

### Chapter 2893 Someone Must Step Forward

Once everyone had settled down, Paintaker straightened his patched robe. Then, he clasped his hands and stepped forward, saying, "Respected One, I am Paintaker, a disciple of Kurt from Southcloud Temple. I respectfully request entrance into the mountain."

If Matthew had been there, he'd have been taken aback by Paintaker's astonishing transformation. Before, Paintaker avoided violence and wouldn't exploit his sect's reputation like this.

Even Paintaker had yet to notice this change in himself. After Matthew guided him following his failure to protect Lola, Paintaker became better at assessing situations and empathizing with others.

Upon the utterance of those words, a gentle breeze swept through the previously serene forest, accompanied by an otherworldly voice. "Present the Sacred Mountain Stone Token for entry!" The tone was firm, leaving no room for negotiation.

A palpable tension filled the air with each word, quickening the pulse and making every breath seem heavier. At that instant, the weight of Mortimer's caution became clear.

A sense of dread tightened as they admired the keeper's dominance. They couldn't shake the fear of what awaited them if they failed to gain entry to the Sacred Mountain, with enemies drawing closer from behind.

As despair enveloped everyone, Sasha, who had been silent until then, suddenly stepped forward. Then, she walked toward the abyss-like boundary.

Instantly, a mountain-like pressure forced her to kneel. At the same time, an otherworldly voice echoed again and warned, "Take another step, and you will die!"

Despite the looming danger, she showed no sign of fear. Instead, she said, "Respected keeper, I am Sasha Cunningham. I come to the Sacred Mountain with no ill intent. My husband, Matthew Larson, vanished a few days ago. I only seek to learn if he is within the mountain. If not, we will leave immediately."

After all, this was their last hope. If Matthew was inside the mountain, there might still be a chance for their salvation. Otherwise, they could only resign themselves to their fate.

As soon as she spoke, the oppressive atmosphere seemed to ease. "Are you truly Matthew's wife? If you deceive us, there will be no leniency."

Her eyes gleamed with hope upon hearing that. She was convinced that her husband must be inside the mountain.

"If I'm deceiving you, may lightning strike me!"

After Sasha's declaration, there was silence from the other party, and the tension in the air dissipated. This brought hope to Shawn and the others.

Eventually, the otherworldly voice spoke again. "However, rules must be upheld. Who among you will endure a strike from me? If you can endure it, I will grant you passage."

Upon hearing this, Paintaker wasted no time and stepped forward. "Respected One, allow me to bear this strike!"

With his hands clasped together, a burst of golden light materialized behind him. It formed an identical seated Buddha statue, distinguishable only by its closed eyes.

The injured felt a soothing sensation wash over them with the appearance of the Buddha statue. Shawn marveled as his wounds began to heal under the golden glow. Additionally, Paintaker's posture at this moment perfectly matched those stone statues he had seen in the village.

Paintaker, who now embodied physical and spiritual strength, commanded respect and admiration from those around him. It starkly contrasted the intimidating aura of the keeper. The distinction between them was clear as day.

"He is truly worthy of being a disciple of the Southcloud Temple. His compassion and benevolence are remarkable!" Even the keeper couldn't help but express admiration.