

Paragon 78

Chapter 78 - 78: Verbal Duel [Bonus]

The uneasy silence that had settled over the room was suddenly broken by a voice from the back.

"I challenge you to a Verbal Duel!" The words rang out, clear and sharp. Everyone turned in shock to see who had dared to challenge Klaus after witnessing his earlier display. Standing tall with a confident smirk was a young man with dark hair, sharp features, and a presence that demanded attention.

The crowd immediately started buzzing with excitement.

"A Verbal Duel? Is he serious?" someone whispered.

"That's Lawrence Kain, from the Kain family. He's known for his quick wit and sharp tongue," another commented.

"What's a Verbal Duel?" a young girl asked curiously

"It's an old tradition," a young man who seemed more experienced began explaining. "When two warriors want to avoid physical conflict but still wish to settle a score, they challenge each other to a Verbal Duel. It's a battle of words, logic, and wit, where the goal is to outsmart and humiliate your opponent without ever raising a hand."

"It's supposed to test not just strength but intelligence," another added. "Some say it's a way to show dominance without violence."

Klaus narrowed his eyes at Lawrence, measuring the young man. He could see the smirk on Lawrence's face and the gleam of confidence in his eyes. Lawrence clearly thought he had the upper hand in this challenge.

Klaus's friends, still recovering from the earlier tension, exchanged worried glances. "What's this guy thinking?" Mark muttered. "Does he really believe he can outwit Klaus?"

Anna and Lucy both stepped closer to Klaus, their expressions wary. "Be careful, Klaus," Anna whispered. "Lawrence is known for this. He's humiliated many with his words."

Klaus raised an eyebrow at Lawrence, unimpressed by the challenge. "You think words will save you where strength cannot?" he asked, his voice calm but carrying an edge.

Lawrence chuckled, his smirk widening. "Oh, strength has its place, but intelligence rules all. I'm here to show everyone that being a brute isn't enough. You might be strong, Klaus, but how sharp is your mind?"

The murmurs grew louder as the crowd watched with bated breath. Some were excited at the prospect of seeing Klaus brought down a peg, while others were curious to see how he would respond to this unexpected challenge.

Klaus considered for a moment, then nodded. "Alright, Lawrence," he said, his voice even. "You want a Verbal Duel? You've got it. Let's see if your words can hold up better than your courage."

The room erupted in murmurs once again. Some were surprised Klaus accepted, others eager to witness the rare duel.

"Lawrence might actually stand a chance in this," someone muttered. "He's clever, and Klaus isn't known for his sharp tongue."

"Well, do we really know Klaus" another replied. "This could go either way."

"But still, Lawrence is an erudite in many fields. He has also challenged many people even before he awakened, so he has a high chance of winning."

"Well, we know little to nothing about Klaus, so we can't say for sure who would win"

Lawrence stepped forward confidently, clearly eager to begin. "For someone who's made it into the Union Charts, Klaus, you certainly have a lot to learn. Do you think power alone will protect you? Power is fleeting. Brains, however, can keep you alive in situations where strength alone will fail."

Klaus listened, not rushing to respond. He wasn't one to engage in petty arguments, but he understood the weight of this challenge. It wasn't just about winning; it was about humiliating that arrogant bastard in front of him. The entire room was watching closely.

When it was his turn to speak, Klaus's words came slow and deliberate. "Strength may be fleeting," he admitted. "But intelligence without strength is just as useless. You can have all the knowledge in the world, but without the power to act on it, you're just another voice in the wind. Intelligence isn't about proving how clever you are to others.

It's about using your wits to protect those you care about."

The room fell quiet for a moment as Klaus's words sank in. Lawrence's smirk faltered slightly, but he quickly recovered.

"Nice try," Lawrence shot back, his voice steady. "But in the end, a strong mind can manipulate even the strongest warrior. Words can command armies, shift loyalties, and break even the toughest of men. That's something you'll never understand."

Klaus gave a small smile, but it wasn't warm. "Words are powerful," he conceded. "But only when backed by actions. You can spin your clever lines, Lawrence, but at the end of the day, it's what you do that defines who you are. People don't remember words; they remember deeds."

The crowd erupted in whispers again, each person trying to figure out who will be winning the duel when it starts. Both sides had made strong points, but Klaus's calm demeanor seemed to carry more weight than Lawrence's sharp retorts.

"Tsk, someone who dropped out of school still thinks he can win the battle of the tongue" A sneer came from Miguel who has recovered from the terrifying might Klaus has showed everyone.

The room went dead silent for a moment as Miguel's sneering words hung in the air. Klaus, a school dropout? Whispers quickly spread through the crowd, disbelief and curiosity lighting up everyone's faces.

"Did he just say Klaus is a dropout?" one young warrior whispered to his companion.

"No way! With his power and skills, I thought he was one of the top students!" another murmured, clearly shocked.

Miguel, emboldened by the gasps and murmurs, continued with a mocking smile. "How does it feel, Klaus? Standing here among the elite, pretending to be one of us when you couldn't even finish school?"

Lawrence, sensing an opportunity to strike, smirked and added, "Ah, that explains a lot. Power without proper training can only take you so far, Klaus. No wonder you resort to brute force over strategy."

Klaus stood calmly, letting the noise die down around him. His golden eyes flickered over to Miguel and Lawrence, and then he looked out at the crowd. He could feel the weight of their judgment, but instead of anger, he felt an odd sense of peace.

"Yes," Klaus said finally, his voice firm but calm, "I dropped out of school."

His confession sent another wave of murmurs through the ballroom, but Klaus didn't flinch. He stood tall, his posture relaxed yet commanding.

"I had no choice but to leave school," he continued, his gaze steady on Miguel. "Not because I wasn't capable of learning, but because life doesn't always go as planned. My mother needed me. My family needed me. And sometimes, responsibilities come before personal dreams."

His words had a ripple effect through the crowd. Some of the young warriors began to look at him with newfound respect, while others still wore expressions of confusion.

"And despite that," Klaus added, his voice growing stronger, "I stand here today, not because of a fancy education, but because of hard work, perseverance, and the will to survive. School doesn't define a person. Your actions do."

Miguel scoffed but remained silent this time, realizing the crowd was beginning to lean in Klaus's favor. Lawrence's smirk had faded as well, and he looked less sure of himself now.

Klaus turned to face Lawrence again, a small smile on his lips. "So, Lawrence, if you think education alone gives you the right to look down on others, you're mistaken. Life isn't about who can recite the most facts or who can throw around the biggest words. It's about who can stand tall when the world tries to knock them down."

The room was quiet now, all eyes on Klaus. Even those who had doubted him were starting to see him in a new light. The tension from before had shifted into something else—an odd mix of admiration and respect.

Lawrence, clearly rattled by Klaus's composure, opened his mouth to retort but seemed to think better of it. Instead, he crossed his arms, looking away as if he had lost interest in the conversation.

Klaus, satisfied that his point had been made, let out a slow breath.

A few moments later, one of the young ladies from the back of the room broke the silence. "I think Klaus is right," she said quietly, but her voice carried. "School or no school, look at what he's accomplished. That speaks louder than anything else."

Her comment sparked a ripple of agreement through the crowd. Even those who had been skeptical moments before were now nodding.

"He's faced Tier 5 monsters and lived to tell the tale," someone else added. "That's more than most of us can say."

As the murmur of voices grew, Miguel and Lawrence both looked increasingly uncomfortable. What had started as an attempt to undermine Klaus had backfired spectacularly.

The duel hadn't even started yet and Lawrence could sense something that made him a little rattled.

"Alright everyone, Lawrence Kain has challenged Klaus to a Verbal duel and per the rules, the challenger will start. Now, I know many of you are hoping to see some action, well, this is another form of action that we all can learn from.

The rules are simple, a case study will be given and you two will banter on it, the one to overpower his opponent with his words wins.

If you are losing, don't resort to violence since that will be seen as going against the rules and you will be expelled from the gathering" Emily, Lily's sister said stepping in as referee. It's common to have some of these duels in gatherings like this, so Lawrence challenging Klaus was normal, however, everyone knew this was an attempt to humiliate Klaus.

"Now, the case study:"