

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 36

Einarr struggled to push the debris aside as he rose to his feet, his body aching with pain. The sky was a mocking bright blue, a stark contrast to the devastation that lay before him. He would have been a goner if it weren't for his defensive skills and armor. But even with his protection, he wasn't unscathed. He peered down at his mangled arm, the molten mithril melded with his flesh and bone, causing him to doubt the healers' ability to fix the damage without amputation. Thankfully, they had the High Priest Neizar, the only one capable of regrowing lost limbs. Such a feat was beyond the reach of most healers but not for the twisted creatures of the dark races. Einarr seethed with anger at the unfairness of it all.

As Einarr surveyed the wreckage, he noticed the scarcity of airships overhead. A terrible omen. His eyes then caught sight of Champion Galen, hovering in the air with ease, unscathed. "Lucky fairy bastard," Einarr grumbled as he searched for his war hammer, ready for whatever else this cursed place had in store for him.

A small cough drew Einarr's attention to a pile of rubble, and with a mighty effort, he pushed aside the debris to reveal Orlaith. She was in terrible shape, with half her face seemingly melting off and her left arm missing. It was clear to Einarr that Orlaith would have perished if not for the corpse lying atop her, evidence that Paladin Anlyth had sacrificed her life to save a Champion.

"Oi, I need ya ta get yer pretty lil' arse down 'ere an' take Orlaith ta th' 'igh Priest," bellowed the dwarf.

Galen looked down at his injured comrade, his wings fluttering. With a heavy heart, he replied, "I don't see the Swift Sentinel in the sky above with the surviving vessels. It seems we have no other choice but to administer aid with a potion."

"Wid a potion?! Ye can't be serious! She's missin' a blood arm, and one of her legs ain't much better. If I give her a potion, the High Priest will have a damn of a toime repairin' the damage done," Einarr yelled back.

Galen's heart sank as he descended toward his two allies, his voice heavy with despair. "This wasn't just a mana explosion," he lamented. "It was a catastrophic event of unparalleled magnitude. The mana saturating this area and Orlaith's wounds will act as a barrier against the High Priest Neizar's magic. Even my healing spells will be powerless to penetrate the dense mana that permeates the air. The survivors of this tragedy are all but doomed, and Neizar will be hard-pressed to offer any aid."

Galen's eyes blazed with fury as he spoke of the monster who caused this destruction. "That creature knew exactly what she was doing," he spat. "She had been biding her time, amassing a pocket dimension within a pocket dimension, waiting for the perfect moment to unleash her evil."

And when she infused the power of the Dungeon Core to trigger her scheme, the resulting detonation was unlike anything this realm has ever experienced.” The air around them crackled with residual mana, a testament to the sheer destructive force of the explosion. Galen knew they were standing in the midst of horror beyond comprehension, and the road ahead would be filled with danger and despair.

Einarr’s features contorted in anguish as he retrieved a healing potion from his bag of holding. With a heart heavy with grief, he administered the potion to Orlaith, knowing it would save her life but leave her permanently maimed and disfigured. And with a deep sigh, he reluctantly did the same for himself, even though the thought of living as a damaged and broken shell of his former self filled him with revulsion. Waiting for the High Priest might have been an option, but if what the fairy had said was true, there was no point in delaying the inevitable. Better to get it over with now and hope they could find some way to reclaim what they had lost.



Craycroft stumbled to his feet, wincing as he felt the jagged splinter pierce his skin. The Swift Sentinel lay in ruins around him, a twisted, gnarled wreck amidst the charred remains of the forest. The trees had been uprooted and shattered, their limbs splayed outwards in grotesque, unnatural angles. It was a sight that made the wizard’s skin crawl.

“Wot in the name o’ all tha’s holy happened?” Gimona spat, pushing herself up from the wreckage.

“Mana detonation,” Craycroft replied grimly.

Gimona shook her head in disbelief. “I’ve nivr seen a mana detonation do sumthin’ loik this.”

Craycroft remained silent for a moment, his eyes scanning the wreckage for any sign of life. And then, with a cold, calculating edge to his voice, he asked, “Where’s the High Priest?” The question hung in the air like a sickening, foul stench, a harbinger of something terrible to come.

As they gingerly picked their way through the wreckage, Craycroft and Gimona caught sight of a crumpled form amidst the carnage. It was the High Priest, broken and bloodied, lying like a discarded ragdoll amidst the twisted metal and shattered wood. His white and gold robes were rent asunder, revealing gashes and gouges that oozed crimson lifeblood onto the blackened earth. Craycroft knelt beside him and detected a faint pulse, barely discernible amidst the cacophony of groans and creaks that emanated from the shattered landscape.

“He’s alive,” he muttered, his tone grim. “But we need to find a healer before he joins the legions of the dead.”

With a sense of foreboding, they hoisted the High Priest onto a makeshift stretcher and began their tortuous journey through the blasted forest. The air was thick with the stench of smoldering wood, with every step they took a painful reminder of what they had survived. But they trudged on, like mournful phantoms traversing the borders of the afterlife, hoping against hope that they could cheat fate and save the High Priest.



“Wake up, my dear child, for the time has come,” a man’s voice whispered, sweet and gentle like a lullaby. And as she opened her eyes, she found herself in a world of wonder and enchantment. The clouds above shimmered with a thousand colors as if they were alive and dancing in joy. There was no sadness or fear, pain or suffering – only happiness and hope filling every corner of her being. It was a place where dreams came to life, and anything was possible.

Yet, a peculiar feeling lingered within her heart, as if a small part of her had gone astray. She felt a sense of bewilderment, unsure of her identity and her place in this wonderful dream. Who was she, and where did she come from? The world around her was enchanting, but she longed for answers to quell the nagging uncertainty within her soul.

“Do not fret, dear one, for your pain has vanished into the ether of joy and peace, which is now yours to behold,” the man spoke once more with a reassuring tone. And yet, he was nowhere to be found.

As she looked around, the world before her seemed to shift and change like a magical kaleidoscope. The clouds above swirled in vivid hues, dazzling and mesmerizing her senses. And then she saw him, or was it a trick of her imagination? A tall, dark-skinned man with rippling muscles and a charming smile beckoned her closer with a twinkle in his eye. She approached him cautiously, unsure if he was real or not, but the allure of love was too strong to ignore. This was not the man who had spoken to her but someone she recognized from a distant memory.

“Vanya, my love, it’s okay,” he whispered, and she felt his arms around her, drawing her close.

“Ezad,” she murmured, feeling a surge of happiness and belonging.

“Yes, my love,” he replied, his smile radiating warmth and comfort.

With a lightness in her step and a song in her heart, she flung her arms around him, twirling in a delightful embrace as the world around them spun and danced. It was a world of magic and whimsy where dreams and fantasies were made real. And oh, how happy she was to be lost in this wondrous realm with her beloved husband by her side.

With Ezad’s loving embrace encircling her, Vanya felt as though time itself could stand still in this eternal moment. However, an unpleasant memory invaded her mind, a nagging thought that refused to be ignored. She remembered the lifeless form of her beloved husband and the cruel and cunning Aurelia who had taken him away from her. But wait, that wasn’t right, was it? This realm within the veil was meant to be a place of peace and bliss. Yet, Vanya’s heart was filled with fiery rage, not for Aurelia but the monster who had gloated about being responsible for her husband’s death. And then it hit her – she was within the veil, which meant...she was also dead! Despite this dark realization, Vanya couldn’t help but let out a bitter laugh at the twisted irony of it all. She had been robbed of her chance for revenge. But what a strange and twisted fate it was to be reunited with her husband only to want to leave him to seek vengeance for his murder.

Suddenly, as if swallowed by the clouds themselves, Vanya’s husband and the wondrous world around her vanished into thin air. She felt a searing pain in her chest as he was taken from her once again. “Bring him back!” she screamed, tears streaming down her face.

But the mysterious man she had first heard upon waking in the veil spoke to her in a calm voice, “I have given you peace and joy, and yet you only seek rage and anger within your soul. It is both sad and promising.”

Vanya’s eyes widened in confusion and anger. “What do you mean?” she screamed back at him.

“I have been granted the power to offer you an opportunity for vengeance. To seek justice for those who have wronged the moons of Völuspá. All you have to do is say yes,” he whispered with an alluring tone that rumbled like distant thunder.

“What of my husband, Ezad?”

“He’ll be waiting for you here, ever watchful of you,” he stated, his words swirling in Vanya’s mind as she weighed his offer. She looked around, taking in the vivid colors and fantastic sights, and felt a pang of longing for the safety and comfort of her husband’s embrace. But the thought of Aurelia, and most of all, the monster who had taken him from her, stirred a deep anger within her. The chance for vengeance was tempting, but was it worth giving up the peace she had found in this strange and wondrous place?

With a determined glint in her eye, Vanya turned to the mysterious voice and nodded resolutely. “Yes, I accept your offer,” she declared.

Suddenly the realm around her disappeared into the swirling mist, as everything went black.

Jörmun the Grand has proclaimed you as his Champion.

Congratulations: System Unlocked

Title Awarded: Champion of Righteous Vengeance

As Vanya Anlyth’s eyes fluttered open, she found herself perched atop a stone pillar in the Great Cathedral of Slaethia, nestled in the heart of the bustling capital. The air was thick with the sweet scent of incense, and the sound of hymns and prayers filled her ears, ringing with the joy and elation of the faithful. All around her, priests and priestesses of every order danced in a joyous frenzy. That day the kingdom celebrated the arrival of a new champion. It was a day of great revelry, both within the walls of the cathedral and throughout the city beyond.