

54 — A Place for the Dead?

Following Imu's forced teleportation of Pete the Hydra-Goose and his Barista-slave, a large portion of our fields were repurposed for growing the tonnes of coffee we'd need just to prevent the Goose⁵ from going on a rampage. Yopi, the Barista, was given command of his own legion of minions who aided him in his tremendous task of brewing the delectable drink en masse. Perhaps as a result of this new industry booming in my settlement, we started to see an influx of White Elves taking up residence here, and I also had to build two additional Hipster Coffee Shops.

During Imu and I's absence from Toad Town, Bel, my new Guiding Fairy, had proven herself to be a useful addition to my settlement management. She had not only organised my Adventurers in searching for the relic required for two of my evolution requirements, but she had also found a suitable spot outside of my southern quadrant walls where we could build a Graveyard.

While my minions were busy clearing the area of rocks and trees, my Builders undertook the construction of the many blurry blueprints of the crypts, pretty embellishments like statues and fountains, as well as the crematorium that she had said would be necessary to limit the amount of space the deceased took up.

"There is one thing that's worrying me though..." Bel said, staring into the horizon, her eyes hidden by her sunglasses.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Look at the last bit on the Crafting List entry."

>Structures>Gardening

—Graveyard (Workbench & Church)—

Unlocks the ability to evolve a Necrophiliac minion into a Gravekeeper and allows for the burial or cremation of deceased citizens and minions.

WARNING: *All citizen and minion deaths prior to the construction of the Graveyard are retroactively added to the Graveyard, increasing the space the Graveyard takes up and adding graves for each death.*

Required Materials: Quarried Stone & Shovels

“Why’s it listed under Gardening?” I wondered.

“That’s not the important bit, Toad!”

“How much space does a grave take up?”

“If we make them as small as possible, then about two metres in length and a little under a metre in width.”

I tried to use my evolved mind to do the mental calculations, then looked around at the area that’d been cleared by Bel’s orders in the expectation of the graves that’d show up for all my dead minions. It seemed that she was underestimating just how many of my minions had died.

“Is it possible to stack more than one body per grave?” I asked.

“Is it possible to... are you serious??”

“What are you building back here?” Imu asked, suddenly emerging out of my shadow. He realised the answer before either of us could say it, then the colour drained from his face.

“Oi, Bel... you’ll need to clear a much bigger area to fit all the retroactively-added graves...”

“Imu, can we stack more than one body in grave?”

Unlike Bel, Imu considered the proposal’s merits.

“You’re not seriously considering it, are you!?” Bel said, outraged.

“Bel... you don’t understand just how many minions have died under *this* moron’s care.”

“Is it possible, Imu?” I asked persistently.

“Let’s hope so,” he replied.

“Just *how many* minions have died??” Bel wanted to know.

Imu and I both refused to answer, which, I suppose, is an answer in itself.

As soon as the buildings were finished, a snap like thunder ran across the Graveyard, before its area expanded outward, flowing along the walls of that bordered the southern quadrant, as well as reaching out into the forest that Toad Town lay within.

“Burn me black that’s a lot of graves...!” Bel cursed out loud.

“Huh,” Imu remarked. “It’s less than I thought actually.”

“Maybe it didn’t count all the rebels that were brainwashed by the Therapist,” I guessed.

“You guys are talking like *this* isn’t a lot of graves, but there’s gotta be thousands!”

“I thought we’d reached five figures, truth be told.”

“Me too,” I added.

In the end, the final area of the Graveyard was something close to four square kilometres.

“Good thing you built it outside of the city,” Imu praised Bel.

“Yeah, nice thinking.”

“You guys are nuts...”

After the Graveyard was finished and the total number of graves revealed, we still had to actually dig each of the graves, as the simple wooden coffins just materialised above ground and proved to be indestructible and immovable. They would only move down, meaning my Digger minion corps, which ballooned in worker numbers, had to learn to dig under these bothersome coffins, before the decaying matter of my long-dead retroactively-brought-back-from-the-void-of-oblivion-to-bother-me-in-the-present minions started to attract feral animals to gorge on their liquidised meat and fatty tissue.

As hundreds of Diggers were assigned to the Graveyard, I waited around in my Essence Form for one that tried to sneak a peek into the coffins, then infused him with my essence to evolve him into a Gravekeeper. Once his evolution was finished, the Toadkin in question had grown a neckbeard and his clothes had turned into an oversized trench coat and fedora. For some reason, he also gained a curved sword that hung over his shoulders.

I flung my essence back into my ‘Lord of Toads’ soul vessel.

“Man, your System is really bullshit,” Bel remarked. It seemed that after just a few days of serving as my Guiding Fairy she had learnt the same cynicism and apathy that Imu exemplified. I was proud of her character development.

“What should I build next?” I asked, while we watched the new Gravekeeper move around between the coffins, prying the lids open, before tipping his fedora and saying the same phrase in a weird language, over-and-over.

“Is he speaking Japanese?” Imu asked, confused and also visibly cringing.

“What’s Japanese?” I replied.

“Some of the summoned Adventurers often speak the language. I guess it’s from some other realm where everyone is kind of mentally challenged.”

“I don’t think you should comment on someone’s mental state,” Bel scolded Imu.

“You’re not much better... Do you want me to tell Toad why you wear sunglasses?”

“...Please don’t!”

“Why does Bel wear sunglasses?”

Imu grinned, while Bel gripped him tightly and began shaking him.

“What’s the Gravekeeper saying?” I asked, when neither of them replied.

“Thank Deathheim he has a short attention span,” Imu muttered and Bel nodded.

“You know I can hear you, right?”

“Anyway! He’s saying something that’s a bit hard to translate, but he’s basically telling the corpses in the coffins that they’re already dead...”

“Did I mention that your System is bullshit?”

“We know,” Imu and I responded as one.

“Let’s build the National Diet next.”

“Ugh, Democracy...” Imu groaned. “Can’t wait for this to go horribly wrong.”

“What’s the worst that can happen?” I asked.