

A WARRIOR UNDEFEAT ABLE

Chapter 5229 Forced Into Servitude

"So that's how it fits together..." Jared's voice came low and steady, the words hanging in the charged air of the ruin. "The Fallen Immortal Valley does hide a tunnel to level five, and the only way to pry it open is by awakening the core ward sealed here. That's why every power risked the valley's curse. We were never the true quarry—they were after the doorway all along."

"Which means," Flaxseed rasped, frowning as the truth curdled in his gut, "we were bait from the first step, weren't we?"

"Almost certainly," Jared replied. "Lunaria and Seraphina must have known this method for ages. They announced a bounty on us just to lure the major factions inside and use our blood to spark the ward."

Before his words could fade, the sigils encircling the altar blazed alive. Light flared, and overhead a vast rift in space peeled open, exhaling the unmistakable breath of level five.

"The passage—it's opening!" Flaxseed shouted, excitement and terror tangling in his throat.

Jared's brow knit at once. He felt several brutal auras knifing toward them. Lunaria and Seraphina—every heartbeat told him they were moments away.

"Move—now!"

Without hesitation Jared seized Flaxseed's wrist, sprang upward, and plunged into the swirling rift. Only inside level five could they both outrun their hunters and uncover the truth of the Flaxseed clan's massacre.

The instant the two vanished, Lunaria and Seraphina burst into the clearing, faces lit with feverish delight. Seeing the passage yawning above, they vaulted in after their prey.

The spatial rift knitted shut behind them, and silence swept across the valley once more. Only the scattered bones and shattered relics whispered of what had taken place.

High over Darkwind Ridge in level five, space twisted like molten glass and spat Jared and Flaxseed out in a tumble. "Cough... cough..." They hit hard, hacking as the denser, richer energy of this realm flooded their lungs and set every vein thrumming.

"So this is level five?" Flaxseed wheezed, raking curious eyes across the alien sky.

Mountains dwarfed any they had known below, jagged crowns clawing at a violet-tinged firmament while raw spiritual energy rolled through the air like thunderclouds about to break.

"Yes, but we can't stand here gawking," Jared said, feeling his own reserves knit back together almost too fast to follow. "Lunaria could be on our heels any moment."

They had barely climbed to their feet when a murderous presence snapped onto them like a drawn bowstring.

Jared dragged Flaxseed to bolt-but

a spear of gold light slammed into the earth ahead, halting them. From its fading brilliance stepped a giant of a man, easily two meters tall, shoulders broad as city gates, a scar carving his face. The aura of a fifth tier Earthly Immortal Realm

cultivator rolled off him in punishing waves.

"You two crawled up from level four?" the stranger asked, his tone colder than iron as his eyes glittered with threat.

Jared's heart sank; they had landed straight under a predator's shadow.

"State your name and reason for blocking our path," Jared said, lifting the Dragonslayer Sword and meeting the giant's gaze without flinching.

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"No one talks to me that way on Darkwind Ridge," the burly cultivator scoffed, his voice rolling like distant thunder'am Ursan Blackbear, lord of this range. You two look new fresh pups from level four, am I right? Well, it just so happens I need two servants. Congratulations, you've been chosen." He swept an appraising glare over Flaxseed and Jared, then jabbed a thick thumb at a third man standing nearby. "And you, little wanderer-reaching level five on your own is impressive. Serve under me, and no one will dare bully you."

Flaxseed barked a laugh, the sound sharp as flint striking steel. "Dream on. We're no pushovers!"

Chapter 5230 Big Talk

"Serve you?" Jared snorted, lifting the Dragonslayer Sword so the moonlight shivered along its edge. "I wouldn't accept you as my errand boy. You're only at the fifth tier of Earthly Immortal Realm-hardly worth mentioning."

His words were no idle boast. Back on the Celestial Stairway he had pulled Kishor, Ararat, Zevon, Sidney, and others from the jaws of death—and every one of them had promised centuries of service in return.

Ursan's grin twisted into a snarl. "Big mouth," he growled. "Let's see if your spine is as strong as your tongue."

He blurred forward. A fist the size of a boulder whistled through the air, trailing a wake that shredded the night. Level-Five pressure slammed down like a falling mountain, squeezing the breath from Jared's lungs.

Jared raised his blade across his chest and braced for impact.

Clang!

Steel met flesh with a deafening crash. Shockwaves rippled over the ridge; dust whirled into smoky spirals. Jared's arms went numb, boots skidding backward across cracked stone. Blood jeweled the corner of his lips. Ursan halted, eyes widening a fraction. "Wandering Immortal Realm Level Seven? You took my punch and lived-credit where it's due." Then the derision returned. "But you're still an insect beneath my heel."

He charged again, fists raining down like a summer hailstorm. Jared parried, but fresh cuts blossomed across his arms and shoulders. Flaxseed tried to rush in, yet Ursan's crushing aura pinned him to the spot. He paced in tight circles, powerless and furious.

Just as Jared's knees began to buckle, a voice boomed from above. "Cub, you're mauling my benefactor-did you ask my permission?" A meteor of muscle and laughter crashed between the combatants. Nearly three meters tall, Kishor landed in a shockwave of broken stone, arms folded and smile fierce.

Blackbear's face drained of color. "K-Kishor? Why are you here?"

"Level five's a big place," Kishor replied with a shrug. "I go where I please. Reporting to you isn't on my list."

He turned, gentling his grin for

Jared. "It's been too long, Jared.

Holding up all right?" Jared stared at

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the giant before him, shock and gratitude flooding his chest. "Kishor? How did you find us-and when did you reach peak seventh tier of Earthly Immortal Realm?"

The new aura rolling off his old ally felt vast, a storm contained in mortal flesh.

Not so long ago, when Kishor stepped onto the Celestial Stairway, the ladder's crushing laws sealed away most of his strength and starved him of every last resource. Even then, he had clawed upward on willpower alone, a fact Jared could never forget.

Kishor threw back his head and laughed, the sound rolling across Darkwing Ridge like distant thunder. "It is a long story, my friend. Once slipped free of the Ethereal Realm, I headed straight for level five and buried myself in training. Who would have guessed I would bump into you this soon, Jared? And look at you," he went on, eyes gleaming with mischief and pride. "Still breaking realms ahead of schedule, still punching above your

tier like it is nothing. You reached level five while still in the Wandering Immortal Realm—now that is the stuff of legends."

"Hardly legendary," Jared answered, rubbing the back of his neck with a rueful smile. "Moments ago, I was a heartbeat from death."

Kishor's grin vanished. He pivoted toward Ursan, and the temperature seemed to plunge. "Blackbear," he said, each word coated in frost, "what, exactly, were you planning to do to Mr. Chance a moment ago?"

Ursan glanced from Kishor to Jared

and felt the ground sway beneath his feet. Kishor—seventh tier Earthly Immortal Realm—had just

addressed Jared as an equal, even as an old friend. The boast Jared made earlier no longer sounded like bluff. He stumbled backward, hands raised. "Kishor, do not act rashly! I am lord of Darkwind Ridge. I have powerful—"

"You could have the cosmos behind you and it would not matter." Kishor blurred forward. One iron fist hammered Ursan in the chest, launching him like a broken kite.