

Chapter 2.44  
Worth Less

“You know, I’m kind of okay with Theo being the more powerful fighter.” Sally gave the Death Knight a pat on the shoulder as they watched the Boss try and stomp and stab through the remainder of the zombies.

“Oh?” Humphrey raised a wary eyebrow.

“Like, I can be the main character but not be the best at everything.” She shrugged, a wave of exhaustion passing through her as the healing magic put her back together. “I went for the melee powerhouse stuff to keep myself alive - but... you know - maybe I should have chosen that *Puppy* skill.”

“I think you have hit your head a bit too hard,” he grinned at her. “I understand, though. Theo has... depending on how the System treats his Class advancement now; he would be hard to keep up with.”

“That’s fine. A Queen isn’t supposed to do all the dirty work, anyway. I’ll have you as my shield and Theo as my sword.” She narrowed her eyes. “*Golden ass* still has my dagger. Hope we level up from this.”

“Just to warn you,” Humphrey rolled out his shoulders as the Boss looked to be finishing up with the last handful of zombies. “Thirteen is a passive ability choice. Fourteen is an active, then at Fifteen, you get an Ultimate and Class change... if you’re normal.”

“*Normal*,” Sally rolled her eyes and brought up her STAR.

[Sally: level ten yet?]

[Theo: still one :\* ]

[Theo: goblins are well]

[Theo: new players are...]

[Theo: a temptation]

She shuddered and closed the chat, wiping the drool from her mouth. “Some people get all the fun,” she murmured.

“If you could rub the heart shapes from your eyes, we have business to attend to.”

With a tut, she nudged him on the arm as she brought out her [Dagger of Luck]. “Don’t be jealous, Humps. We’ll find you someone to have a cute but platonic companionship with in no time.”

Humphrey opened his mouth to say something, but a gathering of energy drew their attention as the Boss began charging up a beam attack after having destroyed all the zombies.

Perhaps next time, she would use them for something a bit more efficient than having a conversation - although it had allowed her limbs time to recover their proper function.

A fifteen-foot wide beam burst from the golden Boss - a radiant circle of white-gold energy - and flashed towards them in an instant.

[Impenetrable Defence]

The silhouette of the Death Knight was the only thing Sally could see as the bright light washed over them. His arms outstretched. A fizzling noise crackled in her ears, almost loud enough to miss hearing Edward make his move on the channeling Boss.

[Inevitable End]

As soon as the light had blinded them, it dissipated as the powerful skill ended. The golden figure turned away to strike out at the demon, his block not strong enough. With a thud, his body rolled across the floor - injured but not dead.

There was a growing crack running up the leg of the Boss where he had struck, a deep purple that pulsed like a vein. Sally didn't know what it did exactly, but the golden bird-man didn't seem too happy about it.

"Fling me."

With his free hand, Humphrey grabbed a hold of the zombie, and she held his arm so that he didn't just wrench her socket out - and turning a quick circle, he launched her into the air toward the Monster.

As she flew, she swapped to her crossbow, firing off the bolt before dropping the weapon, her old dagger popping back into her hand. Thankfully Theo wasn't around to see her quick swap. She landed atop her target at shoulder height, clambering to get a grip on the smooth metallic form of the Boss. The hand holding the spear went to raise to jostle her away, but the Archie cat-nado swirled up the weapon and weighed it down.

Her attempted stabs did little more than leave small indentations in the body of her opponent, and with a deep growl that vibrated through her whole body, the Boss reached for her with his other hand.

[Inspirational Word] - "Just as planned!"

Sally leaped through the air just as the hand came for her - as hers wrapped around the handle of [Skeleton Key], plucking it from the wound it had become lodged in. She fell to the floor and rolled to absorb the impact, turning to see that the Boss had attempted to come for her, but Archie had begun to pull the weapon away, and the purple decay had almost filled the whole leg of the Monster, leaving it sluggish.

She spun through the STAR to grab something more useful than her Luck dagger and mis-clicked on the [////ss\*\*\*\_] item she had hoped to ignore. Immediately, System messages flooded her vision.

[Type Error: Missing Skill {Necroblast}]  
[Incorrect parameters. Anaylsing...]  
[Attempting override. Please standby.]

Humphrey came up behind her, his eye sockets narrowed at the messages as the Boss was inconvenienced by the cat.

"Did you touch an *error*?"

“It was an accident!” She scrunched up her eyes in trying to get the messages to move out of the way of the battle, the blue boxes flickering slightly.

[Skill granted [Necro[Necroblast]blast[Barrageblast]]]

“Ah, that doesn’t seem much better.” She waved her wrist around as if she could shake the ill omens straight out of the STAR.

“I’m not sure you should-“ Humphrey began as Sally raised her arm towards the Boss.

[Necro[Necroblast]blast[Barrageblast]Necroblast[[blast]Necrobarrage]blast[blastblast]]

Sally blinked. Warm blood ran down her arm from cracks in her hand, as a stinging sensation started to burn at the end of her nerves. A hiss pierced the air - at first, it was the dusty atmosphere in the chamber moving to fill in the gaps of reality rent from existence. Then, it was the sand slowly filtering in from the hole in the ceiling where the skill had pierced all the way out into the unknown.

The golden Boss faltered, the impassive eyes on the bird's face glaring at the floor as it toppled over - a fist-size gap cored through their head becoming detrimental to their being-alive situation.

She took a deep breath and then another - the process unnecessary but also draining.

[Error - Skill Use Out of Intended Bounds]  
[Restricting [Necro\*st]]  
[System Granted Skill Reset Points (2)]

Sally dropped to her knees, her arm still extended. Apparently, she couldn’t move it nor feel much other than the burning sensation ravaging her fingers and palm.

Humphrey knelt down beside her to glance between the System messages and the wide panic in her eyes.

“What lesson did we learn?”

“Don’t... don’t mess with errors,” she said quietly.

The rest of the Outsiders moved over to them, concern and shock across their faces. An emoji of a little face screaming beside Lucius.

“You should have just done that at the start,” Edward smirked, hand holding his ribs where some crimson had soaked his suit.

“What happened, big brother?” Archie wobbled as his eyes still spun, dizzied from the constant tornado attack.

The Death Knight sighed, relenting to how convoluted the answer was. “Sally had a bugged item that referred to a skill she no longer had because she made a deal with an eldritch entity to remove it. The System gave her the skill in attempts to fix the mismatch, but it also became errored, and after she tried to use it, the System realized it was wrong, so took it away.”

“Oh.” Archie yawned. “I didn’t mean *that*.”

Humphrey narrowed his sockets, and his hands tensed and flexed.

“Are you okay, Sally? You did great!” Lucius gave her two thumbs up. “You could... put your hand down now, though?”

“That would be nice,” Sally continued staring off into the distance. “I can’t seem to move, though. I feel like I just killed everything in that direction.”

They all turned to look up into the darkness of the ceiling, where a continued light stream of sand continued to pour down. It certainly looked like she had done something of the sort.

“I’ve got some medicine kits for those that need it,” she continued, wincing as her arm slowly started to become limp. “Just as soon as I can hit the button.”

“Just yourself and Edward,” Humphrey nodded.

As Sally struggled against her complaining muscles, she managed to get into her Inventory and very carefully bring out the right items. “I hope the Boss dropped some Potions - we are running low since I’ve been chugging them like gamer fuel.”

The Death Knight shrugged. “You’re the only Player here, so be our guest.”

As he said this, a pop of magical energy burst from where the dias had once stood - and a portal came into being. Sally relaxed somewhat, both as the warmth of the healing flooded through her and from the relief of having an easy way out of this dungeon.

Humphrey helped her to her feet, and she stumbled over to the golden corpse. “*Sorry that I didn’t get to eat your brains,*” she whispered to the Boss as she looted it.

[3618 Gold]  
[Dungeon Reward Chest (1)]  
[Greater Healing Potion (3)]  
[Tornado Wand (3 charges)]  
[Lightning Resist Potion (2)]  
[Golden Tome]  
[Emblem of Eternity]

[Dungeon Clear!]

Her hand hovered over the items, not really wanting to get into any loot theatrics until it was really needed. The emblem did pique her interest, however.

[Emblem of Eternity] [+2 STR, +2 CON, Increased Defences]

Well, that seemed rather arbitrary, but she seemed to be able to equip it without replacing anything else, so free Stats were free Stats. It looked like the engraving that had the poem under it, in miniature form, which was almost as disappointing as not making her immune to time or something.

“Neat,” she eventually declared. With a glum shrug to the group, the exhaustion of three manic days finally greeting her with the expended power of the bugged skill, she led them out through the portal in the amber heat of beyond.