

## The Fall 507

### Chapter 507: Lump of Coal

"Kill me?!" Triv shrieked with dismay. "No! Let me stay on this planet. I can be useful for you!"

"You'd stay on a life-attuned planet rather than return to your Kingdom?" Zac snorted.

"I'm fine while my master is dead. There is no way I will survive returning to face Lord Rexus. My soul will be tortured until it finally crumbles from age," Triv hurriedly said, the words veritably spilling out of his mouth. "That's why I resisted the call earlier."

"I thought you couldn't resist the compulsions of the empire?" Zac said.

"That's different. The one calling was Lord Rexus, Lord Adriel's master, and the investor of this Invasion. I'm technically part of his force though he didn't awaken me. Adriel did. His call is hard to resist, but it's nothing compared to the rules imprinted onto our very souls."

"What level are you?" Zac slowly asked. "And what can you bring to the table?"

"I'm a level 73 Custodian, and I even have gained two Dao Seeds after staying here," the ghost said with some pride piercing through fear, as he shared his status screen. "I am practically guaranteed to advance to an E-Grade Butler in the future. I will be better assistance to your daily life than any custodian burdened with a corporeal could hope to be, provided you help me purchase Miasma Crystals for my survival."

Zac shook his head in bemusement when he saw that the ghost really was telling the truth. Its class was [F - Uncommon] - Spectral Custodian. There were really all types of classes in the world. He also noted with some interest that the ghost only was aligned to the undead Empire. Normally it wouldn't look like that.

You were aligned to your local force, not the empire it was a part of, just like Zac was aligned to Port Atwood, rather than Earth itself. Triv should have been aligned to his master's force, but he must've had mentally cut ties with it, leaving only an alignment with the Undead Empire.

"A ghost butler," Kenzie mumbled, her mouth rising with intrigue. "Might be pretty convenient with your situation."

"Sign a contract to serve me properly and you can stay on Earth," Zac said after a brief hesitation.

He knew how it would look taking in an undead after what they had done to Earth, but Port Atwood had long since passed the point of no return in picking up stray aliens. If it had been one of the generals or the Lich King he wouldn't be so willing to leave them alive, but a non-combat attendant couldn't be considered as culpable. Non-combat classes almost never had a say in the decisions of a force, after all.

"Nothing would have pleased me more," Triv said with a sigh, though Zac felt he didn't really mean it.

"But our commands precludes me from entering contracts with the living."

"Oh? Is that so?" Zac said as his eyes slowly turned pitch-black. "That won't be a problem."

The cooldown for his change had passed while he was unconscious, allowing him to turn into his Draugr form once more. The ghost looked on frozen with incomprehension, its mouth ajar.

"Now," Zac said with his abyssal voice. "The contract!"

"It was you the whole time... The mystery undead! This is impossible!" the ghost screamed.

"The Lich King said the same thing just before he died," Zac shrugged.

"Such a pure bloodline... No wonder the Noble Lady made your acquaintance!" the ghost spoke, and his whole form shuddered as his excitement quickly mounted. "I'll sign, I'll sign!"

The next moment the ghost had entered a lifetime contract of servitude with Zac, and Zac finally released him from the chains that bound him. The ghost had obviously just wanted to serve as means of survival before, but now it looked beyond excited.

"Why are you so happy all of a sudden?" Zac asked with confusion.

"I'm a custodian, a caretaker of the elite. When our master is strong, we benefit as well. Our bloodlines become stronger if our master's bloodlines are stronger."

"So you're like a parasite?" Kenzie asked from the side. "Will you slow down my brother's cultivation?"

"No, no, not at all," Triv hurriedly said when Zac's brows furrowed together. "This comes to no detriment to our master! You can see us as a mix of a supportive and non-combat class."

"Can you buff me in combat?" Zac asked curiously.

"Alas, no," Triv said with a shake of his head, but he quickly followed up when Zac's eyes dimmed with disinterest. "My skill set is more linked to your home. I can help improve its environment to better suit your needs. Lord Adriel's Dao Chamber was largely set up by me, for example. It will take some time until I can sync with you to that level though."

"What else?"

"I am there to deal with all the small things that flitter's on my lord's periphery. Cleaning, lighting incense, keeping track of servants, maintenance of private arrays, poison and threat detection. As I evolve I will also gain some small healing capabilities and the ability to deal with unwanted spying or Karmic manipulation. We allow our masters to focus on what's important, becoming stronger," Triv hurriedly said.

Zac had to admit it sounded pretty convenient having a butler, though that might just be Triv upselling his usefulness. But he first needed to deal with the realignment array before he went into detail about what Triv could do and what limitations he had from his compulsions. However, Zac suddenly felt a weird presence appear in his mind, and his eyes once more turned to the ghost.

The chains of [Love's Bond] trapped the ghost the moment he felt the foreign presence in his mind, and the ghost wailed as he was about to be ripped to shreds.

"What did you just do?" Zac growled as Kenzie looked on with confusion and worry.

"My apologies, Lord! It's my skill called [Deathbound Attendant]. This is just our connection that you can use to send me commands," he screamed.

Zac took a steadying breath. He had overreacted a bit due to his history with getting his soul cracked. But there really was nothing wrong with the mark after a second glance, not that the ghost could harm him with a Contract of Servitude active. He dropped the subject and once more focused on the Seed of Undeath.

"We'll talk more about what benefits you can bring later," Zac said as he turned to his sister. "What do you think? Just yoink that thing?"

"The podium seems to be some sort of absorption array," Kenzie nodded. "I think it will be fine to just take it. But perhaps put the thing in a separate Cosmos Sack?"

"Okay, stand back just in case," Zac said as he walked over.

The closer he got to the egg the fiercer the death buffeted him. It felt like he was inside an extremely refined Dao Field of death-attunement, but it wasn't painful at all in his Draugr form. The Seed of Undeath wasn't fastened to the podium itself, but rather placed down into a groove.

Zac simply reached over to put it into his Spatial Ring, but a surge entered his arm the moment his hand touched the smooth surface. A storm of death spread through his body, and his recently opened node was instantly filled with miasma to the point that he gained a level in his undead form as well.

He had already reached level 81 in his human form earlier. He had lost most of the energy from killing the Lich King due to the cultists' interruption, but he had gained enough to at least fill up the opened node by killing most of the zealots shortly after. Now his classes were once more in balance.

His eyes lit up as he felt just how magical the thing was, and he already had an idea what to do with the egg.

There was already a life-attuned cultivation cave back on his island that used the Lotus as a core. What if he created an adjoining cultivation cave steeped in death, using this egg as a core? With the help of Kenzie and his new butler, it would quickly be turned into cultivation heaven that would give him a leg up on his cultivation, no matter if it was his [Nine Reincarnations Manual] or pondering on the Dao.

The egg calmed down after the initial burst, and Zac safely stowed the thing away. A prompt appeared the next moment, confirming that the quest [Death Defiance] had been completed. Zac sighed in relief as that meant that Earth was finally safe from being turned into the latest branch of the Undead Empire.

As to whether the planet would rid itself entirely of the Miasma, it was too soon to tell.

The quest being marked as completed was just the beginning of the good things coming his way. An inscribed box had appeared next to him just as expected. It was the same with Kenzie, who eagerly reached for her own reward and opened the box.

A small tool was placed inside the chest. It looked a bit like a pen, but there were a couple of attachments that reminded Zac of the bits to a screwdriver. Finally, there was a small crystalline bottle containing some dark-purple liquid.

"What's that?" Zac muttered with some interest, as he hadn't seen anything like it before.

"It's an inscription kit," the ghost sighed. "The small parts are for inscribing on different surfaces, such as array flags, stone, or skin."

Zac's eyes lit up when he heard the explanation. It looked like his sister had gotten a reward tailored for her needs, or perhaps based on the fact that she had mainly contributed by erecting arrays. In either case, it probably meant that a customized reward was waiting for him as well, rather than some random thing that might be useful or just something to throw into the Merit Exchange.

But before he opened his own box he noticed that it looked like the ghost was on the verge of tears.

"What's with you?" Zac asked with some bemusement.

"I just failed a quest," Triv groaned. "As the custodian of the Incursion Leader, I would no doubt have received an extremely valuable reward."

Zac immediately understood that the ghost probably had an opposing quest for [Death Defiance]. After all, Catheya had mentioned that the System was very much in favor of the Undead Empire causing struggle all over the multiverse and that it brought some special benefits. He only snorted in response and instead focused on his own box.

A grin was spreading across his face as he opened his box, and Kenzie walked over with interest as well. He was the one who took out the Lich King and two of the generals, after all. His reward should be the best one around.

But he couldn't believe his eyes when he saw what was neatly placed inside.

"A lump of coal? Have you really been that naughty?" Kenzie laughed, and Zac once again found himself questioning his relationship with the System.

However, he somewhat got his hopes up as he noticed Triv staring at the box with greed in his eyes.

"This! High-grade Bloodline Marrow!"

Zac was about to ask what the ghost knew, but a shudder suddenly rose from the ground, like a small earthquake.

Was it the World Core?

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"Anything?" Ogras muttered as Leech flittered back and forth among the ruins like a snake extending from his arm. "You better find something to evolve or I'll figure out some way to eat you. Blocking my evolution, you really have a deathwish."

A few coruscating waves rippled along the tentacle, and it started to look through the rubble for race-boosting opportunities with more fervor. Ogras snorted as he kept looking as well.

He really couldn't catch a break.

Ogras didn't ask for much. Some good wine, a few pretty girls to accompany him, and a decent class evolution. Hadn't he earned that much by now after being dragged through one near-death experience

after another by that walking calamity? But no, this bastard attached to his soul wasn't ready to evolve, which meant that Ogras wasn't ready to evolve either, apparently.

Now he was stuck looking for something to help this netherblasted Planeswalker take the next step. He had already found a few valuables among the ruins, and there were also quite a few natural treasures in the Cosmos Sack of the general he killed, but nothing that would help Leech evolve.

It didn't help either that the blasted shadow couldn't tell him what it needed.

"And you better gain the ability to communicate soon enough," the demon added. "I'm tired of guessing what ails you every day."

A sudden shudder spread through the whole fortress, and Ogras stopped his search for a bit. It looked like Zac and the lass had finally managed to turn off the array. A box appeared to his side as well, and he snatched it up without hesitation before he flashed out of the ruin. Ogras looked around with anticipation, but he frowned when he couldn't sense anything in the air.

There was no influx of Cosmic Energy, and neither was there any new attunement that he could sense. Then again, anyone would be hard-pressed to make any real assumptions after the undead and the cultists had tainted the air of the area. Not that he really had any idea what a World Core upgrade actually entailed.

He had sounded pretty confident in front of the humans, but he was honestly just spitballing. They needed to be reminded of his value as that human cockroach knocked off one threat after another, after all. So that the demons, or more importantly himself, weren't left by the wayside the moment the last incursion was closed.

He turned his attention to the small box in his hand, and he opened it with some anticipation. Getting a last-minute boost before evolving couldn't hurt.

"What the hell is that?" the demon muttered with a frown, but the tentacle on his arm vibrated with glee.