

Paragon 181

Chapter 181 - 181: A Cold Night Of Slaughter

Under normal circumstances, when a person kills another human, they are supposed to feel some form of guilt or fear. Even cold-blooded killers feel something, even if it's just for a brief moment. Killing a fellow human is too cruel in so many ways.

So, when someone kills without feeling anything at all, that person is often seen as emotionless. People like that are called demons, psychopaths, sociopaths, or monsters. They have no attachment to anything, no remorse.

Klaus is one of those people, but his case goes beyond that. When he first killed Matin Guan, he expected to feel something—regret, guilt, anything. But after wiping the guy out, Klaus felt perfectly fine. In fact, he felt happy.

He doesn't know where that part of him came from, but he never cared. He craved it—the bloodshed. A part of him needed it. After his first encounter with Matin Guan in Sunlight Forest, something inside Klaus wanted more.

Again, he doesn't know why, but the thought of killing humans felt invigorating to him. The rush, the thrill—it made him feel alive. So, when he woke up from his coma after the assassination attempt, his blood had been boiling for slaughter. Today, he had the perfect opportunity to satisfy that craving. The right situation to shed some blood.

Knock, knock.

"Room service," Klaus said, knocking on the door. A second later, it opened, revealing a man wearing dark shades. Klaus smiled, his face calm, and muttered, "Hello... Bye."

A dagger flashed forward, and before the man could react, his head came tumbling down the floor. Klaus didn't need to use his Eye of Malevolence to stun his soul—there was no point. The man was just a Saint, too weak. The dagger sliced through his neck like butter, the head falling to the ground with a soft thud.

"One down, 36 more to go," Klaus muttered, kneeling to place the head on the chest of the body. He took out his phone and snapped a picture of the body and the head. Then, without a second glance, he moved out, heading to his next target.

A few seconds later, another Saint opened the door. His head rolled to the floor before he could react to the familiar face greeting him. Klaus didn't need any special skills to enhance his strength; his normal strength was more than enough.

But aside from appearing ordinary, his features are now more visible making the people he was killing recognize him that split second before their death.

The next door opened, and another head fell. There were 34 Saints and 3 Sages, and Klaus planned to kill every last one of them before he left.

Since the hotel was exclusively for assassins and workers of the Dark Order, Klaus knew anyone who heard a knock would answer. They trusted each other, thinking they were safe within their own organization. Sneak attacks weren't even a concern.

That's what they thought.

The hideout had no cameras or security measures—nothing to alert them. It was a free-range playground for Klaus to unleash his darker side. The fourth door opened, revealing a woman in her mid-30s. But even she wasn't spared. Another head hit the floor.

Klaus moved swiftly, his footsteps light and precise. No one expected death to come knocking at their door, quite literally. He approached the fifth door and knocked softly.

"Who is it?" came a voice from inside.

"Room service," Klaus answered, his voice calm as always. The door cracked open, and another Saint appeared. Before the man could fully register what was happening, Klaus's dagger had already sliced clean through his neck. The headless body dropped to the floor with a thud, and Klaus barely blinked.

"Five down," he muttered under his breath, stepping over the body. His movements were fluid, cold, and efficient.

As he approached the next door, he didn't bother to knock. With a swift kick, he broke it open, catching the occupant by surprise. The Saint inside barely had time to reach for his weapon before his head was cleaved clean from his body.

"Six."

There was no hesitation. No pause. Klaus was a storm of death, moving door to door, cutting down Saints as though they were mere practice dummies. It didn't matter if they were armed, unarmed, or prepared—none of them stood a chance.

He wiped some blood off his dagger, his face completely void of emotion. There were still 28 Saints and 3 Sages to go. The thrill of it coursed through his veins, and the more he killed, the calmer he felt. A

very cold sensation he never knew he could crave yet here he was.

Klaus knocked again, and this time, when the door opened, it was one of the Sages. The Sage's eyes widened in recognition, but Klaus was faster. The Sage raised his hand to block the attack but Klaus's dagger was already at his throat. One clean slash and the Sage crumpled to the ground.

"One Sage down," Klaus whispered with a small smile.

With his Spirit Eye fully activated, Klaus moved swiftly from door to door, cutting through the hotel like a shadow of death. An hour later, 30 Saints were dead, along with two Sages. Only four Saints and one Sage remained. The last Sage was the woman who had led him to the elevator earlier.

The remaining four Saints were lounging in the hotel's welcoming area. Klaus didn't immediately descend to the ground floor. Instead, he headed straight to the top floor, where his eye caught a button labeled "Self Destruct."

Beside it was a timer. Without hesitation, Klaus set it to a day after he return to Ross City, ensuring the place would crumble long after he was gone. He then left the top floor and made his way to the ground floor.

When the elevator chimed, Klaus stepped out, now hidden beneath his disguise like how he was when he entered. His eyes scanned the room, landing on the four Saints sitting at a table, casually drinking. They had no idea what was coming.

Nobody expected anyone to infiltrate their hideout. In truth, even if someone managed to kill one of the assassins, they wouldn't know the value of the ring they wore. Unless, of course, they extracted the information from the assassin—if they somehow managed to capture them.

But that was unlikely since one of their teeth was poisoned. Before anyone could interrogate them, they would commit suicide by biting down on it. So, no one ever expected an infiltration. But Klaus did, and now he has stepped out of the elevator, ready to kill.

He shifted his gaze to the Sage behind the counter and smiled—a smile that promised nothing but death.

Without a word, a 14-inch needle materialized in his hand. In an instant, it flew through the air. Before the Sage behind the counter could react, a hole appeared in her forehead, the Void Piercing Arrow drew a sleek hole through the skull.

But the arrow didn't stop there. It continued its deadly path, and before anyone could blink, the last four Saints collapsed, lifeless, their bodies hitting the ground with dull thuds.

Klaus stood in the middle of the room, his work complete. The hotel, once a fortress for assassins, was now a silent graveyard.

He quickly took the images necessary for his plans in the next few days before leaving. The Hotel is for Assassins and since no civilian will come strolling in since he made sure to lock down the place, he was confident his work is done there.

He quickly made his way back to the Third Finger Royal Hotel making sure he remained as discreet as he could be.

The massacre was already a distant memory to him. The weight of the lives he had taken didn't linger. He knew this act would anger powerful people, but did it matter to him? Probably not.

After returning to his hotel, Klaus took a long bath, washing away the blood and sweat. He slept like a baby that night, unbothered by the massacre he had just committed.

The next day, he and the others left, each heading back to their respective cities. They now had four passes to enter a Forbidden Zone, and no one wanted to waste any more time.

When Klaus landed at the Ross Mansion, Kofi was already there, waiting to pick him and his sister Hanna up. Two days later, two major events shook the entire world, sending shockwaves through powerful circles and leaving many trembling in fear.

Chapter 182 - 182: It Was Just Business

When Klaus returned from Hiroshi City, the War Goddess was already at his house, acting like she owned the place. She had practically moved in.

Klaus's mother was happy to see her children back, but Klaus knew she was more excited about Hanna's safe return. Somehow, his mother has stopped worrying about him like she did before. She knew the white-haired brat would always find his way home—he was tough, after all.

However, he knew a part of the reason was the war goddess who kept showing her some of Klaus's feats. This made her calm down a bit knowing his son is no weak warrior. But she can never stop worrying about him

Klaus didn't stay to tease his mom or flirt with the War Goddess. He went straight into seclusion to check on something he had sensed when he slaughtered the people at the Everdark Hotel. Something had felt off.

Once inside his soul sea, Klaus was surprised to notice that the Pentaface bead had changed—just a little—on the first face.

Before, it had been a plain, emotionless face, a bit sinister but nothing unusual. Now, a small red rune had appeared, right on the forehead of the face on the bead. He had never seen it before.

He tried to study the rune, but like always, he made no progress. It was frustrating. Still, something was different this time. He could feel a faint connection to the bead now. It was weak, but it was there, and that alone was enough to spark his curiosity.

Despite not fully understanding the changes, Klaus felt an even stronger pull toward the Pentaface bead. He knew it was only a matter of time before he uncovered some secret hidden within it.

After spending the whole day checking on things and asking the Senior for advice, Klaus finally left his soul sea and seclusion. He wanted to spend some time with his family—and now, the War Goddess was practically part of that family.

Klaus didn't mind her presence at all. In fact, she seemed more relaxed and even happier when he was around. His mother liked her too, and she got along well with the maids, so everything seemed to fall into place naturally.

Of course, Klaus didn't stop shooting his shots now and then, teasing and flirting with the War Goddess whenever he had the chance. But she always brushed him off with a smirk. But that didn't stop them from sharing a peaceful dinner, recounting the events that had happened in Hiroshi City.

The next day, everything took a turn. Around 4 a.m., just a day after Klaus and Hanna returned, a piece of news broke out, one that shook the internet and the media, sending waves of tension through the city.

In Hiroshi City, an unpopular hotel had exploded in the early hours of the morning, killing everyone inside. Official reports claimed that the explosion was controlled, reducing everything inside the hotel to nothingness.

The media covered it like just another tragic incident, chalking it up to something routine—maybe an energy leak, a cultivation accident, or an attack. Buildings getting bombed wasn't unheard of in these times.

But then, an hour later, a post surfaced on the dark web, and it sent chills through everyone who saw it.

In the post were images—37 bodies with their heads severed, the heads placed neatly on the chests of the headless corpses. The captions attached to the post made it worse.

"It was just business... Chicken Order."

That line shook the online underworld. Everyone knew that "It was just business" was the calling card of the Dark Order, an infamous organization known for their ruthless kills. The sight of this post left people confused and on edge. Was a new group targeting the Dark Order? Was this a message? No one knew for sure, but the tension grew rapidly as the speculation spread.

Klaus, the very perpetrator behind the hotel explosion, was sound asleep in his room, completely unbothered by the chaos he had unleashed upon the world. The dark web buzzed with fear, and whispers of conspiracy were spreading, but Klaus slept without a care.

Suddenly, the door to his room swung open. The War Goddess stormed in, her eyes sharp and voice tense, waking him up in an instant.

"Tell me it wasn't you," she demanded, standing over him, her arms crossed, her gaze piercing.

Klaus blinked, rubbing his eyes as if he hadn't just stirred up a city-wide panic. He sat up slowly, staring at her with a sly grin.

"What makes you think it was me?" he asked, his tone too casual for the weight of the situation.

"You know why," she shot back, clearly not in the mood for games. "That hotel explosion. The post. The heads. It's all too... neat.

And that caption—don't tell me it wasn't your doing."

Klaus stretched, his expression remaining unreadable. He didn't deny anything, but he didn't confirm it either. Instead, he smirked, glancing at her.

"Maybe it was just business," he muttered, his voice low but laced with amusement.

Her eyes widened slightly, and she cursed under her breath. She knew Klaus too well. There was no way he'd take an assassination attempt lying down. He played it off like he was fine, acting calm to keep his mother from worrying. But the War Goddess could see right through that facade.

As a battle maniac herself, she recognized the signs. Klaus wasn't okay—far from it. The bloodlust radiating from him was something she could sense without even trying. So when she saw the post, she didn't hesitate to pin the blame on him. It was just too... Klaus.

"You brat!" she snapped, but there was something else in her tone, something that wasn't just anger.

"Why didn't you tell me you were going after those bastards? What if a stronger assassin had been there when you attacked?"

Klaus raised an eyebrow, clearly not expecting that twist. Instead of scolding him for the massacre, she was pouting because he hadn't invited her to the slaughter.

"Really?" Klaus muttered, half amused. "That's what you're mad about?"

The War Goddess crossed her arms, her expression softening just a bit. "Of course. If you're going to go on a rampage, at least give me a heads-up! I would've cleared my schedule."

Klaus chuckled, shaking his head. "Next time, I'll make sure to send you an invite," he teased.

Despite the absurdity of the situation, the War Goddess couldn't help but grin back at him.

"You better," she huffed, her pout only making her look cuter in Klaus's eyes. It was a rare sight to see the fierce War Goddess, Fairy Miriam, act so playful.

Klaus grinned, his mind already wandering toward shamelessness. "Fairy Miriam, why don't you let this younger brother of yours comfort you in other ways?" he teased, reaching out to take her arm, his grin widening.

Before his fingers could brush her skin, she disappeared in a flash.

"Playing hard to get, huh?" Klaus muttered, smirking to himself as he leaned back. "I guess I'll have to up my game."

Klaus knew it was just a matter of time, but for now, he will keep things PG and hope she doesn't run off anytime soon. He still has two beauties currently in seclusion and another one currently unreachable.

'I guess the more the merrier...Lol,' Klaus smirked before falling back on his bed.

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In a dimly lit room, a masked man sat, his face partially illuminated by the glow of a projection. On the screen were the gruesome images of the headless bodies, the tagline beneath them staring back at him. His expression was hidden beneath the mask, but his posture hinted at deep anger.

Suddenly, his device beeped, shattering the silence. He tapped it, and another dark figure flickered into view on the projection. He didn't even have the time before a cold feminine voice came through the projection.

"Talk," she commanded, her anger unmistakable.

The masked man straightened, his tone careful. "Dark Lord, we are still investigating, but there is no concrete evidence yet. However, all signs point to one person."

"Who?" the figure demanded, her voice even more venomous now.

He hesitated for a second before answering. "Cynthia Ross."

Chapter 183 - 183: Visiting Cynthia Ross

There was a heavy silence in the room when the masked man dropped the name. After a brief moment passed, the masked woman finally spoke.

"Deploy all active hitmen in the Eastern Region. Take her out. No mistakes." The call ended, and the man in the dim room sighed.

He pressed a button on his device, and a projection of another figure appeared. "Number 81, recall number 91 and deploy all active hitmen. Target: Cynthia Ross. Duration: two days." He ended the call immediately after giving the order.

The man reopened the projection of the post on the dark web again. Looking at the dead bodies, he sighed. A while later, far from his location, 19 individuals received the same kill order through a certain device.

Some were delivery workers, others were teachers in the middle of a classroom, and some were just office workers. But the moment their devices beeped, their faces turned serious. They knew what they had to do.

Meanwhile, Klaus, who was brushing his teeth, heard a familiar beep coming from his bed. He walked to the bed, picked up the device, and read the order. A smile crept onto his face before he returned to brushing his teeth.

He had taken everything from Number 91 during his interrogation. All the intel, all the contacts. He knew this would be useful, and now the kill order for Cynthia Ross was right there on his screen. He had always suspected she had a dark side, and now he knew he was right.

The Dark Order hadn't even considered Klaus' presence in Hiroshi City. They immediately assumed Cynthia was the culprit, which could only mean one thing.

She had past dealings with the Dark Order. Maybe she had killed some of their operatives, or perhaps the bounty on her was so high that she had become a prime target. Either way, the hunt was on.

Klaus wanted nothing more than to seize this opportunity to learn more about his mother-in-law. He intended to use her as bait to lure in the assassins coming after her.

Understanding the Dark Order was crucial; he needed to know his enemies. Each kill would provide him with valuable information on where to strike next and who to target. So this was like a gold mine for him.

After brushing his teeth, he headed to the kitchen for breakfast. Once he was done, he left to visit his mother-in-law at the Ross Mansion.

"Master Klaus, what brings you here today? Miss Anna is in seclusion," Henry the butler greeted him, as always.

"Oh, Henry, I'm not here to see Anna. I actually came to see her mother," Klaus replied casually.

"Shouldn't you be calling me Mother-in-Law instead?" Immediately Klaus replied Henry, a voice that he recognised so well filled the air. He turned toward the source of the voice.

And there she was—Cynthia Ross, walking toward him. Her hourglass figure, slender legs, and generous curves were captivating like always, while her long grey hair flowed behind her like a veil. She appeared both magical and dangerous. Klaus knew he shouldn't look directly into her grey eyes, yet he found it hard to look away. Despite his efforts, he felt slightly shaken.

'This woman is dangerous,' Klaus muttered to himself. Looking into those eyes is like staring into an empty bottomless dark pit.

"Oh, Mother-in-law, just the woman I was hoping to see on this fine morning," Klaus said smoothly. He wasn't one to let a mere presence throw him off his game.

"I wouldn't be honest if I said I wasn't also looking forward to starting my day with such a handsome presence," Cynthia Ross said, causing Klaus to smile weakly.

'She sounds friendly, I guess', he thought, letting out a sigh.

"Do you have a moment for a talk, Mother-in-law?" Klaus asked, trying to keep his tone light.

Cynthia's expression shifted slightly, curiosity dancing in her grey eyes.

"Of course, Klaus. What's on your mind?" she asked, gesturing for him to follow her into the Ross Garden. Henry stepped back, sensing he wasn't needed anymore.

Once they were seated, Klaus sighed, unsure of how to start the conversation. He knew that one way or another, he would have to confess a few things—like how he knew she was in danger and what he did to get that information. He thought it over carefully before sighing again. One way or another, he had to achieve what he came for, so there was no point in trying to stay composed now.

With his mind made up, Klaus decided to drop the bombshell right off the bat.

"Mother-in-law, why is the Dark Order trying to kill you?"

Cynthia's eyes narrowed slightly, a flicker of surprise crossing her face. She remained composed, but Klaus could feel the tension in her eyes.

"How did you know that?" Instead of answering, Cynthia shot back a question, her tone, curious.

"Just answer the question, Mother-in-law. They seem adamant about wasting you away," Klaus pressed, his tone firm yet cautious. He knew he had to tread carefully, but he was determined to get to the truth.

Cynthia studied him for a moment. She seemed to weigh her words, and for a brief moment, there was no sound between them. Finally, she sighed, leaning back slightly. "Very well, Klaus. But understand, this isn't a simple matter."

Klaus leaned in, eager for more. "I'm listening."

Cynthia took a moment. "The Dark Order has a long memory. They don't forget easily, especially those who cross them. I was once involved in a business that put me at odds with them. It was a dangerous game, and I made some enemies along the way."

Klaus nodded, absorbing her words. "So, you think they want revenge?"

"Revenge is part of it," she continued, her tone growing serious. "But it's more than that. I possess information—secrets that could undermine their operations. They want me silenced before I can share what I know."

Hearing this, Klaus knew he had struck gold, yet he knew he knew it would put him in danger. But he doesn't care "What kind of information?"

Cynthia's eyes narrowed again. "It's best you don't know too much, Klaus. The more you learn, the more danger you put yourself in. But know this: the Dark Order is relentless. If they're coming for me, they won't stop until they succeed."

Klaus leaned back, weighing her words. "What if I could help you? They've tried to kill me twice already, so it's only natural I hit back at them."

Cynthia raised an eyebrow, skepticism flickering in her grey eyes. "Klaus, dear, you wouldn't happen to be the one who killed those 37 people, would you?" She had seen the post on the dark web, just like most people had.

"Tomato, tomato," Klaus shrugged, an evil grin spreading across his face. "The most important thing here, Mother-in-law, is how you and I are going to work together to get back at our pursuers."

Cynthia studied him for a moment, her expression shifting. The initial surprise faded, replaced by a calculating look. "You're serious about this, aren't you?"

"Absolutely," he replied, his voice steady. "We both have something to lose. If we don't act now, we will forever have to endure knowing they could come at any point, even putting the ones we love in danger"

Cynthia leaned forward, her curiosity deepening. "And what do you propose?"

"That will depend on what secret you have about the Dark Order," Klaus replied, his expression serious.

Cynthia studied him for a while weighing her options. Finally, she let out a long sigh, her posture relaxing slightly. "Very well. I'll share what I know, but you must promise to keep it between us."

Klaus nodded, sensing the gravity of the moment. "I promise."

Cynthia took a deep breath, gathering her thoughts. "Years ago, I was involved with someone who had deep ties to the Dark Order. She shared some information she shouldn't have with me about their operations, their networks, and their goals. When I realized how dangerous they were, I cut ties with her, but not before learning things I shouldn't have."

"What kind of things are we talking about here?" Klaus pressed

She hesitated, glancing around as if ensuring they were truly alone. "They have a list of targets—people they consider threats. Warriors, Scientists, engineers, you name it. But that isn't all, thanks to my curious self, I managed to know about a few powerhouses funding the Dark Order.

Klaus raises an eyebrow

Chapter 184 - 184: Mother-In-Law and Son-In-Law Cooking Something

Klaus clearly wasn't expecting the secret Cynthia held to be this huge. She had names of powerful figures aiding the Dark Order. That information alone could dismantle their organization if used wisely. Cynthia Ross was both valuable and dangerous at the same time.

But one might wonder: why hasn't Cynthia made any attempt to use this information to her advantage? She could have used it to destroy the Dark Order, so why hasn't she?

That's because she is a mother, a mother who cares about her children. But also, it's because she is dealing with the Dark Order.

They were dangerous and far too powerful for just her to take them down alone. Klaus understood that she wouldn't act, especially with her children still growing up. Doing something as drastic as going against the Dark Order would only put them in danger.

The Dark Order was aware of this hesitation. They didn't attack her with full force—at least, not until Klaus destroyed their safehouse, inadvertently implicating his mother-in-law.

However, they also held back because they knew the kind of woman Cynthia Ross was; she would die without making a scene. So instead, they made just enough noise to let her know they were watching.

"So you have names of people supporting them?" Klaus asked, seeking confirmation before taking any action.

"Yes. I have names and the networks they use for their operations. And before you ask why I haven't tried to bring them down, you should know that I couldn't. They are dangerous, and I was just hiding, making sure my babies grow up without the Dark Order targeting them."

"I understand," Klaus said, nodding slowly. He could feel the weight of her words, realizing the depth of her struggle.

"However, this is good for me. You don't have to worry, Mother-in-law. I will handle them from here on out. But I will need a favor from you," Klaus said.

"I'm listening," she replied, curiosity sparking in her eyes.

"Are you willing to go on a picnic with me? Let's treat it as a two-day vacation—just you and me," Klaus asked with a playful smile.

Cynthia raised an eyebrow at his suggestion. "Hey, you're not setting your sights on your mother-in-law, are you?"

"Not really, but what if I am? Do you think I'd have a chance?" Klaus grinned, his teasing tone lightening the mood.

Cynthia chuckled, her initial surprise fading. "You think you can charm me that easily, young man?"

"I believe I have a shot," Klaus smirked.

"So tell me, why do you want to go on a picnic with me?" Cynthia asked, a hint of suspicion in her tone.

"Let's just say I've just found out that their entire assassin network in the eastern region has been deployed to take you out, and the hit is due in two days," Klaus said, watching as Cynthia tensed.

"So you want to use me as bait to flush them out?" she asked, her frown deepening.

"Bait is such a harsh word, Mother-in-law," Klaus replied, raising his hands defensively. "Think of it as a strategic opportunity. We'll draw them out and deal with them before they can even get close to you."

Cynthia's expression softened slightly, but concern lingered in her eyes. "And what if they find out about this plan? It could put you in danger, too."

"I can handle myself," Klaus assured her, his tone firm. "But I need you to trust me on this. If we make it seem like you're vulnerable, they'll show themselves. We can't let them succeed."

She studied him for a moment, weighing her options. "And if I say no?"

Klaus shrugged. "Then we continue living in fear, and you remain a target. It's a risk, but one worth taking if it means keeping you safe in the long run."

Cynthia sighed, knowing he had a point. "Alright, Klaus. I'll do it, but only because I want to protect my family. Just promise me you'll be careful, my daughters are head over heels when it comes to you, I don't want them heartbroken if something happens to you.."

"You have my word," he replied, a genuine smile spreading across his face. "Now, let's plan this picnic. I'll make sure it's worth your while."

After cooking a few things together and feeling satisfied with the results, Klaus left the kitchen. As soon as he stepped outside, Daven Ross appeared in the garden.

"He does have a point," Daven said, leaning against a tree. "Using you as bait to flush them out would be ideal. Since the entire assassin network for the Dark Order in the eastern region has been deployed, taking them out will give you a few months of breathing space before they make any further moves."

Cynthia crossed her arms, her expression conflicted. "I understand that, but it's still dangerous. What if something goes wrong?"

"You have to trust him, and I will be around if anything goes sideways," Daven said, pulling her into his embrace.

"You can't," Cynthia replied. "This has to go well, and your presence might draw attention from unknown sources. This can only be between me and Klaus."

Daven frowned, concern etching deeper lines on his face. "Cynthia, you're putting yourself at risk. I can't just stand by and let you face this alone."

"I know you care, but this isn't just about me," she insisted, her voice steady. "If we want to keep our family safe, we need to be strategic and discreet. I can't have you in the shadows, making it obvious that something is going on."

"But what if something happens? What if you need backup?" Daven pressed, his worry evident.

"I'll manage," she assured him. "Klaus has a plan, and I trust him. He knows what he's doing. We must keep this quiet. If the Dark Order catches wind of our intentions, it could ruin everything."

Daven sighed, running a hand through his hair in frustration. "You're right, but it's hard for me to let go. I just want to protect you."

Cynthia softened at his concern, placing a hand on his shoulder. "And I appreciate that more than you know. Just trust me to handle this. If I need help, I promise I'll reach out."

"Okay," Daven relented, though doubt lingered in his eyes. "But I want to be kept in the loop. I can't help but worry."

"I will, my love," Cynthia said softly, looking into his eyes.

Daven chuckled, his expression lightening. "And make sure that brat doesn't get any funny ideas. He's already stolen two beautiful flowers from us; I can't have him stealing my wife, too!" He smiled playfully at her.

Cynthia smirked, a glint of mischief in her eyes as she met his gaze. "I can't make any promises." The two laughed and Cynthia went about preparing for her vacation picnic with Klaus.

After getting home, Klaus informed his mother that he would be going out and would be back in two days. She opened her mouth to ask more questions, but Klaus quickly assured her it wasn't another hunt in the Forbidden Zone. That simple statement made her smile.

However, the War Goddess didn't buy his subtle lie for a second. Klaus entered his room and went to take a bath. When he came out, he found the War Goddess waiting for him, her gaze sharp as a dagger.

"Tell me everything," she demanded, her eyes narrowing.

Then she froze. In her haste to get to the bottom of whatever Klaus was cooking, she had neglected to consider that he had just been bathing and might come out naked.

Gulp... she swallowed hard.

"Well, you like what you see?" Klaus said, flashing an evil grin. Miriam tensed and then like a smoke, she disappeared from his room, reappearing in Klaus's mom's room with a deep blush.

Chapter 185 - 185: Luring the Assassins in

A little after 2 PM, Klaus returned to the Ross mansion to pick up his mother-in-law. They only have two days to get things done.

After the awkward encounter with the war goddess, she hadn't come back. However, Klaus had sent her several messages explaining what he was about to do with his mother-in-law so she wouldn't worry.

He assured her that if he needed help, he would signal her to come. She read the messages but didn't reply, which only made Klaus believe he had significantly impacted her, especially after showing off his diamond-sculpted body.

Once he picked up Cynthia Ross, they left and headed to the northern section of the city. It was a three-hour drive, with a few stops along the way to maintain the appearance so that the assassins and spies keeping track of them would know where they were headed.

Cynthia was a natural actress, making their entire scheme appear real and intriguing. Anyone watching wouldn't be able to tell that they were just acting. Klaus, on the other hand, didn't need to act. He was in disguise, and with his bold demeanor, it felt completely natural for them to continue their ruse.

Cynthia came up with most of the plan. Klaus just wanted to kill some Assassins so whatever she asked for, he never objected. As long as the plan gets them the assassin, he wouldn't object to anything.

"Do you think they'll buy it?" she asked. They are currently on their way to a resort where the slaughter will be taking place.

Klaus smirked, confident. "They have to. We're playing our parts perfectly."

As they drove, Klaus couldn't shake the feeling that they were being watched. The thought excited him. He thrived on danger, and with Cynthia by his side, he felt invincible.

"Just remember to stay in character," he reminded her, a playful smile on his lips.

Cynthia nodded. "You don't have to worry, playing a cheating wife with my daughter's boyfriend is perfectly normal," She said with a grin. Klaus just smiled back.

Together, they continued their journey, ready for whatever challenges lay ahead. After a while, they arrived at the resort that Cynthia had booked for them. It wasn't big, but it was cute for a couple. She had even reserved the entire place just for the two of them.

The staff had been replaced by a few maids from the Ross Mansion, ensuring their privacy. They settled in, and for a few hours, they stayed indoors, planning their next move. That night, Klaus's senses were on high alert, but luckily, no one came knocking.

The next day started off with a breakfast filled with fresh fruits and pastries. Afterward, they took a light stroll through a lush garden, the sun shining warmly on their faces.

Klaus didn't know why, but he felt a sense of peace, even knowing an assassin might appear at any moment. Cynthia seemed unconcerned as well; they both knew things weren't going to be simple, yet they were just two normal people walking through a garden while they waited for their killers.

Hours passed, and still, no assassin showed up. Then, around 5 PM, Klaus made a suggestion that caused Cynthia to raise an eyebrow before she accepted.

"Mother-in-law, why don't we go for a swim?" Klaus proposed. The plan was to keep up appearances, showing everyone they had no idea they were in danger. A swim seemed like a perfect way to distract from their circumstances.

Cynthia smiled. "That sounds great! Let's do it!" She said excitedly which puzzled Klaus.

They changed into their swimsuits and made their way to the pool. The water was inviting. Klaus dived in first, surfacing with a splash, while Cynthia laughed and followed suit.

As they swam, they chatted and joked, their laughter echoing through the resort. The carefree atmosphere was a welcome distraction from the tension of their reality. Klaus felt lighter in the water, the coolness washing away his worries, if only for a moment.

A while later, still in the pool, Klaus sensed something—or rather, several somethings—approaching. A smirk tugged at his lips. He glanced over at Cynthia, whose swimwear clung to her like a second skin, highlighting her curves in a way that was impossible to ignore.

"They're coming," Klaus said quietly.

"Yeah, I picked them up a while ago, but it seems like they're hesitant to approach. Are we not acting well enough?" she replied.

"I think so. It's like they're trying to figure out if we're just acting or really unaware of their presence," Klaus said, still maintaining a hushed tone.

"I have a plan, but it depends on how restrained you can be, especially with your hands," Cynthia said in a somewhat bashful tone.

"What plan? I'm in if you are," Klaus said, eager to kill some assassins. He wasn't too concerned about the details, as long as it involved taking down the enemy.

"Kiss me," Cynthia suddenly suggested.

"Wait, what?" Klaus nearly broke character with his startled response.

"Two people kissing in a pool doesn't exactly scream 'masterminds setting a trap for assassins.' So, kiss me," Cynthia explained.

"Okay," Klaus replied. "But don't regret this later" Without waiting for a response, he leaned in and captured her lips in a kiss. Cynthia's eyes widened in surprise, but instead of pushing him away, she slowly started to reciprocate.

It wasn't because she wanted to—it was because she had to act, they had to act for the Assassin, or that is what she is telling herself. But it's working. The kiss made the Assassins who were skeptical at first start moving toward them again.

But as their lips moved together, Klaus found himself thinking, 'Isn't this kiss a little too intense?' Cynthia was practically biting his lips, making the kiss far more passionate than he had intended.

His body wanted to react, but Klaus reminded himself this was his mother-in-law, even kissing her was too much. After a few more minutes, Klaus broke the kiss and looked into Cynthia's eyes

"Mother-in-law, we'll continue this later. For now, get ready. I'll make my move first. Just make sure none of them get away."

"How many?" she asked, her voice steady despite the heat of the moment.

"Eighteen. Eight Sages, ten Saints," Klaus muttered. Cynthia nodded, but Klaus could tell her mind was in turmoil. Still, he didn't focus on that. He lowered his head toward her chest, and his eyes flashed red.

He activated the Eye of Malevolence. Instantly, everything within the resort became clear to him—the assassins were approaching, but slowly. It would still be a little while before they entered his killing zone, a 2km radius around him.

"I'm sorry, Mother-in-law," Klaus whispered, feeling a bit guilty for using the situation to his advantage. He had to hide his face from the assassins because he knew they were watching. So the only way was to do that.

"No, it's fine," Cynthia replied, her voice slightly breathless. "We talked about this, so it's nothing. Just make it count."

They had planned for this moment, rehearsed how they would act when the assassins appeared, but plans change and this new plan felt more intense than they'd expected. Both of them could feel it—there was something more building between them, something neither was willing to acknowledge.

The tension between them thickened, not just from the approaching assassins but from the undeniable heat simmering beneath the surface. The plan was simple—act passionately, luring the assassins in by making it seem like they were oblivious to their surroundings.

No one would suspect two people kissing in a pool to be hyper-aware of the danger lurking nearby.

It was a flawless plan. Cynthia, with her affinity for shadows, detected every assassin as they approached, remaining unseen herself. Klaus, with his Eye of Malevolence activated, could watch them without being noticed. Even if they were face-to-face, the assassins wouldn't sense his gaze or realize they were already in his trap.

So, while he continued to "play" with his mother-in-law, Klaus was calculating each movement, timing everything precisely. His senses were heightened, ready for the exact moment when they would all fall into his kill zone.

Suddenly, the last assassin entered the range. That was the trigger. The sky above them darkened ominously, and without warning, a massive bell appeared. High above, a terrifying, all-seeing eye also appeared, its presence overwhelming.

Ding! Suddenly, the bell rang, and the eye snapped open.

Chapter 186 - 186: One Decisive Strike

Klaus knew he couldn't afford to make a mistake. Assassins are tricky; if you don't kill them with your first strike, the chance of succeeding with the next is slim.

Their escape skills are legendary, and Klaus was well aware of that. He planned to counter those skills with his own, using precision and timing.

The [Bell of Harrows] and [Eye of Despair] were the key to his success. The bell had the power to deal both physical (Sonic) and spiritual damage. Klaus needed that combination, and with the addition of the [Eye of Malevolence], he knew he had a real shot.

"Mother-in-law, I'm making my move. Be ready to step in if things don't go as planned," Klaus muttered under his breath as the bell and eye manifested in the air.

Ding! The bell rang, releasing a shockwave of spiritual energy that rippled through the air, spreading across a 4km radius. Klaus had designed the attack for maximum impact, so he waited for the assassins to close in within 2km of his position.

The moment the sound hit, Klaus sensed them freeze in their tracks. The bell's appearance and the ringing were so sudden that they had no time to react. After all, it was a soul attack—something even skilled assassins couldn't defend against easily.

But as if that wasn't enough, the [Eye of Despair] snapped open, and like a demon awakening, a wave of pure terror surged forth. This terror wasn't just for show—it was a powerful soul attack triggered by the eye's three unique abilities.

The ability, called Soul Gaze, unleashed Klaus's star qi in devastating force. He wasn't holding back. Thirty percent of his star qi fueled the attack, and the results were immediate. The Saint assassins began to lose their senses.

The attack struck deep into their souls, leaving them reeling, disoriented, and wracked with pain. Their eyes glazed over as their spirits faltered. Even the Sages among them were struggling to withstand the onslaught.

But Klaus wasn't done.

A flash of light shot forward. Before any of them could react within that split second, blood started spraying into the air.

The Void Piercing Needle, which Klaus had secretly set up in their room long before they entered the pool, has started its work. Klaus has held it in place all this while they waited for their guest to appear, and now, it's been put to good use.

This arrow wasn't in its ordinary form—it was formed from all 54 Viper Piercing Needles Klaus could control. So it's both thick, heavy, and pointy for what he intended to do.

In the blink of an eye, ten heads exploded. The Void Piercing Arrow moved faster than anyone could track, and with Klaus's [Eye of Malevolence] enhancing his vision, he pinpointed each target with terrifying accuracy.

One man, clutching his chest in shock, snapped his eyes open, sensing the attack too late. He turned to his left, but before he could react, something sharp passed through his forehead, exiting the back of his skull.

Blood and brain tissue splattered as his body collapsed. The needle didn't stop there—it continued its deadly rampage.

In less than two seconds, ten Saints and one Sage lay dead, their bodies crumpling to the ground. The rest weren't far behind.

Another assassin emerged from the shadows, sneaking toward the pool just as the bell rang and the [Eye of Despair] snapped open. He was immediately hit hard, his senses muddled from the soul attack. The pain was unbearable, and before he could regain his focus, the Needle of Death—the Void Piercing Needle—struck, piercing straight through his skull.

On the other side, a woman dressed in black was about to draw her bow when the soul attack hit. She froze, her body tense as she gritted her teeth, trying to endure the torment. From the look on her face, it was safe to say assassins have high pain tolerance.

The soul attack wasn't something anyone could quietly withstand, yet somehow, none of them screamed, not even the Saints. But that was irrelevant to Klaus. He didn't care about their suffering—he only needed to disorient them for five seconds. He was already running out of time, with just two seconds left.

The woman sensed the Void Piercing Needle heading her way and tried to move back, but her body wouldn't respond. Her shadow had been pinned in place before she even had the chance to escape. The Needle pierced her head, killing the third Sage instantly. Only five remained.

The needle continued its deadly path, slipping through a window, then bursting out the other side, spraying blood across the grass. It passed through a lush flower garden, staining the white lilies with blood.

It streaked through the resort, and in the store window, a body collapsed to the floor. Another figure dropped from a window and hit the ground. Just like that, seven out of the eight Sages had died before they could even react.

The last assassin, however, was quicker. Four seconds had passed since the soul attack hit, but he wasn't as affected as the others—likely due to a stronger soul. As the Needle drew closer, he dove into a shadow, attempting to vanish from sight.

But before he could fully escape, the shadow he was trying to emerge from shifted, dragging him back to where he had originally entered. He blinked in confusion, but it was the last blink he would ever make. His head exploded.

Seven seconds—that was how long it took for Klaus to eliminate eighteen assassins. Eight Sages, 10 Saints.

Back in the pool, Klaus stood with his eyes closed, focusing. Beside him, his mother-in-law, Cynthia Ross, stood pale and shaky, holding his hand. She has a unique class called Shadow Dancer, which allows her to control shadows.

However, she's only a peak Sage level. There was only so much she could do. Using her power to lock down a Sage had already taken a toll on her body. But when she went a step further and manipulated the shadows of the last Sage, it drained her entirely—her stamina and spiritual qi were almost gone.

It hadn't been easy. She had to link to all the shadows, locking them out and opening only one. She even reversed the Sage's path, making sure he didn't suspect a thing until he walked right into her trap.

Klaus had told her not to let a single assassin escape, and she had been determined to see it through. In the end, she succeeded, and she had done it well—better than anyone could have expected.

"Mother-in-law, are you okay?" Klaus asked, noticing her face had gone as white as a sheet.

"I'm fine. Just take me back to the room," Cynthia Ross muttered, closing her eyes. She knew the white-haired brat wouldn't try anything inappropriate.

Even if Klaus had other thoughts, he wouldn't act on them—after all, she was his mother-in-law. As for her safety, she knew she was in good hands.

She had kept her shadow sense active the entire time, witnessing how lethal Klaus's attacks were. She expected a few assassins might try to escape, but to her surprise, Klaus was even more terrifying than she had imagined. He had killed them all before they even realized what was happening.

Klaus carried her like a princess back to the room and gently laid her down on the bed, still dressed in her swimwear.

"You're not going to leave me behind, are you?" she asked just as Klaus was about to walk away, reaching out to hold his hand.

"I wouldn't dare," Klaus replied with a small smile, dropping onto the bed beside her. He hadn't planned to stay; now that the action was over, he figured their roleplaying was over. But with Cynthia holding him firmly, he had no choice but to give in.

He closed his eyes, trying to catch some sleep, though his senses remained on high alert. And now, his mother-in-law was cuddled up beside him, making the situation even more awkward.

'Maybe the God of Lust and Womanizing has cursed me,' Klaus thought to himself.

Chapter 187 - 187: Guilty Mother-In-Law, Shameless Son In Law

Ten hours passed, and no new assassin came to the resort, so Klaus could finally relax. His mother-in-law, Cynthia, had fallen into a deep sleep from exhaustion. Klaus stayed awake the whole time, his mind drifting, trying not to focus too much on the tempting body lying next to him.

After those ten hours, Cynthia woke up, looking more recovered. Her face had regained its color. But as soon as she became aware of the position she was in, she quickly moved away, her expression slightly flustered.

"I'm a terrible mother," she muttered, probably thinking back on what had happened between her and Klaus. It had been an intimate moment, much more than it was ever meant to be.

She had been the one to suggest the kiss during the planning phase, but now, remembering how heated things had gotten, guilt washed over her.

"I wouldn't say that," Klaus replied with a smile. "From the way I see it, you played your role quite well. No need to feel guilty, Mother-in-law."

He smiled, unbothered. Yes, he had enjoyed his time with her, and instead of feeling any shame, he looked pleased with himself. Clearly, Klaus wasn't concerned at all.

Cynthia's face flushed deeper as she turned away, her heart racing. The words Klaus said, combined with that smile, made her feel uneasy.

She couldn't understand how he was so calm about it all, especially after what had happened. She pulled the blanket tighter around herself, trying to create some physical and mental distance.

"You shouldn't be so casual about this, Klaus," she whispered, her voice barely holding steady. "I crossed a line. A huge one."

Klaus raised an eyebrow, leaning back against the headboard, completely unfazed. "A line? You think so?" He chuckled softly, shrugging as if her worries were trivial. "Look, no one got hurt, and we're both alive. I'd say it worked out perfectly."

Cynthia bit her lip, still unable to shake the guilt gnawing at her. "Still, I am not happy kissing the boyfriend of my daughters. It's just too not right" She said quietly.

Klaus stretched his arms casually. "No worries Mother-in-Law, it was just a role we both played to get what we wanted, no need to overthink it"

'Ouch' Hearing Klaus's reply, Cynthia felt a sharp pang in her heart. Klaus clearly viewed their kiss as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good. But for her, the reality of that moment was much heavier.

She had shared something intimate with him, and the knowledge that he was her daughter's boyfriend made her feel both guilty and heartbroken.

'What am I thinking?' she scolded herself. 'Like he said, it was just a kiss. So why do I feel so sad hearing him?' She snapped herself out of those thoughts, trying to regain her composure.

"Good, then this stays between us," Cynthia said firmly, her voice steady. "I don't want Anna or Lucy hearing about it." She glanced at Klaus, her expression serious, hoping he understood the weight of what she was asking.

Klaus nodded, his demeanor relaxed. "Of course. This is our secret." He flashed a reassuring smile, but it did little to ease Cynthia's turmoil. She felt a mix of relief and dread, knowing that this moment would linger in her mind long after they left the resort.

"Good, you can leave now. I need to take my bath," Cynthia said, causing Klaus's smile to falter.

"Since we started this, why not end it by sharing a bath?" Klaus teased, already climbing down from the bed.

"Brat! I'll tell your mother," Cynthia shot him an angry look, though a smile tugged at her lips. This boyfriend of her daughter's was more shameless than she had thought.

Klaus laughed, leaving the room and heading to the next one. He knew the maids had already cleaned up the aftermath of the chaos—the dead bodies were gone, and even the broken windows had been fixed. After taking a quick bath, he returned to meet Cynthia again.

She was now fully clothed, looking like the graceful mother-in-law she was meant to be. But deep down, Klaus knew their kiss wouldn't wash away anytime soon.

"So, what's next?" he asked, trying to shift the focus away from their earlier encounter.

"Since this is all the operatives they have in the Eastern Region, it will take time before they send more people to kill me. This means the same for you. They won't be coming after you anytime soon, if you are lucky enough" Cynthia explained.

"Does that mean they only send weaker assassins to targets in the Eastern Region? With the secret you have, they should be sending stronger assassins," Klaus said, puzzled. He couldn't understand why only ten Saints and eight Sages had been sent this time.

He recalled that eight of the assassins he had killed were not even on the Tier 1 assassin list he had copied from the Dark Order safe house in Hiroshi City.

"If what you said is true, then it means the list you have has already lost some assassins," Cynthia said, her brow furrowed in thought. "Eighteen Tier 1-level assassins should have come, but only ten showed up."

"So, the other eight are dead, and I only killed one. I'm sure at least one of them was killed by their own group, which means some targets they were meant to kill managed to survive their assassination attempts by taking out eight more," Klaus concluded, piecing the information together.

"How exactly are the Tier levels structured in the Order?" he asked, curious about the hierarchy of the assassins. He knew Cynthia had the answer so he used the chance to ask.

"From what I know, there are four tier levels," Cynthia began, her voice steady. "This means, that in the Northern Union, there are 100 assassins in total. Tier 1 is made up of Saint-level assassins, and from your list, it's clear there are 20 of them."

Klaus nodded, recalling the list he had found. It made sense now why some of the assassins hadn't seemed as strong as he had expected.

"As for Tier 2, they consist of Sage-level assassins. I know for a fact that Assassin number 89 down to number 50 are in this tier. They completely disregard Saint-level assassins, which shows just how dangerous they are."

"So the higher the number, the weaker they are?" Klaus clarified.

"Exactly," Cynthia confirmed. "Tier 3 assassins are Great Sages, and they're responsible for taking down high-level targets. From number 49 to number 11, it's all Great Sages. I doubt they'll come after us—at least, not yet. But they're definitely a bigger threat."

Klaus listened carefully, his mind processing the hierarchy. He wasn't too worried about the lower tiers, but the idea of encountering a Great Sage was unsettling.

"And then there's the 4th Tier," Cynthia continued. "They're on the same level as the War Goddess, but some are even stronger than her. After the Sovereign stage comes the Transcendent stage, and above that is the Ascension stage. That's the level where the Overlords are."

Klaus swallowed hard. "So, does that mean the Dark Order has assassins at that level?" He needed to know for sure, not wanting to make any reckless moves.

"No," Cynthia said, shaking her head. "As far as I know, their strongest assassins are at the Sovereign level. But their leader might be beyond the Sovereign stage—though definitely below the Ascension stage."

Klaus exhaled in relief. "That's a small comfort," he muttered. He had feared the worst, but knowing the Order's limits gave him some room to breathe. Still, the thought of a Sovereign-level assassin made his blood run cold.

'I need to become stronger. Faster,' Klaus thought to himself, the weight of the situation settling in. He knew the Dark Order wasn't acting on their own—they had been hired. And if powerful people were after him, they wouldn't stop until he was dead.

"Ha, looks like I have a lot of killing to do," Klaus muttered under his breath, a dark edge to his voice.

Cynthia raised an eyebrow at his words. "Klaus," she began cautiously, "don't let this turn into a path you regret."

Klaus flashed her a grin, though it didn't quite reach his eyes. "Regret? No, Mother-in-law, I'm just getting started."

Chapter 188 - 188: I Can Do Both

"Mother-in-law, I'm looking forward to our next picnic. I hope next time it'll be all sunshine, with no distractions," Klaus said, giving Cynthia a playful wink as he dropped her off at the Ross Mansion.

Cynthia Ross blushed slightly, her cheeks warming at his words. This bastard is too shameless, she thought, shaking her head before quickly closing the door to hide her embarrassment. Klaus grinned, watching her reaction, before heading back to his own home.

When he arrived, he was greeted by the sight of his mother chatting with the War Goddess. His smile widened, and he dove into his mother's embrace.

"How was your outing?" she asked, stroking his hair like she always did.

"Better than I expected," Klaus replied with a smirk. Indeed, it had turned out far more interesting than he imagined. The War Goddess, who knew all too well what Klaus had been up to, narrowed her eyes.

She couldn't decide whether to scold him or pry for more details. Either way, she knew Klaus had gotten himself into some mischief.

"Nice to see you had fun. By the way, your sister and some of your friends went on a hunt a day ago," his mother said.

Klaus nodded absentmindedly, already aware of that. Hanna has already messaged him. "I'll rest for a day and get back to training," he said, breaking from his mother's embrace and heading to his room.

Once inside, he tried calling Ohema, but as usual, it didn't go through. She had been unreachable for weeks now. He was worried but continued to wait as she told him before leaving the last time.

"She'll call when she's available, I guess," Klaus muttered to himself before flopping onto his bed. He stared at the ceiling, trying to shake the unease creeping in. A few seconds later, his eyes shifted toward the door as the War Goddess stepped in.

"You, what exactly did you do on that mission?" she said, her tone sharp

Klaus grinned lazily. "You know... had fun, made out with my mother-in-law, killed a bunch of assassins. Oh, did I mention I kissed my mother-in-law?" His grin widened, fully aware of the reaction he was about to provoke.

The War Goddess's eyes narrowed, and for a moment, she looked like she was either going to laugh or smack him. "You're impossible, Klaus," she finally muttered, shaking her head.

"How are you, by the way?" Klaus asked with a grin. He knew exactly what she had been going through the last time they crossed paths, but now he wanted more answers.

"I'm not talking to you again," the War Goddess huffed, turning to leave.

"Hey, you're the one who wanted to know what happened, and I already told you. Now it's your turn to spill something," Klaus teased, flashing a wide smile.

"You should hurry back to training. The next trial will be hard, even for you," Miriam said, trying to change the topic. The image of Klaus's diamond boy is still sculpted in her mind. She just couldn't wipe that memory, not that she wanted to.

"I'll manage. Oh, my body's weak right now. Care to give me a shoulder massage?" Klaus shot his shot, his grin never wavering.

"Nope, I'm leaving," Miriam responded, turning away—but not moving an inch.

"You keep saying that, but you're still standing here. Why, Miriam? You wouldn't happen to be harboring some evil thoughts, would you?" Klaus smirked, watching her closely.

Miriam blushed, her cheeks betraying her stoic expression. She didn't move. Instead, she stared at him, silently knowing that Klaus wouldn't stop teasing her or flirting.

Even though she kept telling herself she had no feelings for him—or at least that's what she wanted to believe—Ever since the last time they met, ignoring him had become more difficult. Unwanted feelings were starting to creep in, whether she liked it or not.

She crossed her arms, trying to maintain her cool. "Don't get ahead of yourself, Klaus. You're not that charming," she muttered, though her words lacked conviction.

"Uh-huh," Klaus chuckled. "I think I'm growing on you."

"Stop dreaming," she replied, but her blush deepened.

Klaus let out a soft laugh, enjoying the subtle back-and-forth. "I'm just saying, it's cute how you're sticking around. You know, you can leave anytime you want, yet here you are."

Miriam sighed. She knew it was foolish to entertain him, but something about Klaus made her stay. Despite her denial, her resolve was weakening.

"You're impossible," she said again, shaking her head.

"And yet, here we are," Klaus replied, his eyes twinkling.

Miriam turned slightly, her gaze softening for just a moment before she caught herself. "You should focus on getting stronger, Klaus. Not on me."

"I can do both," he said with a wink.

She narrowed her eyes at him, but a small smile tugged at her lips. "You're infuriating, you know that?"

Klaus shrugged. "Comes with the territory."

Miriam finally took a step away, but her lingering hesitation spoke volumes. "Train hard. Don't die on me," she said, her voice quieter than before.

"Wouldn't dream of it," Klaus said, his tone softer.

With a final glance, she left, but not without a twinge of emotion she couldn't quite shake. The moment she stepped outside, Klaus's mother met her gaze with a knowing smile.

"He's gotten to you too, huh?" Klaus's mother's smile widened as she eyed the flustered War Goddess.

Instead of running away, Miriam buried her face in Klaus's mother's chest, clearly embarrassed. If anyone had seen the usually cold, ruthless, and bloodthirsty War Goddess like this, they wouldn't have believed their eyes.

"No need to be embarrassed, dear," Klaus's mother said with a chuckle. "That bastard is just too shameless." She sighed, amused. Only she could handle her son's relentless teasing. Even goddesses weren't immune to his charms. It made her wonder what he'd be capable of once he got stronger.

"Come here, let me fix that hair of yours," she added warmly, running her fingers through Miriam's slightly disheveled locks. "If you're going to fall for my son, you should at least do it with beautiful hair."

"Auntie!" Miriam protested, her face burning with embarrassment, but she couldn't break free from the older woman's gentle grip. Klaus's mother led her away, ignoring her attempts to escape.

As she walked, Klaus's mother couldn't help but drop one more tease, her grin playful. "You know, you should probably start calling me 'mother.'"

Miriam's blush deepened as she was being pulled away. Klaus's mom's laughter filled the house knowing no matter what, His no-good son would sink his hooks in her if he hadn't already.

As the saying goes, you learn from your parents. And clearly, Klaus had inherited some of his shamelessness from his mother.

Klaus spent two days relaxing with his mom and Miriam, enjoying a rare break from his usual intense schedule. After the second day, he decided it was time to leave for his own hunt. With a blank access card in his possession, all Forbidden Zones were open to him. No restrictions.

During his time at home, Klaus had researched countless Tier 4 Forbidden Zones, going through hundreds of them to find the perfect one. After much consideration, he picked his target.

He knew that the weakest creatures in a Tier 4 Forbidden Zone were Tier 6 Dark Monsters or Tier 4 Zombie Captains, while the strongest could be as dangerous as a Tier 7 Devil or a Zombie King. With that in mind, he made sure to prepare adequately.

Klaus planned to spend a few weeks in the Zone, sharpening his skills and pushing himself to new limits before returning home. The hunt would be brutal, but it was exactly what he needed to grow stronger.

Chapter 189 - 189: Demon's Abode Forbidden Zone [Bonus]

The Demon's Abode is one of the most dangerous Tier 4 Forbidden Zones in the Eastern region of the Northern Union. It isn't far from Arcadian City. From Klaus's research, he discovered that only Sages dared enter this place. A Saint would be sending themselves to their death unless they had absolute trust in their abilities and survival instincts.

According to what Klaus had learned, the Demon Abode houses all kinds of terrifying creatures, including a special variant of Zombies known as Darkblood Demon Zombies. These Zombies wield both darkness and blood as their primary elements, relying on these forces to fuel their abilities.

From what he read online, the Darkblood Demon Zombies were far more powerful than the average Zombie. They were faster and had remarkable regeneration abilities. However, they were also hideous.

Unlike the White Zombies, which retained some eerie attraction, these Darkblood Demons were truly grotesque, the way one might imagine a classic Zombie to look.

Klaus also learned that these Zombies didn't just feast on humans. They hunted monsters too, making them much stronger than even the White Zombies or the Voltax Zombies from the Arcadian Mine invasion. This new information made it clear that the Demon's Abode was no place for the faint-hearted.

It would be the perfect challenge. The perfect place for Klaus who is anything but a normal warrior.

His status page looks good but needed to push further if he wants to keep up with the growing threats surrounding him.

Name: Klaus Hanson

Age: 16

Talent: Celestial Elemental Overlord

Class: Weapons Overlord

Bloodline: Dormant

Physique: Nine Reincarnations Divine Body

Realm: Master - Lvl: 4/12

Strength: 1,230 | Agility: 1,270 | Stamina: 1,240 | Defense:1,100 | Intelligence: 1,100| Health: 4200

Star Qi: 143,672,600

Stat Points: 400

[Next Level up: 10,000/31,228,800]

"Looks like I'll be doing more killing this time," Klaus muttered as he stepped down from the military vehicle that had brought him from Arcadian City. Dave Arcadian, feeling both grateful and guilty for nearly losing Klaus during the invasion, had offered the ride as a way of showing his gratitude.

Standing at the edge of the Demon's Abode, Klaus felt a surge of excitement. The air was thick with danger, but instead of fear, it filled him with a sense of thrill.

"This should be fun," he said to himself with a grin, stepping into the zone that looked like a massive reserve. Before the apocalypse, it had been a wildlife sanctuary, but now it was home to mutated monsters and unimaginable dangers.

The land stretched for miles, vast and perilous. As Klaus quietly walked through the dense forest, the wind whispered through the twisted trees, adding to the eerie atmosphere. His Void Piercing Needle hovered above his shoulder, ready to strike at a moment's notice.

His plan for the day was simple—kill whatever crossed his path and clear out a safe space to rest. The next day, the real task would begin. He had stumbled upon some cryptic information online, a strange rumor about the Demon's Abode.

Something about the place made it more dangerous than other Tier 4 Forbidden Zones, and Klaus was determined to uncover the truth.

For now, though, it was all about finding a place where he could always come back to rest. As he ventured deeper into the forest, he sneered, knowing that soon, the hunt would begin.

A while later, Klaus encountered his first target. Without hesitation, he used the Void Piercing Arrow, swiftly taking it down. He continued deeper into the area, moving quickly and efficiently, killing as he went, his eyes scanning for a place he could clear and rest.

Eventually, he came across a small mountain peak with a hidden cave. After scanning the area, he realized there were no monsters nearby, a stroke of luck for them. He quickly set up camp inside the cave, deciding to relax for a few hours before resuming his hunt.

His plan was simple. First, he wanted to train with the Pentaface Bead and master the skills he had unlocked so far. Second, he would train under pressure to strengthen his mind and add more Viper Piercing Needles to the Void Piercing Needle technique.

Third, he needed to work on his swordsmanship. His recent duel with Aoi had made it painfully clear that he was lacking in that area. He wanted to develop his own sword style, something he could truly master.

Fourth, he hoped to create a new technique using the fire element, just like he had with the ice element when he formed the [Nine Stars Ice Lotus Bloom]. The senior had already advised him to try, so he was eager to see if he could come up with something powerful.

But most importantly, he wanted to hunt some devils, hoping to obtain an Ice Elemental Devil core if he was lucky. He couldn't deny the jealousy he felt toward his past self, Fruity. Despite not having affinities for all elements back then, Fruity had managed to awaken three of the seven Forbidden Ice Elements.

Klaus wanted that too. Call it jealousy, but he couldn't help himself. He was eager to awaken something similar, something to rival his past self's power. The thought of it made him both restless and hungry for more.

After resting for a while and eating almost a quarter of the food his mom had lovingly prepared, Klaus gulped down some fruit juice and set out to start leveling up.

Klaus knew he was falling behind, far behind his friends. His sister had already reached Level 6, thanks to the War Goddess giving her higher-tier monster cores.

All his friends were at Level 6 too, and the Mountain Dew Essence had made them even stronger. The gap between them was growing, and Klaus couldn't afford to stay behind, especially with the Next Academy Trial looming.

With 31,228,800 Exp points needed to reach Level 5, he wasted no time. He began his slaughter, starting with the Void Piercing Needle.

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Somewhere deep inside the Demon Abode, on a large platform surrounded by seven towering pillars, a creature stood still watching the work going on around it.

It was nearly 3 meters tall, with a twisted mix of human and decaying monster features. Its skin is dark, and a single horn jutted from its forehead. Its dark red eyes glowed faintly. It's muscular and even one of its hands was large enough to rival the size of an adult's thigh.

It watched as offerings were placed beneath each pillar. After a moment, the creature turned and walked toward a massive cave entrance, each step inciting heavy thuds.

"How are the preparations?" A feminine voice, cold and commanding, echoed through the darkness making the ugly creature stop and bow slightly.

"My Princess, the ritual offerings are almost ready. All that remains is to wait for the red moon to rise, and we can begin."

"Good," she replied. "Make sure nothing goes wrong. We've invested much into this ritual, and the Empress is expecting results."

The dark creature bowed once more before leaving. As soon as it was gone, a smirk formed in the shadows.

"Those Voltox fools couldn't complete a single task. This time, out of the 69 Zombie Strongholds, I will prove to everyone that the Darkblood Demon Zombies are worthy of standing by the Queen's side in her conquest."

Her smirk grew wider, her disdain echoing in the empty cave.

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Meanwhile, back in the forest where Klaus was farming Exp points and sharpening his mind, thousands of monsters lay dead, each with a single hole through their vitals.

Klaus had recently added 400 points to his Intelligence, making his mental training far more effective. The Void Piercing Needle continuously flashed through the forest, piercing monster after monster with lethal precision.

He had already accumulated over 20 million points, but it wasn't enough. He needed more, so he never stopped killing. Eight hours later, his total reached 30 million points, leaving only a little more before he could finally level up.

Suddenly, a deep, heavy roar tore through the thick forest, followed by the surge of a powerful aura that threatened to crash every soul around. Klaus, unaffected by this aura smiles.

"Finally," he muttered, "a Devil has appeared."

Chapter 190 - 190: Red Eye Sabertooth Tiger [Bonus]

Klaus stood motionless, staring in the direction the monster was approaching. From the heavy, thunderous footsteps echoing through the forest, he knew it was something massive. His senses stretched to their limit, yet he couldn't detect the creature.

That sent a chill down his spine. Even though he was covering a 10-kilometer radius, the monster still remained out of reach, but its steps were felt strongly as if it was right beside him. Suddenly, something shifted. A 4-meter-tall creature crossed into his sensing range, and Klaus's eyes widened in shock.

The monster is enormous. It has a muscular build, covered in dark, blood-streak fur. It has red eyes. Elongated, razor-sharp claws and serrated fangs made it the perfect killing machine.

A wild, untamed mane framed its savage face, and a powerful tail, tipped with a sharp, bone-like spike, swayed behind it, promising deadly strikes.

Klaus instinctively took a few steps back but kept his focus sharp, watching the creature's every movement. Its heavy steps left smoldering fire in its wake, the ground singeing beneath its feet.

"Red Eye Sabertooth Tiger," Klaus muttered under his breath, recognizing the Devil monster immediately. A fearsome fire-type beast, known for its brutal attacks with its claws and teeth.

The reason they're dangerous is that after reaching the Terror stage, they begin to evolve. Their first evolution allows them to walk on two legs, making them look like monstrous humans.

But that's not what makes them terrifying. It's their claws. After evolving, their claws become deadly weapons. They move like humans, and they attack like humans—only fiercer, faster, and stronger.

Now, approaching with an intense fire aura, was a Tier 7 Devil Red-Eye Sabertooth Tiger. Klaus knew he had two choices: run or fight. But he also knew this was a rare chance to win himself a Fire-type devil core.

Despite the danger, Klaus's sword appeared in his hand, radiating ice qi. He was about to fight fire with ice.

Klaus's control over ice far surpassed his mastery of fire. In dangerous situations like this, he always relied on ice. Today was no exception. The monster, still kilometers away, was already exuding an aura more terrifying than the Zombie Kings he fought during the Arcadian mine invasion.

In fact, the aura felt eerily similar to that of the Zombie Emperor, the one the War Goddess battled back then. Klaus knew he'd have to up his game for this fight.

"Brat, kill this monster. The reward will be worth it," his senior's voice echoed from his soul sea, making Klaus grin. He knew that obtaining the Fire Devil Core from this Red-Eye Sabertooth Tiger would benefit him immensely.

"I'll do my best," he muttered, just as the monster appeared before him, towering and radiating immense power. Klaus locked eyes with it.

Without a second thought, the monster charged. Klaus dashed forward to meet it head-on. Boom! The two collided, and the force sent Klaus flying backward, slamming into the ground.

Cough! cough!!

"What the hell," he muttered, spitting out two mouthfuls of blood.

"Brat, welcome to your first real fight with a Devil. Try not to die," his senior remarked sarcastically. Klaus pushed himself up, narrowing his gaze. This was it. He had truly stepped into the big leagues now.

The Tiger's claws, dripping with fiery energy, glowed as it leaped into the air, descending on Klaus with terrifying force. Klaus dashed forward, narrowly dodging, and slashed his sword backward in a swift counterattack.

A thin arc of ice, coated with sword qi, shot out and struck the monster's side. But there was no damage. Its fur was like titanium—unyielding and impenetrable.

"No worries," Klaus muttered with a grin. "If one strike doesn't kill, I'll use a hundred."

His sword flashed forward, sending multiple arcs of ice toward the beast. Each one landed, but the result was the same—no damage at all.

The Red-Eye Sabertooth Tiger barely flinched as the ice arcs bounced off its thick fur. It growled, its fiery aura intensifying, and its eyes burned with rage. Klaus could feel the heat in the air as the monster charged again, faster this time, claws outstretched.

The Tiger slashed its fiery claws at Klaus's head, but he ducked just in time and kicked forward, landing a blow on its leg.

"That hurt," Klaus muttered, wincing. But the monster was knocked slightly off balance, giving Klaus an opening to strike.

His sword flashed forward, and a thick arc of ice, coated with sword qi, surged out. It hit the Tiger's chest, pushing the beast back a step.

Klaus didn't let up. He charged again, aiming for the monster's left arm. But before his blade could land, the Tiger erupted in flames, its claws glowing bright red.

Slash!

A powerful strike from the Tiger's claws sent fire claw marks flying toward Klaus. He reacted quickly, stepping lightly on the ground and raising an ice wall for protection.

The fiery attack crashed into the ice, shattering it instantly. Although the ice defense wasn't that great, the attack was very powerful to the extent that it landed and shattered the ice instantly and then headed toward him

"What?" Klaus gasped, eyes wide as the remnants of his defense crumbled. The Tiger's strength was far greater than he anticipated.

Klaus slashed his sword, sending an ice arc to meet the fire arc. The two forces collided and exploded, pushing Klaus back several steps. He wanted to dash forward, but before he could move, the Tiger appeared within striking range.

"This is not good," Klaus muttered, realizing he was trapped. He tried to retreat, but at that moment, the Tiger opened its maw. Like a dragon, it unleashed a torrent of fire, red and scorching, spraying toward him with terrifying speed. The flames moved like bullets, aiming to disintegrate him completely.

Klaus, who lacked strong defensive abilities aside from the bell and the flower, quickly summoned the ice lotus and instantly activated the Absolute Ice Domain.

The moment the domain formed, it freed Klaus from the lock the Tiger had placed him in, giving him just enough time to evade. He rolled across the ground, dodging the deadly flames, and in the same motion, activated the Ice Beam ability of the lotus. A concentrated beam of ice shot from the lotus, striking the monster with precision.

The Tiger roared in pain as the beam hit, pushing it back several meters before it crashed onto the ground.

"My turn," Klaus growled, dashing forward, his sword glowing with ice qi. "I have to kill it without using the Pentaface Bead," he muttered to himself, determined. His sword slashed forward, aiming for the Tiger's heart.

But the Tiger was too fast and too strong. Its fiery claw clashed with Klaus's sword, pushing him back effortlessly. When it came to speed, Klaus couldn't keep up.

Strength? He was outmatched. Even in defense, he was barely holding on. Each strike proved how much weaker he was compared to the monster. One small mistake would cost him his life.

It was overwhelming. Fighting a Tier 7 monster while only at Tier 3 was something almost no one could do—yet here he was, doing it. But for the first time, Klaus truly felt the gap in their power. The Tiger wasn't just strong; it could use abilities like a human, making it far more dangerous than he had anticipated.

Now he understood what the Senior had meant when he warned him. The day he faced a Devil, he would need every skill and technique he could muster. The realization sent a chill down his spine.

"Round two," Klaus muttered under his breath. His golden eyes flashed, shifting to a deep crimson, giving him the appearance of a demon king.

As the red light radiated from his eyes, a wave of crimson energy burst out, causing the Tiger to stagger. It hesitated, and Klaus smirked, seizing the moment. He dashed forward with newfound ferocity.

"Give me your core!" he roared, his sword flashing forward with deadly intent, aimed right at the Tiger's neck.