

### [ Received: Ocadule Skill Shard: Unselfish Blighted Decay ]

“Shopping is done, my good giant sir.” I gave the mountainous Chief Nograss a salute. “Just going to line up some Blighted missions.” With enough quests to last an hour, I turned around and surveyed the horde packed in the building. “Time to get out of this sardine can.”

A huge grin stretched across my face as I swam against the tide of armor-encased muscles of Mardukryons bigger than me. Theorycrafting juices flowed, but this place was too cramped for some good ol’ overthinking. In half a day, when there’d be no more Blighted missions, the Chief’s Lodge would be far less overcrowded.

But it wasn’t that time. I needed peace and quiet now.

Chimi waved as I exited the building, about to say something. But no words left him. He balked at what was probably the crazed expression I wore, considering talking to me some other time. I didn’t forget my promise to supply him with materials from areas yet undiscovered by players where Bawu got her exotic test subjects. But it wouldn’t be until the Great Hunt that I’d venture to explore those parts.

Heading to the less crowded eastern gate, I excitedly slotted [Unselfish Blighted Decay] into my equipment. Mental note to buy armor pieces with three slots to fit Links later. I’d have some overhauling to do when I reached level thirty.

“Theorycrafting mode on. Don’t bother me.” I told the Swinelings staring at me with beady eyes.

Few players farmed the weakest monster on the mountain. Most of the Mardukryon newcomers, drawn by the world quest started by yours truly, have either quit or leveled up and moved on to more difficult areas. The surge in the Mardukryon population slowed as developments in other races occupied the news. I heard the Aviarii were one step closer to escaping their giant tree. A new race of magic caster armadillos was also discovered.

This area was now quite peaceful. I could ponder in earnest whether this purchase was a good idea or not.

I toggled my newly bought skill active after I exited the village. Purple clouds, ballooning about knee-high, rolled outward from my hooves, dissipating when they reached the edges of the skill’s AoE, a good four meters away. [Unselfish Blighted Decay] wasn’t an aura. Rather, it continuously cast and had an on-off switch.

### [ Status | Blighted Decay: Reduce Armor by 5% and Poison Damage Resistance by 10% ]

My smile stretched wider as the passive of [Ancestral Constitution] stacked higher and higher each second.

**Lvl. 7 Ancestral Constitution:** *Mardukryons inherited but a minute fraction of the divine solar vitality of their ancestors.*

Passive: +500 Armor and Magic Resilience, +23% Armor and Magic Resilience, 500 Health, +350

Ancestral Shroud, 11% Physical and Magic Damage Reduction

Each time damage is received (Max stacks [7]):

+ 70 Armor and Magic Resilience, +25 Health per Second, +90 Health, +70 Ancestral Shroud

Duration: 30 seconds per stack

The ‘cost’ of [Unselfish Blighted Decay] was self-inflicted hits. There was no need to toggle my PvP settings and whack myself before charging into battle. For dungeons, it wasn’t a big deal because I could fully buff at the beginning of each fight. But during the Great Hunt, where enemies could pop all along the trails, and

skills from allies flew everywhere, it was better to have my PvP settings off and rely on [Unselfish Blighted Decay] for stacking [Ancestral Constitution]. This was one of the reasons I bought this skill.

It did mean that a percent of my health got chipped each second, but my massive regeneration gobbled it up, resulting in my health bar not moving but [Ancestral Constitution] proccing.

*Well*, not actually one percent. Should be less than that.

Since this was Poison Damage hitting me, likely of the physical type, my Armor and Poison Damage Resistance worked to reduce it.

“Sadly, I can’t share this through Plaguespreader,” I grumbled, turning it off. That was the downside of the ‘cost’ not being a debuff.

It would’ve been great if I could add the damage I suffered to the abysmal AoE DPS of [Unselfish Blighted Decay]. A tenth of a percent of my health? Really laughable.

Looking it up, I learned that Pierce meant an attack ignored fifty percent of the target’s Armor by default—more if there were other Piercing Modifiers. The AoE Poison Damage of [Unselfish Blighted Decay] must’ve been made Piercing because a tank, not a DPSer, would be using it, given that its formula scaled off of health rather than attack modifiers. Even if it was Piercing, it was still below mediocre. More like forceful tickling of the enemy.

In any case, increasing DPS, though welcome, wasn’t my intention in buying this skill. Most likely, I’d leave it at a low level.

On top of proccing [Ancestral Constitution], [Unselfish Blighted Decay] was a guaranteed self-debuff on demand for [Cleansing Flames], something that didn’t need a consumable item.

While active, [Unselfish Blighted Decay] reduced my Armor and Poison Damage Resistance, in return for debuffing affected enemies for twice the amount. As a tank, it usually wouldn’t be worth sacrificing my own defenses to increase my party’s damage. DPS was the problem of DPSers, and being tanky was the business of the tank.

However, the same as Paritor, I needed some setup to reach full tankiness, especially with how [Ancestral Constitution] and [Cleansing Flames] worked. Cutting down that prep time would be essential, especially if I got killed. *Only in an alternate reality that would happen.* Assuming the unthinkable that it would happen, and would Melonomi resurrect me, I wouldn’t have any buffs in the middle of battle. I couldn’t ask enemies for a time-out while I rebuffer, whack myself, and eat rotten food or drink poisons. I had to immediately get the aggro back before my party mates got killed.

If I kept [Unselfish Blighted Decay] at level one, the self-debuff wouldn’t be so bad. The three-piece set bonus of Blighted Vinereaver’s Revenge, giving ten percent more Armor, and the fifteen percent Poison Damage Resistance from level one [Proficient Battle Brewer] more than canceled it.

In return, I did debuff the enemy and strengthened the effect of Heaping Infections.

**Lvl. 10 Heaping Infections:** *Unleash spores of the Arcane Blight in a large radius around you that weakens enemies, reducing their Attack Power and Magic Power by 60%. Other ailments on affected enemies worsen their condition, reducing their Armor, Magic Resilience, and Health Regeneration by 4% for each (maximum of 40%).*

Cost: 125 Ancestral Shroud (or 125 Energy for Non-Marukdryons)

Duration: 35 Seconds  
Cooldown: 20 Seconds

If that were all, then it wouldn't have been worth buying this skill. *Of course, that's not all.*

Like [Blight Cloud], [Unselfish Blighted Decay] was another continuous AoE skill for Health on Hit shenanigans. *Yep*, I hadn't given up on my unconventional setup for sustain, even if my unboxlike senses were on the fence about it. In the immediate future, this skill with Health on Hit would be useful. The Great Hunt would have tons of mobs, so monster density wasn't a problem. It wasn't like our party would fight each event monster one by one like during our practice—if that were so, my Health on Hit plan would suck.

Moreover, [Unselfish Blighted Decay], again, similar to [Blight Cloud], could inflict negative statuses such as Freeze from [Pristine Frostore Amulet].

### **Pristine Frostore Amulet | Item Level: 15**

Epic | Amulet

86 Magic Resilience

20 - 34 Magic Power

Requires: 32 Spirit, 13 Sense

-----  
+18% Water Resistance

+10% Freeze Resistance

+5% Chance to Freeze the target for 2 seconds

I'd look for equipment or Shards with debuffs on hit later. If my [Frigid Yew Salve] business with Clement would pan out, hooves crossed, I'd have more budget to play with. Not to mention I'd also need more Accuracy Rating on top of that given by [Lesser Precision Aura] since my skills needed to land their hits for my plan to work. The easiest would be through gear enchants. More shopping, then.

"It's also going to help me farm faster." I toggled the Decay back on and trotted close to the Snowy Swinelings. The purple clouds engulfed the thickly white-furred piglets before the darkish green miasma of [Blight Cloud], which had a smaller AoE, about a meter and a half shorter radius, could touch them. They burst into shimmers of Essence and *Gli*.

Then I waited, standing still while purple clouds continued to roll like the entrance of a rockstar. I only went to a concert once, and I hated it. The performer on stage was just a pencil-sized figure from where I stood. There were screens, yes, but I didn't pay to watch screens. I could've done that at home.

*Waiting... waiting...* A minute passed, nearing two.

Was this going to work?

Then it happened. I got Frozen.

Barely a couple of seconds later, the ice shattered and I could move again.

"It works!" I gave a Swinelings, hobbling at the edge of the clouds, an energetic thumbs-up.

Part of me thought I couldn't Freeze myself because I had a higher resistance than the small chance to proc it. Turned out, it wasn't straight-up adding and subtracting. Discounting that concern, it turned out [Unselfish Blighted Decay] could Freeze me. I had Burned myself with Mehubanarath's Old Sling before.

### **Mehubanarath's Old Sling | Item Level: 1**

Rare | Ranged | One-Handed

8-18 Attack Power (Neutral)

1.2 Attacks per Second

-----

+4-6 Physical Fire Damage

15% Chance to Burn Targets for 5 seconds

Another thing I confirmed was that PvP Settings toggled off didn't prevent self-inflicted ailment. After all, [Unselfish Blighted Decay] was a valid self-hit. I wasn't sure—and I didn't know how to test it—if Health on Hit also worked with whacking myself. Even if it didn't, the most important thing was there was a way of inflicting status on myself.

Unboxlike shenanigans abound in the future. I didn't know yet what they were, but I had to buy this Skill Shard. *Destiny demands it!*

For my last test, I cast [Greater Pyro Shell] while [Unselfish Blighted Decay] remained active. Again, I waited. The shell expired without exploding. Was the damage I received from [Unselfish Blighted Decay] too weak to pop it? Perhaps my shell didn't absorb it? I needed to thin my shell and test again.

I entered the village and galloped down the main road heading to the southern gate, and back to the tunnels.

-----

"Herald, why are you grinning?" Sawyer, my youngest sister, asked from behind me.

"Chatting with some girl, probably," offered Nelly, the middle child.

"Girl?" said Mum, sitting in between Nelly and Sawyer. "Who? The Eclairs lady, the cousin of your friend, Boady, is it?"

"No, Mum," I said, groaning. "I'm just checking emails."

Sawyer grabbed my seat and peeked over my shoulder, trying to see what my WeeCee displayed. "Hey, it's eye-locked. No fair," she complained because I set my WeeCee to project only to my retinas. She only saw a blurry floating screen. "What are you hiding from us?"

I was looking at my level twenty-nine Mardukryon character, admiring the unboxlike threads dangling, waiting to be woven into the most diabolical, and gimmicky, of builds. I had managed to level up before I logged out earlier this morning. And I also confirmed that [Greater Pyro Shell] did absorb the self-hits from [Unselfish Blighted Decay].

With my shell on, I let the Blighted Swinelords hit me for a few seconds. Then I left a Totem behind and ran away. I used the active part of [Cleansing Flames] to make sure I didn't have any DoTs or debuffs on me, before toggling [Unselfish Blighted Decay] on. And my shell exploded after several seconds, which was disappointing.

I'd rather that the self-hits didn't damage it, but I couldn't win everything. Otherwise, I'd be unstoppable and this dimension would collapse into itself.

"It's nothing," I said, turning off my WeeCee. "Jimmy, how's the traffic?"

"Moderately heavy, sir," he replied, pointing at the floating hologram over the dashboard.

"Oh, come on." Sawyer thumped my headrest. We were adults but behaved like children in the rare times our family reunited. "Don't change the topic. Were you chatting with Eclairs?"

"Herald wouldn't smile like that when talking to women," Nelly said. "I bet he's looking at MCO. I know that grin from years ago."

"It's work-related." I winked at their reflections in the rear-view mirror. "Anyway, where do we buy flowers on the way to Pop's? We can turn right at St. Partridge—there's a big flower shop there—or just continue and buy at a small store on the way to the cemetery."