

Chapter 51 Sanctified

The rest of the Party paused and looked at the supposed demon. For a few awkward moments, there was just silence except for the raindrops beating at the rocky floor.

“Not sure what I expected.” Sally rolled her eyes. “But it’s good to have you on board, Lucius.” A smile widened across her face.

Now, with his hood down, the apparent demon’s true form was revealed. His head was nothing more than a shadowy mist with two crimson eyes affixed, looking a bit ashamed of himself.

“A Shade,” Edward said, deflating. “Not quite a demon.”

“*Would you all stop bickering?*” Lightning flashed as Maeve roared in anger. Swirls of water surrounded her feet with greater intensity with her words.

“Probably not,” Sally murmured. She rubbed the side of her head as she looked between the golem and Champion. “Hey Humps, monologue for a bit, would ya?”

“Certain...ly,” he replied, somewhat confused. He cleared his throat and then began yelling at the Unique. “Foul demon! It is you who shall rue the day, for you have approached the-“

Sally turned her attention away from the ramblings and opened up her STAR.

[Sally: level ten yet?]

[Sally: could really use some help]

[Theo: in danger? Can be there in two hours]

She looked between the Death Knight and the increasing amount of ire growing on Maeve's face.

[Sally: two minutes, or no deal]

[Theo:... I can't]

[Theo: co-ords pls]

With a sigh and a weight filling her stomach, she sent over the map location to him. He didn't reply. Window closed, she turned back to the looming battle. It was perhaps unfair to expect the vampire to come bail them out - he had only been gone two days. She could surely deal with her own problems?

“-and furthermore, we weren't even ready for this yet, so I'm not sure why you've-“

“Enough!” Maeve held out a hand.

The golem lurched forward, immediately sprinting toward the group.

Sally tutted. "Dibs," she flipped [Skeleton Key] around in her grip and ran forward to meet the monstrosity. It leaped into the air, arm holding the large spear pulled back ready to strike. She jumped up to greet it, dagger arcing through the air.

[Betray Trust]

The dagger burst into green flame as they collided, the spear narrowly missing the zombie, as her blade found a place in the large domed head of the golem. True to form, it pierced the previously impervious skin of the Monster.

Sally dropped to the floor and rolled backwards as they landed after their clash, readying herself for the follow up attack. The golem, however, stayed still. A halo of green energy now encircled its head.

Slowly, it turned and leveled the spear towards the Champion.

"Neat, Edward," the zombie shot the demon a thumbs up.

"First Lucius, and now the golem," Maeve rolled her eyes and twirled the trident in her hand. "Ruben is going to be very unhappy today."

Sally hoped he would be very dead soon, too. Maybe with the golem on their side, she could call off whatever Theo had planned. Things might be looking in their favor. "Hey, Ed - you don't have a teleport just in case?"

The demon worked his jaw, his eyes not leaving the Champion opposite them. "Only one, but I am only using it for selfish, self-serving reasons. I am sor-"

"It's fine," she nodded at him. "If you die you go back to dragon castle or whatever, and you'll want to teleport away from that as soon as possible before you get in trouble, right?"

He opened and closed his mouth and shot her a quick furrowed glare. "Yes, but..."

"That's just pragmatic, not selfish. You *can* be a little bit of a jerk sometimes, like Humphrey, because we are villains after all." She gave him a wink and flipped her dagger around.

"What?" The Death Knight deflated. "When am I ever a-"

[High Tide]

They turned from their disagreements to see a wave building beneath the demon as she hovered in the air. At three feet tall it then surged forth, soon shrinking as it crossed the distance to the Party. The water itself didn't appear to be the main point of the attack, as just when Sally was about to scoff at it, figures started to loom out from the shallow water.

Large pincers rose up in front of thick bodied crabs, their legs long and dripping with sea water. Each was around five feet tall and eight feet wide, dark beady eyes scouring the Party with evil intent.

"Giant enemy crabs." Sally shook her head and smiled. "Theo wishes he could be here now."

"I'm not so sure." Humphrey narrowed his eyes. "There's fifteen of them. If they are also Level Twenty, then..."

"You worry too much, Humps." She looked past him to the Shade and the cat. "You guys want to play too? I have a neat formation thing planned."

"It's raining," Archie complained, while Lucius just nodded.

"Perfect," she clapped her hands together as the crabs finished rising up. "Humps, you are my shield, so stand on my left. Edward, you can fill in for Theo and by my sword on my right. Lucy and Arch stand at the back and don't get eaten by crabs." Sally gave them all jazz hands.

"Okay," Edward rolled his eyes at being the stand-in for the vampire. The rest of them had fewer arguments and stood in place - even Archie played along despite his scowl at the precipitation.

Sally looked at the golem, who was still standing at the ready. "Fido you can just go ham. Run amok. Kill the crabs or whatever. Humphrey, don't you dare compel duel that woman. *Forbidden.*"

The crabs started to march towards them, probably slower than she had anticipated, but then they were going forward and not sideways.

"No promises," Humphrey grinned as he began to cast his defensive skills.

Lucius put his hand on her shoulder. "I'm sorry for everything, Sally." A sad emoticon appeared beside her face. [Shadows Embrace]

For a brief moment, she thought he was doing a double-double cross. But now he wasn't standing behind her. A confused scowl on her face, she then noticed her shadow - a gloomy thing against the wet floor in the darkened sky - had crimson eyes. It waved at her and raised up a shadowed dagger that looked like her own.

And then they were upon them. Humphrey immediately jumped ahead and swung his sword around in a wide arc, clashing against a pincer as if it was made out of metal. Sally chucked a green skull out into the throng and hit [Endless Dead] - her own army of summons emerging from the puddled floor to clutch at the approaching Monsters.

Edward moved in to assist the Death Knight. Every time the plated figure had to block or was pushed back, the demon would dart in to strike with glowing skills to prevent follow-ups or waylay reinforcements. Archie sat at the back, looking damp and miserable, but seemed to be gathering energy for something.

The zombies weren't much of a match for the crabs - probably even half their level. While they were causing little damage, they at least clogged up the melee and slowed the roving tide of giant Monsters from getting to attack them.

She ran to catch up to the Death Knight, hitting the nearest clump of undead with [Living Dead]. While she had definitely taken on more support skills recently, she was still a

powerhouse in the melee, and where her zombies couldn't cut the mustard - or through crab shells, she was certainly capable and willing.

With a duck under the widely swung greatsword which illuminated the area in deep crimson, she slid across the slick floor and stabbed the closest opponent in one of its legs. With a loud snap, the chitinous limb cracked off, and the creature stumbled slightly. It was times like these she missed having Necroblast - or any kind of melee skill would be nice. Still, she was being a team player by having all these buffing skills-

She rolled to the side to avoid the piercing stomp of one of the other legs - and then another crack as her shadow-Lucius struck out at the offending limb.

"Shoulda said you could do that earlier," she grunted as she stood beneath the Monster and rammed the dagger into the underbelly. The crab screeched in pain and was quickly silenced by a heavy strike of the Death Knight's sword.

Sally rolled from the collapsing body into the throng of three more trying to get past her grouped zombies. One of her pals had been pierced through with a leg but had just used to opportunity to wrap themselves around the limb and weigh it down.

[Desecrate Life]

Now the undead had a slightly easier time of holding the crabs back - three of them even managing to pull one to the ground and pile on top. She heard Humphrey use his area stun and the resulting cracks and snaps told her they had felled a couple from his success.

Earthen spike cracked the earth, jutting out three times in succession, just past the Party and carrying on down towards the Champion. Crabs were knocked into the air before the demon absorbed the final blow with a magical shield around her.

The golem was having a bit of a time too - with faint scratches along its body, it had felled one crab and was working on a second.

Sally ducked the snapping of an oversized pincer and slashed upwards, cutting into the extended arm. As the crab withdrew its injured appendage, her shadow leaped up to strike it in the same place - the large claw falling from the Monster. She rolled and used [Eat Brains], picking the claw up in her offhand and using it like a sticky, gross glove.

The brains weren't the worst - a little saltier, so she shouldn't try to eat too many. Two zombie crabs now rose behind her. Things had the chance of going their way. As much as she wanted to taunt the Champion, looking past the army of crabs ahead of her - there seemed to be more than when they had started the fight.

Blue arced beside her as Humphrey used [Decimate] and cracked a large gash through the shell of a crab. She had lost a dozen zombies, gained two, and the Champion had lost maybe seven crabs. Not great odds if there were now more crabs.

Maeve raised her fist.

[Aquatic Guardians]

Sally clenched her teeth as two pillars rose up, flanking the demon. Atop them, two large figures - goliaths with heads like seahorses appeared in a splash of water. Each held an oversized bow, and they began to draw three arrows to fire at once.

A pulse of electricity began to swirl around the trident, and the weapon was leveled towards Sally. The two archers following suit.

Sally took a step backward as all the pitch black eyes of the crabs turned to her.

"Ah, nuts."