

Chapter 2.56 This is the Pits

Sally moved sluggishly through the air, her body now on fire - before a heavy weight shoved her. Her trajectory started with resistance, and then she dropped to the floor as gravity took proper hold.

Immediately, she threw up some kind of gel. Her insides burning as much as her skin against the suddenly cooler air. She turned with bleary eyes to see the rest of the gang stabbing into the slightly opaque air between them. Rasping at the air, she then stumbled. With a click, the floor beneath her shunted down to a sloped angle, and she spun to face the danger.

As a pit of silvered spikes opened up at the end of the slope, a wedge of the ceiling clicked downwards to reveal three large spouts pointing directly at her. With the quick flick of her wrist she flung [Skeleton Key] into the middle one - a spark of magic bursting out before she covered her face with her arms. Jets of fire blasted out from the other two spouts as the slick gel-vomit beneath her shoes caused her to slip into the pit.

With the unholy energy of [Grave Strike], Humphrey cleaved the gel monster in two, and the magic holding it into a cube shape dissipated, leaving the remains across the floor. He leaped over the mess and slid to the edge of the slope, trying to peer down.

“Sally? Are you okay?”

“Bleeding out a little, but I avoided landing on any important organs.” She squirmed against the long blades piercing her. Both legs and one arm. Shoulder and perhaps a kidney. The sharp spikes were too long to raise any of her skewered parts over the points without being able to stand. Thankfully, she had grabbed a potion on the way down, and it had kept her from passing out. Or worse.

Humphrey turned to the Party. “Any of you have a rope?”

They shook their heads, but Lucius stepped forward. “I have something that might help. Hold my hand.”

The Death Knight narrowed his eyes but did so, as the Shade skirted down the slope slightly to see where the zombie was in the darkness. He held out a hand, and his crimson eyes flickered monochrome for a moment.

[Fade Away]

The base of the trap, along with all the silver spikes, became dark like shadows, and Sally slumped against the floor.

“Oww,” she groaned. “Whoever built this place doesn’t mess around.” Sally stood up on shaking legs and took a deep breath. With her hands now free, she went through her inventory to grab a rope and threw an end up to the waiting Party.

Once back up the slope, she collapsed on the ground and scowled at the dead slime.

Archie walked over and stood in front of her face, giving her a brief sniff. "This is far more deadly than the System would have created."

"So, you're saying that this is the work of an enemy Unique?" She scrunched her face up in the ginger fur enveloping her vision.

"Certainly one that doesn't want us snooping around," Edward said, leaning against the wall.

Humphrey shrugged and lowered a hand down to help the zombie up. "Or it could just be a bugged dungeon."

If anything, having the basement be trapped with more difficult things gave Sally some hope that they were on the right path. You wouldn't protect something unimportant, after all. She took the Death Knight's plated hand and stood to her feet, relenting to using a med kit to patch up what injuries she had left. She glanced up at Lucius while the progress bar filled.

"That's a neat trick. What are the limitations?"

Ellipses appeared next to his head. "Well, it's one of the new skills since I accepted being undead. One target at a time, several minute duration, can only be objects. That sort of thing."

"Well, we know what to do next time there's a puzzle or locked door then," she beamed. Lucius was possibly her new favorite, for this alone. Being able to bypass troubles would save them a lot of headaches and mouthfuls of acid. "Someone work out how to get across the pit without immolating themselves," she waved a hand at the group. "I'm going to loot the goop."

She kneeled down and brought up the handy System menu. Most of it was junk - possibly whatever remnants of the last person to get stuck within it without a walking tank to shove them out. Still, loot was loot - and hey, there was even a dagger in decent enough condition! A sword and spear had deteriorated enough to be designated unusable, so found no place in her stash.

[45 Gold]
[Dagger]
[Skull (2)]
[Acid Gel (5)]

Although she wasn't too sure what she planned to do with acidic gel, there was bound to be a use further down the line. Strangely enough, her mind was blank. Perhaps it was just the sudden trauma catching up to her. She tilted her head to look back to the Party to see what they were squabbling over now.

"If you reset it, then it could activate again," Edward had his arms crossed and was glaring at the Death Knight.

Humphrey was grinning, seemingly happier to frustrate the demon more than find a solution. "Just don't activate it again, then."

"I'm not throwing you across," Lucius stood holding the cat, but was apprehensive about the next steps, a sweat drop emoji beside his head.

"Do it." The cat squirmed in his grip. "Cats always land across gaps."

"That's 'on their feet.'"

"Exactly."

Sally considered just standing and watching them crumble apart. It was more amusing than it should be, considering she entrusted her unlife to these goofballs. If it were Theo and Jackie, it'd be no different. So far, it seemed like she was just a magnet for this type of personality. Now they were her burden to keep from standing in the red circles.

The gap over the pit wasn't even that wide, and the doorway opposite stood there judging them, not a dozen feet further than the spiked hole. It was difficult to jump due to the slope right before the drop, and there were probably traps on the other side - otherwise, she would have already made the attempt.

"Alright," she rubbed her eyes as she got the attention of the Outsiders. "You had your chance. Lucius, see how the wall on the other side is made of a large block? Shadow it."

The Shade put the cat down on the floor and used [Fade Away] on the structural stone.

Sally moved to the edge, and ran and jumped over, landing in the shadowy space where she wouldn't have been able to reach the lip of the stone above. She then hopped up onto the floor side and glared at the wall. With a click, she flicked the small switch downwards, and the trap reset.

"Quickly now, you don't want to be halfway before it activates again." She smiled and folded her arms, keeping an eye on the switch so that she could give it an emergency flip if necessary. To save them, not to drop them in. Teach them a pointed lesson... intrusive thoughts had her hand muscles twitching, but kept them at bay.

"Thank you, Sally." Archie beamed up at her as they made it across to where she stood, unharmed.

"Hey, we all help each other, Arch." She kneeled to pet him on the head. "Some of us just have more brains than others."

Edward rolled his eyes. "Most of us don't need to eat other brains to get by."

"Yours tasted bitter, by the way," she stuck her tongue out at the demon. "Now, Humphrey, you lead."

"That would be for the best," he nodded in return, and glared at the rest of the hallway. The flame from the back of his helmet illuminated the ceiling in a ruddy hue as he slowly stepped forward towards the door.

Sally gave Lucius a light jab on the arm, briefly amused that a shocked emoji popped up when she did so. "That ability is insane. I bet there're all sorts of troubles you'll get us into and out of with it."

"Feels like there is a limit though," the shade rubbed the back of his hood. "I don't quite understand the workings, but it might be like... *shadow charges*?"

"I gotcha," she nodded and turned to watch the Death Knight creep down the corridor. "You just need to work out how to replenish the charges, right?"

Lucius nodded, accompanied by a similar emoji.

Humphrey made it to the end of the hall with no further untoward traps springing. He put an outstretched hand against the door, which did nothing violent towards him. Still... he paused.

Sally walked up, followed by the rest, still be overly cautious about potential surprises. Humphrey may be big and heavy, but there might be traps that were triggered by other methods that they'd need to be mindful of.

"Everything okay?" She whispered to him, trying to peer past his plated armor to see what what the hold up was.

"Yes. Although, I feel odd."

He didn't look any different, at least from the back. Sally exhaled from her nose. "Odd how?"

The Death Knight shrugged and pushed on the door to open it. There was the brief wave of air that blew through the crack as it widened, as though they had popped the seal on a room that had not been opened for a very long time. Although the bottom of the pit trap had no skeletons, Sally doubted that many random adventurers would have gotten through without issue.

"You forgot this, Sally." Edward nudged her as she tried to glimpse into the next room.

She turned as he held out the [Skeleton Key] and she slowly reached towards it.

Bright blue blazed in his eyes as a wide grin spread across his face.

"Thanks, Edward. Would forget my own head if the System let me." She took the dagger and flipped it in her hand.

"My pleasure," the demon gave a brief bow. "We all help each other, after all."

"Sally..." Humphrey said from the front. Archie's hair was standing on end.

"There's a really large dog in here."