

A WARRIOR UNDEFEATABLE

Chapter 5161 Getting Injured

The crash of the shattered blades still echoed when a golden beam roared skyward from the hall, tearing through the brooding clouds.

Mid-air, it exploded into tens of thousands of shards that poured down like a torrential storm upon Jared and Everett.

Jared's eyes flashed. He drew the Dragonslayer Sword without hesitation, its steel gleaming cold.

With a thunderous shout, he drove his spiritual energy to the limit, unleashing a matching storm of sword lights.

The twin tempests collided, drowning heaven and earth in blinding radiance as shockwaves ripped outward.

Stones tore free of the ground, whirled aloft, then slammed back to earth.

After that brief, ferocious clash, every sword light vanished, leaving only ruin behind.

Wasting no time, Jared dragged Everett inside the hall.

Yet once across the threshold, they found it utterly empty—save for broken pillars and shattered walls, not a soul remained.

"How is this even possible? That Ten Thousand Sword Array was strong enough to flatten a city—why is there no one around?" Everett blurted. His face had gone sheet-white, and the words trembled with naked confusion and fear.

Jared's brows knitted so tightly they almost touched. His eyes swept the silent hall, every nerve on edge. He said quietly, "Someone is pulling the strings from the shadows. We just haven't spotted them yet."

While he spoke, he pushed his spiritual sense outward in a wide, invisible wave, hoping to sniff out the hidden master. As that probing consciousness glided through every corner, it brushed against something strange at the very heart of the chamber—a stone statue.

The figure stood motionless,

weathered by ages, an ancient sword held with both hands as though it had sworn an eternal vigil. Crack riddled its rough surface, time worn gouges crossing like a web of

scars, yet the simple blade it gripped glimmered faintly, as though an endless reservoir of power slumbered inside the dull metal.

Jared's heart skipped. He focused his spiritual sense on the

statue-and the impossible

happened. The once-lifeless eye

flashed with razor light, stone joints grinding awake. In the next breath, the sword lashed out like lightning, stabbing straight for Jared's chest.

Reflexes honed by countless battles took over. The Dragonslayer Sword whipped up to intercept.

Clang!

Sparks sprayed everywhere. The impact slammed through Jared's arms, a

sledgehammer of force that left his hands numb. Damn, this thing hits harder than

I expected!

The stone golem pressed its

advantage, its swordwork shifting and swelling like a living tide. Every cut carried a murderous sword. intent meant to slice him in two. Jared answered blow for blow, the Dragonslayer Sword sweeping arcs of silver light as he unleashed every refined form he knew.

But sheer skill could not bridge the gulf in raw might. Stroke by stroke, the statue drove him backward. Then its tempo doubled. Sword shadows overlapped in a dizzying net; one misstep and he felt stone steel kiss flesh.

Thin cuts opened across his ribs and shoulder. Blood seeped through his clothes, blooming crimson roses against the fabric. Jared reeled, shocked-his body had been tempered countless times and was hard as fine steel. Yet a statue had injured him with ease.

On the sidelines, Everett's guts twisted with helplessness. He longed to charge in, yet knew he would only become a liability. All he could do was shout encouragement and keep a wary eye on the surroundings in case another threat appeared.

"Jared drew a deep breath, forcing himself to be calm. If this drags on, I'm dead. Think, Jared, think.

While dodging the relentless blade, he studied the statue's technique. Beneath the exquisite façade, he detected minute flaws-barely perceptible hitches in footwork, infinitesimal pauses at the end of a thrust."

Seizing one such pause, he gathered every ounce of power; the Dragonslayer Sword blazed, hurling a gigantic sword shadow toward the golem.

Chapter 5162 The Nine Shadows Technique Is Countered

The sword shadow struck home yet the sword failed to pierce. Jared's face went rigid. The Dragonslayer Sword was a spiritual sword, able to cleave iron like warm butter; stone should have crumbled. Instead, the blade skidded off as if striking tempered steel.

While shock jolted through him, the statue's sword darted for his abdomen. Jared kicked off the floor, flying backward. But the stone golem burst forward with uncanny speed.

Thud!

He landed dozens of meters away, only to feel fresh warmth spilling down his chest-another wound, shallow but bleeding freely.

"Damn it, what is this thing?" He could not stop the curse. I'm supposed to be untouchable in the Third Heaven, yet I can't even handle a lump of rock? Is someone controlling the golem, or has it developed a will of its own?

He wiped blood from his chin, eyes hardening. "The Nine Shadows sword technique..." It was time to call on his trump card. Matching sword for sword, Nine Shadows was perfect-because it gave him eight extra blades on demand.

One breath later, eight perfect duplicates of him fanned out, encircling the statue. The stone golem showed no flicker of emotion. Emotion, after all, required a heart. It simply shifted stance-and its swordwork changed again. The pattern grew eerie, the sword intent harsher, as though the very air had turned to knives.

Jared felt as if he had plunged into an ocean of blades. From every direction, the stone golem's sword shadows stabbed, slashed, pierced. He had eight bodies, yet each clone was already straining to parry an unending flood of strikes.

For an instant, a chill far colder than the bleeding cuts slid down his spine. There are only eight of me-yet it feels like that statue fills the entire hall, thrusting a sword through every inch of space at every single heartbeat...

His mind whirled, searching for a crack in the impossible onslaught, even as each shadow clone fought desperately merely to stay whole.

Jared muttered through clenched teeth, "Why does that brute always find a way to nullify me?"

He could not fathom it. Even when he unleashed Nine Shadows with the Dragonslayer Sword, the stone golem still pinpointed a flaw and ripped his move apart.

Running out of strength, Jared was forced to recall his shadow clones; each one drew upon the same reservoir of power, and that reservoir was draining fast.

"Fine, let's settle this head-on!" he roared, gathering every last shred of energy. A monumental arc of sword energy swept from his blade,

howling through the hall and tearing the air itself.

The stone golem sensed the incoming force and raised its own sword to meet him.

Boom!

A deafening blast rippled outward. The shock wave flung Jared clear across the marble floor; he landed hard, the impact rattling his bones.

He pushed himself up, wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, and locked his gaze on the stone golem, eyes burning with unbreakable resolve.

Once more, he charged. The Dragonslayer Sword whirled faster and faster, weaving a lethal web of silver light.

The golem answered stroke for

stroke, its granite blade forming a seamless curtain that no wind could slip through. Steel rang against stone in a ferocious exchange.

In the blink of an eye, they had traded a hundred blows. Chest heaving, Jared staggered back a step.

"I'm calling a time-out. How about we both catch our breath?" He forced a grin, panting.

In truth, he had almost nothing left in his body, while the golem, being lifeless stone, possessed no concept of exhaustion.

Yet, to Jared's surprise, the golem actually lowered its sword and became perfectly still, as though his suggestion were an order it must obey.

Delighted by the unexpected reprieve, Jared pulled out a handful of pills and shoved them into his mouth without ceremony, letting the medicinal warmth race through his body.

Everett skirted around the inert guardian and hurried to his side. "Mr. Chance, are you all right?"

"I'll live. But that stone freak is downright uncanny." Jared exhaled a long, shaky breath and cursed.

Chapter 5163 Gaining Enlightenment

Jared's gaze settled on the stone golem's sword, its edge glinting cold and sharp. Frustration churned inside him—how could an inanimate lump of rock reduce the so-called invincible champion of the Third Heaven to such a sorry state?

"Still, the guardian's sudden halt felt less like mercy and more like an invitation.

Maybe this is a turning point."

Everett, face lined with worry, whispered, "We could retreat and figure out another plan."

Jared dabbed the drying blood from his lip but did not look away from the golem. "No. There's something hidden inside that statue—I can feel it."

He swallowed his last pill, feeling its power surge along his channels.

Moments later, he drew a steady breath, tightened his grip on the Dragonslayer Sword, and advanced again—but this time, he refrained from an immediate assault. Instead he adopted a cautious guard and began to observe.

The golem's swordwork remained as fierce as ever, each cut following an indescribable rhythm, as if every stroke resonated with the very laws of heaven and earth.

Gradually, Jared discerned that what appeared haphazard was in fact a subtle trajectory: every swing of the stone blade painted a fragment of a grand design, each pattern hinting at a deeper sword intent.

A flash of insight burst across his mind. Is this guardian meant to test us-or guide us toward a higher realm of sword intent?

Excitement replaced frustration. Jared no longer regarded the stone golem as an enemy but as a priceless instructor.

He began to mimic its movements, searching for the heartbeat inside each arc. At first, his imitations were stiff; the golem's counterstrikes forced him into awkward retreats. Yet with every attempt, the rhythm seeped a little further into his muscles.

During one defensive exchange, Jared instinctively traced the guardian's trajectory and let his own blade follow that curve. To his astonishment, the borrowed motion not only neutralized the incoming strike but carried a faint counterforce back toward the golem's chest.

His pulse leaped. That's it!

From that moment, he threw himself into the "sparring lesson" with wholehearted devotion. Every clash, every deflection, every glimmer of stone against steel fed his growing comprehension.

Time slipped by unnoticed. The Dragonslayer Sword's aura grew refined, its edge now humming with a grace that went beyond brute power. Where before his technique was a union of strength and skill, it now resonated with true sword intent.

He summoned his eight shadow clones again. This time, their blades danced with eerie unpredictability, echoing the golem's mysteries until hall and guardian alike were engulfed in a whirlwind of interlaced sword lights.

Yet even as his mastery deepened, Jared sensed that the golem still held transformations he had not touched at times it raged like a storm at others it flowed like a silent brook. Each shift granted fresh insight, and he wove those revelations into Nine Shadows, smoothing and perfecting his own art.

Then, without warning, the golem unveiled an entirely new sequence: sword shadows filled the air like falling snow, sealing the very space around him.

Jared could barely hold his ground inside the swirling storm of sword shadows. The instant he felt his strength slipping and believed defeat was inevitable, a sudden spark of inspiration flared across his mind. He seized that flash, drew on every fragment of sword intent he had comprehended during his earlier clash with the stone golem, then blended those fragments into a technique unlike anything he had attempted before. A single, dazzling ray burst from his blade, tore straight through the cage of phantasmal steel, and drove head-on toward the golem. Sensing the strike's terrifying might, the stone guardian lifted its sword in a hurried block. The two forces collided with a roar that shook the hall far more violently than any previous exchange-yet this time, Jared did not fly backward.

Chapter 5164 Great Fortune

He remained rooted to the spot, his chest heaving as a tidal wave of power surged through his body, and joy blossomed in his heart. He knew he had just broken through a towering barrier: his sword intent had climbed to a brand-new height.

Blades kept crossing, and with every breath, Jared's understanding deepened. He discovered that sword intent was not merely destructive strength; it was a communion with heaven and earth, with rivers, forests, and life itself. The golem's varied techniques were nothing less than physical expressions of that very communion.

In one particularly ferocious clash, the Dragonslayer Sword rang out in a clear, joyful cry and erupted in brilliant light-the first time the weapon had reacted so since acknowledging Jared as its master. He understood at once: as his comprehension soared, so too did his sword's latent power. From that moment, he no longer regarded the fight as a struggle for survival, but as a rare chance to temper himself. With each exchange, he shattered another personal limit, letting fresh insight flow into his swordsmanship until his style was transformed beyond recognition.

Everett watched from the edge of the hall, thunderstruck. Never in his life had he seen anyone face such mortal peril while still leaping from plateau to plateau of enlightenment. Staring at Jared's back, he muttered to himself, This man is destined for greatness the rest of us can only imagine.

Time slipped by. Jared's sword intent swelled to a fearsome realm; each sweep of his blade seemed fused with sky and earth, and the very space around him trembled whenever he attacked. Though the golem's art remained formidable, it could no longer hem him in as it once had. Then, gathering every revelation he had harvested so far, Jared unleashed a single stroke that blazed across the hall like a river of stars. The stone guardian met it with all its strength, yet the cosmic torrent crashed through and split its granite flesh with countless cracks.

Jared's heart leapt only to stop when a radiant glow burst from the fractured body. As the light faded, the golem's sword floated free, streaked through the air, and planted itself upright at Jared's feet.

Bewildered, he closed his fingers

around the hilt. A vast ocean of sword intent flooded his

consciousness, and in that instant, he understood: the stone golem was no mere automaton but a sword spirit set here to test intruders and guide them toward loftier realms of the blade. Gratitude welled within him. He bowed deeply toward the crumbling statue. "Sir, thank you for your guidance. I will never forget this."

When he straightened, he lifted the ancient weapon and held it beside the Dragonslayer Sword. The glow within the hall dimmed; the golem dissolved into a flurry of fireflies that drifted into the ancient blade. The Dragonslayer Sword quivered, and an archaic pattern surfaced along its length, pulsing with quiet light. Two swords in hand, Jared felt a boundless sword intent rushing through every vein, washing away the exhaustion of battle.

"Mr. Chance, your sword intent..." Everett spoke in a hushed voice, eyes wide. He could plainly sense that Jared now moved in harmony with the very laws of the

sword; even the slightest gesture carried an indescribable rhythm.

"That guardian turned out to be a sword spirit, Jared said, running a thumb along the Dragonslayer Sword's edge while it sang a clear, lingering note. "Looks like I stumbled into unimaginable fortune." He slid both weapons into their sheaths. "Come on. We've delayed long enough-I'm starting to worry about Flaxseed and the others."

They had barely taken a step when they noticed the walls around them. Ancient diagrams of sword techniques covered the stone from floor to ceiling, each stroke of the carvings brimming with silent, ageless power.

Chapter 5165 My Responsibility

Jared paced slowly through the grand hall, and with every step, another spark of understanding flashed across his mind. His Nine Shadows sword technique kept rising in his heart, subtly tinged now with the lingering grace of the guardian's movements.

Outside, cold moonlight spilled over the mountain forest-the sky had already sunk into night.

"Damn it, why isn't that kid Jared out yet? Don't tell me something went wrong in there." Flaxseed rubbed his pointed goatee in agitation, pacing beneath the trees while the charms pouch at his waist clinked with every fretful stride.

"Mr. Flaxseed, please calm down. Jared is favored by destiny itself; nothing truly harmful could happen to him."

Jemina stood in a flowing teal robe, a faint worry furrowing her brow, yet her posture remained as composed as ever.

Jhaelyn tightened her grip on the sword in her hand. Moonlight flickered along the blade and cut a silver edge across her tense profile. She muttered, "We wait another half an hour-if he still hasn't come out, I'm going in after him!"

She had barely finished when two silhouettes drifted into view. Jared emerged shoulder to shoulder with Everett, the Dragonslayer Sword blazing in his grasp like a river of stars.

"Jared!" Jhaelyn's eyes lit up. She strode forward, sword at the ready, and scanned him from head to toe. "Are you hurt? And this sword intent around you... it feels completely different."

Flaxseed squinted, tapped his knuckles together as though performing a quick divination, then yelped, "Mercy me! Did you break through in there? Your sword intent isn't just a little stronger-it's leagues above what it was!"

Jemina stepped closer, studying Jared in detail before giving a thoughtful nod. "Indeed. His sword intent has transformed-there's a faint resonance with heaven and earth itself. Seems things inside were not dangerous at all, but a blessing in disguise."

Jared smiled and gave them a concise account of how the stone guardian turned out to be a sword spirit that guided him toward a higher realm of sword intent.

Everyone clicked their tongues in admiration when the tale was done.

"So, that ancient blade in your hand is the sword spirit's true form?" Flaxseed pointed at the weapon. The sword was pitch-black from tip to guard, its hilt engraved with a blurred totem that breathed an icy chill.

"Exactly." Jared lifted the archaic sword. The metal was freezing to the touch, yet it pulsed in silent harmony with the Dragonslayer Sword "It bears no formal name, but its boundless sword intent_

complements the Dragonslayer Sword perfectly."

"Jhaelyn, I'm giving it to you." With that, he held the black sword out to her.

Even before her fingertips brushed the blade, she felt a condensed, weightier echo of the Dragonslayer Sword's sword intent. Instinctively, she took half a step back, brows knitting. "Jared, this sword is a sword spirit incarnate-it could boost your cultivation tremendously. I—"

"My woman wields my sword. That's only right."

His tone brooked no refusal. He pressed the sword into her palms. The weapon felt heavier than it looked; a cool current coursed through her body and stirred an answering resonance in her own sword core.

Startled, Jhaelyn lowered her gaze. Light flickered through the blurred totem, and to her amazement, it aligned with passages of the very sword technique she practiced.

"But this sword-"

"No buts." Jared closed his hand over hers, guiding her fingers around the hilt. His eyes, lit by the moon beyond the hall, left no room for argument.

Heat touched her cheeks. From the corner of her eye, she noticed Everett's amused half-smile, Flaxseed twirling his beard in glee, and Jemina nodding placid approval. Any lingering reluctance melted away.

She drew a deep breath, tightened

her grip on the ancient blade, and let

its grand sword intent flood her

senses. "Very well. I'll accept it. If one day I prove unworthy, I'll return it to you myself."

"Foolish girl." Jared ruffled her hair.

"Hey, Jared, don't play favorites." Flaxseed chuckled. "Jemina deserves a present too—she's your woman as well. You can't charm a lady and then pretend she doesn't exist!"

"Of course. The next treasure I find goes to Jemina." Jared's smile was calm. "Let's head for the Seventh Hall—perhaps it's hiding something worthwhile." Together, they set off toward the Seventh Hall.

Chapter 5166 No Grudge

The setting sun bled across the gates of the Seventh Hall, splashing the mountainside with scarlet.

Jared arrived with his companions. Hands clasped behind his back, he stood at the forefront while Flaxseed and the others followed at a respectful distance. His slight frame cast a long silhouette in the evening glow, yet the pressure that rolled off him felt unstoppable.

Cultivators from the Azurecloud Sect watched with a mixture of frenzy and reverence; they sensed an imminent battle and knew they were about to witness another miracle.

Step by unhurried step, Jared walked straight toward the lair of the Seventh Hall's overlord.

"Mr. Chance, you truly plan to storm the Seventh Hall alone?" Everett swallowed hard, staring at the mist-shrouded main peak. His voice trembled. "Mr. Saleto, the overlord of the Seventh Hall, is at the Top Level Wandering Immortal Realm Level Nine, and we don't even know how many other Wandering Immortal Realm Level Nine cultivators he's got guarding the place..."

Jared did not bother to turn around. The wind carried his lightly mocking reply, "Top Level Wandering Immortal Realm Level Nine? To me, that's just a slightly larger ant." He

had slain the Five Wraiths and absorbed new sword intent from the Sword Sect-now his strength felt terrifying even to himself.

With that, his figure blurred into a streak of light that shot toward the summit.

The defensive formation before the mountain gate flared awake, countless runes weaving a net of light to bar his way. Jared's lips curved in a cold smile. He flicked a finger, releasing a thread of near-invisible chaotic energy. Like an unseen pair of shears, it sliced the Mountain Defense Formation to shreds.

Boom! The explosion of the formation echoed through the entire Seventh Hall. Startled disciples looked up from their cultivation just in time to see a lone intruder blast through every barrier and crash straight into Saleto's hall.

Inside, Saleto sat cross-legged, racking his brains for a way to report to the Fourth Hall. Since returning from the Eighth Hall, he had remained behind closed doors -the shock Jared had given him was simply too great, and he still had no idea how to explain it to Beatra.

Suddenly, the crystal dome above the hall exploded. Amid a rain of shards, Jared descended like a deity of war, landing steadily at the center and sweeping an indifferent gaze over him.

"Mr. Saleto, enjoying your peace and quiet?" Though Jared's voice was unhurried, it thundered in Saleto's ears like a bolt from the blue.

Saleto snapped his eyes open. The moment he saw Jared's youthful face, a face now steeped in bottomless murderous intent, his heart clenched so hard he nearly slid off the woven cushion beneath him.

"J-Jared! Why have you barged into the Seventh Hall?" Saleto stammered.

Jared's smile was razor-thin. "Why do you think?"

"I have no grievance with you. I don't wish to be your enemy, and I hope you will grant me the same courtesy, Saleto pleaded, struggling to keep his voice steady. "Whatever grudge you carry with the Celestial Palace has nothing to do with me."

He would have given anything not to fight Jared, as he was worried he wouldn't win.

"Is that so? If you want no enmity with me, why did you go to the Eighth Hall? Why attack my people there?" Jared demanded.

"I visited only to see you!" Saleto blurted. "I was acting on Lady Beatrara's orders —to investigate your background, nothing more."

Jared's gaze narrowed. He had not expected even the Fourth Hall's overlord to take notice of him. Saleto alone stands at the Top Level Wandering Immortal Realm Level Nine-what kind of monster is Beatra?

"I don't care whether you wish to be my enemy," Jared said, each word like frost. "I'm here to wipe you

out-unless you resign from the net

Celestial Palace of your own accord. I've already obliterated the Barbaric Clan, the Destiny Sect, and Bloodshadow Palace. Anyone who offends me pays in full."

Saleto's brow knotted. "That's going too far. Do you really think I fear you?" Yet even as he spoke, terror gnawed at him; quitting the Celestial Palace meant certain death by morning.

"If you're not afraid," Jared teased, "then attack me."

Chapter 5167 The Consequences

Saleto bit his lip and formed a rapid series of seals, barking with hollow bravado, "Hall Guardians, seize him!"

Before the echo of his shout faded, eight surging auras erupted from the four corners of the chamber. Eight Wandering Immortal Realm Level Eight guardians leapt forward, divine weapons gleaming, closing in on Jared in an eight-trigram formation. Their eyes were icy, their orders clear-kill all intruders.

"Eight small fry think they can stop me?" Jared chuckled softly; he could not even be bothered to draw his sword.

He flickered through the formation like a wraith. With every casual lift of his hand, a guardian screamed, flew backward, weapon shattering, spiritual veins snapping, crashing to the marble floor-fate uncertain.

Within mere heartbeats, the eight guardians lay ruined in a heap, limbs askew.

Saleto's pupils contracted; all color drained from his face. How can anyone wield such terrifying might? Eight Wandering Immortal Realm Level Eight guardians- reduced to clay pigeons!

"W-Who are you really?" His voice quavered as he edged back, fingers sneaking toward the Storage Ring at his belt. "Do you understand the price of defying the Celestial Palace?"

"The price?" Jared advanced, eyes glittering like ice shards. "Ever since I crossed the Tenth Hall, I've understood the price."

merge "Your tiny Seventh Hall, the whole Celestial Palace, the entire celestial race-push me far enough and I'll erase every last one."

"Such arrogance!"

Saleto whipped out a small golden banner. Stars were embroidered across its surface, and the cloth radiated cosmic power. "Jared, don't overrate yourself. Taste my Stellar Banner!"

He swung the flag. Instantly, countless golden phantoms burst forth, howling as they flooded toward Jared. The very air thickened; heaven and earth changed color. This was Saleto's trump card, once used to slaughter peers of equal strength.

Jared only glanced at it, lifted one finger, and flicked.

Clang!

A pure, ringing sword cry split the hall. A thread-thin lance of golden sword energy shot from his fingertip, small as a hair, yet packed with the force of creation itself. The swarm of golden phantoms melted like frost in sunlight. Even the Stellar Banner wailed under the strain; its fabric split, dissolving into ash.

Saleto's hand shook violently around the bare flagpole. Terror-raw and absolute -filled his eyes. A thousand years of blood and effort refining that magical item... yet it was destroyed by a single flick of his finger?

"N-No... impossible!" he howled, and in desperation, he parted his lips, drawing a sharp breath. From the center of his brow spun out a tiny, spinning golden relic.

The relic flared with dazzling brilliance, and in the blink of an eye, it congealed before him as an enormous golden shield. Ancient characters crawled across the surface like living fire, releasing a solemn, boundless holiness that seemed to fill the entire hall.

Saleto roared, half-mad, as though

he had seized the very last straw that could save his life. "This is the Indestructible Golden Relic I wrested from the Western Holy Kingdom! Even a Top Level Wanderingo Immortal Realm Level Nine

cultivator can't break it. Jared, what

do you possibly have that can shatter my defense?"

He looked deranged, bellowing as if the shout itself might hold death at bay.

Jared studied the glittering shield, the corner of his mouth lifting in a faintly amused arc.

He took no weapon from his Storage Ring. He merely extended his right hand, palm up, and pressed forward toward the glowing barrier.

The instant his palm touched the shield, there was no earth-shaking thunder- only a muted crack, deep and final.

The so-called Indestructible Golden Relic that even Top Level Wandering Immortal Realm Level Nine cultivators could not break splintered like glass. From the point of contact, hairline fractures spider-webbed outward; one heartbeat later, the whole thing exploded with a brittle bang!

With a mournful cry, the golden relic dimmed and shot back into Saleto's brow, its light on the verge of collapsing altogether.

Chapter 5168 What Do You Want

Saleto stared stupidly at the ruins of his primordial artifact. It felt as though lightning had slammed straight through him; his legs nearly buckled beneath the shock.

He met Jared's eyes-eyes that looked as if they could see through everything— and for the first time, despair flooded his heart.

What... what kind of monster is this man?

"Mr. Saleto," Jared drawled, voice lazy as though watching a dull play, "any other tricks? Don't keep them tucked away-show me everything. I'm curious how much power the Seventh Hall can muster at its peak."

"You-you've gone too far!"

Driven to desperation, Saleto's gaze turned vicious. "Since you're so eager to die, blame no one when I invoke a forbidden secret art!"

He bit through the tip of his tongue. A mouthful of blood essence splattered across his chest, and his hands blurred through an intricate, unfathomable seal.

In an instant, his aura surged. His already Top Level cultivation strained toward an outright breakthrough. Golden flames coiled around him, and eerie markings crawled across his face.

"That's... the Divine Sacrifice!" Jhaelyn gasped, horror sharpening every syllable.

As a member of the Celestial Palace herself, she understood all too well how terrifying that rite could be.

Flaxseed's eyes narrowed, and he moved to help, but Jared stopped him with a single look.

Instead of fear, Jared's expression showed lively interest. "Oh? Divine Sacrifice? Now that sounds entertaining."

At that moment, Saleto resembled a war god, torrents of golden fire erupting skyward.

With a guttural roar, he hurled a fist straight at Jared.

He had poured every drop of burning life force into that blow. Space itself twisted beneath the gale; a phantom deity gathered on his knuckles, radiating annihilating might.

"Jared, die!"

Yet, faced with a punch that would have made any Wandering Immortal blanch, Jared merely lifted his left hand, fingers spread, and reached toward the oncoming force at what looked like a leisurely pace.

Pop!

There was no imagined cataclysm, only a soft sound like a bubble bursting. Jared's palm closed easily around Saleto's fist. The world-shattering power

vanished in his hand as though swallowed by the sea.

Saleto was rendered speechless.

His eyes bulged, staring at his trapped fist.

As life ebbed from him like a

receding tide, he felt the boundless power in Jared's palm—a power that could devour everything. Despair drowned him like a tsunami.

Impossible...

Even after burning my life force and unleashing my final strike, I couldn't so much as touch his sleeve?

Jared watched the terror contorting Saleto's face and let an icy curve lift his lips. "So, Mr. Saleto, was that truly your full strength?"

He flicked his wrist.

Crack!

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Agony ripped through Saletto's arm as every bone shattered. He screamed, and Jared casually flung him away. Saletto slammed into a stone pillar with a thunderous thud.

"Gah-"

Blood gushed from Saletto's mouth. The life-burning technique collapsed in chaos, his aura withering to nothing.

He clawed his way out of the rubble and watched Jared advance one step at a time, terror and hopelessness swallowing his eyes.

Only now did he understand: the gap between them was not merely one of realm —it was the abyss between an ant and a dragon.

"You... what do you want?"

His voice broke, half-sobbing, stripped of all former authority. "I-I'm sorry! I'll apologize to

Eighth Hall! I'll begove!

forgiveness! Please... spare me..."

The other members of the Seventh Hall lowered their heads in silence when they saw their overlord grovel.

A moment ago, they had considered rushing forward together; after witnessing Jared's true power, every last one of them wilted.

Chapter 5169 What Was The Point Of Apologies

Though Jared looked like a mere Level Five Wandering Immortal, the force he had just unleashed clearly belonged to the Earthly Immortal Realm.

Jared stepped up to the man and gazed down from a loftier height, studying the once-invincible Top Level Wandering Immortal Realm cultivator who now groveled like a homeless cur begging for his life. Not a ripple stirred in Jared's eyes.

"An apology?"

Jared crouched, hooked a finger beneath Saleto's chin, and murmured with faint mockery, "If an apology could settle everything, why would anyone need power?"

Saleto's entire body trembled; his face was as white as parchment. He knew he was unlikely to leave this place alive.

"I... I serve the Celestial Palace... If you kill me... the Celestial Palace will hunt you to the ends of the earth..." he stammered, making one last, feeble struggle.

"The Celestial Palace?"

Jared let out a light laugh, rose, and brushed imaginary dust from his sleeves. "To me, the Celestial Palace is nothing more than an oversized anthill."

"Jared, you may have offended the Celestial Palace, but not everyone in it. Lady Beatra of the Fourth Hall told me only to investigate you-she specifically ordered me to avoid conflict."

"If you hadn't kept forcing the issue, I would never have lifted a hand," Saleto added helplessly.

He looked at Jared with resignation while he spoke.

Jared suddenly remembered what Braxton of the Eighth Hall had told him: inside the Celestial King Palace, two factions wrestled for power-the Conservatives and the Reformers.

"So this Lady Beatra-how strong is her faction inside the Celestial Palace? I've heard the organization is already split down the middle," Jared asked.

Saleto gave a bitter laugh. "For those of us beneath the Third Heaven, it makes no difference. Whichever side issues an order, we obey."

merge "Still, Lady Beatra is kind. She has long tried to scrap the old laws so our clan can marry outsiders."

merge "She herself is a female cultivator; perhaps that's why she understands their pain. Among the so-called celestials, women exist only to serve the men— and they're forbidden to wed beyond the clan."

merge "That single rule has torn countless lovers apart and
condemned who knows howl

women to punishment," he said with
sigh.

When he finished, loneliness clouded his face; clearly, he carried heavy memories.

Jared had not expected the Fourth Hall's overlord to be a woman, and judging from Saleto's words, she wasn't after his life.

Back in the Eighth Hall, Saleto could have destroyed everything while Jared was gone.

Yet he had stayed his hand-obviously following Beatra's order to investigate, not provoke.

"So she's a Reformer," Jared concluded, then eyed Saleto. "Tell me has that rule hurt you too?"

Tears streaked down Saleto's cheeks. Between sobs, he
confessed, "Centuries ago / net

human woman. We were devoted, but clan law barred us."

merge "We're all human, yet they slap the 'celestial' label on us, leaving us no freedom to choose whom we love."

merge "She finally left, and I... I've never taken another woman since."

Jared drew a deep breath. So the celestials are humans wrapped in fancy titles, he thought.

All that arrogance-yet none of it matters without true strength.

Still, he conceded, a few among them could see reality clearly.

If you have no power, what good are endless titles?

"Today, I'll spare your life," Jared said.

Saleto's head snapped up; hope flickered in his eyes.

"But," Jared's tone turned icy, "if you so much as glance at the Eighth fall again, I'll wipe your Seventh Hall

from the map."

"Never-never again!" Saleto vowed, shaking his head wildly.

Chapter 5170 Jared Is Wounded

"Make sure you keep that promise," Jared said coldly.

The words had barely fallen when a wave of danger washed over him.

He jerked his head up. To the northwest, the horizon was swallowed by pitch-black gloom; churning clouds carried tens of thousands of soul fires, like the pupils of some vast creature staring at him from dozens of kilometers away.

Over the ruins of the Seventh Hall, nether energy boiled like ink.

Granny Deadclaw hovered in mid-air, the soul orbs between her talons blazing crimson and staining the sky a ghastly blood-red.

Her knife-like gaze slashed across the crowd and pinned itself to Jared.

"Hand over the token, and we'll let you die in one piece."

Her voice rasped like rusty iron scraping stone, each word steeped in chilly lethal intent.

Jared stood on the scorched earth, a faint, invisible aura coiling around him.

"Who are you people?" he asked.

"We're the Nether Duo. You killed Ghostmask and stole his token. Give it here, and we'll make your death a little easier," Lord Drowned Souls hissed, baring a mouthful of yellow teeth.

"What organization do you serve? And what in blazes is the Skyfall Grotto?" Jared demanded.

At the words "Skyfall Grotto," the Nether Duo visibly flinched.

"You little whelp, this isn't a question you get to ask. Hand over the token right now, or don't blame us for being rough!"

Granny Deadclaw's voice slithered across the ruined ground, icy and unmistakably lethal, as she threatened Jared.

Jared raised the Dragonslayer Sword and let a thin, wintry smile curl across his lips. "The token's on me. If you've got the nerve, come take it."

He had barely finished when Lord Drowned Souls' chain scythe screamed through the air toward him.

Netherfire coiled along the scythe's edge, carving a charred arc through the sky; even the air itself rippled in their wake.

Before the weapon's shriek had died, Jared shot sideways like an arrow loosed from the bowstring.

The scorched earth burst beneath

his toes, spider-web cracks radiating outward, while the Dragonslayer Sword, wrapped in razor-sharp sword intent, slashed up to meet the swing. The instant steel met scythe, the netherfire leapt onto the blade like a living thing, hissing and gnawing with a corrosive sizzle.

"Petty trick!"

With a twist of his wrist, Jared's sword intent surged; a blue light roared out like a dragon, hurling Lord Drowned Souls back several steps.

But before he could press the advantage, all ten of Granny Deadclaw's fingers flicked, hurling ten blood-red soul orbs. Each orb trailed a chorus of wailing spirits;

together they wove a scarlet net that

dropped toward Jared's head.

"Watch it! Those are Nether Soul-Eating Orbs!" Everett's horrified shout cut across the battlefield.

Jared's pupils tightened to pinpoints; in the same heartbeat, he triggered his Golem Body, golden radiance armoring him head to toe.

The orbs struck that golden light and detonated. Crimson light burst outward, and

countless phantom faces clawed free of the glare, gnashing at his defense.

Ripples shuddered across the golden surface, thinning it before his eyes. "Boy, taste the rage of ten thousand dead souls!"

Lord Drowned Souls lunged again, grinning savagely, the chain coiling like a serpent for Jared's ankle.

At the same time, pitch-black talons solidified at Granny Deadclaw's fingertips, raking toward the center of his back with space-rending force.

Two fists could not block four hands-especially hands that had fought in perfect harmony for decades.

Jared dodged again and again, footwork flowing, the Dragonslayer Sword spinning an impenetrable

web. Even so, a lick of netherfire net

grazed his shoulder; his robe blackened in an instant, and cy negative energy burrowed through the wound into his meridians, making his movement stutter.

"Now!"

Cold light flashed in Granny Deadclaw's eyes. Ten soul orbs fused into one, morphing into a blood-red spear that stabbed for Jared's heart with earth- shattering momentum.

"Break!"

Jared roared, pouring every drop of spiritual energy into his sword. The blade erupted in a blinding azure blaze and clashed head-on with the spear.

Boom!

The explosion of power kicked up a storm of dust. Jared shot backward like a cut kite, slammed into a broken wall, and spat a mouthful of blood.