Chapter 2.73
Death of the Party 2

Edward swore constantly and energetically as he slid around the marbled floor of the palace.

"Edward? You dare return-" The Scribe began as the demon sprinted past.

"*Fuck you!*" he replied.

As much as he held a dim view of the zombie leaving him alone to be roasted in the dragon's fireblast, it did give him the opportunity to help out in a way that the others couldn't. His dress shoes squealed across the floor as he stopped in front of the dragon's chambers.

He jammed his glowing sword into the lock, purple energy crackling over the metalwork.

"I can't allow you to do this, Edward," the Scribe shuffled up behind him.

Edward grinned to himself, slowly withdrawing a throwing knife, his face glowing green from the enchantment on it.

Ruben stretched his neck out as the crimson moon vanished and the normally drab sky returned, looking toward the mountain. His brow furrowed, as if he could sense something wasn't right.

Sally slid out into the wreckage of one of the buildings and held an index finger pointed at him. "Let my Theo go!"

"Hmm?" The dragon looked down his snout at the bloodied vampire between his teeth. "No, I don't think so," he glanced back at the mountain, as the talking moved the sharp teeth in and out of Theo's torso.

He spat the limp body onto the floor; the vampire rolling after he landed, causing a spray of his blood to color the dusty rocks of a ruined building. "Undead taste terrible." Ruben shook his head. "I have more important matters to attend to, but I will be back to find you all."

"Too late," Theo sputtered out mouthfuls of blood as he tried to right himself. "You were dead as soon as you met me."

Ruben gnashed his teeth together. "Your ego clearly needs humbling, mosquito." The dragon growled and opened his mouth, the glow of his beam attack forming.

Theo made the motion of pushing up his glasses, even though he wasn't wearing them.

[Blood Shift] took him above the dragon. Before Ruben could abort his attack to look up, pitch black flooded the area as the blood orbs hovering in the area burst. Any color and light dimmed to a faint gray, leaving only the blazing trail of the vampire's eyes cratering down onto the top of the dragon.

[Death Syphon]. He landed, legs spread atop Ruben's head, and pressed his index finger against the golden scales.

There was an explosion, as the darkness of the sky was sucked out of being and struck the dragon. Theo's body fell limply, to crash amongst some rubble, as Sally ran over to hit him with a [Living Dead].

Ruben twitched, then turned his head to look down at the pair with a wide grin. "Really? You think that would…" he paused and his eyes widened.

From all over his body, every golden scale burst into black mist, leaving pale red scaled skin below. Like dominoes starting from his head, they shattered into the air all the way down to the tip of his tail.

"No…" he gasped, "…not my *gold*."

Before he had a chance to gather himself, his wide eyes looking toward the mountain again, the Death Knight sprinted out from an alleyway and stabbed his blazing blue sword into the ankle of the dragon's foreleg.

Ruben turned with a growl, opening his mouth toward Humphrey before a sarcophagus slammed into the side of his face. He staggered away, tripping as one of his clawed feet dropped into a shadowed pit. It then turned back into rock, as the Shade ran across the battlefield, sending an orb to orbit the Death Knight just before he vanished to shadow him.

The trapped foot burst from the stone as the dragon righted himself, fury building in his eyes.

"You are all very irritating." His wings opened up, blowing debris around the area.

"Imagine being around us all the time," Theo coughed out blood from where he lay.

Ruben glared down at him. Where was the zombie girl? Oddly, he didn't seem to be able to move his gaze away from the wounded vampire. Something was controlling him, but he could block it - he was a powerful-

Humphrey slammed his sword into the same ankle again, drawing blood as he cut into muscle. It broke the glare, so he turned, just as something landed on his right wing.

The zombie. He turned his glare just as a flaming green skull struck him in the eye. Ruben screeched in pain as the necrotic energy burned away at his vision. Time to leave. He beat his wings in an attempt to shuffle the zombie away from him.

Instead, pain wracked the appendage, as a long split ran through the leathery wing.

As he turned toward the dropped woman, he was restrained by four bandages, two of them shadows. "You really are tiresome," he turned toward the Mummy with a glow forming in his mouth.

[Kneel]

The dragon paused and turned to the Death Knight, narrowing his eyes. "The *fuck* did you say to me?"

Theo bit into one of his back legs, barely able to drain blood through the thick skin. An Imp from the [Summon Demon Scroll] flew into the air and started to build a fireball.

Ruben opened his mouth to bite onto the Death Knight, taking up the ex-Observer in his dagger-toothed maw. The jagged teeth scraped and whined against the metal plated figure.

"You'll find me quite unappetizing," Humphrey growled, as he used [Will of the Dark Lord]. It didn't stun the large dragon, but with the Death Knight in such proximity to his brain, it made him stagger backward.

The bandages tensed as he moved, now having surrounded along the whole wing as several others had sprung out from one of the alleyways. Norah grinned, her brow furrowed as she concentrated with the looming yellow eye above her head. "Thanks for the assist, Lucius." With a loud ripping sound, the wing burst into sand, the bandages falling limply from the space.

Ruben roared, a deep sound that vibrated through the whole of the Gold district as the Death Knight fell to the floor with a loud clang.

There was anger there, but Sally could see the desperation, too. His pride was too great to leave any threat unanswered despite his instincts telling him to go and find out who was messing with his gold. Now he just wanted a little self-preservation.

"Why won't you die?" He roared again, starting up another beam attack.

"Tried it once. We're already dead." Theo grinned and wiped his mouth. [Novice Strike].

Now able to puncture the softer scales of the dragon, the vampire began to circle around with his punch-blades, scoring a multitude of small wounds in a manner of seconds. Lucius had joined back up with Humphrey and the pair were slicing at the chest and neck of the large Monster.

Sally stood atop the nearest unbroken building and cycled through her crossbows, firing off the primed bolt and then dropping the weapon to the street below. Most of them did little damage or just bounced from the pale red scales of Ruben, but a few embedded into his side.

Now unable to fly, the realization that he needed to be out of the area overrode whatever pride was bruised. He crouched and tensed up, even with the vampire peppering him with wounds, about to leap and charge away from the group. His back legs then tripped on bandages that had stretched across the area and he slammed onto the ground.

Sally ran up and clambered onto his back, her dagger crackling with energy after using the [Savage Strike Scroll]. With a growl, she ran across his spine and leaped, striking the blade into his head.

"Even if you kill me, do you think that makes you heroes?"

Sally snorted. "*No*. We clearly aren't" She stabbed into his head again, dark dragon blood running from the wounds where her dagger bypassed his remaining defenses. "We are villains. So are you, but we are just *better*."

"Better? That is laughable." Ruben struggled to get back to his feet, his strength draining away.

"It's about sustainability," she plunged the dagger in again. "We will continue to be villains, and you will be a long forgotten treat for my stomach."

Ruben shook as he righted himself. Angered by their gall to lecture him, but still under the constant assault that drained his energy, he knew he really had Edward to blame. Something was happening to his gold hoard, and it was weakening him to the point of almost his base power.

He closed his eyes and tried to tune out the constant assault. If he couldn't rule this land, then neither could they.

Dark energy began to pulse around him across the floor. Circles of mist pulsed back and forth around his feet. The air drew cold and even the Outsiders started to be more wary with their attacks.

Except for Sally, who kept trying to dig through to his tasty parts. Dragons seemed to have really tough skulls - or more likely, he just hadn't taken enough damage yet. As his powered attack chilled her, her next strike came with an additional crack, and the conditional popped up as active.

Ruben hissed, an element of resigned calmness to his booming voice. "You think you have won? This is your end, you filthy fucking bugs."

[Game Over]

[Eat Brains]

Sally dropped from the body of the dragon, rolling across the floor covered in his blood. A pulse of energy release from the dragon washed over the area. The others ran over and lifted the zombie up.

"We did it," Humphrey grinned. "The dragon is…" his brow furrowed.

He tasted pretty rich. That would be the perfect line to cheer the troops up. Sally tried to smile, but couldn't. Theo went to put his hand on her back, but it fell away, back to his side. The others seemed tired too. Unable to talk, she felt... confused.

Strength was being drained from them, as if their very lives were being pushed from this reality. As their limbs went lax, and their eyes closed, she just felt so very tired and resigned to leaning into them.

Surely one little sleep would be okay?

The breeze rustled past, blowing charred dust and clouds of powdered stone through the five lifeless figures of the *Outsiders*.