

60 — Too Much of a Good Thing?

It had taken about two weeks, but Pope Septimer I had managed to gathered a host numbering roughly three-thousand to the cause of Lady Light's Crusade against the Blaspheming and Definitely-Very-Evil Toaddom Religion and its adherents. For the purposes of staging and preparing the army, Septimer had requisitioned the lands of Duke Morten Dookieshoes.

Amongst his army was no more than a dozen Priests, which did not bode well, and the entire training regimen was handled by one very-decrepit-and-old Paladin who had never seen any real fighting, as he had served only as a ceremonial honour guard of royalty. Nevertheless, Lady Light had invested in Septimer the demand for Righteous Justice to be carried out against the foul cretin dog *****, and he would not let her down.

Although, he could not help but sigh in dismay as he beheld his army. The vast majority were farmers who had been forcefully conscripted, with most never having even wielded anything other than a hoe and shovel.

Septimer was broken from his reverie by a loud screech from above, and the blood drained from his body as he beheld a figure plummeting out of the clouds above. Many of the gathered host saw this descending monster as well, and panic immediately broke out, as everyone fled for the hills. Not a person hadn't heard the rumours of how the last crusade was torn apart by the abomination that descended upon them.

With a tremor like an earthquake, the enormous nine-headed Hydra-Goose landed in the middle of the fortress that sat at the heart of Duke Morten Dookieshoes' realm. Then all hell broke loose, as each of its heads spewed elemental destruction and reality-defying annihilating beams of decay, time-reversing, and gender-swapping. Septimer caught the exact moment that his retired Paladin trainer was hit by two of the beams, turning him into a spry thirty-year-old woman.

Then he saw the cape that adorned the Hydra's back, and he shuddered in righteous anger at the blasphemy, for it depicted his most holy Goddess and He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named-Because-He-Sucks-And-Started-Ghosting-The-Lady-Of-Light-Because-He-Has-A-Tiny-Manhood-And-Cannot-Handle-A-'Real'-Woman.

A hailstorm of detritus and flensing wind suddenly tossed Septimer off the side of the parapet he was standing upon, when the Hydra-Goose flapped its many wings.

When Septimer came to, he was lying in a pile of bodies, most of which were undeniably deceased, their faces frozen in abject terror at the thing that had slain them.

Nearby, he heard voices, and when he crawled out from the mass of corpses, he saw two figures he recognised, as well as a third that was new to him. The tiny fat Dark Elf boy was talking about *this* actually being a good thing, whatever *this* referred to. Meanwhile, the metallic amphibian that towered over the boy was pleading with the third man, a White Elf, to do something about the Hydra, which was plumped on its butt atop the ruins of the castle and crying inconsolably.

“Pete!” yelled the amphibian automaton, “Yopi has something to tell you! So stop bawling for a minute and hear him out.”

Somehow, the enormous nine-headed monstrosity actually headed the metal toad’s words, because it seized its crying immediately.

“Hey, Pete,” the third figure said awkwardly. “I know I brushed you off! But maybe I’m just afraid of commitment, you know? And like, we’re so different, you and I. But, you know what? I’m willing to give it a chance, so how about I take you out on a date tomorrow?”

“OH MY GOOSE, DO YOU MEAN THAT, YOPI?”

“Of course! But first, you have to come back to Toad Town!”

“OKAY!”

Septimer was very certain that he was hallucinating. It was quite possible that he was still in the Holy Dungeon, but that he had slipped on the treacherous stairs and brained himself on the marbled floor, and that these last three weeks had not been real, but that he was in fact lying in a pool of his own blood, while his fellow Priests were rushing to heal him.

He sighed as he knew that what he was seeing was real.

The three figures and the enormous Hydra-Goose disappeared into a portal of inky darkness, after summoning about fifty reptilian humanoids, who immediately got to work rebuilding the ruins made by the Hydra.

Lady Light won't be happy about this...

“Like I was saying earlier, Pete taking his broken heart out on that random Castle Town was actually a boon for us. I mean, look at this:”

[*Evolution Requirements*]

Capital => Nation

- *Have at least ten species thriving within your territory (9/10)* -
- ~~*Create a lasting peace between Toadkin and Frogkind*~~ -
- ~~*Evolve a Lord to King after one is chosen by popular vote, as decided upon by the denizens of your territory*~~ -
- *Have three generations of Royalty born under your King's lineage* -
 - ~~*Defeat the Crusade of the Church of Light*~~ -
 - ~~*Spread the Toaddom religion to neighbouring nations*~~ -
- ~~*Create a National Diet of elected citizens to advise the King on laws and governance, such that the will of the people is included in his rule*~~ -
- ~~*Takeover three cities of Castle Town rank or higher, either through warfare or diplomacy*~~ -
- ~~*Make at least ten million Toaken in profit from sales within or without your territory*~~ -
 - ~~*Find a Relic of Divine Power*~~ -
- ~~*Conjure a National Guardian by combining a Rare Animal with a Divine Relic and infusing it with your essence*~~ -
 - ~~*Build a Graveyard and evolve a Gravekeeper*~~ -

“That was the last Castle Town we needed!” I realised in excitement. “Now we only need King John Toadcaller the First to spread his seed, since Bel is bringing the last species here!”

“I’m not a fan of how you worded that,” Imu replied. “Also, I’m pretty sure John Toadcaller has declared himself celibate, apparently he says that there are no women who can handle him.”

“Maybe we can clone him,” I said.

“What do you mean?”

“I acquired the ability to make something called a ‘*Magical Minion-Copying Mirror*’ when I devoured Blazing Blaine’s Dungeon Core. Do you think that would count as him having offspring?”

Imu shrugged. “It’s worth a shot, I guess.”

“What’s that sound?” I asked. In the background there’d been a lot of *pops* and *splats* for last ten-or-so minutes, and they were audible even in the Castle Garden despite sounding like they came all the way from the entrance of the Residential Sector.

“Oh, right, about that. Bel has already brought the last species here, the Niffers, but they seem to be instantaneously combusting, since there is so much ambient negative energy here that they immediately eat their fill, and then some, which makes them engorge and pop.”

“I’m gonna go take a look!”

“I thought you’d want that,” Imu replied and waved his hand in the air, transporting, himself, Goldie who he sat atop of, and me in my vessel to the entrance of my settlement.

I saw Bel swarming about a congregation of about three-hundred tiny black furballs with beaks and enormous yellow eyes, which were, as though orchestrated by design, puffing up, shooting into the air, and exploding, one-after-the-other.

“Ohai, Bel!” I yelled to the Fairy.

“Toad! Now is not a good time!”

Another Niffler grew to three times its normal size, then shot off into the air before exploding in a shower of gore and black fur.

“There’s way more negative energy here than I expected. We’ve already lost over two-hundred Niffers, and they’ve only stepped a few metres past the entrance gate!”

One of the Niffers, an older one, by the looks of his grey-striated fur and rheumy eyes, came forward to address me, even though his body was slowly filling with negative energy and growing in size.

“I have never before witnessed such a den of suffering,” he squeaked in a tiny voice. “It’s delicious!”

Then he ballooned even further and shot up into the air, before exploding.

“They’re pretty cute,” I remarked.

Imu just pinched the bridge of his nose like he always did.