I hadn't been checking my notifications in some time, finding them to be more of a pain. However, right now, I had one I was eager to see.

YOUR PARTY HAS DEFEATED:
[CHAMPION EINARR, THE GRAVITATIONAL DESTROYER, AND ALL-AROUND GREAT FECK]

Seriously!

Huh, he must have been a really great fuck after all.

It has to be a title from a whorehouse. No, I'm more upset about Jason stealing credit.

Oh yeah, that party bullshit. Good thing we don't need experience points or something else as ridiculous. What about the other notification?

[DEVOURER] [CHAMPION EINARR] SUCCESSFUL
SELECTABLE
[ASTRAL GRAVITON]

Oh, hell yeah!

What does it do?

[ASTRAL GRAVITON]
MANIPULATE THE ETHEREAL FORCES OF GRAVITY TO CONTROL THE FLOW OF THE COSMOS.
TYPE
SPELL
ACTIVATION
CAST
DO YOU WISH TO REPLACE ANOTHER SPELL WITH THIS ONE?
YES / NO

Finally, a new skill!

Umm... What does it mean by replace?

Ugh? I think we can only have two active skills in any category at a time, excluding Vulnerabilities and Immunities.

...SHIT!

NAME: BLAKE
RACE: ELDRITCH PUDDING

CLASS: PHANTASM <u>TITLES</u> DESCENDANT OF THE END SCION OF DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES		
<u>RACIAL SKILLS</u> [DEVOURER] [DISINTEGRATION] <u>SPELLS</u> [PHANTASMAL DOMINION] [PHANTASMAL MIST] <u>ABILITIES</u> [PHANTASMAL SURGE] [WEB OF WHISPERS]	<u>VULNERABILITIES</u> [FIRE] [HOLY] <u>IMMUNITIES</u> [ACID] [CHARM] [DARKNESS] [DISEASE] [POISON] [SLEEP]	<u>UNIQUE</u> [BIRTHRIGHT] [SOVEREIGN HEIRESS] <u>SELECTABLE</u> [ASTRAL GRAVITON]



Nikola leaned over the hand railing of The Heart of Eternity, his heart swelling with gratitude as the battle between Blake and the Champion had finally concluded. The Slaethians had been forced to pull back their airship in the chaos, allowing the beastkin the precious moments they needed to evacuate the catacombs. Almost everyone had made it on board, but there was a looming issue on the horizon. In the distance, an armada of airships hovered, their dark silhouettes waiting patiently for the clash between the two monstrous opponents to conclude before making their move. It was an encouraging sight, suggesting that there might not be another Champion among those airships; otherwise, they would have already joined the fray instead of holding back.

However, it was going to be a frantic race to reach the darklands once they lifted off. "That will be the real battle," Nikola muttered.

"Any sign of her?" Kadia stepped up beside Nikola to stare off into the mist.

"No, but things have calmed down. It seems the battle is over, and I just know she won," Nikola replied with a smile.

"How do you know?"

The dragonkin snickered, "Because, I'm still here," she replied, hinting at the fact that Blake possessed her phylactery.

Both women spotted a figure emerging out of the mist. At first, it appeared to be a man taking a bite out of an apple, but as the two stared at him, they noticed his razor-like needle teeth and the gruesome sight of him eating a heart.

"Who the hell?" Nikola breathed out in disgust.

"Look," Kadia pointed at another figure moving strangely, almost like she was skipping or hopping as she moved.

Squinting, Nikola spotted Blake approaching, casually playing with a jump rope. However, with each hop, the rope would swat the ground, sending speckles of liquid flying all around.

"Hey, what the fuck!" the needle-toothed man swore. "You keep splattering me with blood," he added.

"Oh, you're such a bitch," Blake laughed. "You're coated in his blood, and you're complaining about my jump rope," she teased.

"That's different," he grumbled. "Besides, that's his intestines you're playing with. That's not just blood you're spraying everywhere!"

"Yeah, it smells absolutely wonderful, don't it," Blake sighed in delight.

"What the hell is wrong with them?" Nikola whispered to Kadia, but all she received in response was a shrug. With a shake of her head, she headed to the helm of the airship, scanning her surroundings as she went. Her gaze locked onto the eyes of the lost, the forsaken, and the forgotten, and she noticed a small glimmer of hopefulness within the beastkin before her. Each one nervously stole glances at her before turning their attention to the armada in the distance.

The Heart of Eternity wasn't quite ready to set sail, but it was almost there, just a few more minutes—regrettably, they didn't have that time. Nikola initiated the takeoff process, only waiting for Blake to board the vessel before they could depart. She tapped her foot nervously, the seconds ticking away in agonizing slowness.

Finally, Blake, the pudding woman, boarded the ship, happily skipping and hopping over a jump rope, ignoring the quizzical gazes directed at her. Nikola glanced over at Kadia, and their eyes met briefly before receiving a nod of approval.

With a deep breath and a silent prayer that everything would work smoothly, Nikola pulled on a lever that resembled a twisted tree branch. In that instant, everyone on board either fell to their knees or landed on their backsides as The Heart of Eternity shot skyward like a balloon released underwater.

"The Slaethians are moving," a beastkin shouted, breaking the tension.

Nikola whispered to herself, "This is going to be a hell of a race," just before she reached for another lever to steer the ship towards the darklands. She pulled it, then pulled it again, more frantically this time.

"Shit!" she uttered, running from the helm to lean over the handrail, glancing back at the nacelles. It was clear that the still growing roots hadn't quite reached that part of the vessel yet. "Shit!" she yelled out in frustration.

Author's note: I apologize for not reaching my 4-5k word count goal with this chapter. I wrote it on a nearly decade-old MacBook in my grandmother's basement while visiting my shitty hometown. Ugh, I miss my PC... Despite the challenges, I hope you enjoy it.