

A Warrior Undefeatable

chapter 5238

Inside the shattered throne hall of Blackshade Demon Palace the metallic smell of blood still clung to the stone like sweat to a dying man. Varek surveyed the sprawled bodies, then let his gaze drift toward the side-chamber where Jared had vanished; the politeness that had painted his features earlier was gone, replaced by a vulture's chill watchfulness. He straightened. Beneath the folds of his black cloak his fists whitened, and the supplicant who had bent his back before Jared only hours ago seemed to have never existed.

"Father..." Lunaria edged forward, her voice scarcely louder than a sigh, skirt still stained with drying filth. She kept her chin down, unwilling-perhaps unable to meet her father's simmering eyes.

Varek whirled. The crimson glare that leapt from his pupils made Lunaria flinch. He lunged, clamping a bruising grip around her wrist. "Failure!" he hissed, each word ground through clenched teeth. "A century of Blackshade pride, ruined, because I was too weak to stop that lecherous old ghoul—"

"Please, do not torture yourself," Lunaria murmured, suddenly calm. She raised her head; an unsettling flush colored her cheeks. "That scar-faced codger may be ancient, but he surpasses your disciples in every way. Besides..."—her smile curved with dangerous delight—"he taught me sensations I never knew existed."

"You—" Speech died in Varek's throat as the wanton gleam in her eyes mocked him harder than any blade. He released her and turned to the storm-dark window. Between clenched teeth escaped a vow as bitter as nightfall: "Jared Chance... Flaxseed... this blood debt will never be forgiven."

Lunaria smoothed her disheveled robe and stepped beside him, voice now colder than the clouds churning outside. "Empty curses are useless. Jared has Kishor guarding him. Level four holds no refuge for us anymore."

"I know," Varek breathed, eyes sharpening. "He thinks sparing me lets him pull every string? He underestimates me. Jared is at odds with Malevolent Path Hall- so we join them."

Lunaria's eyes lit like twin lanterns. "You mean Uncle Dioz?"

"Exactly." Varek nodded. "Your uncle occupies a lofty post there. Jared claims Dioz is down to a single remaining soul-thread, but that hall's resources can rebuild him a body in days. With their strength and our treasure, we'll make certain Jared's own soul is fed to their cauldrons."

He strode to a far corner, pried up a loose flagstone, and drew out a black storage pouch. "Generations of Blackshade loot," he said, hefting the weight. "Enough to buy us safe passage through level five. Pack. We leave now."

Lunaria offered a single soft acknowledgement and slipped away to gather what little she still valued.

Left alone in the hollow hall, Varek let a savage grin twist his mouth. "Jared, you wanted intel on the Flaxseed clan's spirits? Wait. Soon you'll watch your own spirit be refined by the very people you seek to eliminate."

Under a moonless sky the father and daughter slipped past roving cultivators and vanished from Blackshade Demon Palace. Before departing, Varek scoured every trace of their presence, leaving the fortress as empty and silent as a tomb that history forgot.

At that same hour Jared, Kishor, and Flaxseed halted before the mountain gate of the Crimson Coil Sect. Carved serpents towered on either side, their stone scales glimmering with a cold, venomous sheen. Alarmed guards rushed forward, blades sliding free with a chorus of steely warnings. "Identify yourselves!" the captain barked, voice echoing against the cliff-face. "No one breaches Crimson Coil Sect territory uninvited!"

Flaxseed strode up the stone steps, his scarred face splitting into a cruel grin. "Listen well," he growled, his

voice echoing across the scop de

"I have come to settle an old score. Drag Seraphina out here--I want her head!" The guards stiffened, they knew that name. Since the slaughter on Nine Serpent Mountain, stories of Jared and this ragged charm master had become campfire legend-whispered, feared, impossible to forget.

One guard spat in disgust. "So the last of that rabble crawls out of hiding," he sneered. "You three think you can rattle the Crimson Coil Sect? Dream on, fool."

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