

Chapter 2.71

Destroy the Head

There was a ringing in Sally's ears and the ground beneath her felt cold. No, it was just wet. Strange as it hadn't rained in... oh. Her eyes fluttered open to see the pool of crimson surrounding her.

A burning smell filled the area, which was unpleasant. With a groan, she pushed herself up to her feet. Some of her was missing, but her brain was swimming with around in her head. Drowning. By reflex, she brought out a Healing Potion and downed it.

"Sally!"

She turned to see the obsidian golem slide up beside her, and the demon dropped down onto the ground beside her. Panic was in his blazing blue eyes as he helped stabilize her.

"What's up?" she drawled. Her jaw ached, and it clicked loudly as the warm healing magic flooded through her system.

"They detonated the golems like bombs."

With dry eyes, she looked back at the battlefield. The area was scarred by small craters and charred stone. Hundreds of bodies were now just chunks of flesh, broken limbs, and lifeless. Zombies, System-created, and Player alike. A few of the luckier undead had survived, but their massive throng was now little more than a few handfuls.

Over to the left, a damaged sarcophagus stood smoldering. It popped open and Norah stepped out, immediately moving over to the Death Knight. Humphrey was standing motionless, part of his armor bright silver from the damage. The flame at the back of his helmet was radiant rather than diminished, however.

On the right side of the battle, Theo stood panting heavily. Somehow, only his upper body clothing had been destroyed, leaving his muscled torso to gleam in the sun. Lucius popped out of the shadow to prop the vampire's body up before he collapsed, fiddling around his belt for a Healing Potion.

Sally dropped to her knees and pushed some rubble out of the way. "Dent? Dent?"

"*Dick move*," the figure groaned.

She winced as she unearthed him from the debris. "You're missing an arm," she said glumly. "Bet that's your sword arm too, huh? Half your face is burned off too, like - oh, you wouldn't get the reference."

"Can't feel either of my arms, so..."

Sally clucked her tongue. Some of the other Players in the flanks had taken damage, but most of them had been lucky. She took out a healing potion and handed it to the demon. "Edward, take care of Dent, please. Also, get your golem to throw me at the rest of the gang."

He nodded. "As you wish." The arm of the golem reached down, cupped around her as she balled up. A brief amount of pressure and then the fresh air rushed past her. Theo was the one meant to be thrown around, she internally grumbled, right before hitting the ground.

Broken leg, but she rolled a few times up to her feet. The Outsiders were already gathering in the center and she hit [Living Dead] now that they were all in range. Her leg clicked back into place and she stretched it out.

"Dick move," Theo grumbled as he hobbled over.

"That's what Dent said," she smiled, mostly at his abs.

"He survived?"

"Barely. You might be the best swordsman in the world now. No offence, Humphrey."

The Death Knight shrugged, a grinding noise between some of his plates trying to bend back into shape. "Maybe we can have a duel after all this is over."

Norah sighed. "A holiday would be nice."

Sally stared off forward at the remaining army. The two Champions appeared to be arguing. The explosion was probably meant to be the final ploy to rid the world of their Party and accomplices. Zombies began gathering behind her. All told, they probably still had between fifty and a hundred. Theo would know - although he was only wearing the broken frames of his glasses, so might not be able to count properly.

"Just under two hundred remaining enemies," he filled her thoughts out without being asked. "We have just over a hundred, including the remaining two groups of Players."

Her mouth opened and closed as she felt exhausted. "Line?"

"The longer they delay, the more we will recover," Humphrey grinned. "They should have pressed the advantage."

Their defensive and regenerative auras and individual powers made them a tough nut to crack if they were kept together.

"I'm going to need to eat a lot of brains, huh?" She sighed and stretched her back out, resulting in a few more clicks.

Theo tilted his head to the side. "Same plan as before, then. Lucius goes with Sally this time. You two focus on converting as many as you can - and the rest of us will get rid of the Champions?"

"Thanks, pup." She punched him on the arm. "Perfect plan. Ready to eat, Lucy?"

He nodded his shadowed head slowly as an emoji of a shaking head appeared beside him.

The Death Knight and Mummy nodded their agreements, and Sally plucked another skull from her belt. "Let's get to killing, then." The green light of the skill bursting up illuminated her face from below.

Edward watched the five of them run off into battle from a distance and sighed.

"Wish you were alongside them?" Dent asked. The man was sitting, propped up against the leg of the obsidian golem. His right arm was missing from the elbow, and one leg was broken, but healing up slowly from the potion.

"No. I have neither their durability nor stomach for bloodshed. I suppose I just... admire them. They always push ahead, no matter the odds."

"What will you do when the dragon crushes them?"

Edward chuckled. "They'll win. Either that, or we all die."

[Eat Brains]

Sally whirled beneath the swing of an axe and jabbed her dagger in her opponent's stomach. Lucius stabbed them in the calf and knee, allowing the zombie to eat the brains of them unhindered.

She wiped her mouth. It was slowly working back into their favor and their number of zombies had increased. The remaining Players and System-created had lost a lot of heart in seeing both the large-scale collateral damage the detonating golem had wrought, alongside the fact that it hadn't stopped the Outsiders.

Theo [Blood Shift]ed above the Golemancer, landing atop his mechanical suit. "Your time here was wasted," he growled out as he plunged his sword into the cockpit. A metal covering zipped over the open space and blocked the strike as the piloted golem became fully enclosed.

"Incorrect, bloodsucker." His metal arms swung up and knocked the vampire off onto the floor into a roll.

"Hiding away? Is your blood so precious to you?" Theo grinned, exposing his fangs. "That'll make it all the more sweet when I-" he leaped to the side as a circular saw blazed sparks against the floor.

The mech twisted, bringing up other weapons to bear. "Too many words. I will erase you."

Humphrey spun away from a snake, drawing a line of crimson down its body with his greastword. Norah slammed a summoned sarcophagus into the open mouth of the approaching creature, breaking teeth and causing it to choke. With the unholy blaze of [Grave Strike], the Death Knight severed straight through the body.

"How many of your pets will you send to die by my blade today?" He grinned, crimson flame flickering behind his helmet as he glared at Sidiv.

“Bastard! You will be a fine meal for my kin.” The snake man hissed, his long body stretching up to meet a pointed face of pale green beneath deep emerald eyes.

Four serpent heads rose from around him as a dark green energy pulsed through his scaled body. Smaller than the previous ones, but similarly white with red eyes. At once, they burst forward towards them.

The crimson energy of [Adrenaline] filled the Death Knight as he struck the first one from the area as it wound through the air. Norah wrapped and diverted the second, as the third slammed into him.

Humphrey stumbled backward and the fourth stake landed on his plated thigh. Both of them latched on, their fangs pierced through his armor and pulsing with venom. He grinned and flourished his blade through them, severing the bodies and leaving the heads still impaled onto him.

“I am immune to that,” he scoffed and burst forward.

Flame gushed out from the golem at Theo, and he rolled across the worn ground. Bloodied scratches on his exposed torso slowly healed up as he tried to get his breath back. This kind of thing was a lot more hassle when he couldn't use any of his abilities. Well, he could use some of them.

“You're a tough nut to crack,” he sighed, standing up straight and limbering his shoulders. The vampire threw his sword onto the floor.

“Ready to give up? I could take you as a prisoner.”

Theo yawned. “Sure, bud. If you can take me.” He held his arms up into the air, grinning widely to himself.

The Golemancer strode forward, arms extended to restrain the vampire.

Obsidian punch-blades appeared on his closed fists. [Novice Strike]

Radiant sparks began to illuminate the ground around the golem as a flicker of pink energy rolled around them, the metal plates slowly denting and buckling against the repeated assault.

“No, stop - what are you-“ The arms waved around wildly but weren't able to land a hit.

Eventually Theo stopped, his blades punctured through the cockpit protection, and grunting, he lifted them up to reveal the panicked old man within. The blades went into the Golemancers chest to lift him up out of the seat as the vampire bit his fangs into their neck.

Sidiv hissed. “Get the fuck off me!” He wiggled and strained against the bandages restraining his movement. “When I get up you're going to-“

Humphrey strode up and lopped off the Champion's head with little ceremony. “They talk too much. That only works if it is a proper duel.”

“You did well,” Norah cooed. “We make a great team.”

The Death Knight grinned and shouldered his large blade. “That we do, Norah.”

Sally stumbled forward, trying to keep her stomach from emptying. A lot of these brains were pretty gross, and even the occasional Player one didn’t make up for how much she had consumed. She glanced around to see Theo feasting on the corpse of one Champion, while Humphrey and Norah flirted by the dead body of the other.

The remaining Golds could see the painting on the wall, and lost faith - only some of the System-created remaining as the golems fell inert. It wouldn’t take long for her to finish these up and she had gained another large horde of shamblers to join her current.

All things said, it had gone pretty well. She furrowed her brow. Something was wrong.

Sally looked up, fear sinking into her stomach as the shadow of the massive dragon flew overhead.

“*Why must I do everything myself?*” Ruben boomed through the area, his voice vibrating through the ground.

His large wingspan of gold and sandy skin folded inwards as he turned into the sky and began to dive straight for her. As he plummeted with burning anger in his eyes, his mouth opened and a golden beam of light started to form in his mouth.

“*Die!*”

Radiant light illuminated Sally’s face, as she felt unable to move from the attack.