

# BLACK PUDDING

## CHAPTER 25

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With a pleasant sigh, I ventured out of my dorm room and made my way down the corridor that led to the common area, where my fellow residents of the Hall of Oddities, also known as House Baku, could usually be found. I couldn't help but wonder if "Baku" held the same meaning here as it did back on Earth or if it was simply a product of my Veil Polyglot translation skill. Well, now it would be considered Dark Babel after my recent class and race change. I gotta admit, it's all rather confusing. But you know what? I ain't gonna waste too much time pondering that crap. Gotta live in the moment, embrace the weirdness, and just roll with it.

[Charm] Resisted

"Ah, Miss Pudding, what an unexpected delight. I was just about to seek your presence," Lady Zephyra cooed, her eyes gleaming with a hidden motive that could shatter glass.

"Yo, den mother, how's it hanging?" I greeted her with a wide grin, thoroughly amused by the visible twitch in her eye.

[Charm] Resisted

[Charm] Resisted

"Your informality is always... a delight," Lady Zephyra replied with a forced smile. "Now, Miss Pudding, the headmaster is hosting a gathering specifically for the fairer races, as he so disgracefully put it, and as an elf, you have been summoned to attend. Waste no time and make your way to the stadium, where you underwent your initial academic evaluation before enrolling. That will be all," she stated before swiftly turning on her heel and strutting away.

However, before she could slip away out of earshot, a burning question stirred within me. "Hey, wait a minute," I called out, raising my voice to catch her attention. "We both know I'm not an elf and if I'm being 'summoned' to attend this clan rally, it's obvious that the headmaster is clueless. So, I need to know who made the decision to put me in this..." I waved around my hands, "house?" I pressed, determined to get some answers.

Lady Zephyra paused mid-stride and glanced back to respond. "Clan rally?" She repeated the words in confusion before continuing. "Miss Pudding, it is the magic weaved within the wards of this academy long ago that determines one's placement. The headmaster and others have no say in the matter. As for your unique nature, House Baku has a longstanding tradition of embracing individuals who might not fit in elsewhere. Now, if you would kindly oblige me and attend this

so-called ‘disgraceful’ assembly, I would appreciate it. And do inform me of its purpose once it’s over,” she stated before resuming her departure, leaving me a bit speechless if I was being honest.

Shrugging off that weird encounter with the den mother, I decided to go along with her request. Instead of heading to the boring common room, I made my way through the academy, straight to the damn stadium where I had totally kicked ass a few days ago to get accepted here. Gotta admit, that arena was freakin’ awesome! The ambient mana concentration in there was off the charts, giving my spells a crazy boost. It was like a freakin’ playground for my magical badassery, where I could unleash some epic arcane power. Well, as long as I stuck to casting with ambient magic, that is. I highly doubted I would have gotten the same results if I had used my system commands. Anyways, without wasting any more time, I found my way into the stadium, ready to soak in all its epicness—and of course, see what the hell the headmaster was up to.

As I stepped into the bustling stadium, my eyes widened at the sight of the packed seating. It was more than just students—it felt like some kind of freakin’ elf convention in here. Elvish folks of all kinds were mingling about, creating a vibrant atmosphere. Gnomes were a rare sight, and humans were even rarer. In fact, I noticed a few humans being turned away while only a select few were allowed in. As for me, I had gotten a scrutinizing glance, seeming that snow elves were extremely rare, but I had been allowed entry.

I made sure to keep my mouth shut. A single glimpse of my black gums and tongue would’ve revealed something wasn’t right about me. I mean, I thought my glowing eyes would be the dead giveaway, but hey, there were plenty of people—well, okay, more like six—in the stadium with their own pair of glowing peepers. Although, I must admit, mine were the only ones that shimmered in a vibrant orange light, like molten iron. However, to my relief, I managed to pass through without raising suspicion. I found myself a seat in the sea of elves and settled in, all too eager to see what the hell this gathering had in store for me. But seriously, what’s with the fuss over humans? *Screw it! I’m not human anymore. So, it’s not my problem to figure out.* Disregarding that thought, I just sat there, scanning the crowd, waiting for this shindig to kick off.



Faelwen’s rodent whiskers twitched furiously as she tracked the scent of her missing children to an abandoned warehouse nestled within the city. Fear and dread gripped her heart, but determination burned in her eyes. The overpowering scent of blood threatened to mask the trail of her beloved offspring, but with each breath, she found solace in the realization that the blood did not belong to her precious little ones. Steeling herself, she exerted her strength against the iron door, causing it to emit a piercing screech as the rusted hinges reluctantly gave way.

Peering around the corner into the desolate building, Faelwen’s heart sank as she found it empty, devoid of any signs of life. However, the overwhelming stench of blood continued to assail her senses, growing more concerning by the moment. With legs trembling and her tail swishing nervously, she summoned her courage and cautiously entered the warehouse, desperately searching for any trace of her precious babies. As she ventured further into the dark space, fear tightened its grip on her heart. Her eyes widened in horror as she discovered tables scattered throughout the building, each equipped with restraining straps designed to hold down their unfortunate victims.

Some of the tables emitted the familiar scent of three of her children, filling her with anguish. Following the trail of fear that permeated the air, Faelwen dropped to her knees in despair as it led her to a large furnace.

Overwhelmed by pain and sorrow, Faelwen collapsed to the cold stone floor, her body wracked with sobs. She had already lost her worthless husband, his body now serving the twisted purposes of a lich, and now, her worst fears seemed confirmed as she all but confirmed her precious babies were lost to her forever. Hours stretched by as she lay there, curled up in a ball, weeping in inconsolable sorrow. But then, amidst the darkness, a glimmer caught her eye—a shiny object tucked beneath one of the tables. Without bothering to stand, she crawled slowly toward it, her hand outstretched to grasp it. As she pulled it close, her eyes blazed with seething rage, for she held in her hand a shard of a Soul Crystal.

The scent of her youngest daughter, still a tender little one who hadn't yet grown into her mouse ears, clung to the crystal. As anger replaced her tears, Faelwen mustered the strength to rise from the cold floor. Her gaze swept across the empty warehouse one final time, searching for any overlooked clues or remnants of hope. Satisfied that there was nothing left for her here, she strode purposefully toward the exit, her anger fueling her determination.

Stepping out into the narrow alley that had led her to this wretched place, Faelwen swiftly located a nearby sewer drain. With unwavering determination, she wasted no time in descending into the depths below, disappearing back into the hidden world beneath the surface. There, she would embark on her relentless pursuit of vengeance, vowing to exact a heavy price from those responsible, no matter the cost. For she knew all too well the identity of the sinister owner of the warehouse, Duke Vicar. His name, Faelwen etched deep within her heart, fueling her determination to unleash the full force of her wrath upon him.

The journey through the labyrinthine sewer felt endless, but consumed by her turmoil and anger, Faelwen paid little heed to the passing of time. Before she knew it, she found herself standing outside Kaida's humble sanctuary. With determination coursing through her veins, Faelwen took a deep breath and didn't bother with formalities. Instead, she barged into the abode, her eyes scanning the chamber in search of the undead woman. If anyone could assist her in seeking vengeance, it was the revenant and perhaps even the lich who had taken possession of her late husband's lifeless body.

Faelwen knew that the sinister mistress of the lich, that unsettling woman named Blake, bore responsibility for Razzle's untimely demise. Yet, in the depths of her dark and twisted desires, a part of Faelwen couldn't help but feel a strange tinge of disappointment. For years, she had yearned for the satisfaction of being the one to bring an end to her husband's life. And now, it seemed that Blake had stolen that satisfaction away.

Kaida rounded a corner, her undead gaze falling upon the unexpected guest. "Faelwen, what brings you to my humble abode?" she inquired, her tone laced with curiosity. "Have you received any word regarding the whereabouts of your children?"

To Faelwen's surprise, she found herself unable to articulate the words that weighed heavy on her heart. Instead, she extended her hand, presenting the shard of a Soul Crystal to Kaida. The undead woman stepped closer, her eyes focused on the tiny fragment. With utmost care, she raised her hand and held it above the crystal, only to gasp in response to what she sensed.

"What's happening?" Razzle—no, Olin—emerged around the corner, hastily fixing his attire as his eyes fell upon Faelwen, her face streaked with tears.

"One of Faelwen's children's souls is trapped within this shard," Kaida responded. Her voice carried a touch of sorrow. "What about the others?" she asked, her tone gentle and concerned. Faelwen, unable to find the words, simply shook her head in response, her heart heavy with grief.

The chamber fell into a heavy silence as if the weight of Faelwen's sorrow hung in the air. It was Olin who finally broke the silence, his voice calm and matter-of-fact. "There are no child corpses here," he stated. "But if you're willing, I can bring back the soul trapped within that shard as a wraith." The weight of his words hung in the air, the gravity of the situation sinking in on them.

Faelwen gazed at the shard in her hand, her fear gradually giving way to a glimmer of hope. After a long moment, she nodded in agreement to Olin's proposal. With trepidation, she approached the lich, her hands trembling as she extended the shard toward him. Olin met her with a reassuring smile, his presence exuding a sense of calm. As he waved his hand over the fragment of the Soul Crystal, a miraculous transformation unfolded before their eyes.

To Kaida's disbelief, what should have been a laborious ritual spanning an entire day manifested in an instant. A spectral entity materialized from the shard, taking the form of a young ratkin girl with oversized ears. The girl, now a wraith, floated before them, her ethereal presence radiating a sense of both familiarity and otherworldliness. Kaida couldn't fathom how Olin had effortlessly accomplished what should have been an impossible feat. The sheer magnitude of magic required for such a creation was beyond comprehension, typically necessitating a painstaking ritual. Yet, Olin had achieved it with nothing more than a wave of his hand.

"Momma," the wraith cried.

"Saffron," Faelwen cried back as she reached out to hug the floating girl.

Kaida couldn't help but be astounded once again, witnessing the ease with which Olin had created a fully manifested wraith capable of interacting with the physical plane. Saffron's ethereal form embraced her mother, the reunion bringing both joy and sorrow. As Kaida glanced back at the lich, Olin appeared oblivious to her gaze, his attention completely consumed by the tender moment shared between mother and daughter. A fond smile graced his lips, revealing a depth of compassion that seemed incongruous with his undead nature.

Suddenly, a frantic pounding at the door shattered the joyous moment between Faelwen and Saffron, the sound resonating through the chamber. At the same time, the ground rumbled beneath them as if responding to a distant tremor from the city above.



Thalassa was in a state of pure bliss as she reclined, luxuriating in the comforting warmth of the house bath. Every moment was pure bliss, soothing her senses. Although, the chiseled abyssal marble with obsidian crystal embellishments wasn't exactly to her liking, given her upbringing in the Forest of Woe, where natural elements prevailed. But she couldn't deny the peculiar charm of the blood candles, casting their eerie light upon the dark stone, which she had grown rather fond of.

The flickering candlelight brought back memories of a time long ago, before the treaty with her clan, when Thalassa reveled in the freedom of the woods, hunting and slaying any intruders who dared enter her domain. Those were days filled with wildness and excitement, now fading into the distant recesses of her mind. Yet, here she was, attending an academy as part of a peace initiative, as decreed by Queen Evergodling. Amidst the pathetic gaggle of students here, Thalassa couldn't shake the feeling that her roommate exuded an air of darkness, albeit not necessarily belonging to the Corpseweaver Hive as she had initially presumed. Regardless, Blake possessed an enigmatic presence, hinting at a different kind of darkness as if plucked from the depths of nightmares. And truth be told, Thalassa found herself strangely drawn to that aspect of her roommate.

Her musings were abruptly shattered by a powerful explosion that reverberated through the stone walls, causing the water in the bath to ripple violently. Shouts and screams echoed from beyond the doors, signaling trouble outside. Thalassa wasted no time in springing out of the water, paying no heed to the need for clothing. After all, nymphs found such garments utterly useless, which only heightened her annoyance at the academy's insistence on her wearing a robe. But at that moment, she couldn't care less about clothing.

Thalassa burst through the double doors and into a chaotic scene of colored projectiles flying through the air. A lethal spell struck a lizardman who selflessly shielded a young vampire girl and a human male. Humans weren't an uncommon sight among the darker races, often seeking refuge wherever they could find acceptance. But there was no time to dwell on that. The relentless onslaught of magic forced Thalassa to swiftly dodge and weave, narrowly escaping the deadly spells. In the midst of the chaos, Lady Zephyra conjured a defensive ward, providing a momentary respite from the relentless assault.

Seizing the moment, Thalassa took a quick assessment of their adversaries. They were faced with a formidable group of elves donning battle mage armor, accompanied by a few gnomes, humans, and even two dwarfs. Each of them wielded wands and staffs embedded with potent Mana Stones, radiating an aura of raw magic. Even the least skilled among them had the potential to be a significant threat.

"Kill every last Night Hag!" roared one of the assailants, his voice filled with hatred and determination.

"Don't forget to collect the souls of their fallen with the empty Soul Crystals!" another voice shouted.