

THE LAST PARAGON IN THE APOCALYPSE

Chapter 5: Klaus's Birthday Gift

His mother froze for a moment, processing his words. Then, slowly, her arms encircled him, holding him close. "Oh, Klaus," she whispered, her voice trembling. "I'm so proud of you."

Klaus buried his face in her shoulder, letting the tears flow freely. The years of struggle, of feeling powerless and uncertain about the future, all seemed to pour out of him in that moment. He clung to his mother as if afraid that letting go would make it all a dream.

His mother's own tears began to fall as she stroked his hair gently. "You've worked so hard, Klaus. You've sacrificed so much for us... and now, look at you. A warrior."

They stayed like that for a while, lost in the moment. The world outside could have been falling apart, but inside that embrace, everything felt right. Klaus

could feel his mother's heartbeat against his chest, steady and strong, and it gave him a sense of peace he hadn't felt in a long time.

"I couldn't have done it without you, Mom," Klaus finally whispered, his voice thick with emotion. "You never gave up on me, even when I wanted to give up on myself."

His mother pulled back just enough to look him in the eyes, her own filled with a mixture of pride and love. "I would never give up on you, Klaus. You're my son, my strong, brave boy. You've always been a warrior in my eyes."

Klaus smiled through his tears, feeling a warmth spread through him that chased away the cold grip of doubt that had been with him for so long. "We're going to be okay, Mom. I promise you, I'll protect us. I'll protect you."

His mother nodded, unable to speak as fresh tears spilled down her cheeks. She knew Klaus meant every word, and in that moment, all the hardships they had faced seemed worth it.

As they held each other, Klaus felt a surge of determination rise within him. This was just the beginning. He would become stronger, not just for himself, but for the woman who had given everything to see him succeed.

Together, they stood there, wrapped in each other's arms, feeling like they could face anything the world threw at them.

In that small room, in that fragile moment, there was nothing but love, pride, and the unbreakable bond between a mother and her son.

"Let's go back inside. I want to give you something special. It's a birthday gift of sorts," Klaus's mother said after they had hugged for a while, gently breaking away and wiping her tears, as well as Klaus's.

"There's more?" Klaus was surprised, but he followed his mother back into their small room. Once inside, she opened a cardboard box and carefully pulled out a long wooden box, about 1.5 meters in length.

She placed it on the floor and stared at it for a moment, a deep sigh escaping her lips. Klaus noticed the sadness in her eyes and felt a knot form in his

stomach. "Is everything alright, Mom?" he asked, concerned by the look on her face.

"No, nothing is wrong. Open it. It's yours," she replied, her voice soft and a little shaky.

Klaus hesitated for a moment before stepping forward. He knelt down and slowly lifted the lid of the wooden box. Inside, resting on a bed of soft cloth, was a beautifully crafted sword. The blade gleamed even in the dim light of the room, and the hilt was intricately designed with patterns he had never seen before. But what caught his eye was a folded piece of paper placed on top of the sword.

He picked up the note with trembling hands and unfolded it. As he read, his breath caught in his throat.

"Happy birthday, Klaus," the note began. "I'm so proud of you, son. I wish I could be there to see the man you've become. But since I am not here, I left something for you. This sword is a family heirloom, passed down from father to son. It's now yours. Use it well, and protect your mother with everything you have."

I'm sorry I can't be with you but know that I love you both more than anything. Stay strong, my boy. I believe in you."

The note was signed, "Dad."

Klaus felt a wave of emotions crash over him—joy, sorrow, confusion. He looked up at his mother, his eyes wide with questions. "Mom... did Dad leave this for me? Where did this come from? Is he really...

gone?"

His mother knelt beside him, her hand gently resting on his shoulder. "He left it for you before he disappeared, Klaus. He made me promise to give it to you when you were ready. I don't know where he is or what happened to him, but I do know that he loved us. He wanted you to have this when the time was right."

Klaus stared at the sword, his mind racing. His father's words echoed in his head, filling him with both hope and uncertainty. "What if he's still out there, Mom? What if he's not really gone?"

His mother's expression softened, though the sadness never left her eyes. "I wish I knew, Klaus. But whatever the truth is, your father believed in you. And so do I. He left this for you because he knew you would become a warrior one day. This sword shows how much faith he had in you.

Every parent dreams of giving their children a chance to find their place in this chaotic world.

I miss him, Klaus, and I know you do too. But remember, I'm always here for you. And with this sword, your father is with you too."

Hearing his mother's words, Klaus felt a wave of emotions wash over him. He gently reached out and ran his fingers along the blade of the longsword. The metal felt cool to the touch, and the craftsmanship was exquisite. As soon as his hand made contact with the sword, a sudden rush of information flooded his mind.

It was as if memories or knowledge not his own were trying to surface, but just as quickly, it all went blank.

For a moment, Klaus hesitated, unsure of what had just happened. But something deep inside him urged him on, a pull he couldn't ignore. Almost as if guided by an unseen force, he wrapped his fingers around the hilt of the sword.

The moment he did, something shifted within him. His posture straightened, his grip firm and sure. It was as if the sword had awakened something within him, something ancient and powerful. Klaus felt a confidence he had never felt before, as though he had been wielding swords his entire life. His feet instinctively moved into a solid stance, and his body felt balanced and ready.

He swung the sword gently at first, testing its weight and feel. The blade moved through the air with a grace that surprised him. It felt natural, like an extension of his own body. He adjusted his grip, feeling the strength in his arms as he held the sword with a calm yet determined focus.

For a brief moment, Klaus wasn't just a boy who had awakened as a warrior—he was a grandmaster, someone who had trained for years, someone who understood the art of the sword deeply. The connection he felt to the weapon was profound, and it stirred something in his soul.

"There's another note and a ring," Klaus's mother said, pointing to the inside of the box. Her expression revealed that she hadn't looked at the contents all these years. Klaus carefully picked up the note, unfolding it with a mix of curiosity and anticipation.

"Little Fella," the note began, and Klaus could almost hear his father's voice in the words. "I know I promised to take you to get your first tattoo when you turned 16. Unfortunately, I'm not there now to keep that promise. But don't worry, I've already made arrangements. Go to Ziggy Tattoo Parlor and tell him you're my son. He'll know what to do.

Goodbye, little fella. And remember, always make your mother smile."

Klaus couldn't help but let out a small, bittersweet laugh as he finished reading. The note was so typical of his father, full of love, but also a bit of mischief. He could imagine his father grinning as he wrote those words, knowing full well the trouble it might cause.

"Tsk, what a scoundrel," his mother said, shaking her head with a smile. "How could he promise a child that he'd take him to a tattoo parlor?" But despite the

smile, Klaus could sense the deep sadness behind her words. The note was a reminder of the man they both missed so much, a man who had left a void in their lives that had never truly been filled.

Klaus picked up the ring that lay beside the note, examining it closely. It was simple yet sturdy, made of dark metal that felt cool in his hand. Without hesitation, he slipped it onto his finger and directed his spiritual qi into it. A few seconds later, his lips curled into a smile. "Dad really was the best.

He even left me a space ring." Klaus had overheard a lecture about storage artifacts before, so he knew exactly how to use it the moment he saw it.

"What's inside?" his mother asked, curiosity lacing her voice.

"Nothing, it's empty," Klaus replied with a grin, before casually tossing the sword into the ring's storage space. The sword disappeared instantly, and Klaus marveled at the ring's capacity. It wasn't enormous—about 100 square meters, but to someone like Klaus, it was an invaluable treasure. Space rings, with their ability to store inanimate objects in a separate dimension, were incredibly expensive.

The fact that his father had left one for him showed just how much he cared.

"Let's get some sleep, Mom," Klaus said, turning to her with a look of determination. "Tomorrow, I'm going on my first hunt. When I come back, you'll finally get a taste of awakened monster meat." His smile widened as he imagined the look on her face when he returned victorious.

With a sword and a space ring ready, the next step was to fill them and start earning enough to keep his father's promise—making his mother happy.