

THE LAST PARAGON IN THE APOCALYPSE

Chapter 17: Nine Star Paragon Art

Klaus woke up in complete darkness. It was so pitch black that he couldn't even see his own hands or toes. He looked around, but all he could see was more of the same—just endless darkness. Then, out of nowhere, something appeared on the horizon. It was small, almost insignificant at first, but as soon as it showed up, Klaus knew he was in some strange cosmic space.

He couldn't quite put it into words, but there was this feeling deep down that he was here for a reason, like this place had a purpose for him. But staring at that tiny light, he wasn't sure what to do. He felt small, almost insignificant in the vast darkness that surrounded him. Yet, the darkness didn't last long.

Just as he was struggling with these feelings, the little light began to expand. It grew from the size of a pill to that of an egg, then to an orange, a watermelon, and a basketball—it just kept getting bigger. Suddenly, it swelled up to the size of multiple moons, and then, without warning, it exploded. His vision went black again, and he lost consciousness.

When Klaus woke up, he was back in the same dark place. But this time, things were different. The light reappeared, but now there were nine of them in total.

The nine lights grew larger and larger until they were the size of the sun. But unlike the sun, they didn't radiate light. They just hung there, massive and dim, almost like pale moons with even less color. Klaus stood still, frozen in place, staring up at the enormous orbs in the sky.

Then, out of nowhere, a voice started speaking.

"From the darkness, from the cosmos, from the rivers of time and the age of destiny, through the struggles and through the sorrows, they shall rise. Nine of them."

Klaus's heart skipped a beat. "Excuse me, who's there?" he called out, his voice shaky. But the voice ignored him, continuing its strange chant.

"The endless rivers of time will never permit them to ascend, neither would it allow them to have fate. But what is fate, what is having fate. The nine are not, they were, they are, and they are to be."

Klaus had no idea what the voice was talking about, but he kept listening, unable to tear his eyes away from the giant orbs.

As the voice went on, something started happening to the lights. At first, it was subtle. The edges of the orbs began to shimmer, like the surface of a distant ocean catching a faint light. Klaus noticed it, but he wasn't sure if it was real or just his mind playing tricks on him.

The voice grew louder, its tone more urgent. "They shall pass through the fires of the past, the storms of the present, and the shadows of the future. The nine are the guardians of time, but time itself will not bend to their will."

The shimmering grew stronger, spreading across the surface of each orb. Klaus's breath caught in his throat as he realized these weren't moons at all. They were stars, massive and ancient, but something was different about them.

"The nine shall be bound by the chains of destiny, yet destiny itself shall be their prisoner. The cosmos shall tremble, but the rivers of time shall flow, unyielding and eternal."

The stars began to pulse, their dull glow becoming more intense. Each pulse sent a wave of light rippling through the darkness, making the stars look like they were breathing, alive.

"The nine shall walk among the shadows, yet they shall cast no shadow of their own. For they are not bound by light, nor by darkness, but by the endless cycle of time."

Klaus could feel the weight of the words, even if he didn't understand them. The stars continued to pulse, their light growing stronger with each beat, as if they were waking up from a long slumber.

"Time shall weave their fates, yet they shall weave the fate of time. The nine shall rise, and with them, the dawn of a new age."

The stars were now shining brightly, their light filling the vast darkness around him. They were no longer just orbs of light; they were powerful, almost divine.

"And so it shall be, from the darkness, from the cosmos, from the rivers of time and the age of destiny, the nine shall rise."

Klaus stood there, overwhelmed by the sight of the nine stars, their light now piercing through the void, illuminating the space around him. He didn't know what any of this meant, but deep down, he felt that whatever was happening, was something far beyond his understanding.

Suddenly, Klaus felt a sharp pain in his head as he stared at one of the stars. It was like something had pierced his brain, a sudden, intense stab that made him wince. But before he could react, seven more sharp pains struck his mind, one after the other, like needles digging into his skull. The pain was unbearable, and he couldn't hold back the scream that tore from his throat.

The chanting changed. The voice, once calm and distant, now took on a darker, harsher tone. Klaus's mind went into overdrive, and in a rush, images began flashing before his eyes.

He saw a battlefield, littered with bodies. Blood soaked the ground, and the air was thick with the scent of death. He didn't know where he was, but it felt strangely familiar, like he had seen it before. The pain in his head grew worse, but he couldn't look away from the carnage.

The chanting grew louder, echoing in his skull. "Through the rivers of time, the blood shall flow, unending, unyielding."

Another scene flashed. A village burning, flames consuming everything in sight. People ran, screaming, but there was no escape. Klaus felt their fear, their hopelessness. He could almost feel the heat of the flames on his skin, the smoke choking his lungs.

His heart pounded in his chest as the images came faster now. A dark forest, filled with shadows. Figures moved among the trees, their eyes glowing with malice. They hunted, and those they found were torn apart, their screams echoing through the night. Klaus felt like he was there, hiding among the trees, trying to escape the same fate.

The voice continued its chant, relentless. "From the shadows of the past, the future shall rise, built on the ashes of the fallen."

Klaus's vision blurred, and another scene took over. A city in ruins, buildings crumbling, streets filled with rubble. The sky was dark, thick with smoke and ash. People wandered aimlessly, their eyes empty, their faces gaunt with

hunger. Klaus felt a deep sense of loss, of something precious that had been taken away.

The pain in his head intensified, but he couldn't stop the images. He saw a figure standing alone on a mountaintop, overlooking a battlefield. The figure was surrounded by bodies, their eyes wide open in death. The sense of déjà vu hit Klaus hard. He knew this place, this moment, but he couldn't place it. It was like a nightmare he had lived before.

"The nine shall rise," the voice chanted, "but not without sacrifice. Blood shall be the price, and suffering the path."

Another flash. A temple, ancient and crumbling, its walls covered in strange symbols. Inside, nine figures stood in a circle, their faces hidden in shadow. Klaus felt drawn to them as if they were connected to him somehow. But the closer he got, the more the pain in his head increased.

He could feel the weight of countless lives lost, the sorrow of a thousand battles fought and lost. He felt the despair of those who had given everything, only to see it all destroyed. The scenes kept coming, faster and faster, until they were just a blur of blood, fire, and death.

Klaus was overwhelmed. He wanted it to stop, but he was trapped, forced to witness it all. The voice kept chanting, each word driving the images deeper into his mind.

And then, just when he thought he couldn't take any more, the images stopped. Klaus felt like he had just lived a thousand lifetimes in a few moments. The sense of déjà vu was still there, stronger than ever, but he couldn't shake the feeling that this was just the beginning.

"They shall be called the Nine Paragons, those who defy time and fate. They will come together and reshape the ruins of the past, building the walls of destiny. They will carve their own path, outshining fate and challenging the heavens. They shall be known as the Nine Paragons of Destiny."

As soon as the voice finished speaking, the nine stars trembled and then shattered, shrinking rapidly. Out of nowhere, nine rings appeared before Klaus. The first ring was small, but each one grew larger as they ascended. The shattered pieces of the nine stars began merging into these rings.

The first star split into two and merged with the smallest ring. The second star split into three pieces and joined the next ring. The third star divided into five, the fourth into seven, and so on—the fifth into nine, the sixth into eleven, the seventh into thirteen, the eighth into fifteen, and the ninth into seventeen pieces.

The rings then rearranged themselves, forming a pattern in the air before flying straight toward Klaus. Instinctively, he tried to raise his hands to defend himself, but it was as if his body had frozen, refusing to move. Panic surged through him, but then, from deep within, a voice echoed in his mind.

"You have been born but have yet to awaken. Oh, Paragon of the Ninth, your destiny awaits. Your journey begins with the Nine Star Paragon Art."

Before Klaus could react, the lights from the rings flew toward him, merging directly into his forehead. His eyes snapped open, and the darkness around him vanished. He was back in the tattoo shop, lying on the chair.

At that exact moment, Ziggy, the tattoo artist, finished the last mark, completing the design. Klaus felt a jolt, a connection between the light in his mind and the fresh ink on his skin.