

The Fall 503

Chapter 503: Hidden Aces

"And you killed countless people and almost converted our world," Zac said as he looked around. "How about this? Undo what you've done with the Realignment and I'll let you leave this world alive, or your version of it at least. I let bygones be bygones, and your Kingdom will give up any claim to this planet. I don't think that your Kindom wants an enemy like me anyway."

Zac's biggest worry right now was the realignment array. Kenzie was coming along with her knowledge of arrays, but there were no guarantees she'd be able to deal with such massive formation. That left Zac's far cruder method, finding the Array Core and bashing it. But none of them had any idea what that would result in.

What if doing so would cause the array to go out of control, completely crippling the planet?

The best outcome would be the Lich giving up and backing away, based on the potential of Zac's future growth. Besides, revenge was a dish best served cold. Zac definitely would deal with the Lich King because of what he'd done sooner or later, but it didn't have to be today. He could always visit the Undead Kingdom as his Draugr persona in the future and track this guy down. Saving Earth was more important.

But a laugh echoed across the halls as a robed figure emerged from the darkness, and a glance with [Cosmic Gaze] could confirm that this was the real Lich King. The hooded undead teemed with power, far more than he ever had on top of the wall.

"What makes you think it is reversible? Death is the shadow of life, a natural absolute of the universe. Our arrays only speed the process up," he laughed. "You're long past the point of return."

"Bullshit," Zac growled without hesitation. "The thing hasn't even started up."

"Perhaps. Perhaps not," the Lich snickered as the fractals on the hundreds of pillars lit up in an instant. "But does it matter when you are about to join us?"

The energy density of the chamber grew by a terrifying degree in an instant, and Zac's danger sense prickled as he looked around with a frown. He unhesitantly shot out a series of fractal edges toward the closest pillars, but the blades actually crumbled mid-air as it looked like a million motes of darkness fed on them until they couldn't maintain their form.

Zac activated [Loamwalker] to flash to a pillar instead, but it felt like he was trying to move through solid matter. Was nature blocked out in this place? He activated [Hatchetman's Spirit] next to rid himself of the effect, but it didn't work either. It was like he had lit up a weak candle of life in a raging storm of death, and his skill was ripped apart in an instant.

"I've reinforced this array for a year and it contains the will of the Undead Empire. It is powered by an enormous fortune of crystals and is perfected by the ancient sages. How could your little domain possibly resist it?" the Lich laughed. "You are indeed powerful and bursting with potential, but you are too confident in your strength. You are not fighting me, but an Empire, and the only result is Death."

The intensity kept increasing, and Zac soon found himself on his knees. His skin burned like someone had thrown acid on him, but it was the black motes that tried to burrow into his skin. He tried to block them out with the Fragment of the Coffin and the Fragment of the Bodhi, but neither could help him for more than a second.

This array was just terrifying. It had created an absolute zone of death, and he as a living being was completely restrained. However, he still had one more card to pull, and a pitch-black crystal appeared in his hand as he readied himself. He quickly infused it with Cosmic Energy to activate it before he slammed it into the ground.

The whole area shuddered as the darkness turned into a vast nebula, and Zac felt the immense pressure of the array disappear. He immediately pushed all the Cosmic Energy he could muster into [Chop] as [Verun's Bite] lit up with sanguine luster. He wanted to take out the pillars and the Lich King alike in one massive swing.

However, Zac had barely time to begin his swing before he found himself on the ground again, the vision of the cosmos so brief that it might just as well have been a figment of his imagination. The crystal lay cracked on the ground, completely devoid of power.

"Void's Disciple," Adriel snorted. "A supreme talent, to even have managed to catch a glimpse of the Dao of Space at such an early stage. He would be welcomed with open arms in most forces of the Zecia Sector. It's his bad luck to have been attached to such a wretched master."

Zac sighed as he looked at the cracked crystal in front of him with mixed emotions. It was a big setback that this thing didn't work at all, as it would force him to expose his Draugr form. But it was also was a bit of a relief. He had built up Void's Disciple into some sort of mysterious powerhouse after their last encounter, but this was a good reminder that the Zhix warlord was just someone with an incomplete heritage and a bit of a headstart.

He had wanted to deal with this without exposing his undead form, but he was just restrained too much by this array of death. He sent the command to his duplicity core, while he circulated some energy to shoot out a feeble fractal blade toward the Lich king. Of course, it didn't even make it half-way before it crumbled as well.

"You knew?" Zac croaked, trying to stall for a bit.

"He is talented, but just a native barbarian in the end. Just like you. How could I not notice him scanning the arrays in my domain?" Adriel said. "But there is time for us to discuss all this after you have awakened anew."

Zac was just about to complete his transformation, but his mind suddenly screamed of danger. He used everything in his power to slightly adjust his torso as a pitch-black spike descended out of nowhere, aiming straight for his heart. He just managed to adjust his chest enough to avoid getting his heart pierced, but the weapon still punctured his lung.

Bad turned to worse as a massive storm of miasma tore through his body, and Zac knew he would have died then and there if it wasn't for his unique constitution. Zac arduously looked around only to see a gaunt spectral assassin shrouded in a robe of pure darkness. He had never seen this assassin before, but he radiated a dense aura of killing intent.

Who was this? His aura was even stronger than that of the banshee general he fought earlier. And his mind had only managed to warn him at the very last second, barely allowing him to avoid getting his heart ruined. Was that ghost from before not actually the last general, but there had actually been one more lying wait all this time?

If that was the case then he was a true assassin. Zac had never seen a hint of his aura or his impressive killing intent, something that would only be born from a lot of carnage. He didn't do anything while Zac tore down half the fort and killed most of the soldiers, but waited to strike until he was confident in succeeding.

"Don't soil the body," the Lich said from the side, though he clearly seemed to be in a good mood. "I lost the poison constitution lass, but we can still submit this body. It might be even better for my purposes. The dreams of the Heartlands are not yet dead."

Zac's chaotic mind wandered, but he snapped back into focus as the transformation into his Draugr form finished. The waves of miasma that crashed through his body due to the spike were no longer harmful, but rather invigorating. The spike still hurt, but getting gored by a small spike wasn't a wound that really bothered Zac any longer.

Zac had been in this exact situation before, and there was no need to change a winning concept. A bladefist full of the Fragment of the Bodhi punched into the chest of the spectral assassin as Zac leaped to his feet.

"Wh-" the ghost said, but he didn't have time to react before his throat was caught in a vise-like grip.

The extremely powerful array that once had threatened to crush his body and soul was no longer an impediment at all. In fact, Zac had never felt this comfortable in his undead form before. This place felt like a paradise for cultivation, and he already started thinking of whether he could bring these pillars back home to create a proper cultivation ground.

This was why Zac had been confident in jumping down into the hole at all. Most of the attacks that the Lich King had brought forth had either been based on death or poison. And in this form, he was confident in dealing with either.

There was no crunch as Zac ripped the ghost general's head clean off with another infusion from the Fragment of the Bodhi, but a surge of energy entered his body as he followed it up by crushing the head.

"What!" the lich screamed as he fell back. "Draugr? It's you? It has been you all along?! This is impossible!"

"You keep saying that," Zac said with an abyssal voice as a child-sized coffin appeared on his back. "You should know by now that nothing is impossible in the Multiverse."

Four chains shot out the next moment, each of them aiming for the Lich with a palpable eagerness. Zac followed suit as a black armor covered his body, and Zac stomped down on the ground to appear right next to the Lich.

The Lich King was clearly frazzled by the turn of events, and Zac couldn't blame him. This array he had set up would be the bane of almost any living warrior dumb enough to get caught inside, and even if Zac

could withstand it he should have been severely weakened. But how could the lich have expected to run into one of the few living people in the multiverse that the array was utterly useless against?

The fractal cage sprung up while Zac simultaneously pushed the taunting function of [Vanguard of Undeath] to its peak. He had already shown his hidden ace, and he couldn't let this man escape no matter what. The Lich King screamed as he unleashed a barrage of poison from his body, and Zac noticed that the real body of the Lich had once again been replaced by a copy.

However, the real body appeared just ten meters away, and the chains of [Love's Bond] were already twisted around his body before he had time to realize that he hadn't escaped as he had planned.

The massive avatar once more appeared in the sky as a waterfall of toxins started to fall, but the chains effortlessly moved the lich out of the way. Bursts of poison emerged from his own mouth next, but if there was one thing the chains were unafraid of, then it would be toxins. They twisted even harder until sickening crunches echoed out through the subterranean hall as one bone after another snapped by the pressure.

Zac suddenly felt a tremendous surge of energy entering his body as the Lich finally couldn't take it any longer. Zac had been worried that there would be even more tricks to the Lich King, but he and his personal assassin had placed too much trust in the arrays in this chamber. It allowed him to take them out in quick succession, and Zac could already confirm that the Invasion has failed as the familiar prompt appeared in front of him, telling him that the area had come under his control.

There shouldn't be many surviving invaders after Zac had torn the whole place apart, but they would probably be fleeing toward the incursion by now. Zac didn't care about that as he hadn't exposed his Draugr form to anyone on the surface, and unless there was another ghost that could hide against his scans there were no witnesses down here either.

They would only be able to retell the situation of a terrifying Progenitor, and they would sooner or later connect that with "Zac Piker" of the Tower of Eternity, which would explain how this was all possible. Hopefully, that meant that any issue with the Undead Empire would end then and there, as Catheya had indicated that she would make sure no problem would crop up even if he booted the local undead from Earth.

But honestly, Zac couldn't bother going over every eventuality. He closed his eyes as he felt a sense of calm spreading through his body. He had done it. He had defeated the Undead Empire, which would allow Earth to keep going for a while longer.

At least until the next threat would come along.