

Paragon 40

Chapter 40 Pretty Boy

Klaus, unaware of the stir he was causing, made his way to Ziggy's Tattoo Shop. Without a phone, he had no idea about the buzz his image had generated online. But as he walked, he noticed more and more people turning to look at him, their eyes filled with curiosity.

What Klaus didn't realize was that the pictures of him were being uploaded to the internet with tags, including geotags that pinpointed his location. As more people in the area saw the photos, they began searching for him, eager to catch a glimpse of the now-famous "Pretty Boy."

As he continued down the street, the increasing number of stares and the sound of camera shutters became too much to ignore. Irritated by the attention, Klaus approached a young man who had just taken his picture.

"Excuse me, brother," Klaus said, his voice firm but polite. "Can you tell me why everyone is staring and taking pictures of me?"

The young man was stunned, his mouth slightly open in shock. Had he just been spoken to by the #Pretty_Boy himself?

"Uh, brother... don't you know? You're all over the internet," the young man replied, still in disbelief. He quickly pulled out his phone and showed Klaus the screen, where the first ten images were all of him walking toward the tattoo shop.

Klaus stared at the screen, confusion and surprise washing over him. He had no idea that his image had gone viral, and now he was at the center of attention. The realization made him feel a mix of annoyance and unease, but he kept his composure.

"Thank you," Klaus said, nodding to the young man and turning to leave. But before he could take a step, the youngster spoke up, "Big Brother, can I take a selfie with you?"

Klaus paused, unfamiliar with the term. "What's that?" he asked, but quickly realized what the young man meant. Not wanting to reveal his ignorance, he nodded. The young man beamed with excitement and quickly took a selfie with him.

"My handle is @GoodBoyBen," the young man said, grinning from ear to ear. "You can message me anytime you want. I know practically everywhere, so if you need a guide, just reach out." Klaus nodded again, smiling at the young man's genuine enthusiasm. Unbeknownst to him, this smile was captured in the photo.

As Klaus noticed more people rushing over, his smile faded. With a frown, he tapped into his newfound speed after ascending and disappeared from sight in an instant.

"Heavens, he's not just handsome; he's actually a warrior!" one person exclaimed, astonished by Klaus's sudden burst of speed.

"This is a clear sign of someone who's both handsome and powerful," another person said, excitement growing in the crowd. "Quickly, spread the word! Hashtag #PrettyAndStrong, #PrettyStrong!"

And just like that, the internet buzzed with even more fervor, the chaos only escalating as Klaus's image continued to spread.

Klaus sped forward, only slowing down when he was a few meters away from the tattoo shop. He sighed, frustration evident in his voice. "What was that? These people are so annoying," he muttered to himself before walking toward the shop. The small bell above the door jingled as he entered.

"Hello, Uncle Ziggy, Uncle James, Uncle Jojo, Uncle Xian, and Uncle Matt," Klaus greeted warmly as he saw the five men inside, laughing and talking together.

"Klaus, when did you become such a pretty boy?" Uncle James teased, looking at him with a grin.

"You saw the pictures too, huh?" Klaus replied, shaking his head with a small smile.

"This is the era of cultivation and technological advancement. These things are only normal," Uncle James said with a chuckle.

"You've ascended, good boy. You're definitely Pete's son," Uncle Ziggy said with a proud smile.

"Thank you, uncles, for the money and the recommendation card last time," Klaus replied gratefully.

"No need to thank us, Klaus. We're your uncles, and it's only natural to help you when you need it," Uncle Ziggy said, waving off Klaus's thanks. "But honestly, isn't it a bit boring to keep thanking us for every little thing? It makes us feel distant."

Klaus smiled at that. "In that case, I won't stand on ceremony," he said as he sat down. "Uncles, I need your help."

"Just ask," Uncle Ziggy said, and for some reason, the five men seemed even happier to hear this.

"Well, I know it sounds arrogant, but the monsters in the forest aren't strong enough for me anymore. I've heard the ones in the Forbidden Zones are much stronger. So, I need help getting into some of these zones," Klaus explained.

The five uncles raised an eyebrow at his request, then burst into hearty laughter.

"Pay up," Uncle Ziggy said, turning to the other four. "I told you he'd come asking sooner or later. Looks like it was sooner than I thought!"

"This..." Klaus was taken aback by the sudden turn of events.

"Don't be surprised, Klaus," Uncle Ziggy said with a knowing smile. "The last time you were here, I sensed your spiritual Qi purity. I knew then you wouldn't be satisfied with weaker monsters for long. If I'm not mistaken, during your first hunt, you took down several Tier 2 monsters and even a Tier 3 one, didn't you?"

Klaus was shocked by how accurate Uncle Ziggy's guess was, but he nodded.

"I figured as much," Uncle Ziggy continued. "I knew that once you ascended, those lower-tier monsters wouldn't be much of a challenge anymore. But I didn't expect you to come back so soon. It seems you're even more outstanding than your father, Pete."

"So, about the team?" Klaus asked, curious.

"Don't worry about that," Uncle Jojo said, stepping in. "We still have one last spot on the Bloodaxe Mercenary team that your dad used to fill. It's yours if you want it. But I suppose you wouldn't go hunting with us, right?"

"Stupid, he's just an Ascended. Are you trying to get him killed?" Uncle Ziggy cut in, shaking his head. "Klaus, don't pay attention to him. He had too much to drink this morning."

"Why would I die if I went hunting with you?" Klaus asked, confused.

Uncle Ziggy's expression turned serious. "Listen well, Klaus. There are hundreds of Forbidden Zones all over the world, but not all Forbidden Zones are the same. They're ranked based on the class of monsters they house. The ones you fought in the forest are like greenhouse flowers compared to the real monsters out there.

The real monsters are graded into classes, and each class is stronger than the last. Right now, the human race has identified five classes of monsters: Lesser, Great, Dark, Terror, and Devil. I won't go into too much detail, but even the strongest of us can only defend against or run from a Terror Monster."

"What?!" Klaus shouted, shocked by the revelation.

"No need to be so shocked," Uncle Ziggy said calmly. "We're just Grandmasters forming our Star Core, while a Terror Monster has already formed its Beast Star Core. It's only natural for us to struggle against one. But let's not get off-topic. As I was saying, there are different classes of monsters, but even within a class, not all monsters are the same.

For example, if a mosquito and a lion both became Terror Monsters, it's obvious the lion would be stronger than the mosquito. However, that doesn't mean you could easily kill a Terror Mosquito either. So, if you've killed a Tier 5 monster, that's impressive, but your chances of killing a Tier 5 Dark Monster are nearly zero."

Klaus was shocked again. He had always known the monsters in the Forbidden Zones were strong, but hearing this made him realize just how immense the difference was.

"But don't worry," Uncle Ziggy continued, "Forbidden Zones are graded by Tiers. Currently, you can enter a Tier 1 and 2 Forbidden Zone, but I'd advise you not to go too deep into it. A Tier 2 Forbidden Zone contains monsters ranging from Tier 1 to Tier 5, between the Lesser and Dark classes.

The stronger ones are mostly found in the inner sections, but that doesn't mean you won't encounter tough monsters in the outer areas either."

"Uncle, what makes these monsters stronger, and how can I identify them?" Klaus asked after taking a moment to process what he had just heard.

"Well," Uncle Ziggy continued, "these monsters are more evolved and have something called Monster Cores. These cores act like an energy source. While you rely on your spiritual qi pool, monsters use their cores to power themselves. This core is what makes them stronger and allows them to use spiritual qi like humans do."

He paused to let the information sink in before continuing, "To identify them, there are two main ways. First, if your spiritual qi is strong enough, you can sense their class based on their aura. If you can't do that, you can use your tracking band."

"Tracking band?" Klaus asked, intrigued.

"Yes," Uncle Ziggy explained. "The tracking band is what the military uses. It tracks the number of kills you've made and rewards you with points accordingly. It can also help you identify the strength and class of the monsters you encounter."

"Thank you, Uncle Ziggy. I'll make sure to prepare well before heading out. It looks like I'll really be facing stronger monsters this time," Klaus said with a confident smile.

"Well, the rewards are great, so it will be worth it. I suppose you haven't gotten your identity card yet?" Uncle Ziggy asked.

"Not yet. I plan to go to the bank after I leave here," Klaus replied.

"Good. When you get your card, come back here. We'll register you into our team, and then you can head to the hunter guild to buy a Forbidden Pass. That will let you enter the Zone," Uncle Ziggy said.

"Okay, thanks!" Klaus said. He turned to leave but paused at the door. "Um, Uncles, do any of you happen to have a hat and sunglasses?"

The five uncles exchanged amused glances and burst into laughter.

Shortly after, Klaus left the shop wearing a cap and sunglasses and headed to the Royal Gold Reserve Bank where a surprise was awaiting him