

The Ground Shook

Erdania smashed another monster with her staff and kicked another in the head. Her skill **|Enhanced Sphere of Awareness|** let her know that a monster was attacking from her back. She stabbed her staff into the ground and leaped over it, avoiding another attack. As the monster passed below her, she smashed her palm into its back, releasing a **{Reverberating Blow}**. The monster's body buckled and exploded, spreading black ichor all over the floor. These monsters didn't have organs or blood inside of them, they seemed to be made out of the same substance. At least most of them, she had encountered a few that were different, although she hadn't stayed long enough to examine their corpses.

She had tried to use her **[Inflict Agony]** on the monsters, but her touch didn't seem to be doing anything, nor did her **[Draining Step]**. It was as if these monsters didn't feel pain or had any stamina to be drained. There was no real intelligence behind them, only hunger.

And then there was the faint buzzing inside her head. She had been noticing it more and more, her **|Crystal Mind|** seemed to be protecting her, but she had seen a couple of warriors around her fight with strained expressions on their faces. The monsters were giving off something, but she couldn't examine what it was without lowering her own defenses, and there was no way that she would do that.

The **Gravity Orb** pulled monsters around her off their feet, but there were too many around her, even with that she was often surrounded. She whirled her staff, killing monsters with single strikes. Her stats were rising with every kill, her **Vampire** perk adding their stats to hers. Her stamina was still full, as her **Stamina Regenerator** perk kept her topped off.

A group of monsters leaped at her, surprising her. A couple of them were the standard type, but one of them was larger, looking like a monstrous bear with six arms and a horn on top of its head, towering over her. She pushed her **Cosmic** body, allowing the mass of her body to exert the full effect on her surroundings. She swiped with her staff, triggering its power. In an instant it weighed ten times the amount, she smashed through the

monsters as they came at her, and then the bear-like monster reached her. She pushed the effect of gravity on her body to its maximum, the ground beneath her cracking under her weight. She whirled her staff back and blocked the monster's attack, but two of its limbs got through to strike against her skin. Its claws didn't even scratch her skin and its momentum barely moved her. She pulled her staff to her chest, pulling the monster closer in the process. She dropped her staff and then smashed her palms against the sides of the monster's head, exploding it between them. Black gore showered over her face and body but she didn't even slow. She kicked her staff at a monster coming at her then jumped forward as she lessened the impact of her mass and the pull of gravity on her. She caught her staff as it bounced off the monster's head and then brought it down on top of it.

The majority of the monsters were about as strong as an average Monarch Cultivator, the larger ones maybe a few tiers above that. But she could see other monsters in the distance, the towering behemoths that were slowly getting closer.

She continued to fight, seeing Emar and his nephew nearby, their spears flashing in unison and killing dozens of monsters. The warriors of her sect were fighting bravely, but she saw that many were dying both from her and other sects. She needed to do more to help them, but she couldn't do it while she was near them.

Then, before she could react, a large shape smashed into her. It was an amorphous mass of black with what seemed like a hundred tentacles that all wrapped around her, tightening, the hooks on the tentacles attempting to breach her skin. It was powerful, and she could feel the hooks pricking her skin, but her mass was greater than even the monster that was three times her size. She focused her will let her mass fully effect the real world and increased the pull of gravity on herself. Her **Gravity Orb** was orbiting quickly, smashing into the monster in an attempt to have it release her.

Her mass pulled her and the monster to the ground, she felt the tentacles tightening, but it was getting squished against the ground. She pushed more, increasing the gravity around her with her **Master of Gravity** perk. The monster was trying to move, but it couldn't, it was getting crushed between her and the ground. She wiggled getting more room as the monster

lost its strength from the crushing weight. Then, once she had enough room, she turned and used her **{Wrathful Assault}**. Her limbs struck out, chaotically and blindly, smashing everything in her way. The tentacles and the core of the monsters splashed against the ground from her impacts, gore flying everywhere.

It took her a few moments to climb out of what was left of the monster. Once she did, monsters were already on her. Her orb pulled them off the ground and then smashed into them while she grabbed her staff from the mass of tentacles. She jumped off the monster corpse and returned gravity around her to its normal intensity.

Then, a large monster limb grabbed the edge of the cliff, and something pulled itself up. It was large, as large as a small building, with flat face and no mouth, its eyes were large and glowing with red light. It was elongated, gangly, and thin, but its claws were large and were digging into the ground as it fully raised itself. It stood on all four thin limbs and then something filled the air around it. Immediately she was hit with a mental attack. It made her pause for only a moment, but she saw the warriors around her pause for longer. Dozens died in an instant, as they paused in their attacks or they missed a block.

Six of the larger sized monsters jumped at her, taking advantage, but silver spears and a beam of void cut them down before they could reach her. She silently thanked Selia and Ryun, and then focused.

She opened her mouth and sang, letting her **Clearing Song** come out. The tones were simple, without any words, just humming. But it filled the cliff and she saw people recover. Emar and Eari jumped at the big monster, their spears glowing with green Qi. Her song ended, and the warriors restarted their defense. She was about to jump in to help them when she saw another large monster climb on top a few hundred meters away. This one was just as large, but built as a building. Six limbs crashed on top of the step, one of them crushing a warrior beneath it. The tree trunk sized limbs were thick and muscled, and the monster had large tusks that it stabbed into the ground, ripping chunks of it out and sending a shower of debris at the warriors.

She saw a beam of void Qi scour its thick hide, but not penetrating deeply inside. Selia's spears were embedded in its skin, and then they exploded, rocking the monster down but not downing it.

Erdaina looked around the line and knew that they would need to retreat to the second step soon. The monsters would start overwhelming them soon. She put her staff back in her storage then she jumped forward at a monster that was just about to climb over the cliff and activated her **Evolved Form: Gravity Titan**. Her body grew in size and she felt the gravity around her intensify slowly. She crashed into the monster and carried it down to the arena floor. She crushed it beneath her weight and then she stood. Monsters were swarming around her feet and she stomped on them, the gravity was intensifying around her with every moment that passed and quickly the monsters were starting to slow down. The ranged fire from behind her was raining all around her, and she continued to wreak havoc. She moved her Qi and triggered her **{Inverted Gravity Sphere}**. Monsters all around her were thrown into the air hundreds of them and she released used her **|Whirling Kick|** to smash through as many of them as she could.

Then she jumped forward at a towering monster. The gravity around her was at the point where it was difficult for all monsters to move, the large one included. She smashed her fists into the monster with **|Wrathful Pounding|** punching it into the ground and breaking its bones. Once it was dead, she stood; monsters were trying to claw at her legs, but even if she wasn't the size of a building they would've barely been able to scratch her skin, her body was too tough to be damaged by their weak attacks.

Another of the towering monsters charged at her, even through the gravity field around her. It was screaming, sending a mental attack against her, but she shrugged it off. The monster opened its mouth wide and black fire spewed out of it, splashing against her. She grimaced as it sizzled on her skin, burning her slightly. She charged through the fire and smashed a fist into the large monster's jaw, breaking it and making it turn its head toward the ground and scorch the monsters around them.

She raised her fist to kill it when everything shook. She staggered and turned her head, looking toward the portal. In the distance she saw a

massive blast sending thousands of monsters through the air, the large monster that seemed to be in charge near the portal was pushed back as well and then it tumbled to the ground. Through the chaos she saw someone step through the portal from this side.

* * *

Zenker arrived amongst monsters, near the portal. He was immediately attacked, of course, but his blue and white armor protected him. He saw the large monster that had blocked Awirren's Ideal, clearly a general of some kind, it raised its tentacled hands toward him, but Zenker pointed his wand at it and released the full charge stored inside of it. The **Wand of the Mountain's Force** unleashed the force that he had been storing in it. The blast turned earth, a kinetic force vaporized the monsters near him and sent everyone else flying. A cone of force extended from him, the large monster staggered back then fell and Zenker turned away, he activated his **None May Stand in My Way** and jumped forward. The monsters coming out of the portal collided with him and exploded as they were hit by his potential energy. For a moment all was bright, and then he stepped onto the sand, exploded bodies of monsters surrounding him.

The scorching sun blazed from above, and everything was covered in black charging forms. He realized just how screwed they were. Only a bare fraction of the monsters was entering the portal, the rest were fighting with an army in the ruins of a fortress. Black ichor was covering the walls, growths were pulsing along it, and a dozen monsters the size of buildings were smashing the inside of the fortress. More of the same type of general monsters stood in the distance, while the sky was filled with black shapes a cloud that spun in the circle all around the battle, leaving only the sun in the center above them.

The monsters surged at him as soon as he arrived. Zenker raised his **Staff of Ten Thousand Storms** and slammed it against the ground. The sky turned gray, and then lightning smashed down, most hit the flying monsters, but then after a delay, after the monsters in the sky were cooked

alive, the bolts hit the ground all around Zenker. Every monster in a large range around him died in a flash of light.

He didn't hesitate, he put the staff in his storage since he had spent all of its charges, then he turned and pulled out his **Wand of Rift Exploding**. He regretted not having more ways to deal with spatial rifts, but in his defense, it was such a rare occurrence that he had to deal with, it had never seemed necessary. Spatial items and powers were already rare, and with his wand he had always been able to deal with them, violently at least. The wand would explode the rift, the detonation would depend on the power and size of the portal. He already knew that this portal was probably the most powerful one ever created. It had bridged the entire known world; it would destroy everything.

He could feel his Image wrapping around himself, he wasn't sure just how it worked. So far it seemed to be instinct and willpower. The ground around him trembled and he released the charge inside his wand. The blast flew toward the portal, and then the world twisted.

I where am I?

Zenker saw a battlefield, but a moment before he had been in a meadow, he had found an entrance to the dungeon. He was... His mind wrenched itself back, the reality twisted itself and he felt his **|I Remembered All Sights|** protect his mind.

In front of him a being stood. It wore a yellow robe with a wooden mask, and eyes that shone from behind it. It made him shiver. Its hand was raised as it stopped his wand's bolt. The flying monsters from above started to fall and he moved. With **|I Walk And Thorns Spread|** he stepped, thorns exploded out of the ground with each of his steps, lashing out at the dead monsters around him. He fired another bolt from his wand, and... again something tried to mess with his mind. He grimaced, with his skill and his mind protection ring he seemed to be able to shrug the effects off, but for a moment there he had frozen.

The yellow robed being was again in front of him, blocking his attack. He activated his **Piercing Gaze**.

Name	Hastur — The King in Yellow
------	-----------------------------

That was all that he saw, but he remembered the notification from before.

“Fuck,” he whispered. He faced the monster after which the dome was named, the leader of them all.

The monsters charged over the corpses of their comrades, heading for him. He charged at Hastur, released his **Monstrous Aura** and used **|I Arrive And Lash Out|**. He blurred across the ground and his claws lashed out. Hastur didn't move, but tentacles slipped out beneath its robe and one of them slapped Zenker away. He flew across the ground, smashed through the sand and corpses of monsters, then rolled for a long time before he managed to stop. And he halted only because he hit one of the building sized monsters and got stuck in its body. The monster fell, blood and gore flowing around and over Zenker as he groaned and then pushed himself out of the fallen monster's body.

Immediately he was swarmed. Monsters swiping at his armor and not even scratching it, but a crack spread over his chest from the yellow robed being's slap. He had lost his wand in the roll and he roared a challenge. His armored gauntlets had clawed tips and he ripped into the monsters around him, sinking claws into their bodies and pulling them apart. He ran back toward the portal. As he charged, something around him was trembling, he saw reality flickering and he pushed his willpower out. He felt it fill his Image, infusing it. And then the ground around him changed, he stepped on brown rock instead of sand, and blazing lava flowed around him. The monsters nearby recoiled as they were burned by it.

Zenker remembered this place, it was a place that he had walked, the ground upon which he had trodden before. His Image flickered a bit, it didn't cover a lot of ground, only his immediate surroundings, but it was enough to give him some breathing room as the monsters slowed their attacks.

He pulled his hand back and took out a large spear from his storage. Then with all his might and **|I Throw With the Weight Of A Mountain|** he hurled **The Spear That Pierces the Sky**. It blazed through the monster horde, any monster that was near its path simply melted into a puddle of black ichor that was then thrown aside. The sand along the path

was blown away, creating two walls of dust and sand that expanded away from the spear's path. The ground shook and the air trembled.

The spear flew faster than a blink, a fraction of an instant. It smashed into Hastur the King in Yellow. It pierced his yellow robe in the center of his chest. Hastur staggered a step, the space behind him exploded. Monsters near the portal were thrown away in a blast of sand and air, a big chunk of it carrying through the portal. The world was filled with noise and shaking. Then, after it ended, Hastur reached up to the spear with one hand. Zenker saw the gnarled and gray skinned hand grip the spear and pull it slowly out.

Then a voice filled Zenker's mind. It was... smooth, the sound of a river passing through a forest, gentle almost. It spoke of things that Zenker wanted more than anything.

"You are strong," Hastur whispered across the battlefield, yet Zenker heard him clearly.

Zenker kept his eyes on the leader of the armies from the dome. He couldn't see his wand among the dead monsters and all the chaos that his attacks had caused. But his **|I Remembered All Sights|** told him exactly where it was. A moment later he moved.

* * *

Selia saw a massive blast of something explode out of the portal. For a moment she thought that perhaps it was closed, but then her hope died. The portal still shone, but at least the number of monsters getting through had been reduced significantly. Her eyes had been able to see clearly who had gotten through, and she wished the Wandering Drake all the luck in the world. They couldn't hold out for much longer, and she knew that people all around them were dying. Monsters were in the city, and the only reason the city hadn't been overrun was that some of them held large pieces of the wall, slowing down the tide. Yet she could see even that slowing down, some were retreating, pulling back into the city. They wouldn't last for long.

The battle in the sky had moved away from the city, which meant that most of the newly arrived flying monsters were heading toward them,

attacking the wall and others in the city behind them. Selia had tasked Reki and his warriors with covering the skies and protecting them from the fliers.

Selia threw her spears at the monsters, trying to keep her strength since she didn't know when she might need it. Erdania had used her evolved form, which was helping them immensely. She had slowed down the monsters significantly and had already killed thousands. The problem was that it seemed like there was no end to them. The warriors had managed to retreat to the second step and had started to prepare to meet the monsters there.

Then, Selia noticed Ryun walk over to her.

"Selia, we have a problem," he said.

She didn't glance at him, choosing to keep her eyes on the monsters below. He had helped a lot with his technique, his avatar was still firing, thinning the monster waves.

"What is it?"

"Monsters are about to hit us from the back," he said.

Selia blinked, stretching her senses, but not noticing anything other than people running around in panic. She knew that he had a long range on his sensory skill, so she didn't argue with him.

"What is happening," she asked as she sent another dozen Qi spears flying down.

"A couple of thousands of them are charging through the city, killing anyone in their way. People fighting in the city are not slowing them down, they will hit us in a few minutes."

Selia grimaced. "We can pull back some of the warriors, to defend against them."

"We need to decide if we are staying here Selia, or if we are going to retreat into the city," Ryun said. "Soon, we will be surrounded."

"We need to slow them down, give the people a chance to escape. And... we need to close that portal, or those monsters will flood the core. We don't know how many of them there is."

Ryun turned his eyes to look at the portal. "Whoever went through didn't close it yet," he said. "But if we need to hold a bit longer... we need more power."

She knew that he was right. She could see the way things were going, there were too many monsters and the larger ones had started to reach them. Soon they would start to lose more and more people and they would be overwhelmed. Her ideal was not meant for combat like this, but she still had her evolved form, and a few other perks, but... she was just one person. Even if she killed ten thousand in an instant, even if she killed five times that number, it was just a fraction of what was in front of them.

He closed his eyes and tilted his head. “We won’t survive for long as we are now,” he voiced what she felt.

“The Warden Commander is right; we need to close the portal. I hoped that she had some ideas, but...”

Ryun nodded. “I... I have something that can give us power, but it comes with a price.”

Selia knew him well enough to know that he wouldn’t be wasting time at a time like this.

“What is it?” She asked, hoping that whatever he had been holding back could make the difference. Because by the way her **|Threat Assessment|** was screaming in her mind, they needed all the help they could get.