

Sally stumbled backward as blood ran down the side of her face. The knight was a blur of blue and white light as he spun his blade around, shield covering most of his side. She jumped toward him and stabbed Skeleton Key straight through the metal and into his arm holding it.

“The hells?” He growled and bashed her away.

A second fighter swung from her side before his arm was stopped by the wrapping of a bandage. As two more shadowed ones circled around the man, he was jerked into the air toward the large bird-mummy. Sally hopped back away from the knight, holding [Curse: Decay] on him as her shadow stabbed him through his plated ankles.

This had been a tiring fight. Two brains eaten and almost lost her own twice over. Only a handful of Players left, but only a handful of zombies too. Many of them had been lost when she needed to [Share Burden] to avoid being run through with a holy lance. Norah had surrounded that woman with bandages, and under the glow of the yellow eye, turned her to sand.

Slightly more insidious when used against Players rather than Monsters, but Sally wasn't exactly one to judge. Mostly, she was saddened that the potential brain was taken off the table. She hadn't checked the stats she was getting from all these area three Players, but it was a substantial gain. The knight seemed to be regenerating health, or perhaps one of those remaining was a healer. It was hard to gauge as she tried to use what remaining corpses there were to stay out of sight.

The man glowed with white light as he charged up an attack, and Sally tensed to brace herself. A sarcophagus suddenly enclosed the knight, and she leaped forward, bringing her dagger through the air in a blaze. The trap vanished just as the point met his helmet, carving through it like butter and straight into his skull. [Eat Brains].

Number advantage was now in their court. She looked up to see the thirty-foot summon crunch through the wrapped fighter with its zombie beak as Norah's eyes glowed brightly. Her beast had taken some beating, but Sally had given it the occasional [Living Dead] to keep it going. It drew attention, and when her horde was still large it was almost untouchable, allowing the Mummy the perfect platform to buff and entangle foes from above.

Norah had been a good fit for the Outsiders in more ways than one, Sally grinned to herself. She buckled as weakness hit her legs. Adrenaline was wearing off, and the wounds she had earned now burned at her senses. It was hard to see which blood was hers, but most of her clothing was torn, showing patches of green flesh bright red and wet. Next [Living Dead] should be for herself. She rolled to the side on aching muscles as a cleric with a mace swung for her, clocking one of the zombies instead. The burst of radiant light and now headless zombie told her that was a good call. She wondered how the Death Knight was holding up.

Humphrey grinned as bright flame encircled him. His gleaming armor was filled with silvered holes and dents. Arcs of pale electricity rolled around his plated form as he breathed heavily—not that he was required to. These Players had been slightly smarter than most. Instead of standing in formation and getting all muddled, they had immediately arranged into

groups. The healers and casters retreated away from the melee fighters who had held him back.

His first action had been to cause a rogue to [Kneel] and removing his head hadn't been something they were able to heal. They had two knights with shields that had been hard to shift, and left him open to the shots of the ranged Players. [Compelled Duel] hit, and they had been confused at their opponent now being untargetable. Skeletons up to force [Decimate] and he made short work of the healer who was unprepared for a one-on-one duel.

Taking on the rest had been a slow process. He couldn't catch up to the lightly armored Players while the knights were constantly on him. Any time he knocked one of them back, the other would step in. If he managed to wound one, the second avoidant healer would keep them up. It was both aggravating and tiring, and exactly what he deserved for his hubris.

The mage, standing beside the healer, has cast a circle of fire around him so that they may have a moment's breathing room to recover. They didn't know he was almost immune to Fire Damage. He stepped through and flourished his sword. The two knights started to circle around to waylay him. Exhausting little bugs.

A sarcophagus flew in from the side, cracking the healer in the head and knocking the pair of casters to the floor. Humphrey turned to see Norah a way off, giving a fist pump toward the accurate shot.

The two knights paused in seeing their backup clobbered to the floor—at least one of the two was knocked out, if not dead.

“Now we can have some fun,” the Death Knight said as he flourished his sword.

[Expert Duelist]

The first knight lashed out at him with a long blade of green metal. Humphrey blocked it and then immediately made a counterattack at blinding speed, denting the man's armor and pushing him back. The second tried the same, but as soon as the Death Knight blocked the blow, there was a split second response, almost disarming the shield with how unexpected the strike was.

“This lasts until you can strike me,” he grinned, his own helmet flame lapping in the air. “How lucky do you feel?”

Sally rolled across the floor and growled, standing to her feet on shaky legs. The cleric had some manner of aura that made it painful to get close to him. She had retreated and used the trusty Crossbow ploy, but they had a reflective shield that knocked the bolts away.

“You are very annoying,” she admonished the man.

His pale eyes just stared her down. “Your awakening was foretold, I have prepared for this moment for almost a year.”

She glanced around at his dead companions. “Did a pretty shitty job of preparing then, huh?” The sound of a body being torn in half by the bandages of the Mummy punctuated the brief silence.

“Then allow me to use my Ultimate,” he smiled sadly, raising his hand. A radiant glow began forming.

Sally could feel the power of it. Pure, holy energy designed to eradicate the undead from this plane. He really did go all in on wanting to kill her. She didn’t even know his name.

Lucius popped out of her shadow to stand beside her. With the click of his fingers, the patch of ground the cleric was standing on became shadow—a rough five foot cube of ground suddenly missing from the terrain. The man dropped abruptly into the pit and then the Shade undid the skill.

“That’s kind of broken, Lucy,” she said with a grimace. The man was now entombed up to his shoulders, his head looking around wildly in panic.

“My Ultimate wore off, so good thing I chose you to continue helping.” A smiling emoji appeared beside his hooded face.

The large foot of the behemoth stomped down on the exposed head, shattering the shield and aura, and pulping the man into the dirt.

“Sorry, hun!” Norah called down from the shoulder of the creature. “I kept this one for questioning, though.” The large hand of the bird-mummy gestured forward to show a wrapped individual.

Although she had ruined the meal, that seemed like a decent enough peace offering to make up for it. The handful of remaining zombies milled around her, now slow again since the speed up had worn off. Aside from the captive, their group of Players had been dealt with, surprised expressions on their faces and dirt and blood marring their blue tabards.

They looked over to Humphrey to see his shadowed figure lift up one of the knights, impaled on the end of his sword, before he slung them to the ground. With the quick flick of his blade, he finished off the remaining few, stabbing through the downed spellcasters. With a flourish of his greatsword, a mist pulsed from his body, obscuring him before waving away. Now he returned to his black and crimson armor, although it was silver in many places due to his wounds. He kneeled down and lowered his head.

Lucius shadowed into Sally as Norah bandaged her up to the other behemoth’s shoulder, and they stomped over to the resting Death Knight.

Sliding down the outstretched arms, the Mummy clapped her hands as they all reached the ground and the behemoth started to sink back into the ground.

[Living Dead] Sally cast her healing spell as they ran up to him. “Everything okay, Humps?”

He grinned as Norah helped him back to his feet. “Yes. Of course.”

Lucius popped out of her shadow and looked around at the dead bodies. “Ten against one, very impressive.” A thumbs-up emoji emerged beside him.

“I won out due to my immense defensive capability and single target stuns.” He flexed out his neck as the silvered and bent pieces of his armor began to reshape.

“Yeah, yeah,” Sally said as she waved her hand. “Tell Norah all about it if you want to impress someone.” She narrowed her eyes back to the bound captive. “I’m too annoyed at Chuck right now.”

She stomped off away from them to recover the bandaged figure, removing some of the wrappings from their face to reveal a woman with tied back auburn hair. A long gash ran up the side of her face and green eyes full of malice glared at the zombie atop cheeks filled with freckles.

“Why did he do this?” Sally clenched her teeth as she lifted the woman up.

“Fuck you, undead scum,” the woman spat in return.

“Fine, I’ll ask him myself. But you’re not off the hook.” Sally dropped the captive to the floor and put a boot atop her so she couldn’t squirm away. The rest of the Party walked over as she loaded up her STAR, ready to spout vitriol at the supposed Druid.

[Chuck: Sally.]

[Chuck: I’m sorry it has to be this way.]

[Chuck: I wanted to see you sooner - it’s been a tough year.]

[Chuck: If Rachel wasn’t too convincing, well, we’ll meet soon anyway.]

[Chuck: Don’t tell the others, but I’ve missed you all.]

She stared at the messages sent during the fight. Slowly, she turned her eyes away and narrowed them at the woman underfoot.

“Everything okay, Sally?” Humphrey put his hand on her shoulder and read through the messages still up. “Hmm, interesting.”

“Chuck wasn’t trying to betray us,” she said quietly. “Which means there are two possibilities here.”

She removed her boot and grabbed at the wrappings to lift the woman back up to face level.

Her eyes danced with crimson energy as she moved her face closer to that of the enemy.

“Unfortunately for you, both answers mean I am going to eat your brains.”