

## Chapter 2.7

### Warren you like to know

“Rats!” Sally shouted, her voice echoing down the tunnel as she cast [Hex: Slow] on the giant rodent clambering through the entrance behind them.

“I think they’re field mice, actually,” Chuck grimaced as he tried to lower himself down to be less of a target.

Humphrey pulsed with energy as he cast [Adrenaline] and [Dead King’s Court], stepping into the middle of the rough corridor to face the two from within. His greatsword burned a deep crimson, illuminating the space around them after the torch was discarded to the side.

“Any of these the ones we aren’t meant to kill?” Sally held up her hand in preparation.

“Don’t think so-“ the Druid began.

[Necroblast: Barrage]. A sequence of five eldritch pulses of necromantic energy flew from above the zombie and into the large mouse scurrying towards her. At first, it looked like they did nothing but burn the fur from the impact areas, but as the creature moved towards her with anger in its eyes - she could see the darker shades of blood soaking through the dark grey coat.

Humphrey thundered forward to meet the two mice coming from around the corner. The tunnel was only wide enough for one to fight properly, but so eager to find out what this new meal was, they squished and pushed between each other to be the first to bite down on the glowing morsel.

[Grave Strike] caused his blade to flare with unholy energy, and the Death Knight levelled a large upswing, catching one of the mice in the jaw. Dark blood flicked up across the ceiling as a dent was rendered across the front of the assailing rodent’s face. The companion giant bit downwards but was on shaky footing and only managed a mouthful of rocky dust as Humphrey skirted away.

Sally rolled to the side to avoid being flattened and lashed out at the offending leg, giving it a superficial cut. A dagger was no way to fight something so large - even if she could get close enough, the blade didn’t puncture deep enough to do a lot of damage. She watched as a thick tail lashed around towards the Druid.

[Thorn Wall]

Up from the ground, small structures made of thick wood and vine sprung up almost instantly and were struck by the prehensile limb. They cracked and immediately shattered from the blow, but it saved Chuck from taking the hit himself.

The looming maw of the giant Monster breathed warmly down on Sally, the giant yellowed teeth bared in a grimace as the creature was angered. She ran towards it and sent off a single [Necroblast] - straight into the mouth before it had a chance to react. As the giant gulped in pain, she slid beneath it and stabbed upwards into the furred stomach repeatedly.

Chuck winced at the violence and watched as the mouse tried to back away and stomp upon the woman. With a sigh, he held out a hand. [Earth Clutch]. Vines wrapped around one of the flailing legs of the Monster and pinned it to the tunnel floor.

Humphrey blocked the clawed attack with the flat of his blade and slid backwards from the impact. One of the mice had retreated to lick their wounds, and the eagerness of the second to take the place in the melee was now waning as it had lost one of its eyes. Froth surged from its mouth as it gnawed at the air where the Death Knight kept retreating from, drawing it back further to the support of the zombie. Then, Humphrey stepped forward instead and thrust the blade out straight forward.

The giant rodent tried to dodge to the side to avoid taking the blade into the mouth and instead had its shoulder joined rendered by the greatsword. It collapsed on the weakened limb, and before it could scramble back up, the Death Knight had leapt atop it and crashed down - impaling the creature straight through the skull.

"I don't think I'll ever get used to this," Chuck grimaced to himself, watching the carnage play out.

The mouse near the entrance collapsed on top of the stabbing zombie, and the Druid briefly considered casting something before-

[Eat Brains]. Sally burst from the top of the rodent's head in a spray of gore and bone matter. "Wow, that was super gross!" She beamed, spitting out some remnants of the quick meal.

"How did you even... from that angle?" Chuck's stomach rolled at the thought of the journey the woman just made to reach her target.

Humphrey started to stroll up, having also dispatched both his opponents. He was similarly lashed with crimson blood, and he reflected in a macabre hue in the low light of the torch.

"Broke your..." the zombie slipped from the head of the felled mouse and rolled along the tunnel back to her feet. "...ah! Broke your pacifism run there, didn't you, Chuck?"

"I don't think I hurt it." The Druid bit his tongue. "Plus, I've killed orcs with you guys previously - I just don't want that to be my bread and butter."

"Well," Humphrey slapped him on the back, knocking him forward. "It's nice to have some proper support for a change."

Chuck looked past the Death Knight down the tunnel. It didn't look like they needed much support. He hadn't even needed to cast any healing spells - and probably could have gotten away with just the one to protect himself.

"There will probably be a lot more squeakers in the hole," Sally tried to squeeze some of the matted gore from her hair. "How'd my hair get so long and thick anyway?"

The other two shrugged, and with a sigh, the group started off towards the interior of the warren.

Chuck became the designated torch holder - if only for the fact that every so often, they were again assailed by a mouse or two, and he didn't need to do much otherwise. The glow of the Death Knight was almost brighter than the held light when he was powered up.

"Sorry if you feel useless, Chucky." Sally wiped her mouth from the fourth brain she had eaten on the trip. "Odd that our Quests led us to the same place."

He shrugged in return but narrowed his eyes off into the gloom. "I'm more worried that we'll accidentally kill the wrong one, and then I'll fail my Quest."

"Unlikely," Humphrey grinned as he strode out in front of them. "The System knows what it is doing."

Sally and Chuck exchanged rolled eyes and caught him up.

A notification came through on the zombie's STAR.

[Theo: sit rep?]

[Sally: that like an exercise?]

[Sally: we are fighting giant mice.]

[Theo: I can't sleep.]

[Sally:...]

[Sally: seriously? You have the easiest quest ever.]

[Theo: it's the middle of the day!]

[Theo: also something weird is going on with the town here...]

[Theo: tele stone to me when you're all done?]

[Sally: ya ya, speak soon.]

"Theo is useless sometimes," she sighed and shook her head.

Humphrey said nothing but grinned wider.

"Trouble in paradise?" Chuck nudged her, but she remained unmoved.

"Don't start with that, *Mister Vines*. Let's focus on fighting and Quests for now, gossip later." She wagged a blood-stained finger in the air.

Chuck grinned and rolled his eyes. "A surprisingly measured response from you."

She shot him a glare, but any further back-talking was halted as another pair of giant field mice leapt from a side chamber. Sally pushed the Druid to the floor as the large furred rodent slammed her into the tunnel wall and knocked the stale air from her undead lungs.

"Worst thing is..." she growled as she grabbed at the teeth of the mouse to hold its jaws open. "...I can't even raise these as zombies."

"That would be pretty neat though, *ha-ha!*" Humphrey rippled with power as he slashed back and forth between the pair of enemies.

[Blinding Light]

The mouse trying to take a bite out of the zombie flinched away as a bright radiant light briefly lit the tunnel. Sally took the opportunity to roll away and beneath the jaw of her assailant.

[Necroblast: Barrage]

The repeated blasts struck the creature point blank, just below its mouth. Landing in the same place bore a hole into the furred neck, and as it struggled to breathe through pulses of blood - [Eat Brains] put it out of any misery.

Humphrey cleaved a leg clean off and managed to pierce the heart of the second with a swift jab.

With a smile, he turned back to the pair. "I hope you've been looting these."

"*What!*" Sally wrinkled up her face. "I don't give a [Rat's Ass] about what they could drop - oh? Do they drop that?"

"No, these are *mice*." Humphrey lowered his blade and deflated a little.

Chuck shuffled nervously as he tried to dust some errant rodent blood from his druidic outfit. "I've been looting them. Nothing exciting, but it'll be good to start building gold up again."

Sally shrugged and wondered where she could find rats that dropped their little butts. On second thoughts, that might not be the best idea - that path was a route to ruin.

"So uh," Chuck tilted his head to the side. "When are we going to address *that?*"

The two undead turned from where they were standing in the direction where the field mice had sprung from.

Ahead of them, barely lit by their scant light, was an extremely large set of wooden doors. Emblazoned about twenty feet up in tarnished gold was the symbol of a crown.

"A rat king!" Sally gasped.

"*They're mice,*" Humphrey sighed.