

Chapter 2.57 Silent Generation

Really large was perhaps an understatement. Despite only briefly moving underground, the room here was practically cavernous, and had been decorated with pictures of various scenes - figures talking or doing activities. Sally could neither see enough detail from this range to make any a more precise determination, plus she was also really distracted by said *really large* dog.

Enormous, in fact. With two heads.

Easily house-sized, one half of the animal was an off-white, whereas the other was a dusty-black. Golden collars, decorated with various gemstones, sat about each of their necks, and atop their heads were equally opulent crowns.

"Wow," Sally began, taking a deep breath in.

"Do not ask them to join us," Humphrey interrupted, causing her to deflate.

"I wasn't gonna!" *She was*, and she would hold that against the Death Knight. Look at all the people she had invited - her track records showed things worked out. Eventually.

"Greetings mortals." The gray headed one began.

"Or... whatever you are." The white one continued.

"They can talk!" Sally hissed. "What are your names?"

"Boros," the white head said.

"Jokos" said the darker dog, with a slight bow.

"I'm Sally, and this is Humphrey, Edward, Lucius, and Archie... Arch, come say hello."

The ginger cat had hid away behind the boot of the Death Knight. The hair on his back was standing on end and his ears were flattened back.

Sally scowled at him. Far be it for her to turn her nose up at something so clearly cliché, but for an all-powerful supposedly-the-Architect being, the cat could be a bit on the odd side. She turned her gaze briefly between the rest of the Party. Perhaps she shouldn't be the one to judge.

"What do you seek in the pyramid, names I will not remember?" Boros peered down at them.

"Some... uh... *Humphrey*?" She tilted her head.

"It matters not!" Jokos interrupted. "To pass us, you will need to answer three riddles!"

Sally held her face. This was her worst nightmare. Maybe she could call for a Theo airdrop now. He had a little more brains in him than the rest of them. No - she could do this. She turned to smile at the Party and then grimaced back at the large dog-guardian.

“Is there another option?”

“You could turn around,” Boros nodded.

“Or perish.” Jokos added, helpfully.

“Do we perish if we get the riddles wrong?” She crossed her arms and began to tap her foot.

“You just do not proceed if you are unable to answer.”

“But we can eat you if you prefer.”

None of the Party looked particularly keen on that outcome - only slightly less so than having to answer the riddles. Seeing no place where she could stick her dagger to avoid this situation, Sally eventually relented.

“Fiiiine. Give us the first one, then.”

“Born of shadows, a void in the light. Invisible to the day, elusive at night. Neither seen nor felt, yet I enhance. What am I in this paradoxical dance?”

Sally scrunched up her face. Why couldn't the answer just be *brains*. Like the word, not actual brains - although she hadn't eaten a good one in so long. Perhaps they should just go back to the starting area and live amongst the fresh meat again - oh, even better! They could be the new Zeroes and gatekeep the Wasteland. It's not like anyone would survive how harsh it was, or the invincible toad, anyway.

Or was the toad invincible? With her new dagger, she might be able to stab it and get revenge. She wondered what it could drop, if anything. There probably wouldn't be anything worth the effort and its brains probably tasted terrible But! If they stuck about where the previous Guild had done, she would be able to eat all the Level Ten brains and grow more powerful with little effort.

In effect it would be a terrific Plan B for their conquest idea. They would become bosses in their own right, preventing access to the rest of the world until enough Players got together and found a way to oust her. That definitely sounded more fun than stomping around the desert and rocky land under the constant sun without brains to eat. Only to almost die to dungeon traps twice, ultimately-

“Sally,” Humphrey nudged her. “Are you thinking about the riddle?”

“Huh? Yeah, of course.” She tapped the side of her nose. “The answer is-”

“Yes, we know,” the Death Knight narrowed his eyes, “Edward already gave the answer while you were glazed over.”

Sally shot the demon a thumbs up and smiled up at the two-headed canine. "Next please."

"Fine, but this one won't be so simple." Boros raised an eyebrow at his sibling - or just his own other head.

Sally wasn't sure how that worked. Were they twins? Same dog, but different brains? It was confusing and very distracting, considering she was supposed to be paying attention. She bit her tongue to mentally stop her brain from running away with the words.

"I speak without a mouth, hear without ears. I have no body, but I shed tears. Wherever I go, darkness is cast. I am not alive, yet I grow fast," Jokos asked with a wide grin.

She immediately looked at the tax-collector.

"What?" He shrugged. "Just because I got one, it doesn't mean I have all the answers."

"Not even for a Demon Coin?" Sally withdrew one from her Inventory and waved it in the air. "Also, Lucius, you owe me two of these you pretended to eat."

"Edward already plied them from me," the Shade slowly recoiled as a sweat drop emoji appeared beside him.

"I think I have an idea," Humphrey announced, standing in between Edward's smirk and Sally's glare. "How about *the night?*."

"No, that is incorrect."

"We can see how you came to that conclusion though."

The Death Knight deflated and rubbed at his chin.

Sally had no intention of getting stuck here when there was a world to save and so many brains to eat. The morsels just had to catch up to where she was and get in the way a little bit. If danger or Theo didn't get to them first. As the Party murmured amongst themselves, she brought up her Chat.

[Sally: talking to some dogs]

[Sally: they have riddles]

[Theo: that sounds some degree of fun]

[Theo: won't be long, I promise]

She tutted to herself, promises were made to be broken. Like necks.

"Very good, weird shadow thing," Boros nodded.

"I'm surprised you got it," the other dog raised his eyebrows.

Sally waved at them. "Third one, please."

"In the skillet's dance, I morph and take form. Layers of joy, a breakfast to warm. A disc of delight on a griddle's embrace. I defy gravity, with culinary grace." Boros raised an eyebrow, while the other head just grinned.

She realised she didn't have anything to distract herself from having to get this last one answered. There was no other option but to blurt out the first thing that came to her mind. "Pancakes!"

They both watched her, stunned. "That is correct, little dead one."

"You may pass."

That was exhausting. She gave them a brief bow before waving on her unimpressed Party. The two-headed dog moved to the side and allowed her to pass, revealing a hidden doorway on the opposite side of the chamber. As she strode across the room, she bit her tongue and managed to prevent herself from asking the hounds to join them. By far, almost the hardest part of this encounter.

Humphrey closed the door behind them. "Well, that was... something."

"I don't think Sally was even paying attention to most of that." Edward tilted his head as his arms were crossed.

She scowled back at him. "I don't need to be in the limelight all the time. You all can get some... where's Archie?"

The chamber they were in shook as a dull bass vibrated through the brickwork. Dust fell from the ceiling, and the door opened slightly. Archie walked in, a puff of smoke emanating from his ginger fur as he pushed the door closed again.

"Hello," he beamed up at Sally with large emerald eyes.

With a sigh, she glanced around the small chamber. Either it was another space to stop and rest, or it was full of unseen traps. Two doorways stood in the wall about thirty feet opposite, around a dozen feet apart. Neither had any sorts of markings or ways to determine where each of them led.

"Just as tough a problem as the last room," she rubbed at her chin. In the previous dungeon, she had thought going left was the surest way to victory - when in fact a totally different route was correct. What would she do if she wanted to design a nefarious dungeon? "We may die here."

The rest of the Party looked around the otherwise empty room with a little less suspicion, although none of them made the move to progress without any elaboration.

"We don't have a bag of ball bearings to do the job, or a ten-foot pole... but!" She withdrew a blade and a spear from her Inventory. "We can just throw about the dozens of weapons I still have, and prod about at the brickwork with these spears." After passing the one held over to a skeptical Edward, she brought another three out for the rest of them except the cat.

Slowly, they tapped ahead of them, occasionally making sure there were no pressure plates, false floors, or traps hiding amongst the walls. Despite their reluctance, they were diligent in doing their part in safe-checking the whole way across the room, until finally, they made it to the two doors unharmed.

“Underwhelming, yet that just makes it even more suspicious.” Sally narrowed her eyes at the two doors. Caution should dictate that Humphrey goes first. Maybe she should just let him pick - that way the blame won’t be on her if he died.

She took a couple of steps backward and bowed to the Death Knight. “All yours, Sir.”

He narrowed his eye sockets at her and then glared at the two doorways. Energy powering over his armor, he took a step forward and kicked the right door open. Despite being made of stone, the door cracked and split from the hinges clattering into the room beyond.

A wailing noise pierced the air, as some manner of siren blasted back at them from within.

“Thanks... *THANKS HUMPS,*” she shouted back over the constant din.

The Death Knight turned back to her and shrugged. “*What? I can’t hear you.*”

“*WHAT?*”

Edward pinched the bridge of his nose, exhaling continuously, while a mute symbol appeared next to the wincing Shade.