

# BLACK PUDDING

## CHAPTER 13

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I couldn't even begin to guess how long I'd been walking away from those pathetic idiots who dared to cross my path. The sheer power radiating from the spell that ended Wartie's sorry existence was a brutal reminder of my own current weaknesses. Hell, if it wasn't for Circe's protection, I'd have been fried just being in the damn vicinity of that holy magic. But you know what? That ain't gonna stop me from seeking sweet revenge. No way! I've got a burning desire to make those bastards pay for what they did. And let me tell you, I really hope those pricks have families or people they care about. 'Cause when I tear them down, it's gonna be all the more satisfying knowing I've shattered their lives along with their sorry asses.

"Gimona Grimmail, Craycroft, and that fucking elf, Anlyth," I repeated their names like a twisted mantra, spewing curses with every breath.

Wartie remained unconscious as I carried him on my shoulder, his phylactery safely tucked away in my Stellar Void. Following Circe's advice, I made some tweaks to my mental image of the spell's casting, allowing a trickle of mana to flow from the void and maintain a connection between the phylactery and his body. It wasn't a perfect solution, though. I had no clue how far Wartie could wander from me without breaking that connection. It could be a few measly meters or some cosmic distance, for all I knew. Circe, that annoying bitch, conveniently left out those details, as per usual.

But hey, I was doing my best in this messed-up situation. It took a shit-ton of self-control, you know? Carrying around the lifeless body of an undead goblin and resisting the urge to chow down on it was a real challenge, I gotta admit. But guess what? There was a tiny ray of sunshine in all the chaos. I ran into a bunch of dungeon monsters along the way. They weren't the toughest bastards out there, which probably explains why they didn't bother attacking that expedition group. I can't be certain, but I've got this sneaky feeling they were trailing after the Dungeon Core. These encounters turned out to be pretty damn useful, leveling me up twice and boosting me to a badass level, forty-five. And as if that wasn't fuckin' sweet enough, I even scored an extra skill point to play around with. But goddessdamn, I can't ignore the fact that Wartie's undead body was starting to emit one hell of an enticing aroma.

"Ugh! Seriously, Circe? Can't I just feast on him and worry about finding him a new vessel later?" I grumbled in frustration, my patience already wearing thin.

*"If that's really what you want. However, I should mention that he's a newborn lich. He requires a suitable host body to possess until his soul fully merges with the phylactery. So, chowing down on your little bundle of undead joy might not be the best idea for his development,"* Circe replied, barely able to contain a mischievous smirk.

"Ugh! For fuck's sake," I groaned in frustration.

She burst into laughter, unable to contain herself. “*You know, you really are a terrible mother!*” she exclaimed between fits of laughter.

To be honest, I think I preferred it when this damn goddess just ignored me. “Will you stop calling me that!” I snapped. I was just about to cancel Oracle and be done with her when I heard something up ahead. A familiar voice of a girl echoed down the pathway, sending a thrill of excitement through me. I couldn’t help but smile, eagerly anticipating what was to come. I glanced around, searching for a suitable place to dispose of the kid’s lifeless body. But if I were being honest with myself, I didn’t feel comfortable just leaving it anywhere. I leaned in closer to Circe’s floating form and whispered, “What the hell should I do with this kid’s body?”

“*I thought that would be obvious, toss him into your dimensional holding, of course.*”

“Wait, what the fuck? You mean I can actually stick a living person in there?” I nearly blurted out. I had to bite my tongue to prevent myself from revealing myself to the approaching group.

“*He’s not exactly living,*” Circe replied with a dry tone.

“Ugh, you bitch! You could have fucking told me that earlier! I’ve been hauling this sorry excuse for a body around for over a day, dammit! Why the hell didn’t you say anything?” I complained, my frustration seeping into my words. Her only response was a slight smirk as if relishing in my annoyance before she returned to ignoring me. “Fine,” I sighed in resignation before adding, “[**Oracle**],” with a hint of satisfaction as Circe vanished from my sight.

With a wicked grin spreading across my face, I finally took Circe’s belated advice and flung the unconscious lich kid into my trusty Stellar Void. A plan started forming in my twisted mind, and anticipation coursed through me. As a result of my recent level-ups, I earned a free point to invest in a new skill, and I knew exactly which one to choose. In a swift and sinister transformation, six spider-like limbs erupted from my back, spreading out like the wings of a demonic angel, ready to carry me toward my unsuspecting victims. The deep roads stretched out before me, their vaulted ceilings soaring high above like the grand halls of a sinister cathedral, adorned with massive pillars that would serve as perfect hiding spots for my vengeful strikes. The thought of revenge-fueled my every step, and I relished in the delicious anticipation of the terror I would soon unleash upon those foolish enough to cross my path.

Using my newly acquired [**Spider Walk**], I effortlessly scaled up the wall with my spider-like legs, scurrying to find the perfect hiding spot, nestled in a dark nook, completely concealed from sight. From this vantage point, I eagerly awaited the approach of my unsuspecting prey. Malice gleamed in my eyes as I watched their every move, my spider legs twitching with anticipation, poised to strike at a moment’s notice. Their footsteps reverberated through the deep roads, their obliviousness to the lurking monster within these shadows almost comical. While my anger at being unable to attack the elf, wizard, and dwarf earlier still simmered within me, I pushed it aside for now. Those fools would face my wrath another time. At this moment, my focus was fixed on my original targets, and nothing would hinder my pursuit of vengeance. With a wicked grin, a spell crept to mind, and I whispered, “[**Fear**].”



“I swear, I heard something,” Yua whispered, her voice barely audible as she struggled to mask the fear that was squeezing her heart. Ever since that crazy showdown with Blake, who claimed to be a fellow candidate, Yua’s nerves were shot. The idea of facing another battle made her skin crawl, and she knew she wasn’t the only one feeling it. Yeah, they had encountered their fair share of dungeon creatures on this underground path, but none came close to the pure terror that went by the name of Blake.

The four of them had reluctantly agreed to put aside their differences and make a pact to escape the wretched dungeon together, no matter what. Even Jason, stubborn as a mule, had finally caved in, probably more out of fear of Jeremy’s secret spell than genuine cooperation. So, there they were, bound by a shaky alliance fueled by desperation and the burning desire to leave the horrors of the dungeon behind. They foolishly thought their trials were over, but little did they know that the real nightmare was just getting started, lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce.

“Be ready for anything,” Jeremy warned, his voice low and filled with an underlying sense of dread. He fought hard to conceal the fear in his eyes, not wanting to show any weakness to the group. But truth be told, his nerves were shot, just like the rest of them, after that last brutal battle. He clenched his fists tightly, his grip ready to unleash Death Bolt with lightning speed if needed. It was one of the three skills he had unlocked so far, and he hoped it would be enough to keep them alive until they could finally make it out from this godforsaken hellhole.

“G-Guys, I.. I can s-sense something. D-Do you f-feel it too?” Heather stammered, her voice trembling with a mix of fear and urgency. The hairs on the back of her neck stood on end, a clear sign that something sinister was lurking in the shadows. An overwhelming s-sense of unease washed over her, causing her stomach to churn with anxiety. It was as if a malevolent presence hung in the air, r-ready to strike at any moment. The t-terror was so thick she could almost taste it, and it made her feel sick to her c-core.

“I’m surrounded by a bunch of pussies!” Jason spat, his contempt for his fellow companions clear in his voice. “As long as it’s not a boss or another of those shapeshifting freaks, we can handle anything that comes our way in this shithole——hrrrk!”

Heather’s scream tore through the air, its shrillness reverberating down the dark hallway. From the shadowed recesses above, a serpentine tentacle descended with alarming speed. In a horrifying display, it impaled Jason through his open mouth, piercing him from one end to the other. The tentacle then coiled around his trembling thighs, lifting him off the ground before violently hurling him across the chamber. The sickening sound of impact filled the air as his body collided with the unforgiving wall, leaving him whimpering in excruciating pain. Though he still clung to life, the internal damage inflicted upon him was undoubtedly severe. Time raced against them, with mere moments remaining until he would succumb to his grisly wounds.

“P-p-please, let me l-l-leave this place! I w-want to go home. I want to go home! I W-WANT TO GO HOME!” Heather’s words came out in a frantic, stuttering plea, her voice trembling with fear as she desperately begged for release from the overwhelming terror that surrounded them.

A wicked, demonic cackle echoed through the cold stone walls, permeating the air. It was a taunting sound, a challenge to their courage, tempting them to flee in terror. But Jeremy, though his heart pounded with fear, steeled himself against the looming horror. He refused to be overwhelmed by it. His determination burned fiercely within him, propelling him forward. He was no stranger to adversity, and he would not be defeated by an unseen enemy. With unwavering resolve, Jeremy prepared to face whatever lurked in the shadows, ready to confront it head-on and emerge victorious.

“Reveal yourself, you vile creature!” Jeremy’s voice thundered through the darkness, a volatile mix of anxiety, dread, and fury.

Heather’s muffled scream tore through the air behind them, jerking Jeremy and Yua around in stark alarm. Their hearts raced as they witnessed Heather’s kicking feet disappearing into the devouring darkness above. The inky blackness crept closer, its suffocating grip tightening around them, foretelling their impending doom. Yua’s desperate scream reverberated through the halls, filled with fear and anguish, as she frantically searched the void for any trace of her friend. But the darkness offered nothing but emptiness, punctuated only by the haunting echo of Heather’s fading cries. Seconds later, Heather’s lifeless body plummeted to the ground, crushing Yua beneath its weight. Jeremy stood frozen in abject terror, his gaze fixated on the ghastly sight of Heather’s headless corpse. The silence shattered, replaced by Yua’s inconsolable sobs as she clung to her friend’s lifeless form.

“I call forth the rage of the gods, [**Death Bolt**]!” Jeremy’s voice quivered with a potent blend of desperation, hope, and frustration as he unleashed his spell into the void above. The searing energy crackled through the air, tearing a path with an explosive force that pulverized a nearby pillar, reducing it to a heap of crumbling debris. But the derisive laughter of the darkness only grew louder, its taunts amplifying Jeremy’s sense of futility and feeding his mounting despair. “Reveal yourself!” he bellowed, mustering every ounce of power he could summon. The cooldown on his spell was not too long, but he needed a few precious seconds to regain his composure and prepare for what awaited him.

“Now, why would I spoil the delightful suspense? The allure of the unknown is far too tantalizing to resist, wouldn’t you agree?” A seductive, hypnotic voice playfully teased from the depths of the enveloping darkness.

However, a wave of horror washed over Jeremy as he recognized the source of the voice. “You! How is this possible? You should have perished beneath that rubble! Even if you somehow survived, you shouldn’t have been able to catch up to us,” Jeremy growled.

“Hahaha!” The voice reverberated through the darkness, taunting Jeremy, but no answer was given to his question.

A surge of frustration washed over Jeremy as the realization struck him. They should have dug through all that rubble in the boss’s chamber and finished her off. But grief had gripped them, clouding his mind and throwing him into disarray after Rob’s tragic loss. And now, here he was, facing his imminent demise in the eerie depths beneath the dungeon. The haunting sound of Yua’s

heart-wrenching sobs mingled with the taunting cackles of the deranged woman about to snuff out his life.

However, a glimmer of hope flickered in Jeremy's mind, a reminder of his previous reincarnation into this twisted world. Who's to say it wouldn't happen again? A twisted smile tugged at the corners of his lips as he reluctantly accepted his impending death. His time was up, but perhaps this was just the beginning of a new cycle.

Raising his hand, he aimed his finger out and cast his spell. "I call forth the rage of the gods, [**Death Bolt**]!" Jeremy unleashed his spell at a pillar with a flick of his wrist. And yet, before the energy dissipated, he deftly redirected it towards as many pillars as possible, reducing them all to rubble in an instant.

"Jeremy, what the hell are you thinking?!" Yua cried out in a voice laced with panic.

"Taking that damn monster down with us!" Jeremy declared. He glanced at Yua, a bittersweet smile tugging at the corners of his lips.

The ceiling trembled above them, the walls groaning as if an earthquake had erupted overhead. A deluge of colossal stone blocks plummeted from the heavens, crashing down with bone-rattling force. Jeremy stood amidst the chaos, bracing himself as he awaited the moment when the monstrous entity would reveal herself. The sickening crunch of a stone fragment resonated through the air, extinguishing any glimmer of hope for Jason's survival. Dust billowed, obscuring the twinkling crystals that adorned the walls and floor, creating an ethereal, otherworldly ambiance. And then, she emerged from the shadows, her face contorted in a snarl of unbridled fury. Jeremy couldn't help but be simultaneously terrified and captivated by the sheer beauty of her rage.

"You dumbass!" she screeched with venomous rage. With a swift motion, she flung Heather's severed head towards Jeremy, the gruesome projectile finding its mark as it struck him in the abdomen, causing him to collapse to his knees in pain and horror.

"You crazy bitch!" he coughed out.

Then darkness enveloped Jeremy, swallowing him whole. The cacophony of chaos was abruptly silenced, replaced only by the lingering echo of the monster's final expletive-filled scream, "SHHHIT!"