

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 9

Dreams are like the stars, infinite and ever so beautiful as they sparkle in the dark of night, forever out of our reach. So it is incumbent upon us to forge our own stars.

As I awoke from a wonderful dream, I stretched my arms into the air. In it, I had become what everyone had always accused me of being, a monster. I was powerful, ruthless, and without mercy... My eyes burst open in alarm as I took in my surroundings! Mana Sight instantaneously connected to a set of eyeballs out of sheer instinct, only they formed in the palm of my hands. This happened because the rest of me remained in a sticky black puddle of goo on the floor beneath my outstretched arms. I looked like a slug poking its head out of a tar pit as I glanced around, shifting each eye separately about from one another.

Holy shit! I caught a glimpse of an eyeball as my snail-like eyes crossed paths. It was glowing orange! I withdrew Mana Sight from one of them to get a closer look, but as I did, the eye went black, as if someone had flipped the light switch off. Focusing Mana Sight back into it, the eyeball glowed orange once again. The whole thing was a bit surreal but fascinating.

I stopped playing with myself—stopped playing with my glowing eyeball as I went back to examining my surroundings. I found myself in a large circular stone chamber with two entrances. Hadn't there only been one before? *That's right!* I had fallen asleep while I had been eating the dungeon boss. The only problem, the toad's corpse was gone, and I had forgotten to use Absorb on him. **SHIT!**

Relax, I took care of it.

“Oh, thank god. Wait, I thought you couldn't do anything when I'm unconscious. How does that work?”

Ugh, Barbie, you weren't unconscious. You were asleep, two completely different things.

“How?”

Your mind is still working when you're asleep, or else you wouldn't be able to dream, now would you? Duh! So, that means I'm conscious when you're asleep.

“Huh... I'm not sure if I agree with your logic. But I have figured out that even after a good night's sleep, you're still a bitch!”

You're just calling yourself a bitch.

“What else is new. So, what did we get from Absorb?”

Nothing too special, but the better question is, what did you earn from your two milestones?

“Milestones?”

Oh, Barbie, what would you do without me. Okay, listen carefully. I’ll explain it as if I’m talking to a three-year-old.

“I hate you.”

Yeah, me too. Alright, you know when you first leveled to level one and received a Racial Skill with a spell and ability point. Then it happened again when you reached level five, but you got two spell and ability points with your Racial Skill that time. And then once again at level ten with three spell and ability points. Are you following the trend here, Barbie?

“Yes, bitch, when I hit level fifteen, I earned four spell and ability points with a Racial Skill. Then again, when I hit twenty, but instead, I got five points in both spell and ability. And I’ll get six points in both of those at twenty-five.”

Nope! Twenty’s the cap until you hit fifty.

“Seriously! How can I learn new Spells and Abilities if I only get the points during milestones?”

Barbie! Have you already forgotten the points you got for defeating the boss? Levelers gain power through fighting. The Chieftain said so himself. And dungeon bosses earn levelers those oh-so-precious spell and ability points when they defeat them. It makes you wonder what you get for clearing a dungeon.

On the other hand, you have your cheat skill, Absorb, and you can easily create a huge reservoir of Unlockable Spells and Abilities you can exchange for points. I doubt anyone else has that edge.

“Fine, I get it. I don’t need to hit milestones to gain unnnlimited power, at least not when I can steal it with Absorb. Too bad this dungeon can’t be cleared since the dungeon orb has been stolen... So, stop stretching this out, and tell me what we got already?”

Ha, everything! Here, I’ll just show you. Oh, and by the way, I did some slight customizing to the Status page.

Name: Blake Race: Black Pudding Class: Dungeon Monster Level: 20 Titles: [Hopeless Crusader] Unspent Spell Points: 5 Unspent Ability Points: 4 Unspent Attribute points: 0 Health: 340 / 340 Mana: 500 / 500	Racial Skills: [Absorb] – III [Corrosive] – Max [Polymorph] – IV [Stellar Void] – I [Thermalsense] – III Spells: [Blight] – II [Charm] – I [Fear] – I [Life Drain] – II [Mana Sight] – Max [Necrotic Flame] – I	Vulnerabilities: [Fire] [Holy] Immunities: [Acid] [Charm] [Darkness] [Disease] [Poison] [Sleep] Unique: [Dissociative] – Max
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Stamina: 200 / 200 Strength: 10 Dexterity: 10 Constitution: 17 Intelligence: 25 Wisdom: 15 Charisma: 7	[Soul Container] – I <u>Abilities:</u> [Burst] – I [Defense Boost] – I [Leap] – I [Paralysis] – I [Silk Webbing] – IV [Soul Sucker] – I [Soulsense] – I [Spider Walk] – II [Veil Polyglot] – Max [Venomous] – Max	[Restricted] [Restricted] <u>Unlockable:</u> None
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“I was a little worried when you said you did some customizing, but showing the tier level is, honestly, pretty useful. **Holy shit!** We had enough to unlock all of the Unlockable Spells and Abilities?”

I was flabbergasted. Yesterday had been a rollercoaster of a day. I died, woke up in a monster body, a Black Pudding of all things, fought and murdered my way through a dungeon, and defeated a dungeon boss. And that doesn’t even cover half of it. Regardless of all that shit, I’m stronger for it. If what little I know about these stats is correct, I’m dangerous! *Those poor little candidates I’m competing with aren’t going to know what hit them!*

“Shouldn’t there be two Racial Skills from my milestone, and wasn’t Stellar Void a spell? Also, these attributes aren’t adding up. Shouldn’t I have less?”

Because, Barbie, your two milestones this time were Immunities for Charm and Sleep, which are pretty useful. Especially if your goal is to Absorb every succubus you come across so that you can take what Charisma you can from them. Stellar Void was always a Racial Skill. It’s why it was purchasable when you first awoke after dying. Geesh! No, you shouldn’t have gotten fewer Attribute points. You get some from everyone and everything you use Absorb on. Well, only if they have a class, it seems.

“Okay, I get it, and stop calling me Barbie. It’s getting old already. Hmm... I do have to admit, Defense Boost sounds handy! Although, what’s the difference between Leap and Burst?”

Bar—Blake, why don’t we go to the next boss, and you can see for yourself. Or would you rather me just show you the description for it?

“Nope, it’s all good. I would rather go and see it in action.”

Thought so.

“However, I do have one last question. Why are all my tiers so high, especially Spider Webbing? I haven’t even used it yet.”

Ugh, Bar—Blake, it seems Passives level quite fast, and add in your two exp boosters—.

“**WHAT EXP BOOSTERS?!**”

Oops... I forgot I hadn't told you yet.

“Told me what?!”

Well, it seems being a Dungeon Monster fighting inside a dungeon earns you triple the experience. And then there's the Hopeless Crusader title, which earns you double the experience on top of any other exp boosters you may have.

“Wait... Are you saying I'm getting six times the amount of experience than I should?”

Yep!

“Huh, I don't know if I want to kill that goddess now or make love to her. Why would she help me?”

Maybe she's just building you up for some epic smackdown. Or, maybe she's just bored.

“Awe... Yeah... I don't know how to respond to that.”

As for the Spider Webbing, I may have been practicing with it while you were asleep. Sadly, it doesn't work like Spiderman's, so there is no web-slinging. However, I think I've found a solution for us to appear more human... ish.



After stepping through the newly formed chamber exit, I easily located the pathway Redtail mentioned to the next boss fight. Sadly, striding across the dungeon to the next boss had been rather uneventful. I had expected an endless sea of grueling monster battles, but I found was endless boredom. I felt like I was strolling through a dead husk, not a living dungeon. Perhaps I should go retrieve the dungeon core. *How do those necromancers expect the other candidates to level up?*

Despite my boredom, all this extra time spent walking gave my split personality the time she wanted to practice her makeover skills on me. I now had a full set of hair! Granted, it was thousands of spaghetti-string tentacles in the form of a jaw-length layered hairstyle, albeit these layers could strike out at someone like thousands of tendrilled snakes. I thought it was creepy cute!

Then there was my body. I had grown quite a bit after eating the dungeon boss. Add in that my split personality had also managed to reattach my torn half while I slept. And I now found myself at my dream height of about five foot seven, with quite a bit of extra fluff that my other half used to create a gorgeous gothic-style dress. The intricate detailing was insane, as if an embroidery artist designed it from a beautiful nightmare, especially considering that the embroidery moved about like demonic tendrils. The whole dress looked as if it were alive, well, it was, seeing it was my black gooey body. I had never been skilled enough in my previous life to make something like this. *Of course, my split personality is more talented than me!*

Thanks!

“I was talking to myself, not you.”

Finally, I had a face! Ghost white skin from interwoven spider silk formed on me like a masquerade full-face mask. With it made from thin spider silk and my ability to make sticky muscle fibers, perks of leveling my Polymorph tier, I could subconsciously move the surface of the mask about as if it were a real face. To be honest, I now consider it to be my flesh. I did the same for my teeth, or did she do it? I can't tell anymore. Although they were for appearance's sake, seeing as they couldn't bite into anything, I'll hopefully be able to create real teeth soon enough. Still, there was something eerie about silkie white teeth amongst black gums and a long black tentacle—tongue. *I love it!*

Now, if we could only find someone and drain them of their blood and entrails to use as lipstick.

“Did you just think that, or did I?”

Not sure.

With my beautification complete and my hike across a dying dungeon now over, I found myself outside the gates to my next boss fight. The red toad, Spine Pounder, stupid name, had nearly killed me. I could only hope I had leveled up and acquired enough skills, spells, and abilities to solo this bastard. Despite my growing battle excitement, I thought only of Aurelia and returning as her champion.