

Chapter 2.34 Dusted Off

A jet of dark, foul-smelling liquid immediately sprayed into the face of the Death Knight.

“Ah,” he intoned. “That probably would have hurt if I had any eyes, in the traditional sense.”

“How do you see things with empty sockets?” Sally crossed her arms, once again glad not to be on the receiving end of another dungeon trap.

“Mostly by suspension of belief,” he wiped away errant liquid from his face with his cloak. “Same way as you are undead, yet not exactly.”

“My belief is basically on the end of a bungee cord. With how suspended it is.” She wrinkled her nose up and turned to Edward. “How about yours?”

He paused as he looked between them. “I think I’m starting to learn.”

“You’re not very talkative; you need to constantly blab about all sorts of inane crap if you want to fit in with us.” She beamed at him. “Shame we don’t have any more Party space for you - although I think I can have a third minion now, Humps? Not that I’d ever ask that of you, Edward.”

“*Bodyguard*, Sally.” Humphrey sighed. “Not minion. But yes, you can have three now.”

Edward tilted his head. “Huh, so you’re like a Boss Monster mixed with a Player?”

“We’re all a bit like that,” she nodded. “Theo is the same as me, but a vampire, obviously. Humps used to be an observer; Archie has part of an observer in him. Uh, Lucius, you kidnapped.” Her smile turned into a scowl.

“I did,” he smiled sheepishly. “But in fairness, the rest of you, I wouldn’t have had the chance to.”

“True, but that’s not exactly an excuse.” She wagged a finger at him before turning back to the Death Knight. “Any loot in there?”

“Yes, but I can’t access it.” He shrugged and allowed the zombie to come retrieve the items.

[Sun Disc]
[80 Gold]
[Healing Potion]

“Neat - what’s this disc for?” She glanced around the room as if the solution would be immediately present.

“Probably a puzzle or door.” Humphrey looked between the two doorways - one to the North, one to the West. “Which direction do you wish me to absorb danger in?”

“Let’s let the disc decide!” She took it from her Inventory. It was around three inches across, one side engraved with one of the sun pictograms that decorated the area, and the back side was blank. “Sun goes north; blank goes west?”

She flipped it into the air, spinning it wildly. “Call it Edward!”

The demon stumbled on his words at being called on unexpectedly. "Ah- Sun!"

With a slap, she caught it from the air between her hands and then revealed it, palm up. "Suns it is! Looks like luck is on your side, Edward."

He grimaced and gave her a nod.

"You're an accomplice now," Humphrey grinned, "you have diverted the tides of destiny and become part of the unending sea."

"*Poetic*," Sally nodded. "Open the door, bud."

The Death Knight exhaled and turned toward the door, placing his hand on it. "Hmm, I reckon this one will be combat." The door opened slowly, the stale air pushing through and cooling the previously flame-touched room.

They filtered through to a large and dark room with a high ceiling, the main source of light seemingly to be the doorway on the wall opposite - a good sixty or so feet away. In the middle of the room stood a large statue. A four-armed man with an angered, toothy expression engraved on his face.

"Ooh, we have to fight that?" She winced as the door behind them closed.

Torches lit up around the room from one end to the other, gradually illuminating the area. As the final ones burst into flame, the statue began to shift, shedding dust and loose pebbles to the floor. It was a good twenty feet tall - and now, brightly lit, Sally could see the sun-shaped clubs it wielded in each of its hands.

"No brains," she tutted. "But! A good chance to use my new dagger!" She flipped it in the air and caught the handle, ready to run forth.

The statue crouched and brought his four weapons to bear.

"Hey, Sally," Humphrey grinned as he watched her eagerly handle the new blade. "Guess what?"

"What?"

[Compelled Duel]

"Oh, come on!" She deflated and glared at him. "Kill stealer."

The Death Knight narrowed his sockets. "Nevermind, he seems to be immune to-"

A large mace clattered into the stone where they had both stood, cracking the flooring and sending a puff of dust into the air. Immediately, a follow-up from another sun-mace was in motion - sending them running in opposite directions to avoid the constant blows.

Sally hated golem-type monsters. [Hex: Slow]. Not only could she not bite them, but they often didn't have the consideration to have a brain either. Fighting rock with a knife seemed like something totally not in her wheelhouse. She jumped as a mace swung widely and struck the wall - and she jumped upon it, wrapping her arms and legs around the long handle of the stone weapon.

At the risk of getting squished against the wall, she began to stab at the weapon - surprised at how easily the dagger pierced the stone, as though it was butter. While there was too much resistance to slash through the grip of the mace, with enough stabs, she had weakened it enough to where when the statue tried to clash two of his weapons together, the one she was one snapped off from the impact and fell to the floor.

She rolled away, nursing her leg with a hobble. She had disarmed a quarter of the arms, but one of the spiked rocks of the sun-mace had stabbed through into her leg. She raised her empty hand - now marred with her blood - to cast right before a swinging club struck her. Blood flicked across the dusty floor as she was knocked back a dozen feet, a new gash across her collarbone.

“Ass,” she spat. [Necroblast: Barrage]

Each of the five bolts scoured the air as they struck the body of the statue - everywhere they hit blowing a fist-sized hole in the stone. Not enough to truly hurt it, but it was becoming weaker.

Sparks flew around the Death Knight as he was fully on the defensive. Every strike blocked or deflected made a sharp grinding sound, as any attack he attempted just resulted in a heavy clang wherever he struck.

Sally ran up, sliding to avoid the swing of a mace, and jabbed the Monster in his thick legs. She doubted it could feel pain, but she jumped and dove, repeatedly stabbing it over and over despite the cramps of her own injured leg. Eventually, the statue got lucky and caught her where she didn't have the movement to dodge - but then Humphrey was above her to stop the strike. A second mace then swung in and knocked the Death Knight to the floor with a large thud that reverberated around the room.

As much as the ground was now littered with dust and stone from the statue - it showed no attempt at ceasing the assault. If only they had the full Party, then something like this would probably be easy. They had enough overpowered abilities between them that usually one of them would have something for every occasion.

She shot herself backward and slid across the floor, avoiding the plumes of dust from where the sun-maces struck the stone. [Necroblast] struck the most injured leg, blowing a larger chunk from where it had already suffered some damage. The Monster buckled slightly, briefly off-guard, which gave Humphrey time to right himself.

“Sally,” he growled, gesturing with his free hand.

With a nod, she ran towards him - instead of the statue. As the Death Knight bent low, she put a foot atop his hand, and with a grunt, he launched her into the air.

She grappled around the head of the statue, scrabbling to get purchase with her feet - and then she started stabbing. “Let's see your lil rock brain then,” she growled as the dagger drew lines of dust in the air every time it stabbed back and forth into the Monster.

It tried to slam a mace into her to remove her from the tightly gripped position, and the zombie growled in pain as one of the stone prongs pierced through her. But she did not relent, continuing the assault even as her blood ran down the statue's face. It twisted and slowed as it went to perform the same attack - but Humphrey had grabbed onto that arm and weighed it down.

And then something popped up that she didn't think possible.

[Eat Brains]

The statue paused for a brief moment and then dropped to the floor as if whatever magic had been powering it had suddenly disappeared.

Sally fell to the floor with a crack, rolling over and coughing out blood and stone dust.

Humphrey lent a hand down, which she took - and stood to her feet - still choking with her face covered in light powdered rock and crimson. Pausing to hold her breath - since she didn't technically need to breathe - she withdrew a Healing Potion and popped the cork, gulping it down with wide eyes.

"Ohhh shit," she eventually gasped. "Never doing that again, so gross." She retched and covered her eyes. "Oh my god, why does everything here taste so bad."

"I'm not sure you are meant to eat everything," Edward said as he rolled his eyes.

"Why not," she smirked, "when you can earn cool new abilities from it?"

[Passive Unlocked: Rock Bottom]