

## Paragon 23

### Chapter 23 Zombie Tide (1)

One part of the Everlasting Zombie Forest is dominated by a strange mountain range with five distinct openings. At the heart of this range lies a large, open clearing. Thanks to the natural barrier provided by the mountains, this area has been made safe for the humans who venture into the forest, offering them a place to relax and regroup.

Tents made from highly advanced fabrics were scattered throughout the clearing, providing shelter for the human experts who came here to hunt. The mountains served as a protective wall, and since the five openings were the only entry points for monsters, the humans had set up defenses to ensure that any creature that dared to enter never made it out alive.

It was a place where hunters could catch their breath and even turn a profit. But suddenly, this peaceful haven, which housed thousands of people, began to tremble. The ground rumbled ominously, and small stones started to bounce across the earth.

One by one, experts rushed out of their tents, weapons at the ready, their faces etched with confusion and concern.

"What's going on?" a young man with a spear in hand asked, his eyes fixed on one of the openings.

"Everyone, get ready! There's a monster tide!" A shout came from near one of the mountain openings, the voice filled with urgency.

"A monster tide in the Safe Zone? How is that possible?" panicked cries echoed through the clearing as experts began to realize the gravity of the situation.

"What the hell is happening?" another voice called out, panic rising as the ground continued to shake.

"This place is supposed to be secure!" a woman yelled, her bow drawn as she glanced nervously around.

"Did something break through our defenses?!" someone else shouted, their voice tinged with fear.

The tremors grew stronger, the ground almost vibrating beneath their feet. The once-sturdy tents swayed precariously, some of them collapsing as the quakes intensified. The safe zone, which had always been a place of security and comfort, was now filled with fear and uncertainty.

"We're sitting ducks here!" a hunter cried, his eyes wide with terror as he looked toward the nearest mountain opening.

"Why now? Why here?" a young woman whispered, clutching her sword tightly, her knuckles white.

"Monsters! They're coming!" someone near the front lines screamed, their voice barely audible over the growing roar.

The panic spread like wildfire. Even the Master level expert started to panic.

"We are doomed," a young man muttered as his grip on his sword loosened, and the weapon clattered to the ground. From 10 kilometers away, Tier 2 monsters of all sizes and shapes surged toward them from four of the five openings. There were hundreds, maybe even thousands, of them.

"Look over there, no monsters are coming from that place!" a young lady shouted, pointing frantically at the one opening that was still clear. "Everyone, run there!" The order, though anonymous, sparked a wave of desperate motion as the crowd surged toward the supposed safe exit.

"Idiots," a young man holding a bow muttered under his breath, shaking his head at the fleeing masses. He then pulled back his bowstring, and an arrow made entirely of fire materialized. With a sharp twang, he released it. Boom! The arrow shot out, streaking through the horde of monsters, and those it struck were instantly incinerated.

Without hesitation, he loosed another arrow. Each shot carried intense heat, burning through the monsters on impact, killing them outright. Those that survived the initial strike weren't lucky for long—the next arrow found them, and death quickly followed.

"Rainbow Flames Volley!" the young man shouted as he nocked another arrow. This time, as the single arrow left his bow, it split into dozens of smaller arrows mid-flight. They rained down on the monsters,

each one a deadly spark that erupted into flames on contact. The monsters howled in agony as the fire arrows pierced them, their bodies turning to ash within moments.

Not stopping, the young man conjured another arrow, but this one was different. "Blazing Wind Piercer!" he called out, releasing the shot. The arrow spun like a drill as it flew, gathering wind and fire around it. When it hit the horde, it didn't just strike—it tore through the monsters, creating a fiery vortex that sucked in those nearby, shredding them to pieces.

The monsters tried to push forward, but he was relentless. "Inferno Burst!" he shouted, channeling his energy into the next arrow. This one glowed with an intense, fiery light before he released it.

As it hit the ground in the middle of the horde, it exploded with a blinding flash, sending out a wave of fire that engulfed everything within a wide radius. The monsters caught in the blast were vaporized, leaving nothing behind but scorched earth.

The air was filled with the stench of burning flesh, and the once unstoppable tide of monsters was now a scattered mess of charred remains. The young man, breathing heavily, lowered his bow for a moment to assess the battlefield.

Looking over to one of the other openings, the archer noticed another figure fighting with terrifying efficiency. This guy was wielding a spear, and with each swing and stab, a monster fell. His movements were smooth and precise like he was dancing through the battlefield.

"Tier 2 scum, how dare you come after a Master Stage expert like me?" the young man sneered as he thrust his spear forward, impaling a Tier 2 dark-tail wolf. With a swift spin, he unleashed a powerful burst of wind energy, sending shockwaves through the air. The blast tore through the ranks of the monsters, their bodies exploding into pieces as they were blown apart.

The spearman didn't stop. He continued to mow down the monsters with deadly accuracy, his spear a blur as it sliced through flesh and bone. Each movement was calculated, and each strike was delivered with perfect timing. There was no hesitation, no wasted energy—just pure, lethal skill.

The wind around him seemed to obey his every command, swirling with his spear strikes, amplifying their power. Monsters that got too close were instantly cut down, their bodies shredded by the force of his attacks.

"Mark, reserve your strength. We don't know how many tides will be coming. It's best if you don't exhaust yourself too early," the bowman called out, his voice steady despite the chaos around them. After giving his advice, he quickly turned back to his own bloody work, arrows flying with deadly precision.

Mark glanced over at his companion and smiled, his spear still moving fluidly through the air. "Thanks for the reminder, Kay. But don't worry—I'm just warming up." With a powerful swing, he sent several monsters crashing to the ground, their lives snuffed out in an instant.

Elsewhere on the battlefield, another figure was tearing through the horde with terrifying efficiency. Each strike of his blade was like a reaper's scythe, cutting down the monsters as if they were nothing more than wheat in a field.

Not far from him, a young woman was also in the thick of the fight, her sword a blur as she slashed through her enemies. Her movements were graceful yet fierce, every swing filled with determination. The two fighters seemed to be in sync, always aware of each other's positions, ensuring that no monster could sneak up on them.

Their teamwork was seamless, a clear sign that they had fought side by side many times before.

At the last of the four openings, five experts held their ground, their faces set with grim determination. Two of them were at the Master stage, their power evident in every move they made. The other three, still at the Ascended stage, fought with equal ferocity, refusing to let the monsters breach their defenses.

Across the battlefield, those who hadn't fled were engaged in their own battles, striking down any monsters that slipped past the main defenses. It was a scene of organized chaos, each fighter focused on their task, but all working towards the same goal—survival.

"NO!" A panicked shout tore through the battlefield as a young man was suddenly lifted into the air by the razor-sharp leg of a massive spider. His scream echoed as the deadly leg pierced through his body, the horror of it freezing those around him in their tracks.

"Tier 3 monsters! Everyone, run!" Panic spread like wildfire. The orderly retreat turned into chaos as humans scattered in every direction, desperate to escape the monstrous threat. But some weren't fast enough. They were cut down before they could even move, their bodies falling lifeless to the ground.

Others managed to flee, though not without injury, while a few were lucky enough to escape unscathed.

The battlefield descended into madness as more and more monsters poured in from the entrances. Those who panicked met quick ends, while the ones who managed to steady themselves raised their weapons and fought back with everything they had.

"Something's not right," the young lady fighting beside the young man said, her voice barely audible amid the chaos. She continued to fight, her sword flashing as she struck down another monster.

"Lily, what's wrong?" Kilian, the young man fighting beside her, asked between swings of his sword.

"Look at the way the monsters are running," Lily said, her voice tense with realization. "It's like they're fleeing from something."

"You mean to say something's driving them here?" Kilian asked, his grip tightening on his weapon.

"Yes. If I'm right, these monsters aren't attacking—they're running for their lives. Something else is behind this," Lily replied, a cold sweat breaking out on Kilian's brow as her words sank in.

"Lily, what should we do? Just give the order, and I'll follow without question," Kilian said, his voice steady despite the fear gnawing at him.

"You overestimate my authority here, Kilian," Lily said, shaking her head, her expression grim.

"What do you mean?" Kilian asked, but before he could get an answer, a cold, ominous voice chanted something in the distance. Suddenly, the temperature across the battlefield plummeted, the air turning icy as if winter itself had descended in an instant. The chill cut through the chaos, and everyone on the battlefield paused, the breath of fear hanging heavy in the freezing air.

"Eternal Freezing Domain, Ice Queen wrath"