

## 127: Is it graverobbing if they're undead?

Scarlett and the others entered a dark, rectangular stone room that looked like it hadn't seen life in it for ages. The air was stale and there were overturned shelves and tables spread around the place, covered in the dirt and dust that accumulated over the long years.

Adalicia conjured a set of small orbs of light for them—which were somehow incredibly bright, but still not too bright when you looked at them—that lit up the area. There were a couple of slab-like coffers at the far end of the room, next to a pile of what might have been broken magical equipment in the corner.

Scarlett scanned across the walls of the room, noting several sconces that were empty or had cracked crystals in them, as well as Zuverian carvings here and there.

Fynn pointed towards a long corridor at the side of the room. “The undead is in the next room.”

“Then let us first deal with it before we investigate this room,” Scarlett said.

They moved forward as a group, with Fynn and Shin at the front, with Adalicia somehow making her light bend so that it didn't go too far down the corridor. That was certainly convenient.

Scarlett pulled out her enchanted glasses and put them on, peering down the passage. The chamber beyond was a vast hall with pillars running down the middle. Rows of stone seats were arranged in front of a grey dais atop a platform at the head of the room, where a skeletal shape was floating in the air above it. The figure was dressed in worn, red robes, and held a long staff in its right hand.

It was a lich. And this dungeon's last boss.

Normally, an opponent like this would call for a bit of caution, but...

Scarlett glanced at Adalicia and the rest of her group.

Both pyromancy and lumomancy—one of Adalicia's specialties—were counters to undead, and Scarlett's party was pretty good at teaming up on lonesome opponents.

Not to mention that Adalicia *was* a grand wizard. The woman might not focus on battle magic, but she was still a pretty powerful mage in her own right. In the game, a grand wizard or mage was at minimum level 60, so if Scarlett's estimations were correct, Adalicia would either be similarly strong as Garside or stronger. Considering this dungeon wasn't at the same level as the Howling Gale's Haunt, they didn't have too much to worry about.

She gestured for Fynn and Shin to continue forward. Rosa used her magic to buff their group as the two young men moved ahead. Scarlett had already used the [Charm of Expedient Change] to equip everything but her [Tiara of Lost Benediction] and followed behind them.

The moment Fynn stepped foot into the hall, the lich at the head of the room spun around in the air. A pair of bright red eyes locked onto the man, pure hatred in its gaze.

A blazing beam of light tore across the spare and engulfed its arm, leaving it black and charred as part of its robes was disintegrated.

Scarlett turned to stare at Adalicia. The woman's tome was floating in the air beside her as a set of runes dissipated into thin air in front of her hand.

That had to have been [Radiant Surge]. It looked *a lot* more dangerous when seeing it in person than it did in front of a screen.

The lich let out an enraged scream that echoes across the room. It raised its arm as a green light formed around its staff, then three rays shot out, arching towards Shin and Fynn.

Shin raised his shield and blocked two of them, the blows pressing him back several steps.

Fynn managed to dodge the one aimed at him as he ran across the room like a mad sprinter. Even the lich appeared slightly surprised at how fast Fynn reached it, trying to float back as the young man jumped in the air to slash at it. Several more spells were conjured up just to keep him in check, and the others took the opportunity to close the distance themselves.

Another streak of light from Adalicia slammed into the lich's side, burning even more of its robes and body. Scarlett followed the attack up by forming a conflagration of flames that stuck to its upper sections, just as Fynn leaped up to strike at it from underneath.

It didn't take long for their group to finish it off from there. Within a minute, what remained of the lich fell to the ground like a charred husk, leaving the hall silent.

"That...was fast," Allyssa muttered near Scarlett. The girl hadn't been given much chance to do anything that fight.

"There still remain other undead in these ruins," Scarlett said. "Though, in truth, they are likely to provide even less of a challenge."

She idly looked around the space as she walked up to where Fynn and Shin stood, next to the boss' remains. The staff that the lich had used lay next to it, as well as what was left of its robes.

#### **[Ruby Infused Warden Staff (Epic)]**

{A staff infused with the rage of its caster, empowering attacks}

#### **[Scorched Robes of Sorcerous Synergy (Epic)]**

{This robe was once made of fine fabrics and steeped in powerful magic, but has since gone fallen into disrepair. What remains of it is but a shadow of what it once was}

Her eyes lingered on the robes.

She hadn't considered it much before, since most of the items they found weren't taken from the bodies of those they defeated, but destroying it like this was a bit of a waste, wasn't it?

The description still said the robes were epic-tier, but it had been the same back when she looted all of that Cabal Adept equipment. Only some of it had actually been sellable.

...Hopefully this one wasn't a lost cause.

For now, she instructed Fynn to place both of the items in the [Bag of Juham]. She would look over them later, but she didn't have too much interest in keeping either. A staff was far too unwieldy to carry around in her opinion—unless it was incredibly powerful, and even then she knew of other items she would prefer—and the robes would only be useful to her if she could transfer the enchantment to another piece of clothing. She would look into it, but she didn't have too high expectations.

“Since we have dealt with the most immediate of the threats, we can search this area before we proceed to the next sections,” she said, turning to the others. Adalicia's interest seemed fixed on the dais that was up on the platform where the boss had been at the start of the fight. “Miss Mendenhall. You can, of course, do whatsoever you wish for the time being.”

The wizard looked at her and gave a short nod before walking up to examine the dais closer.

Scarlett directed Allyssa and Shin to start going around the room and gather anything that looked both valuable and movable. Modern archeologists would have despised her, but she honestly didn't care too much.

Returning to the first room, along with Fynn and Rosa, she looked around the space a bit closer. There appeared to be plenty of lootable things in here. Not all the sconces' crystals seemed cracked, so those were definitely something they wanted to take with them. Evelyne had told her Zuverian light crystals sold for a decent amount. The old magical equipment in the corner probably held some value to the various mage towers as well, even if some of it was broken. There were also plenty of smaller trinkets and baubles spread out on the shelves, as well as Zuverian gold coins.

Her attention, however, was focused on the coffers at the end of the room.

She walked over to them, eyeing the symbols etched into the stone slabs on top of them. There were two coffers, each bearing the same design.

Calling over Fynn, she had him remove the slabs.

As he pushed the heavy stones off, they slammed into the floor with loud thuds as dust spread around the room. Scarlett scrunched her nose for a moment as she waited for it to come to rest, then took in the coffers' contents.

Next to her, Rosa let out an impressed whistle.

The coffer to the left was filled with gleaming gold coins. Judging from how much Scarlett knew one coin to be worth, she estimated that there was somewhere between 50 000 to 100 000 solars worth of gold here.

She looked at the second coffer, which didn't hold any gold. Instead, there were only two items. A scale with no notable features except being made of silver, as well as a small grey cube that held a clear surface.

**[Scale of Reconciliation (Epic)]**

{That which was once one may now be two, but there is always place for reunification}

**[Cube of Instant Katabasis (Epic)]**

{One may find themselves facing an untenable situation, yet the one that has tomorrow always prevails}

While there were several reasons for Scarlett to keep exploring Zuverian ruins like this one, this here was the reason she had wanted to clear this ruin in particular. The second item, especially, was something she wanted in preparation for what they would do once Gaven returned from his mission.

She picked up both artifacts and placed them in her [Pouch of Holding]. Then she spent some time gathering up all the gold from the other coffer, along with Fynn. After that, they collected the rest of the items in the room before returning to the chamber where Adalicia and the others were.

The wizard was still standing up on the platform at the head of the room, leaning over the dais there as she inspected it. Scarlett told Fynn and Rosa to help Allyssa and Shin, then continued towards Adalicia.

The woman looked up as she approached, then gestured at the dais. "Do you know what this is?"

Scarlett looked down at it. The design of the dais was fairly intricate, despite seemingly being made of simple stone. It had elaborate inscriptions covering most of its base and carved into its face was a mass of complicated lines and symbols written in the Zuverian tongue. There were a few cracks in the stone, and some of the symbols weren't entirely legible, but it seemed in better condition than the rest of this place at least.

"I do not," she said.

"It's a type of relic sometimes found in places like this one where the Zuver resided, often referred to as a Tabernacle. It's believed that they are related to how the Zuver created the Kilnstones and other artifacts like them." Adalicia ran a hand over the dais, a certain passion to her voice. "However, no one has been able to completely decipher how they work. Most of the ones that have been found and successfully recovered have all been in relatively poor condition. The most well-preserved one is on the Rising Isle, and even that one has been worn down by time."

Scarlett examined the 'Tabernacle' more closely.

If that was how it was, then she *did* know of it. Not only had the relics been mentioned in some of the texts in this world that she'd read about the Zuverian civilization, but they had also been present in the game to some degree. It was thanks to one of these that you could even reach Beld Thylelion in the first place, if you were playing the good route.

Adalicia bent closer to the dais, studying a row of symbols at its center. “The expedition I was part of on the Rising Isle included both mages from Elystead Tower, the Ustrum Assembly, and the Isle. It’s been ages since something on the same scale was arranged, and part of our work actually involved these Tabernacles. I am far from what you might call an expert on them, but I do consider myself somewhat experienced on the topic.”

She pulled up the tome fastened to her waist, flicking to a certain page with numerous sigils engraved on it. They started glowing as she moved her hand over them, and some of the symbols on the Tabernacle glowed in response.

“Oh? That’s curious…” the woman muttered. “It seems to alter its response on its own, for some reason. I wonder why that is…?”

She opened another page in the book and started jotting things down.

“…From your description, it would appear this is something that most of the mage towers would desire to have access to,” Scarlett said.

“Hmm, I’m not sure how much there is to be learned from this one that we don’t already know,” Adalicia answered without looking away from her notes. “The ones that have been encountered up till now have all had some rather complex safeguards, so there is only so much we can do with that limited tools we have. That said, other than the one on the Rising Isle, this is the most well-kept one I’ve seen, so there’s bound to be some interest.”

“Then I presume Elystead Tower will be eager for the opportunity of procuring it for themselves before any other faction has they chance, would they not?”

The wizard paused, turning her head up to look at Scarlett. A small smile formed on her face. “You’re most likely correct. Though I imagine those in charge of our accounts won’t be as appreciative.”

“I am sure we can come to an agreement.”

Scarlett looked down at the dais once again.

It was too large for them to take with them. It was most likely also attached to the stone beneath, so removing it now wasn’t an option. But they were the only ones aware of the location of these ruins, and Adalicia was unlikely to reveal it to anyone—even the people from her own tower—since they had an agreement.

Scarlett only had to have Evelyne contact the people from Elystead Tower and tell them they would sell the information about this place, as well as the Tabernacle in it, to them first if they gave them a good offer. All the annoying stuff could be left to the mages themselves this time.

She turned around to leave the platform they were on. “Continue here for as long as you wish. I will leave Mister Thornthorn with you in case you have need of him. The rest of us will begin to explore the rest of these ruins to save time.”

Adalicia gave her a small nod before returning her full attention to her work, and Scarlett walked over to where the others were moving around the room. Hopefully, if they finished everything up here quick enough, they would all be back in Faybarrow before midnight at least.