

## Paragon 20

### Chapter 20 Entering the Everlasting Zombie Forest

After leaving the city, Klaus set out on his journey. This time, he wasn't heading to Sunlight Forest, so instead of going east, he took the westward path. Two hours of steady speed walking brought him to a checkpoint, similar to the one he passed through on his way to Sunlight Forest.

Fortunately, he wasn't alone this time. There were a few other people there, all going through security checks. The process was the same as before—they scanned everyone, and you had to pay the fee before being allowed to pass.

But unlike Sunlight Forest, getting into this one required taking a shuttle. The shuttle was reinforced with military-grade metal, a precaution to prevent any sudden accidents from the occasional monster attacks that happen on the way. They took safety seriously here, making sure everyone entered the forest unharmed.

The Everlasting Zombie Forest was no ordinary forest. It was one of those places filled with wildlife so dangerous that it could threaten entire cities or even a country. It was massive, teeming with vicious monsters. Sometimes, these monsters would swarm out of the forest in tides, attacking the nearby cities.

Ross City, Guan City, Hamid City, and Felin City were the closest to this forest, which meant the city guards were always on high alert. They also made sure that anyone who ventured into the forest came back without any nasty infestations.

The forest earned its name, Zombie Forest because a huge part of it was infested with zombies. But these weren't the slow, shambling zombies you see in movies. These were fast and vicious, and some say they've even heard them speak, though that's a rare occurrence.

Just as there are different kinds of monsters, there are also various types of zombies in this forest. Although these zombies don't offer any food value when killed, most of them carry something rare and valuable—a Zombie Stone. These stones have some medicinal properties that make them highly sought after.

It's said that absorbing a Zombie Stone can grant some resistance to zombie bites. While there's no cure for the zombie virus yet, those who aren't fully overtaken by the virus after being bitten can sometimes be cured. Because of this, Zombie Stones are incredibly valuable.

That's why so many adventurers venture into this dangerous forest. But as the saying goes, the greater the value, the greater the danger. The Everlasting Zombie Forest is not a place for the weak. Most people who enter are either at the Peak Ascended stage or have reached the Master stage.

As Klaus approached the line for the shuttle, a few people began to notice him. They sensed his cultivation base, and some of them started to sneer and whisper among themselves.

"What's an Awakened doing here?" one of them muttered, loud enough for Klaus to hear.

"He must have a death wish," another one snickered, shaking his head.

"Probably thinks he'll get rich quick," a third person added with a smirk. "He won't last five minutes in there."

Their mocking remarks continued, growing bolder as they sized Klaus up. They seemed to find his presence amusing as if they were watching a lamb wander into a lion's den.

But Klaus didn't react. He wasn't here to prove anything to them. He had a purpose, and their words didn't matter. He kept his focus straight ahead, ignoring the taunts and jeers.

Some of them tried to catch his eye, hoping for a reaction, but Klaus didn't give them the satisfaction. He knew better than to engage with people like this. They weren't worth his time or energy.

The line moved slowly, and the sneers continued. But Klaus remained calm, his mind already on the task ahead. He was here for a reason, and nothing was going to distract him from that.

When it was Klaus's turn, he paid his fee and received a badge. The cost this time was 200 gold coins, partly due to the shuttle ride, but the badge was good for four entries into the forest. After the fourth time, he'd only have to pay half the fee if he wanted to keep hunting there.

As Klaus took the badge, the guard who handed it to him offered some advice. "Little brother, you shouldn't wander too deep into the forest. Hunting in the outer section is good enough."

Klaus nodded, accepting the badge. "Thank you, big brother."

"Henrick."

"Thank you, big brother Henrick. I'm Klaus. Next time, I'll be in your care," Klaus responded with a smile. Henrick seemed far better and friendlier than those guys who had scammed him at the Sunlight Forest border.

"Just be careful out there," Henrick said as Klaus turned to enter the shuttle. It had 15 compartments, and he chose the 5th one, lying down to relax. The border to the forest was about 70 miles away, so he knew it would take some time to get there.

As the shuttle moved, Klaus noticed a few others in the 5th compartment, but they kept to themselves. No one bothered him, so he settled in, feeling at ease.

Along the way, the shuttle was attacked by monsters. However, the shuttle's advanced mechanisms, built to handle such threats, took care of the situation quickly. Klaus couldn't help but admire how seriously the Ross Family took safety and business. This kind of protection made people feel secure, and many would be forever grateful to the Ross Family for it.

But for Klaus, this was nothing new. He was already aware of how the Ross Family operated, so he didn't pay much attention to the praises others were murmuring. Instead, he just lay there, drifting off to sleep, which surprised the other passengers.

Whenever a monster attacked, the others would tense up, some even drawing their weapons in case things went wrong. But Klaus remained completely unfazed, lying there as if he were dead.

His calmness was unsettling to some. They couldn't understand how he could be so relaxed when danger was literally knocking at the shuttle's doors. A few of them exchanged glances, puzzled by his behavior.

As the shuttle continued on its way, more monsters tried to attack, but the shuttle's defenses held strong each time. The passengers flinched and prepared themselves, but Klaus didn't move a muscle. It was as if he trusted the shuttle completely—or maybe, he just didn't see the point in worrying.

Eventually, the tension eased a bit among the others. Seeing Klaus so calm made them realize that the shuttle was indeed well-protected. A few passengers even began to relax a little, though they still kept their weapons close, just in case.

Finally, after what felt like hours, the shuttle neared its destination. The adventurers aboard tensed up as they approached the Everlasting Zombie Forest. Even from a distance, the sounds of roaring monsters echoed through the air, and the thick scent of blood hung in the atmosphere, putting everyone on edge.

"This is where we drop you off. From here on out, it's all up to your abilities and survival instincts," a voice announced as the shuttle came to a stop. The adventurers quickly disembarked, weapons ready, and began making their way toward the forest's edge.

Klaus, however, lingered in the shuttle for a few moments longer. He felt something—an odd, familiar presence—but when he looked around, he didn't see anyone. Frowning slightly, he dismissed the feeling and finally stepped out of the shuttle.

As he set foot on the ground, the tension in the air was palpable. Everyone around him was on high alert, scanning the area for any signs of danger. But Klaus stayed calm, his mind already focused on the task ahead.

He saw some people getting on the shuttle. It appeared they were people who had entered the forest and were now leaving. The stress and fatigue could be seen on their faces as they climbed aboard after being checked whether they were infected.

Glancing around one last time, he shrugged off the strange sensation and headed into the dense forest. The dark trees loomed overhead, and the sounds of distant roars grew louder with every step.

"Hopefully, this time, I can make some great profit before leaving," Klaus muttered to himself as he ventured deeper into the forest.

As he moved further in, the eerie atmosphere of the Everlasting Zombie Forest surrounded him. The air was thick with tension, and every step he took seemed to echo through the dense undergrowth. Suddenly, a rustling noise caught his attention.

"Spike Lizard," he noted calmly as a Tier 2 monster appeared from the shadows. Without hesitation, Klaus swung his sword, sending a sharp ice arc slicing through the air. The attack hit the lizard dead on, killing it instantly with a single blow. Klaus didn't even break a sweat.

Before heading out this time, Klaus had wisely distributed the 100 points he gained from his last level-up into strength and stamina. The increase in strength made his attacks far more devastating, while the added stamina meant he could endure longer battles without tiring.

But what really gave him an edge was his agility. It was off the charts now, making him faster than ever before. With his newfound speed, Klaus felt more confident in his ability to survive and thrive in the Zombie Forest this time around.

"I should probably level up before looking for Zombies," Klaus said storing the body of the monster. He began moving again. The forest true to its name, just a few steps away, he encountered his second monster, and that began his hunt. He currently is a Level 6 Awakened, but he is several times stronger than normal awakens at the same level, so he began to run amok killing monsters about.

A little after two hours, he smiled looking at the message he wanted to see the most.

[You have leveled up. Current Level: Level 7 Awakened. You have received 100 Stat points.]

[Next Level up: 300/38,400]

"Time to officially begin the hunt" Klaus smiled and dashed away, heading deeper into the forest.