

BLACK PUDDING

SECOND TOME – CHAPTER 1

My eyes reignited with mana, restoring my vision. Glancing around, I found myself in a modest chamber chiseled from unyielding rock. Above me, an opening above me served as a skylight to a bizarre sight. Wisps of clouds drifted overhead, obscuring my view of a Jupiter-esque vista in the night sky while a flurry of snowflakes swirled inside. The scene was enchanting and heart-wrenching, for I knew the one I cherished was not to be found in this strange land. The vista unfolding overhead appeared to affirm the unsettling truth I had come to realize; I was no longer on the same moon. Beneath me, I lay upon a makeshift altar formed by a stone slab supported by two large boulders. Compounding my despair, I had no knowledge of the name of where I came from nor the means to return. Yet, despite the profound pain caused by the distance from Aurelia, it wasn't her absence that left me feeling shattered at this moment.

“Ava?”

As I cast my gaze behind me, I beheld a sight that defied all conceivable notions. Her skin was smooth and flawless, as pale as the snowflakes gently descending from the heavens. Her eyes, a mirror of mine, held an ethereal orange hue that seemed to shimmer with raw mana. Yet, our distinguishing feature lay in our hair: hers, as dark as the obsidian night, while mine, as white as our shared spider silk complexion.

“Blake?” I murmured hesitantly, scarcely daring to trust my own eyes.

The sensation of existing within two distinct forms was disconcerting, and I found it difficult to accept our separate identities. If not for the slight divergence in our appearance, I might have believed myself to be Blake.

“Ugh, Status!” I heard Blake groan as though the word were a curse, and to my bewilderment, the interface manifested before me as well.

Name: Daughters of Nightmares

Race: Black Pudding

Class: None

Level: Restricted

Titles:

[Hopeless Crusaders]

[Scions of the Crone]

[Restricted]

[Restricted]

<p><u>Racial skills:</u> [Corrosive] [Stellar Void]</p> <p><u>Spells:</u></p> <p><u>Abilities:</u> [Veil Polyglot] [Venomous]</p>	<p><u>Vulnerabilities:</u> [Fire] [Holy]</p> <p><u>Immunities:</u> [Acid] [Charm] [Darkness] [Disease] [Poison] [Sleep]</p>	<p><u>Unique:</u> [Restricted] [Paradigm Inversion] [Soul Bonded]</p>
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“What the—”

“SHHHIT!”

[Blake] “Seriously, Ava, what in the world is going on? We’ve lost all our spells, most of our abilities, yet we’re still saddled with all our weaknesses?” I sighed exasperatedly, casting a sidelong glance at Ava. Seeing a mirror image of myself in human form was surreal, even down to the same mana-infused eyes, though she seemed to favor using spider silk for her hair.

[Ava] “We’ve retained our immunities, at least, so there’s that,” I responded to Blake, increasingly worried about our losses. However, I couldn’t help but be taken aback by the sinister grin spreading across her face.

[Blake] Gazing into Ava’s eyes, I fought to suppress a chuckle. As I raised one hand, I maintained unwavering eye contact with her, my other self. With a crisp snap of my fingers, Necrotic Flame ignited, and a vibrant purple flame danced in my palm.

[Ava] My eyes widened in astonishment as I observed the purple flame flickering within Blake’s hand, and a sudden understanding washed over me. Glancing down at my hand, I noticed 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. Admittedly, it was apparent that Blake hadn’t used the spell correctly when she first unlocked it, but it had enabled her to see nonetheless.

[Blake] “We can still wield magic and abilities beyond the system’s limitations!” I exclaimed, my smile unwavering as I continued to gaze at my other self.

Panic surged through me as I suddenly remembered I had been wearing something precious when the dimensional ring exploded. Without explaining my actions to Ava, I plunged my hands deep into my chest and began rummaging through the 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.

Casting a glance at Ava, I observed her rummaging through the dimensional storage. She pulled out an assortment of rubies, coins, and the like. It appeared the two of us also shared the same pocket dimension. However, when she retrieved a peculiar cube, I heard a sizzling noise. Yelping in surprise, she promptly hurled the mysterious object across the chamber.

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

A significant portion of the spider silk shrouding my fingertips and palm had been singed off, revealing the Black Pudding that made up my true form underneath. Even though the sizzling had ceased and my wounds were mending, 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 had come from.

“Ah, the cock ring!” Blake exclaimed with a chuckle.

“What?” I asked, watching her continue to search through the Stellar Void.

As she dug her hands into her chest cavity—a somewhat unsettling sight that we both found amusing—Blake suddenly burst into a dark, sinister fit of laughter. She pulled out our scanty black lace trophy, Aurelia’s panties! I didn’t know she had stored them away before the dimensional ring exploded. The ring was originally a cock ring 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 Blake and I first freed Aurelia from her prison cell with a swift snap of his neck.

A realization hit me, “Wait, do you think the dimensional ring we had in the Void dumped everything into the Stellar Void before it exploded out of our chest?”

“That’s exactly what I think happened,” Blake replied, still trying to regain her composure from the bouts of laughter.

[Blake] I held my most cherished possession close to my cheek, delighting in its softness, while Ava cast me an envious glare. But the sound of hurried footsteps approaching grabbed my attention, and it dawned on me that Ava and I were sitting completely naked on the stone altar. My black form oozed from beneath my silk skin without missing a beat, creating an exquisite gothic dress. Intricate patterns formed on the surface, composed of wriggling tendrils that danced and writhed, seemingly alive and guided by their sinister whims.

What caught me off guard, however, was Ava’s ensemble. The same darkness emerged from her identical silk skin, shaping itself into a dress that exuded gothic or even medieval flair. But she took it a step further, allowing the spider silk to envelop the entire garment, transforming it into a pristine white. The transformation hinted at a duality within her – a gleeful desire to stand out, tinged with an unsettling edge that was impossible to ignore... I rolled my eyes.

Suddenly, a large rat appeared and dropped to its knees, bowing its head to us. 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 its flesh. I glanced at Ava, and a similar hunger burned in her eyes. The craving sent a shiver of madness down my spine, but I couldn’t deny the twisted joy it brought me. In our former

life as the original Blake on Earth, the thought of eating a rat would have been repulsive, even more so would this human-sized one. But now, as our altered selves, two fragments of the original Blake, we had developed an acquired taste for flesh, and any would do, even humans. Of course, the rotting variety was the most delectable, but intestines were a close second.

[Ava] I stood on the altar we had awoken upon, Blake beside me as we stared at our soon-to-be meal. The rat had scurried into our chamber, dropping to its knees and bowing before us. Blake's hunger was palpable, with a yellowish corrosive drool dribbling down her chin while I struggled to contain my urge to feast on the creature. The scent of the sewers on its fur was only making me hungrier. But I knew we had questions to ask before indulging in our cannibalistic tendencies. It was already becoming evident to me; I was the voice of reason between the two of us.

With a cold and calculated voice, I addressed the bowing rat. "Tell us, creature, where have we found ourselves?"

Now trembling in fear, the rat addressed us with a stutter, posing his question instead of answering mine. "G-Greeting, my ladies, but are you truly the Sisters of Prophecy? The Daughters of Nightmares?"

Our name had been altered to Daughters of Nightmares on the status sheet, and it was time to find out what that meant. As I gazed at the trembling rat, 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 our quest for answers. The rat before us might have some answers, and my sister wasted no time demanding them.

Blake's voice sliced through the tense silence. "What do you mean, Sisters of Prophecy? What prophecy?"

The rat stayed on his knees, but his posture became rigid as he recited the supposed prophecy, as if he had recited it countless times before. "On an altar of Dreams and Nightmares, twain daughters shall appear, so it was prophesized! Their hunger shall be insatiable, devouring all who dare to steal the dreams and nightmares of those taken from realms unknown. Flesh and bone shall they consume as their power blooms and their strength resumes. For they are the fearsome Daughters of Nightmares, a force that no one dares to compare."

Blake shot a glance my way. "Mom's doing?" she sighed. I could only offer a nod in confirmation.

After a brief moment of silence, I finally spoke up, "If he's a follower of our mother, we probably shouldn't eat him," I said, my words bringing a look of horror to Blake's face.

The rat gawked up at us 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 Blake and I would end up indulging in his flesh anyway.

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

With a bit too much enthusiasm, Blake exclaimed, “ROTTING CORPSES!” much to my irritation. But I couldn’t ignore the drool pooling in the corners of my mouth, signaling my own hunger.

“We have an n-necromancer among us, so that shouldn’t be a problem, my ladies,” the rat replied, bowing his head once again.

“We’re not ladies,” I corrected him.

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

“Nightmares,” Blake interjected before I could reply. I couldn’t help but feel a sense of satisfaction at the name.

The rat’s subservience amused my sister, which caused us to let out a shared chuckle. “My Nightmares,” he repeated, eager to please us. “If you’ll come with me, I can lead you to the city for your meal.”

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 started, “Where are we, and does the prophecy mention—”

“Aurelia?!” Blake cut in, finishing my question.

“Please forgive me, my Nightmares, but the prophecy does not mention her. As for where we’re at, you’re on Yaddith, the origin moon of the Gnomes.”



The inevitable had finally come to pass, and the prophesied demons had emerged in the realm. Once a loyal servant to the Crone, Razzle’s allegiance had shifted; he now served the Gods of Light. Though they detested his kind, their followers would protect his family and extensive brood of seventy-three children – the latest litter of which added fifteen hungry mouths to the mix.

With reluctance, Razzle bowed before the two fearsome entities that materialized on the time-worn altar. He inwardly lamented his ill fortune. Among the numerous Moons of Völuspá and countless shadowy altars, it was his fate to confront these two nightmarish beings. He couldn’t help but question his chances of survival.

“My Nightmares, kindly accompany me. I shall guide 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 these dreadful creatures of nightmares.

“Was the necromancer anticipating our arrival?” inquired the woman dressed in black, her tone subtly revealing a growing suspicion.

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

“Hmm... lead us, rodent,” the other one clad in white growled.

Razzle couldn't suppress a terrified squeak, but he was determined to see this through, regardless of the consequences. He was well aware that any betrayal of the Gods of Light would inevitably bring suffering to his children. Having seen similar fates before, he harbored no doubts about the grim outcome that would await his children should he aid these two. With a resolute nod to the two Nightmares, he rose to his feet, ready to guide these monstrous beings directly to the city guards, hoping to bring this dreadful day to a close.