

The greatsword dropped down to the floor, as Humphrey held up his hands to look at them. “*Oh no*,” he whispered, as his blue flames petered out to be replaced with low crimson ones.

Sally slid across the floor, panic on her face. She cupped the head of the fallen vampire and tried to lift it. “Theo? Theo?”

“Fucking hells,” Norah swore through clenched teeth. “It always ends in tears.” Her hand raised up.

[Tomb of the Eternal]

Darkness surrounded the zombie as a stone structure burst from the ground and built up around them. Theo’s body raised up on a plinth, pushing her away across newly formed stone flooring. There was the dull sound of a horse’s movement, muffled from the thick walls, before torches burst into flame, illuminating the chamber.

A small room, no more than fifteen feet square, where the centerpiece was the dead vampire laid out on a light gray bed of stone. A throne of similar design sat raised slightly against the back wall across from Sally, where the Mummy went and sat, sighing deeply.

Sally looked around at the pointed ceiling and carvings around the walls that reminded her of the pyramids. She struggled to maintain her breathing and turned to Norah. “What is this place?”

“Remember how I said I used to be the Ever-Living? This is the process I’d have to undergo every time I died.” The Mummy sighed and rubbed at her eyes. “While I remain here, watching over Theo, his body will not degrade and his soul will not leave this space.”

A pained smile crossed the zombie’s face. “So we can bring him back?”

“I’m sorry, hun.” She shrugged in response. “I was brought back using rituals known only to a handful of priests. This just holds him in stasis.”

Sally kicked up dust and growled in frustration. Her eyes darted around the chamber. “Humphrey ran off, but where’s Lucius?” A closed doorway sat against the wall behind her. “Maybe he was left outside?”

“If you leave, you can’t get back in.” Norah held up a hand. “It’s designed to be as safe as possible.”

With a sigh, Sally opened up her Inventory and spun around to the box he had given her. She placed the smooth wooden container on the edge of the plinth by the vampire’s feet. “He gave this to me, said I’d know when to use it.” Biting her lip, she popped the clasp and opened up the lid. This was a good a time as any, hopefully it wasn’t a stake.

Inside was a folded note. With shaking hands, she removed it to reveal three vials of blood sitting in a line amidst comfortable black velvet. “Can you read this, Norah? My eyes are super blurry for some reason.”

The Mummy’s expression softened. “Of course, hun.”

They exchanged the note and then the zombie went to lean against the stone bed again, wiping her eyes and staring at the vials.

“Dear Sally,” Norah began, holding the note up. “If you are reading this, either I am dead or you are sneaking a look, even after I told you not to. I am hoping it’s the latter.”

“Ass,” Sally smiled, sniffing.

“Most likely I am dead. In truth, I knew this day was coming. When we started off in the Wastelands, Archie sat me down and told me that I would die by the hands of an Outsider. That’s part of the reason I was so hostile towards Edward.”

She nodded slowly, as the Mummy continued to read.

“Turns out he was pretty weak, though. So it was most likely to be you or Humphrey. Maybe I went insane and needed putting down. Forgive me for keeping this a secret from you all, but Archie assured me it was necessary. Hopefully I didn’t kill anyone anyone in the process. I am pretty powerful.”

Sally rolled her eyes.

“Assuming you want to bring me back, unfortunately normal resurrection magic doesn’t work, because I am undead. I’ve already asked Chuck about it and have looked into scrolls or magic that do similar. Honestly, I’m not sure if I can come back from this.”

Norah took a deep breath, the weight of his death on her expression now too. “In the case are three vials of blood that might provide a key for my rejuvenation. That is only one part, as I do not know how to put the soul back in my body.”

The zombie rolled the vials around. They had labels around the hidden sides. Her brow furrowed as she read them out. “Bella. Edward. Lana.”

The Mummy lowered the note to raise an eyebrow in question.

“Bella has insanely high health regeneration. Edward can respawn at the cost of one of his levels. Lana is a clone, a split Player.” These all made some sense, some key to unlocking a way he could live yet again. It was clearly a lot harder than just jamming all three into his mouth or open heart, though. How could they bind his soul back?

Norah gave her a brief nod and continued. “There is a dungeon nearby that I’m going to try to get you a key for. It might hold the answer. It might not.” The Mummy bit her lip. “Just know that I love and trust you, Sally. Ah, only read the next part if I am totally dead for good, and preferably not out loud.” She raised her eyebrows.

Sally wiped fresh tears from her face. “Is it a bunch of mushy stuff?”

“So mushy,” Norah nodded, reading slightly further down the page. “And then oddly rather erotic.”

“Oh, pup,” she gave the vampire a glum smile. “I’d go through anything to bring you back, rather than read through your cringe attempts at spicy fan fiction.”

The Mummy tilted her head side to side, before folding the note back up. “I mean... I’ve definitely read worse.”

“Damn it, Theo.” Sally flicked his shoe. “Can’t promise a gal a good time post-post-mortem. You were supposed to rule the world with me, not get murdered by my possessed father-figure stand-in while trying to avoid the ire of a newly formed god.” She shuddered as she deflated.

“He is a good man.”

“He *was* a good *man-child*.” Sally wiped her running nose. “His whole thing is counting, and he died because Humps carried the one. I’m going to need to bring the dumb pup back to life just to chastise him.” She shook her head and crossed her arms.

“You have a plan then, hun?”

A wide grin crossed the zombie’s face. “I’m done grieving for now. Instead, I’m going to murder and destroy everything in the way of what I want. I’m done playing nice. The System has been living easy ever since I stepped away from my villain era.”

Norah smiled. “Good luck, Sally. When the days are darkest, that is when Monsters grow strongest.”

“You always know how to cheer me up,” Sally went up to the Mummy and gave her a hug. “Thanks for looking after my dead husbando.”

“Of course, hun,” she returned the hug. “I knew this would come to pass as soon as the System gave me the blasted skill.”

Sally moved back from behind her and furrowed her brow. “You think Humps has been keeping all your skills secret because he knew this would be coming?”

Norah shrugged. “He knew something was coming, but not... this exactly. He had been apprehensive about the new Architect even before we got to the Jungle.”

“Big lug.” The zombie sighed and rubbed at her face, before looking back towards the inert vampire. “I’ll bring pops back home safe for you too, Norah.” She turned to give her a smile. “Once he can forgive himself.”

“Please do. Hopefully, all wrongs can be righted.”

“System allowing,” Sally snorted, before moving over to the vampire. She gave him a small kiss on the cheek. “You taste horrible,” she whispered to him, with a sad smile. “Hang tight, pup.”

Standing up straight, she cleared her throat. “Alright, I am going. I’ll keep you updated via Party Chat, and if I die, then... you’re on your own, mom.” She paused and pulled a face at Norah.

The Mummy smiled. “Kill and eat the weak, Sally, so that we sit upon a throne made from the bones of our detractors.”

Sally stepped towards the door, and went to push it open—instead just falling straight through it as if it was incorporeal, and landing flat on the dirt beyond. The best start possible.

She stood and dusted herself off, looking back at the plain wall of the small structure, peaked like a pyramid at the top. Dark gray brickwork, and unassuming. It should be safe enough left alone, she would just have to trust Norah to protect the precious cargo.

On the ground, the greatsword of the Death Knight still lay discarded. Dark blood painted some of the grass and dried dirt. With a sigh, she put the weapon in her Inventory.

Eyes blazing crimson, she looked out at the world that caused the death of her Party. Something it would soon regret. Anger welled up within her. The uncaring all-consuming undead part of her she often squashed away to try to be half-normal. With the tether of her found family severed, the System was about to find out what an error that would be.

As she went to check her Map for the dungeon location, her eyebrow raised as the slew of notifications pending she had to read.

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The skeletal horse thundered down the road at full sprint while the rider stared impassively at the horizon. Dust and dirt flew up in their wake, the heavy feet of the steed pounding through the mud as they left the road to travel through a lightly wooded area.

Thinner branches were snapped and torn as they continued through the vegetation, crushing bushes and trampling grass.

Eventually, they stopped, and the horse vanished, leaving the Death Knight to drop to the floor. He rolled out his shoulders and looked behind him. “Why are you following me?”

Lucius popped out of his shadow, a sweat drop appearing briefly before his expression hardened. “What gives you the right to run away?”

Humphrey sighed and started to walk. As the trees thinned out, they were right before an outcropping. Slowly, he took a seat on the edge. They were high up, and the small cliff they were atop allowed them to gaze over a large swathe of the jungle. The thick canopy of dense greens looked misty in the drab light of the day. Patches of dirt or openings between the leaves revealed structures or places Monsters may be lurking.

“I murdered Theo, I have no place in the *Outsiders*.”

The Shade moved up and stood beside him, crossing his arms. "Don't you think Sally would need you now, more than ever?" His foot began to tap, no emoticons accompanying this line of questioning.

The Death Knight shook his head and lowered his gaze. "No. I am not safe to be around. What if I turned again? Killed you, or Norah? Sally?"

Lucius sat down on the edge beside the plated figure. "You're back now, though? Theo used his whispering skill on you to take you out of it?"

Humphrey didn't move and continued to stare at his own feet. A few seconds of silence passed before he spoke. "It wasn't his skill."

A question mark appeared in the air. "Then what did he say?"

The Death Knight turned his head to him, improbable tears running from his empty sockets.

"He said, 'I forgive you, pops'."