

BLACK PUDDING

CHAPTER 8

Here I was, standing on two legs once again. Only this time, I found myself outside a dungeon boss's chamber. Altering my form between spider and human-like had gotten much easier, and I now had hair, albeit it was three long tentacles, but it counted. Still working on breasts. Tentacles coming out of the chest didn't look right. Oh, and I had a mouth, although my smile reminded me of my granny without her dentures. However, my biggest achievement was with Mana Sight and how I could focus the spell out of a particular location. I had functioning eyes without the three-hundred-and-sixty-degree field of view. It was so much nicer!

I figured out all this during my hike to the boss's chamber, which took a few hours and gave me plenty of time to practice my Polymorph. Come to find, partial shifting was a thing and quite easy to do. If I wanted spider legs coming out of my back, done, even though I was aiming for wings. I want a spider's bottom half and a human's top half, done! I still couldn't figure out how I got tentacles added to the mix, but I wasn't complaining. Maybe a hidden succubus trait I got for absorbing Niamh? Either way, it turns out they're pretty neat! I can totally picture a succubus having a tentacle obsession...

My plan to attack the monster sanctuary of Ockpool for level farming turned out to be a complete bust but not a waste of time. Turns out, these so-called monsters weren't too dissimilar from humans. In fact, I think I may have spotted a few among them. Only they linked their power, magic, souls, or whatever have you to a dungeon core, and because of that, everyone labeled them as monsters. They're not what I would call a monster. *I'm a monster! Ugh... Sounds like politics to me.* Whatever they were, monsters, Dungeon Folk, they wanted their stolen dungeon core back, so here I am, helping others. *Blake, what the hell am I doing?*

You'll kill the remaining dungeon bosses for their experience, get stronger, commit some manslaughter on the five remaining candidates, and snuggle with Aurelia afterward. You might help Ockpool retrieve the core because you're considering taking it yourself. Yikes, Blake, you really are a bitch!

Errr, I almost forgot about you.

That hurts, Blake! What would you do if you couldn't talk to yourself, with yourself? Start talking to yourself?

Apparently, I've got another me stuck inside my head now. *Yaaay... Damn that goddess!* It's not all bad, she, I mean me, her? Whatever this split personality thing is, it's been dealing with all my annoying system notifications. The only problem I'm finding is that I don't like myself.

“What are you waiting for? The boss is in there. Hurry up, fucking slime!”

And then there's this dick. I believe his name was Drake Redtail. Chief Hensley had sent me on my way with an escort to my first boss fight. However, I found it quite difficult not to murder the talking lizard.

“What about the other bosses? How will I find them once I'm done here,” I asked as I leaned in close to the gecko?

“Even a buffoon like you should be able to find them from here. Just follow the path.”

“Hmm... I see. I see. And how will I find this highway and the adventurers who took the core?”

“For scale's sake! Head the way we just came, and your little slime brain will find a large cavern with a waterfall. The highway's path starts behind that water—hrrrk!”

“Thanks! I guess that means I don't need you anymore.”

His sentence was cut short as I rammed my balled fist into the lizard's mouth! All I could hear were the bastard's muffled screams and gurgled whimpering as my arm shifted into a tentacle while snaking deep down Redtail's throat. My other arm shifted back into my natural form as it exploded into a net of black sticky goo around him, like a fly caught in my spiderweb. It was utter bliss as he flailed about helplessly in my arms!

“**Oh, fuck yes!** Go deeper, Blake, deeper,” I moaned out to myself!

I couldn't tell if I was trembling in delight or if he was giving off a few last-minute death spasms. Either way, I felt amazing! My tentacle arm kept cramming its way deeper and deeper through his throat, into his stomach, and past his intestines until I felt the cool air touch my tip. There was no mistaking the shudder I had just felt had been his final one! As if a Philosoraptor had been unleashed, a trembling scream of glee escaped my newly formed mouth, reverberating off the stone walls as my prey fell limp into me.

Maybe, just maybe, I absorbed more than I intended from the succubus... *Nah!*

After eating the goblin, I had grown to my former height before my death of about five-foot-three. However, as my arm slithered through Redtail, I found my height had shrunk in conjunction. I now had a four-foot tentacle arm impaling the lizard's mouth and out of... well, you know. Leaving my body about two feet smaller. I should eat more to grow into a big strong monster—girl!

So, Blake, that just happened... That's a waste since everyone from Ockpool isn't worth absorbing without their dungeon core.

Oh, shut up me. It was one hundred percent worth it. Besides, we needed the extra mass.

Uhuh... You're just sitting here holding his corpse like a lost lover. If it was so worth killing him, why aren't you absorbing him?

Turns out, lizards taste a lot like lemon zest chicken. Just leave me alone while I enjoy my meal in silence.

Still seems like a waste since you're not using Absorb on him.

Shhh, I'm eating.

It took a few minutes to finish dissolving Drake Redtail and a few more to swab up all the delicious juices and morsel bits smeared across the ground with my tentacle arms. Dissolving a body turns out to be quite messy but oh-so-yummy. I felt marvelous! Life was wonderful! The numbness that had first plagued me was gone, and I never felt more human in this body as I do now.

Human? Umm, Blake, we're just going to ignore the fact you murdered someone, ate them, and that six-foot tentacle you used to lick up all the leftover blood and guts certainly did not come from your arms.

Oh, shut up, me, and let us have a pleasant moment.

Sure, whatever, psycho.

The iron doors leading into the boss's chamber were cracked open, but as I peeked through the gap, I spotted... *Nothing!* It was an ordinary circular stone chamber. Sure it was big, but it wasn't anything special. But these doors, these were impressive! I remember going to the courthouse once when I was seventeen for a minor juvenile offense, turns out pepper spraying the head cheerleader for calling me a goth cunt was a no-no. Who knew? Still, I remember those daunting courthouse doors and how they loomed over me as if larger than life. Taking a deep breath, which I still hadn't figured out how that worked, I shoved these larger-than-life iron doors out of my way as I stepped into the boss's chamber, ready to hand out my own judgment.

However, it really was empty. I shifted my head about as I surveyed the chamber, but there were no corners to hide in a circular room. Then it happened, and that adrenaline rush I had felt right before I had my head chopped off took hold as time slowed to a crawl.

Idiot, stop using Mana Sight through those fake eyeballs you created, and start using Mana Sight!

Focusing my Mana Sight through a set of eyes I had formed had recreated the comfort and familiarity of human eyes that I had missed since awakening. However, in moments like this, it was a hindrance that I couldn't afford. Thinking of myself as a human was going to get me killed!

A three-hundred-and-sixty-degree field of view snapped back as my awareness spread all around me, and that's when I finally saw what I had missed. Above the chamber's entrance was a gigantic red toad leaping down from a hidden ledge! He held in one hand a massive five-foot cleaver and in the other hand was a large spartan-like shield. He had on a metal helmet that reminded me of something a gladiator would have worn and a Conan the Barbarian-ish loincloth. This red toad was huge, with a belly that put any sumo wrestler to shame. *Oh, shiiit!*

Where's Kirito when you need him?

Will you shut up! And no more anime references, either!

My adrenaline high was still pumping, but unlike before, I was able to avoid the strike. My hair wasn't so lucky as the cleaver came down with a thunderous boom, shaving off the three tentacles protruding from the back of my head. The toad and I stared in mock horror at the black puddle of

goop that had been my hair as it splattered on the ground, albeit for different reasons. *That's it. I'm pissed!*

A black miasma flowed out of my body and over the cleaver and the arm holding it. I had only managed to infect the toad's arm with my Blight spell as oozing pus-filled blisters appeared. The boss cried out as he dropped the stupidly large weapon, as his arm fell limp. *Huh, that's strange...* I had wanted to do that, but I didn't have to think or concentrate on the spell Blight to unleash it.

Duh, what do you think I'm here for?

But how did you know that's what I wanted to do?

Are you sure you weren't a blonde in your past life?

Fuck you!

Seriously?! I knew you wanted to use that spell because I am you! I will start calling you Barbie whenever you ask or say something else as stupid.

Ugh, at least I now know why everyone hated me in my past life. I'm such a bitch!

The toad released a cross between a roar and a ribbit before bashing me with his shield. As if struck by a semi-truck, I felt my body liquefy as the shield sent me careening across the chamber. With a sickening splat, I collided with the wall spraying across its surface like a Rorschach test.

Ow! What I would give to have that numbness back right about now.

Pull yourself together! He's charging right at us!

Listening to my own advice, I did as I was told. My body flowed off the wall into a pile of slop before reforming into a human-ish form, only now I had eight squid-like spider limbs protruding out of my back as if they were a magnificently horrifying set of wings of death and despair.

I had thought I was pissed before, but now, I was more confused than angry. The limbs on my back seemed to move on their own. Before I knew what was going on, they attached themselves to the wall and scurried up it with me in tow. And just in time, too! The toad finished his dash with a mad leap sending himself smashing into the portion of the wall I had just been splattered against. The entire chamber shook from the impact of a deafening boom.

*I know for a fact I did not purchase Spider Walk. **What the hell is going on?!***

No shit Barbie, I purchased it! And, if you must know, I just saved our lives.

***You can take control?!** That's scary! And how did you make a purchase? I didn't have any points remaining!*

I sold the Appraisal spell for six points, Barbie.

Wait, I can sell spells and abilities? Wait, Spider Walk cost ability, not spell points. That shouldn't have worked!

Yes, Barbie, and it does work. Did you even bother to read the instructions? You can exchange two spell points for two ability points at the cost of one spell point and vice versa.

*Wait, wasn't Appraisal worth six spell points? Wouldn't that have left me with three spare spell points? **And what fucking instructions?!***

It did Barbie, but I may have spent them already...

ON WHAT?!

The toad's collision with the wall seemed to have dazed him, but he appeared to be shaking it off. On the other hand, I was still mentally shaken as I scrambled up the wall by my eight spider legs protruding from my back. Before I could figure out my next move, my arm moved on its own accord as it pointed at the red bastard, who was now glaring up at me as he prepared to leap.

From the deep recesses of my mind, I heard my split personality murmur a dark whisper. *Necrotic Flame!*

Purple necrotic flames jetted out of my palm like a flamethrower as they bathed the toad in a swirling inferno of death magic. I had thought the squeal he let out when I hit his arm with Blight had been loud and painful, but it failed to compare to his now screeching.

I know you're dealing with my notifications, but where's my health?

Oh, now you care?

Health: 178 / 200 Mana: 120 / 400 Stamina: 121 / 180

Huh... I would have thought my health should have been lower from that shield bash, but why is my magic so low?

You've used Life Drain three times now, Barbie.

When?

Okay, I used Life Drain for you.

Back to my last question, when?

The toad opened his mouth wide in screaming agony, but I noted that I didn't see any teeth. As if crying out to the heavens, the toad reached upward as if pleading to his god for help. However, the only thing above him was me! A sudden wicked thought popped into my mind. *Oh, Blake, that's evil!*

Barbie, what are you doing?!

If memory served me right, these flames should only last thirty seconds. Timing my drop just right, I let go of the wall and plummeted into that agonizing scream as the flames dissipated.

Simultaneously, I released Polymorph and splashed into the back of his throat, trickling further down and wreaking havoc with my Venomous and Corrosive form as I seeped into every internal orifice I could find. There was no scream or cry of pain this time, for his vocal cords were among the first things I devoured.

I felt a sudden crushing pain. Not all of my Black Pudding body had yet leaked into his lungs and stomach, and what little of me remained in his mouth, he had managed to reach in and grab hold of it. I had already been pretty sticky as a slime monster, but you added in my newest weapon, Spider Walk, and no matter how hard he pulled, I refused to let go without tearing out a lung with me. Regrettably, I just found out it's easier to rip me in half than to rip out a lung...

This time, the blood-curdling scream coming out of the toad's throat was that of my own. With a hard jerk, the fucker had torn me in half. I could hear my split personality scream with my own, but soon, that faded along with everything else as my world went black.

You have defeated [Toad Barbarian] Floor Boss.
<u>LEVEL UP!</u> <u>LEVEL UP!</u> <u>LEVEL UP!</u> <u>LEVEL UP!</u> <u>LEVEL UP!</u> <u>LEVEL UP!</u> <u>LEVEL UP!</u>
You are now level 20. 9 Ability Points Awarded. 9 Spell Points Awarded. 7 Attribute Points Awarded.
Achievement unlocked: You have defeated a Grotto of the Betrayed's Floor Boss. 5 Ability Points Awarded. 5 Spell Points Awarded. 5 Attribute Points Awarded.
Achievement unlocked: You have solo defeated a Floor Boss. 5 Ability Points Awarded. 5 Spell Points Awarded. 5 Attribute Points Awarded.
Do you wish to [Absorb] [Toad Barbarian]? Yes / No

Like awakening from death, my light within the darkness was system notifications once again. Within a few seconds, my sight returned, and I found myself melting through what remained of the red bastard's chest. My body had been torn into two, and I now felt like half the woman I had

been, but I could feel that bulk slowly returning as I ate away at the toad's carcass. Thankfully, any resemblance of pain faded away with the level-up notification.

Ugh, thank me, Barbie, we're both alive!

Shut up! I refuse to thank myself like some narcissist. Besides, I thought you were supposed to deal with these notifications. Why am I seeing them?

Ha! Funny coming from a schizo! You know, if you're unconscious, so am I. I can't stop notifications from appearing if neither of us are lucid. Gesh, ungrateful Barbie!

I'm not a schizo, bitch. Maybe a psychopath... Now leave me alone while I relax and enjoy our meal. We should savor this for a moment before Absorb steals it away. Take that as my sign of gratefulness.

I wouldn't call us indulging your gluttony a sign of gratefulness.

Mmm! He tastes like orange chicken. Now, shhh, we're eating!