

## The Fall 504

### Chapter 504: Broken

Zac took another look around before he released [Profane Seal] as he gazed down at the corpse of the Lich King. This wretched half-man half-corpse had caused so much trouble for Earth, but he hadn't even been able to resist one attack of his new Spirit Tool. He couldn't help but shake his head as he bent down to look for treasure.

He pried a low-quality Spatial Ring from the man's hand and found a top-quality Cosmos Sack hidden within his robes before he threw the body into his Spatial Ring. He walked over to the ghost next, which had turned into a pile of shimmering sand upon dying.

It felt a bit weird digging around in a pile of ghost ashes, but Zac found a spatial pouch and a set of throwing darts inside. He popped a healing pill next as he explored the chamber, and he could quickly confirm there were only two points of interest apart from the numerous inscribed pillars. The first was a pedestal holding a large black rock, and the second was a proper entrance in the direction of the palace.

It didn't require a genius in formations to figure out the pedestal, or rather the rock, was the core of the array, but Zac left it alone so that Kenzie could look at it instead. As for the entrance, it was sealed shut, and Zac had more pressing things to do than to look for treasure in the palace. A massive amount of energy coursed through his body after his two kills.

The Lich might have been the highest leveled individual on Earth apart from the Dominators, and the amount of energy he had gained from the kill was staggering. This energy alone was more than all the kills above-ground, and it would probably take him weeks to grind the equivalent with any targets he could find on Earth.

He really needed to make sure everything was okay on the surface though, and he ran back to the hole in the ceiling, speeding against the clock as the accumulated energy already had started to dissipate from his body. But he froze just as he was about to jump up before he looked down at his chest.

The wound to his lung had mostly healed by now thanks to the pill, and he activated his duplicity core again. With [Profane Seal] expended his undead form was severely weakened, not to mention there might still be curious eyes upstairs. He felt a stabbing pain in his chest when the transformation completed, but it wasn't too bad.

Zac jumped up through the entrance he came from, and soon enough found himself back in the open air. It wasn't too different from how he left it, but he saw a clear change as he jumped up on one of the tallest buildings that were still standing after the battle. Streams of the surviving undead were rushing toward the Incursion Pillar, and the fortress was fast losing its population.

This was just how it usually went. The invaders all got a warning the leader was dead, and the countdown before the Nexus Hub closed had begun. A glance over in his sister's direction showed they had moved away even further from the fortress, and the unthinking zombies seemed to have lost interest in them by now.

Perhaps they were unsure what to do after having lost connection to the Lich King.

“Good job,” a bloodied Ogras said as he emerged from the shadows. “That girl suddenly lost her composure, I’m guessing she got the prompt of her leader’s untimely demise.”

“I dealt with the other General as well. There should be no more threats, but are you okay to guard the others for a bit?” Zac asked. “I think I found the array, but let these people clear out a bit before I bring Kenzie over. I want to use the energy to break open a node before it’s too late.”

“These guys don’t seem to have any fight left in them,” the demon nodded as he looked around. “Go ahead, I’ll look after things.”

Zac nodded and entered the building he stood on, finding a secluded spot. There was no point in him going after the fleeing Revenants and Corpse Lords, as that would only result in a net loss of accumulated energy with the speed he was losing energy from killing the Lich King.

He only hesitated for a second before he sat down on his prayer mat. The fighting above had only left him with some grazes, and the stab wasn’t too bad either. Most of the danger had come from the torrent of miasma, which had been completely neutralized and absorbed moment he turned into a Draugr. Apart from having spent most of his big skills he was essentially in good condition.

He couldn’t discard this opportunity to become stronger, and he directly started pushing the remaining energy toward the node in his left leg. The Undead Empire was dealt with, but he still needed every advantage he could get in the upcoming fight against the Dominators. He needed to break open a few more nodes, and he turned his vision inward.

The node in his leg was just like before; partially opened and chock-full of energy while still impeding energy circulation. Seeing that nothing had changed from swapping classes back and forth he started to forcibly infuse it, and the pain quickly grew to uncomfortable levels.

The minutes passed and Zac started to brace himself for what was coming, but even he hadn’t expected the extreme agony when the node finally exploded. His white robes got drenched in blood as his a chunk of his leg exploded as well to the point that bone was exposed. But that pain was still nothing compared to the agony he felt on a spiritual level.

The nodes were something between corporeal and intangible, fixed on what Ogras called a Spirit Body. It was essentially an energy copy that perfectly matched your physical form, and it was the housing of the pathways. And now this Spirit Body was wounded from the explosion, causing the pathways in his legs to become messed up.

He finally understood the difference between opening a node the normal way and forcing it open. The normal way was akin to unclogging a drain by pouring down some solvent before snaking it dislodge whatever caused the bad flow. Forcing a node open was rather like throwing a stick of dynamite down the drain and blowing up the clog, along with half your house.

This self-inflicted carnage did not only hurt a lot, but Zac also realized it had weakened him drastically. His Energy circulation was all out of control, even in the parts of his body that weren’t harmed. He immediately took out another pill, this one intended to heal souls.

It helped with the pain somewhat, but there was no time for him to properly heal as an immense pressure suddenly descended upon him. Zac barely had time to get on his feet before a blinding golden light bled through the cracks in the wall, and then he was falling as the building collapsed.

A blistering heat was pushing down from above as well, almost immediately making the stones to burn upon the slightest touch. A new set of shallow wounds covered his body as he was buried in an avalanche of stones, but he immediately started to dig himself out. But there were just golden flames and smoke all around him, robbing him of his visibility. He didn't even know if he was digging in the right direction.

Worry gripped his heart as Zac pushed the heated stones out of the way. What the hell was going on?

The strength required to unleash an attack with that kind of impact was not something anyone in his group could deal with, and it didn't look like something that the undead would use. There was only one group who could conjure something like this.

The cultists.

He quickly circulated energy as he tried to forcibly push himself out of the mountain of rubble. But a blaring pain erupted in his left leg after putting too much pressure on it, almost making him black out from the agony. The events had made him forget about the wound from blasting open the node, but at least he had managed to break free from the building.

Only to be met with an utter inferno.

Golden flames had embroiled the fortress in every direction, and scorched corpses of elite Undead Warriors littered the wall. Zac had already killed most of them through his earlier rampage, and there couldn't be many still around after this salvo. The cultists must have bombarded the fortress with massive siege weapons to cause this kind of destruction in an instant.

Panic really started to set in but opening the Ladder screen allowed Zac to breathe out in relief. He could spot both his sister and Emily on the Dao Ladder, and Joanna on the Level ladder. Whatever was going on right now hadn't affected them just yet.

That didn't mean he could relax, but he simply couldn't find any target. There were just flames and corpses everywhere, and a sky on fire. He hobbled toward one of the broken towers, each step feeling like he was getting stabbed. A few jumps later he found himself on the broken peak, looking across the landscape.

Nothing.

There was no zealot army amassing outside the gates, just a grey haze in every direction except for the Incursion pillar. The bombardment was thankfully confined to the fortress, and he believed that Ogras was experienced enough to avoid getting scorched. Zac felt a fluctuation from his spatial ring, and he took out a communication crystal with surprise.

These things hadn't worked since they had reached the core of the Dead Zone, but now he heard his Sister on the other side of the line.

"What's going on?" Zac asked. "Is everyone okay?"

"It's the cultists! A huge flying vessel suddenly appeared in the sky, and we immediately fled into the woods to not implicate you," Kenzie said from the other side. "Ogras shrouded us, so we're fine."

"Stay hidden," Zac said. "I can deal with this alone."

"Be careful. I don't think they just came for the undead. They are probably here to deal with you as well," she said.

"It seems that way," Zac sighed as a storm of flames was falling straight toward him.

Cosmic Energy surged in his body, but a blazing pain made itself reminded as the recently opened node flared up. He could only grit his teeth as he forced the Cosmic Energy to move. However, he barely managed to form a 30-meter fractal edge with [Chop] this time, compared to the 100-meter blade he easily conjured earlier.

It wasn't enough. The blade cut into the wall of flames like a knife, but it was swallowed whole without breaking apart the attack. Zac didn't hesitate to activate a defensive treasure, and a sphere enclosed him and the top of the tower in an instant. The flames slammed down like a furious waterfall the next second, and Zac felt the scorching heat even within his protective bubble.

The base of the tower was quickly incinerated, and the tip was just held in the air with the help of the barrier. But the flames finally subsided, which allowed the skies to clear out. Only then did he finally spot the source of the attacks. A large vessel in gold and red hovered a few hundred meters above the fortress, something that looked like a mix of a flying treasure and a floating island.

Zac couldn't see how it looked from the top, but it seemed to be kept in the air with a massive ball of flames. Zac sighed with a shake of his head as he took out his own flying treasure. The cultists really liked their fire. He quickly rose into the sky as the tower fell to the ground behind him, no longer supported by the shield.

Nausea and double-vision plagued him from the pain of opening a node, so he needed to end this fast. He forced the unruly Cosmic Energy into his arm as he prepared his last skill of mass destruction. He had used up [Deforestation] in his earlier fight, but there was still one more card he could bring out; [Nature's Punishment].

His whole body was covered in sweat from the pain of forcibly utilizing his maimed pathways, but he couldn't stop at this juncture. Space cracked and the familiar hand flew out, though Zac couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed that the hand hadn't changed at all from him evolving.

It still radiated terrifying might due to the Fragment of the Bodhi though, and it shot straight through a burst of flames without even getting its leaves singed.

The hand placed itself straight above the floating warship, and Zac didn't delay a second before the familiar branch started to descend. There was no way to tell what these unhinged lunatics had planned, and he needed to strike before it was too late.

The branch quickly grew in size as it shot down at the ship, but a burning whip covered in white-hot flames shot up to meet its descent. Zac spotted a lizardman standing at the fore of the vessel, his eyes lit up like two blazing beacons as five swirls of pure-white globes of fire circulated behind him.

Zac had fought one of the other generals just the other day, but the power this man emitted far eclipsed him. In fact, this man even felt more threatening than the Lich King himself, though much of the danger from the Undead Leader came from his command of formations.

Had the leader of the Church of the Everlasting Dao come in person?