

Chapter 2.67

Day of the Dead

The ground cracked and shook. A pale mist surrounded the area, causing all the Silver Players a brief amount of confusion and panic.

And then they arrived. *Zombies*.

Hundreds of them, clawing out from the ground and from around all the gathered enemies. Immediate disarray flooded through the regiments and Player and System-created alike stumbled over each other and into more and more corpses surrounding them.

Theo whistled as Sally hopped down the steps to stand beside him. "That is remarkable. Two hundred and fifty zombies."

"I traded my skills and tricked some weird eldritch god into giving me this. It's like an Ultimate, but only Boss Monsters get it - and even then it's super rare."

"Gives me chills," the vampire shook for effect. "Shall we go and join in?"

Theo held out his arm with a grin, and she took it as they both started running toward the melee.

Norah knocked the Death Knight on the shoulder pad. "What about you, big guy? Up for having some fun?"

"I have my eye on the Champion," Humphrey grinned. "Lucius, care to join us?"

The Shade nodded, a saluting emoticon by his head. "Would be a pleasure."

Sally swerved through the packs of zombies to slash out with her dagger, taking the guards by surprise. It was great to be amongst so many like-minded individuals. Her Mortis Bomb had given them a couple more zombies - and just because they were really driving home the point, she had used [Endless Dead] to bring out the ones saved away, including the crabs and Eaglebears.

Theo had become a blur of pink energy, occasionally [Blood Shift]ing over to her to assist in her eating brains or getting a kill. With a crack of red lighting, he surged up to one of the giant golems, his sword striking over and over as he moved up the figure.

Humphrey pulsed out his stun and caught a group of System-created, who were quickly brought down to the ground by the massive horde of zombies. Bandages shot out from behind as Norah stood a little way behind him. Wrapping around arms or legs, she pulled combatants off their footing and toward the Death Knight, allowing him or the shadowed Lucius advantage in striking out at them.

The flowered Champion stomped out at the zombies with one long, vine-wrapped leg, while several clung to her arm and other leg. Anger flared in her eyes. She saw the writing on the wall. "Retreat to the Golds!" she yelled out, making to move from the square.

"I don't think so..." Humphrey loomed out from the swirling melee, his sword leveled toward her.

She spat on the floor. "I know all about your duels, tin-can. I'm immune to such trickery."

Norah leaned forward to whisper in the Death Knight's ear. "You got this, Humphrey. I'm going for the other golem."

He nodded, and the crimson flame behind his helmet rose higher. With a flourish of his sword, [Grave Strike] illuminated the weapon with an unholy glow. "What name do you have Champion, so that I may add it to those that have fallen to my blade?"

"Rose, the Green Lady" the woman hissed, bring around her cannon. "Now feel my thorns!"

"*Cliche*," Humphrey exhaled, as a blast of energy washed over him. Vibrant petals, over a foot in size, each burst and scoured the area where the Champion blasted. Zombies were torn to shreds, and deep gashes were scored straight through the stone ground. As the breeze washed away the cloud obscuring the blast zone, the Death Knight remained standing. He wrenched one of the petals lodged in his shoulder out and dropped it to the floor.

Fire sparked in the empty sockets of his skeletal face. "You have picked the wrong side to fight for. Today is the last day you draw breath." Plated boots biting into the floor, he launched forward.

Norah hummed to herself as she moved through the throng of fighting bodies. Those opposed to her seemed to dizzy and weaken in her presence and were soon overwhelmed by the walking dead. She stopped and crossed her bandaged arms in arriving at the second golem. The giant figure punched down and crush a pair of zombies, as a dozen more milled around its feet ineffectively.

"My, what a gaudy excuse for opulence." She tutted and closed her eyes. A dark mist encircled her before a large eye of luminous yellow opened above her head. Two dozen bandages zipped out from around her and wrapped the limbs of the golem, the giant turning to her and straining against the attack.

The golem crashed down to its knees as more of its golden form was covered by the snaking wrappings. Its arms struggled against the pull, eventually being almost flatted against the ground.

"That's right, bow before your betters," the Mummy purred.

[Become the Sands]

Now fully wrapped up, the golem shuddered and lost its form. The bandages retracted and large eye faded away as only a large pile of sand remained from the opponent.

Sally watched in awe at the display. Turning from the pile of sand now blowing about in the breeze, to the blur of pink energy coming from Theo, to the flashes of metal and shadow as Humphrey pushed the Champion on the defensive.

This was it. Surrounded by hundreds of living dead and the wails of the living being snuffed out...

This was living!

She beamed and barely registered the last legs of the fight. They had the upper hand from the outset, and every combatant that had fallen had just tipped the scales more in their favor. Hand outstretched, she scooped the crabs, Eaglebears, and whatever other zombies were gathered in that area into [Endless Rest]. They weren't really needed now.

Theo slid across the ground to a stop, almost slipping over some spilled entrails. "Everything alri-woah-right, Sally?"

"Better than alright, we're a force of nature! Ever since that first group of zombies back in Hillan... and now look where we are."

The vampire looked around and pushed his glasses up. "I imagine there will be an even greater blockade over at the Golds. One last ditch effort before he has to get involved himself."

"Psh," Sally crossed her arms. "How tough could a dragon be anyway if he has to hide away? We chew through level twenties like nothing, and he hasn't done anything throughout this escapade to signal his level of strength."

Theo flared out his nostrils and grimaced. "If he gets stronger the more gold he has, and intended to take over area three, then I imagine he might be between twenty-five to thirty, and Boss level, rather than Champion."

"Don't you rain on my parade, pup." She glared out at the zombie horde. Many of them were now wandering aimlessly as they ran out of nearby targets. "We'll need to start marching, otherwise the golems will catch us up."

"Yes, my Queen," Theo bowed.

"Don't try to cozy up to me now that you've hyped up the dragon." She shook her head and pushed him away towards the portal building. "Go tell Ed and the boys that Silver belongs to the dead." Her nose wrinkled up. "But they are acceptable guests."

Theo waved her off with a smile and opened up his STAR as he made his way to the building.

What Sally needed to do was to rally the troops. She slunk around some of the groups of zombies, giving them pats on the back and thumbs up for doing a good job. With unstable footing, she clambered up the pile of sand and narrowed her eyes over the battlefield. Norah wasn't too difficult to spot, and she waved her over. Humphrey was making a show of his duel, and as he glanced in her direction, she gave him the gesture to hurry it along.

The Death Knight was enveloped in another cloud of smoke as the cannon blasted the razor sharp petals across him. As the smoke cleared, he had his sword lodged in her bark-like

chest, the shadow version held by Lucius helping to pry her in half with a quick show of force.

“Good thing I’m really far away and can’t see all the gross details,” Sally nodded to herself.

“Everything okay, hun?” Norah stepped up the pile of golem-sand to stand beside the zombie.

“It was until Theo tempered my expectations,” she raised her voice over to the side, but the vampire wasn’t there.

“I’ll admit I know nothing about the dragon, but if Theo is advising caution, he may be correct.” She smiled over at the Death Knight, now working his way back through the crowd. “That boy straight up exploded someone’s head with a touch. I wouldn’t want to see the things he is scared of.”

“To think he used to be scared of me.” Sally shook her head and sighed. He still was on an interpersonal level. Sheer force of personality was the only step up she had over him these days. Not that she was even complaining. It was nice to have others do the heavy lifting and she could just point them in the direction her ambition led.

“We’re like that anime,” she ventured out loud, leaving the Mummy confused and without any further context.

Humphrey stomped up the sand, aided by an extended bandage. When he finally got to the top, Lucius popped out beside him. The Death Knight briefly glared at the freeloader before he turned to grin at the two undead women.

“Did you see me kill the Champion?”

“It was very impressive, Humphrey,” Norah smiled warmly.

“I was engaged the whole way through,” Sally nodded, causing him to deflate slightly at her possible sarcasm. “Lucius, you did great, too.”

A large smiley face appeared by his head.

Theo hopped up the side of the sand dune deftly, hands in his pockets. At the top, he removed a hand to push his glasses up. “Edward and the others have been notified. They’ve slowed down the golems somehow, so we should be able to stay ahead.”

Sally turned to face ahead. Across from the mist and gloom of her apocalypse, buildings rose in the distance. Taller and better made than those closest around them. Beyond even those, a large mountain stood shadowed before the horizon. The lair of Ruben.

“Undead!” She raised a hand in the air and drew the attention of the horde. “With our dead hands we will grasp and tear the corrupt power from the Wastelands and take it for ourselves.” With a deep breath and blazing red eyes, she launched herself from the small hill.

“March to the mountain!”