

A Warrior Undefeatable

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A Warrior Undefeatable

Isabel leapt to her feet, braids whipping behind her. "Ms. Dusko, you're incredible! Finish that fiend!" she cried, voice echoing against the marbled pillars.

Percival's strength waned; his breathing grew ragged. At last, Esorin could bear the spectacle no longer.

He flashed skyward, ready to intervene only for a thunder-rich voice to roll from the horizon. "People from the Malevolent Path Hall, how dare you run rampant within my Celestial Palace!"

In that fraught instant, a vast presence awakened deep inside the palace. The air vibrated with a sovereign might that pressed on every soul present.

The power surged outward like a relentless tide, irresistible, enormous—each wave a silent decree demanding obedience.

Gasps rippled through the crowd. Faces tilted toward the palace's inner darkness, eyes wide with a mingling of awe and dread.

"Th—that aura—tell me I'm wrong, but... could that be the Quartet Celestial Guards of the Celestial King Palace?" This text is hosted at findnovel.net

The color drained from Enaricus' face. A nameless dread crawled up his spine, pricking every nerve with icy needles.

He had come armed with schemes and swagger, convinced that no hidden power remained beneath those ancient eaves. Now the plan he had rehearsed so carefully began to crumble, pebble by pebble, inside his mind.

After all, the Quartet Celestial Guards were only legends. No one alive had ever laid eyes on them—until this moment.

Esorin knit his brows. "So the palace still hides strength like that," he murmured, and the reverence in his weathered gaze unsettled even him. For a man

accustomed to steering calamities, the situation suddenly felt far more tangled than anything he had bargained for.

Onneas felt her heart kick against her ribs; realization flashed through her like white lightning.

Only the Quartet Celestial Guards could unleash a presence so vast, so terrible, that the very air seemed to warp beneath it.

Since time immemorial, those four had been the palace's living bulwark, their fathomless power woven into every brick and banner. Today, the clamor raised by Enaricus and his allies had finally roused them from their centuries of silence.

A hush rippled outward as a single figure emerged from the palace's inner darkness, each step measured, inevitable.

He wore gilded armor polished to a mirror, the plates catching stray sunlight and hurling it back in blinding shards. His face—firm, middle-aged, and carved with unyielding authority—radiated a sanctity that brooked no defiance.

In his right hand rested a longsword whose steel glittered with a cold, silent promise of limitless force. The power rotting off his body felt almost solid, pressing every bystander to avert their gaze or be crushed beneath its weight.

Onneas, seizing the moment, drove Percival back with a single whirl of energy, then strode to stand directly before the golden warrior.

"Mr. Guardian, we salute you!" Onneas and the Celestial Guards behind her dropped to one knee, voices trembling with reverence. Relief flickered across their faces; his arrival rewrote the board.

The Guardian dipped his chin, a silent acknowledgment heavier than any spoken oath.

"Insolent rabble," he thundered, voice booming like cathedral bells. "You dare create havoc outside the Celestial King Palace? Are you so eager to throw your lives away?"

The words reverberated through stone and marrow alike, leaving a high-pitched ring in every ear.

Enaricus flinched yet forced himself to sneer. "And who might you be to meddle in the affairs of the Celestial Halls?"

Though he reached for bravado, a betraying quiver threaded his words.

"I am one of the Quartet Celestial Guards," the armored titan declared, each syllable hammered in fire. "My mandate is the palace's safety. You trespass, you threaten the master of the Fourth Hall-your death wish is noted."

Each charge rang like a verdict, weighty with righteous fury.

Esorin advanced a cautious step. "So the legends breathe after all," he said, forcing a brittle smile. "Yet even four legends together will not halt our resolve."

The boast landed softer than intended, its steel dulled by honest fear.

"Is that so? Then show me," the Guardian replied, disdain curling his lips as he beckoned them forward like children.

With that, his aura surged anew, a tidal wave of pressure sweeping across the forecourt in a single breath.

It struck Enaricus, Percival, and Esorin like a fist to the lungs, robbing them of air and courage alike.

Enaricus felt a ehill lance through his

confidence the plan had always seemed foolproof-overwhelm the Celestial King Palace with numbers, lean on Percival's backing from the Malevolent Path Hall walk straight through the gates. Now a single golden figure barred the path,

radiating power so dense it pressed against Enaricus' ribs like stone. A truth settled over him with suffocating certainty: this would be nothing like the easy conquest he had imagined.

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The Guardian stood unmoving, clad in armor the color of sunrise metal. His eyes, visible through the helm's narrow slit, burned like twin torches aimed straight into every heart.

The long sword in his grasp quivered, frost-bright edges glinting a silent warning that even the faintest misstep would draw blood.

Sweat pearly along Enaricus' hairline. The Guardians truly exist, and we have roused one of them.

He risked a glance at Percival and Esorin. Both wore the same hard mask he did grim, cornered, unsure which move might unleash ruin.

Dark haze leaked from Percival's sleeves, coiling like angry snakes around his armor. Shame and fury crashed inside him; he was heir to the Malevolent Path Hall, yet a single Guardian kept his rage leashed. But facing such a formidable presence, he dared not take reckless action. His fists clenched until the gauntlets squealed, eyes locked on the Guardian, daring him to blink.

Esorin half-closed his eyes, mind racing through stratagem after stratagem. If they mishandled today, the tension between the two palaces could ignite a calamity felt across every realm.

No weakness surfaced in the Guardian's posture; Esorin found nothing to exploit.

Behind that radiant suit stood Onneas, her shoulders finally loose, breath finally steady. With the Guardian here, no one would dare charge again.

She met Enaricus' gaze with cool contempt, as if silently mouthing the verdict he feared. Your scheme ends here.

Isabel and the surrounding Celestial Guards tightened their grips on spear and blade. Muscles coiled, eyes narrowed-they were one breath away from battle and held themselves ready for the inevitable spark.

Minutes dragged like hours. Air thickened, each heartbeat pounding as though under a mountain's weight.

Whispers rippled among Enaricus' troops; uncertainty dulled their earlier bravado, and more than one pair of eyes flicked toward the open road-the only path of retreat.

"Mr. Guardian today's intrusion was rash on our part," Enaricus began, voice trembling despite his effort to steady it. "But we act for the palace's own welfare Ms. Dusko took Celestial Guards to level seven without sanction, leaving warriors wounded. That violates every statute. We merely wish to inspect the palace. Nothing more."

"For the palace's welfare?" The Guardian let out a low, metallic laugh. "You bargain with the Malevolent Path Hall, waiting for the Celestial King's absence so you may seize his throne and you dare call that loyalty? Your crimes are already written in iron. Until we have

restitution, no one leaves."

Enaricus blanched. His mouth opened, closed-no argument would form.

Percival barked, "Careful! Malevolent Path Hall is no one's prey."

The Guardian's eyes turned to ice. He lifted the sword an inch. A tidal wave of sword energy exploded forth, howling straight for Percival and scouring the courtyard with blinding light.

Percival felt a cold knife of panic slide down his spine. Even after he twisted aside, the streak of sword energy clung to him like a parasite gnawing at bone, refusing to let go.

He had no choice. Demonic power surged through every vein, forming a trembling wall of power that barely—just barely kept the killing wind from slicing him in two.

"Defy me again, and I will show no mercy," the Guardian said, his voice as frigid as iron cooled in snow.

Esorin watched the exchange, shoulders sinking with the grim certainty that the day could no longer end peacefully.

"Mr. Guardian," he began, taking one measured step forward, "we never wished to stand against the palace. Today's folly is ours alone. We are ready to pay the price. Tell us what settlement will satisfy you?"

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"Enaricus conspired with Malevolent Path Hall-high treason. By law, he should die. Yet, for the palace's sake, I grant him one chance. He will cripple his own cultivation so others may learn. As for you two, leave the Celestial King's Palace this instant. Set foot here again, and you face the blade of every guard within."

Enaricus blanched. Crippling his own cultivation was worse than death. His fists tightened until nails cut flesh, yet he felt no pain, only the hollow roar of his future collapsing.

Percival and Esorin traded a single, fraught glance. They both knew refusal meant none of them would leave alive.

Silence flooded the hall. Every soul held its breath, waiting for their answer, while in the vaulted air an invisible storm gathered, ready to break.

Meanwhile, in the void passage, Jared raised his Dragonslayer Sword, lost to time, space, even memory.

Flame meteors streaked toward him in endless waves. Each swing of his blade shattered a thousand blazing comets into showers of jeweled fireworks that lit the churning void.

The silent man beside him watched the stars die under Jared's sword and could not hide his awe.

At last, the fiery tempest ended. Jared drifted back to the man, golden light rippling across his skin, his very flesh now humming with newfound power.

"Sir, may I finally leave this place?" Jared asked, voice steady yet threaded with anticipation.

The man's lips curved in a small, satisfied smile. "You may."

Jared clasped both hands in grateful salute. "My thanks, sir."

Joy flashed in his eyes, bright as the sparks he had just slain.

At that precise gesture, the man's brow knotted. His stare locked onto Jared's joined fists, as though something there screamed a silent warning.

Confused, Jared lowered his arms, unsure what secret the man had just seen.

The man's voice sliced through the stale cavern air. "What is that on your hand?"

The question shook free on a ragged breath. Before Jared could form an answer he lunged forward, fingers clamping around Jared's wrist with desperate certainty, as though truth itself were etched into his skin.

Jared opened his palm to show nothing at all. "Nothing, really," he said, the apology in his voice at odds with the stranger's rising frenzy.

"I'm not talking about your palm. That ring-tell me. Is it the dragon ring?" His gaze locked on the band circling Jared's finger, and each frantic breath rattled as though the sight alone had stolen the air from his lungs.

"Yes. My father left it to me." The confession tumbled out. Hope surged behind Jared's ribs. "You recognize it?"

Since arriving in the celestial realm, Jared had searched every corner and found not a single branch of Dragon Sect. He had started to believe the sect had

vanished hidden in distant vel

vanishplaces even his journey

or buried

had missed. Yet this stranger stood here now, eyes wide with

recognition. If he knew the ring, then the sect itself might still live.

Without warning, the man dropped to one knee, armorless yet resolute. "Maxwell Sterling, your humble sword, greets the lord." His voice quaked with reverence strong enough to shake dust from the stone floor.

Jared steadied his pulse. "Are you... from Dragon Sect?"

The man, Maxwell, nodded so hard his dark hair whipped across his brow. "Yes. I serve under that banner."

Jared hauled the man upright, fingers still buzzing from surprise. "That means every warrior inside the Celestial Palace answers to me?"

Maxwell smiled, awe shining in his eyes. "I built that palace myself. Of course, its blades bend to you, sir."

The revelation hit so hard that Jared almost lost his balance. A sigh slipped free, long and heavy.

Maxwell's brows knitted. "Sir, why the sigh?"

He had no idea Jared had clashed with the very palace he had founded-no idea several hall masters now lay dead by Jared's hand. The bitter joke tightened around Jared's heart-he had slain his own men.

"Don't call me that," Jared murmured. "Just call me Jared. I'm only marveling at fate's cruelty-who would have thought Celestial Palace was mine all along?"

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"Sir... Mr. Chance, finding you is a blessing beyond words. I feared I would never repay the kindness your father once showed me." Excitement cracked in

Maxwell's voice like distant thunder.

Jared understood. Maxwell must also have been lifted by his father's grace-another life woven into the Heavenly Dragon Hall's legacy.

"First things first-get me out of here," Jared urged. "I need to reach level eight at once. Celestial Palace may already be in danger."

Maxwell leaned in, star-flecked eyes glinting like naked steel beneath torchlight. "Mr. Chance," he said, his voice the whisper of a thousand blades sliding free, "level eight will swallow you whole in your present state. Allow me to pour an ancient legacy into you. Your strength will surge and quickly."

The offer struck Jared like a hammer. He bobbed his head so fast his hair whipped across his brow. "Then what are we waiting for? Do it-right now!"

At the very rim of level eight, before the towering gates of the Celestial Palace, silence pressed down like a thunderhead ready to burst.

No warrior so much as twitched. Breath itself felt like an affront while dread congealed in the air, thick enough to choke on.

Hidden beneath his jeweled helm, Enaricus' eyes darted, schemes blooming like weeds through cracked stone. "If I retreat today, I am a dead man," he rasped. "Yet the Malevolent Path Hall will gain nothing either. Help me survive this ordeal, and Celestial Palace will flood your coffers with resources. Plunder any treasure inside the Celestial Palace-take your pick."

Percival and Esorin traded a single glance-greed flashing like molten gold in their eyes. Esorin narrowed his gaze. Retreat promised punishment and profitless disgrace; besides, the Malevolent Path Hall had already declared war on the Celestial Palace. Fear now seemed pointless when temptation tasted this sweet.

From the palace steps, Onneas' voice sliced through the tension. "Mr. Guardian, strike him down now! His treachery blackens Celestial Palace's name."

Trembling with rage, Onneas nearly tore the very air apart. Enaricus had dared to hawk the palace's sacred relics as though they were trinkets on a street cart.

"Shut up!" The Guardian glared at Onneas, then fixed the intruders with a glare that could weld iron. "Walk away, and I shall pretend none of this happened. Discipline for Enaricus is our affair-not yours."

Esorin stepped forward, his ebony staff humming with dark promise. "And if we choose to shield him?"

"Then you die!" the Guardian began, his words grinding like stone.

A heartbeat later, heavenly force erupted from his armor. The ground quaked banners flattened against poles, and every b felt readyto splinter under the pressure.

"Don't go too far!" Esorin roared. He flashed forward, a streak of shadow. His staff cracked the sky, flinging a lance of black demon light straight at the Guardian.

The Guardian's face tightened. His longsword swept across his body, intercepting the beam. Impact rang like cathedral bells, driving him half a step backward.

He attacked without warning-this is bad.

Esorin blurred from shadow to shadow. Every flick of his staff rained ebony sparks that pitted marble like hailstones.

Silver sword arcs clashed with demon light, detonations rolling outward in deafening succession while the sky itself seemed to vibrate.

Minutes bled away, and the Guardian's strokes slowed. His breathing rasped; the once-seamless wall of blade images frayed, gaps yawning like tears in old cloth.

Seizing the instant, Esorin gathered

power into a colossal onyx hand that thundered downward. It struck the

Guardians chest le Saile

backward like a broken comet and

slammed into the flagstones with bone-shaking force.

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He clawed at the ground, struggling to rise, only to feel agony blossom through cracked ribs and shattered pride.

A ripple of realization swept through the onlookers-Celestial Palace's famed Guardian was all shine and no substance.

Confidence bloomed inside Esorin. A smug grin carved itself across his gaunt face.

"Ha! All that bluster and you're nothing but a good-for-nothing. The only thing you guard is your own empty threats!"

Esorin threw his head back and

roared with laughter. The sound

rolled across the plaza like iron chains dragged over stone, rattling every brittle nerve in the watchers chests.

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Enaricus finally exhaled in relief. For a moment, he had imagined the palace's famed Guardian to be an untouchable legend. Now, seeing the golden-armored man falter, he realized the threat had been smoke and mirrors all along.

Onneas, ruler of the Fourth Hall, felt her pulse spike. She shouted, a clear bell of a cry echoing between marble pillars. "Guardian, summon the other three Celestial Guards. Four as one can break Esorin, no matter how vicious his arts!"

The Guardian did not move. Metal plates groaned as he rose to his feet. His voice slipped out, low and grim. "Of the Quartet Celestial Guards, I alone have awakened."

A hush fell. The admission struck like cold rain. Mouths sagged open. Even the braziers seemed to dim, as though the hall itself were startled.

Enaricus' eyes sparked with wicked delight. Behind him, Percival and Esorin relaxed, confidence blooming like thorns. With no reinforcements coming, they could unleash themselves without restraint.

"So the so-called Guardian is nothing but a loser," Esorin sneered, his words dripping poison. "Today, the Celestial Palace will pay in blood."

He lunged, robes whipping behind him, a black tide aimed straight for the lone Guardian. One decisive blow-that was all he intended to need.

"Enough!" The single word rang out, carried on the rising whine of a sword. A silver flash parted the air. From the rent in space stepped a young man clad in travel-stained black, a crescent of steel singing at his back. Only when the newcomer's boots kissed the marble did the crowd know who it was. Jared Chance.

"Jared Chance?" several voices blurted at once, disbelief snagging on every syllable.

Onneas stared, speechless. She had seen Enaricus hurl Jared into a forbidden spatial tunnel-an endless snarl of chaotic void currents from which no one returned alive. For him to appear here, breathing and whole, felt like witnessing dawn rise at midnight.

Enaricus' smug mask cracked. Panic flickered behind his eyes.

"H-How did you escape the void passage?" Enaricus demanded, voice shrill and thinning.

Percival leaned forward, curiosity gleaming like drawn steel. "Who is he?"

"Jared Chance," Enaricus spat. "The meddler who ruined our plans and slaughtered Mr. Hemato."

Percival's gaze sharpened to a murderous point. "So this is the whelp, then."

Jared ignored them. He turned to Onneas, voice softening. "Ms. Dusko, are you hurt?"

"I am unscathed," she answered, astonishment still painting her face. "But how did you survive that tunnel?"

Jared offered a brief, calm smile. "When we settle the matter in front of us, I'll explain everything."

His smile vanished as he faced Enaricus. "You, a lord of the Celestial Palace, conspired with the Malevolent Path Hall and dragged our name through filth. Do you feel the weight of your crime?"

Enaricus barked a laugh. "And who are you to lecture me? Palace affairs are none of your concern, Jared Chance. Do you have a death wish?"

"Since you remain defiant," Jared said, each word colder than winter steel, "I invoke Palace law and sentence you to death."

He spoke the decree as though announcing dusk-simple, inevitable, irreversible.

Enaricus barked a booming laugh that rattled the rafters. "Hah! Did that swirling void tunnel fry your wits, kid? Someone of your measly rank thinks he can spit words like that at me?"

The laughter kept rolling, a low thunder tumbling down the marble colonnade, shaking stray motes of dust from the ceiling.

Not even Onneas had bested him before. Yet Jared, a man who had not even broken into the Human Immortal Realm, dared promise to end the mighty Enarious here and now.

Percival narrowed his eyes, muttering through a crooked grin "D*mn, looks like I've finally run into someone who brags louder than I do. His voice dropped to a speer the words thick with grudging awe.

From Percival's vantage, Jared's aura sat only at the very peak of the Earthly Immortal Realm, a full step below the Human Immortal Realm.

For a man at that stage to boast with such swagger felt, to them, like thunder without clouds-noise with no storm behind it.

Only Onneas knew the truth: Jared's growth moved faster than any tale she had ever heard faster, even, than arrows fired from the gods.

In scarcely the blink of a season, he had climbed all the way to the summit of the Earthly Immortal Realm, rising as if strapped to a rocket of pure will.

She sensed-chillingly-that she herself might no longer stand as his equal.

"Enough chatter," Jared said, his voice quiet yet slicing. "Why don't the two of you attack together and save us time?"

He offered the suggestion with a single disdainful glance toward Percival-hardly worth a second look in Jared's eyes.

To Jared, the prince who could not defeat Onneas was little more than background noise.

Percival's temper flared. "The h*ll are you strutting for, hero?" he spat, fists trembling.

He lunged, only to be snatched back by Enaricus' iron forearm before a single blow could land.

"Leave the peacocking pup to me, Prince Percival," Enaricus declared, his smile as sharp as drawn steel.

Having spoken, Enaricus leveled an icy stare at Jared. "Come," he beckoned, voice low as grinding granite.

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He did not know how Jared had survived the void passage, yet he was certain a one-handed swat would be more than enough to crush a mere Earthly Immortal.

Jared smiled faintly. His palm opened and sword intent shimmered into being, born from nothing but the conviction in his blood. In the same heartbeat, his body vanished.

To face Enaricus, he did not even use the Dragonslayer Sword, forging instead a weapon from raw sword intent alone.

The sight wiped the smirk from Enaricus' face. Brows furrowed, he felt a ripple of unease slip beneath his armor of pride.

Summoning a blade that swiftly, from sheer will, was something no ordinary Earthly Immortal could fathom, much less achieve.

Enaricus stamped forward. His right hand rose and plunged, unleashing a crushing tide of power that billowed outward from his palm.

A streak of blinding sword light screamed toward Enaricus, splitting the air with needle-fine precision.

Yet the moment the sword light met the lord's aura, it shuddered, trapped beneath the brute weight of his domineering aura.

Jared flicked his wrist. The intent-blade flared, erupting with a terrifying edge that shredded the pressure holding it at bay.

The impact thundered. Enaricus staggered back, boots gouging deep channels in the stone as he skidded nearly a hundred paces before finding balance.

A collective gasp rippled through every throat present, the sound cresting like a sudden wave against a silent shore.

The moment Jared's blade flare forced Enaricus to stumble back, a collective gasp swallowed the plaza. Even Onneas, whose gaze rarely betrayed emotion, stared at Jared with something close to awe-no, outright fright—as if lightning had cracked open the ground between them.

Percival's cheeks burned crimson. Only seconds ago, he had mocked Jared as a provincial upstart. Now that very arrogance returned like an open-palmed slap, echoing across his face.

He knew with brutal certainty he could never, not in a single move, force Enaricus into retreat. The realization left the prince feeling small, exposed, and suddenly very mortal.

Enaricus steadied himself, boots skidding to a halt on fractured stone. His expression curdled into something foul as though he had been made to swallow ash and bile in front of thousands. Humiliation radiated from him like cold smoke.

Yet beneath that anger slithered a deeper shock. He had studied Jared's progress - knew the young swordsman could fight above his official rank-but when Jared had defeated Cormac a while back, it had taken effort.

Now, in the space of a single breath, the young man's power had ballooned into nightmare territory. Enaricus could think of only one word-aberration.

Farther back, half-hidden among the spectators, Cormac felt an involuntary shiver crawl down his spine. Without a second thought, he turned and slipped into the fractured air itself, vanishing between folds of trembling light.

Cormac had planned for both

outcomes. Enaricus triumphed, he

would step forward, basking in reflected glory. If Enaricus fell, he would dissolve into the crowd and pretend he had never pledged allegiance Tonight's verdict arrived with ruthless speed, and flight was the only reasonable answer.

None of the Third Hall disciples noticed his exit, and Enaricus-consumed by fury - remained oblivious. But Esorin's eyes tracked the fleeing silhouette with ease.

Esorin's lips curved into a wintry smile. "Running from a single swordsman, are we? Did the fool forget that I still stand here?" His voice, though soft, dripped with derision and carried across the hush like falling needles.

Despite Jared's astonishing display, Dioz felt no dread. To him, Jared was still a mere Earthly Immortal-a child sparring with titans. Impressive, yes, but hardly world-ending.

Jared lowered the gleaming point of his sword, disappointment tightening the corners of his eyes. "One strike and you still stand-clearly I need more practice."

Weeks spent brawling with flame meteors inside the void passage, weeks absorbing Maxwell's

star forged legacy, had rocketed his cultivation beyond expectation. He had believed the current blade strength enough to sever Enaricus where he stood. Enaricus still breathed. That alone irritated him.

"You're too arrogant!"

Enaricus trembled with rage, Jared's casual tone gnawing at his pride. The very idea that an Earthly Immortal thought he could be felled in a single stroke-unforgivable.

Before the overlord could lunge, a new blade shimmered into existence-pure sword-intent made iron, appearing a handspan from nothing and howling toward Enaricus' chest.

There had been no warning, no flash of drawn steel, only Jared's will condensing the surrounding air into lethal form. Wherever his intent reached, swords were born like silver flowers in a storm.

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Enaricus flinched, arms sweeping up in a desperate cross-guard.

Boom.

Impact thundered through the square, hurling him backward once more-armor denting, bones rattling-while dust spiraled skyward like applause for the young man who refused to stop advancing.

Enaricus skidded backward across the ravaged air, more than three hundred yards before frictionless void finally surrendered its grip and let him stop. He was uninjured, yet both arms throbbed. Tremors rippled down to his fingertips, protesting Jared's last strike.

"Those feeble tricks? You dare call yourself the Third Hall overlord?" Jared's voice rolled out, cold and certain, each syllable a verdict. "As of today, you are stripped of that title."

"You are nothing-nothing!" Enaricus roared, forcing power through shaking limbs. Aura ballooned around him in ragged, furious waves, too wild to disguise the panic beating behind his eyes.

Jared offered a thin, almost pitying smile. Then, he vanished. A heartbeat later, the sky screamed-swordsong chiming from nowhere-its invisible edge twisting space, carving silver fissures through the firmament.

Enaricus bit down on fear, vaulted upward, and met the emptiness with a hammering fist aimed at Jared's new location.

I cannot lose-Prince Percival and Grand Elder Esorin are watching. If I fall to an Earthly Immortal upstart, the Third Hall's alliances will unravel, and my own men will never heed me again.

Boom!

Sword intent collided with raw fist-wind. The heavens burst open, shockwaves rippling like tidal rings through shattered sky. Spectators fumbled for hastily raised shields of spiritual energy while, at the epicenter, Jared and Enaricus were already trading the next savage volley. Flames licked along the sundered void, turning air itself into burning canvas.

Disciples of the Third Hall blanched. If even their overlord could not restrain Jared, what hope did they hold? The young man was supposed to sit at a mere Earthly Immortal rank—nothing about that realm explained such cataclysmic force.

Across the field, Onneas watched with a blooming smile. Warmth softened her gaze, admiration mingling with something tender. Jared's growth was astonishing -so swift it defied common sense.

Boom!

The two figures sprang apart in a spray of molten air, only to slam together again with renewed ferocity.

Jared's intent-forged blade unfurled bursts of icy brilliance. Each sweep etched pale arcs that lingered an instant before gouging fresh wounds in space.

His excitement mounted; he could feel his sword will

purifying growing keener with every

clash. Each meeting of steel and flesh felt like sculpting an

incomparable statue, his sword

intent the master's chisel

The phantom-blade shimmered, its cold light slithering like living mercury. Guided by Jared's wrist, it painted lethal, beautiful strokes one moment a horizontal slash

materializing at Enaricus' left the

next a needle-point thrust darting

from the right with

with surgical cruelty.

Jared himself became a specter, flickering through fractures in

reality—here, then gone-dancing

just beyond the reach of any

reprisal.

Enaricus fought on, but dread gnawed at him. He had dismissed Jared as a minor Earthly Immortal yet the young man's sword intent seemed bottomless Every strike carried crushing power and arrived from angles no defense could anticipate.

"How in the blazes can this whelp wield such terrifying power?"

Enaricus felt his composure unravel. Sweat beaded across his brow, slid past the curve of his cheek, and sank dark stains into the collar of his brocade coat.

His breath shortened. Each punch now carried the dull, terrifying weight of futility, as though his arms were moving through half-frozen tar.

Across from him, Jared floated with effortless poise, a faint, almost courteous smile playing at the corner of his lips. The sight burrowed into Enaricus' chest, blooming into a cold knot of helpless dread.

All around them, gasps rippled through the crowd. For a heartbeat, the world seemed to shrink until only two figures—predator and rising predator—existed beneath the bruised sky.

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Onneas' eyes flew wide, shimmering with wonder that bordered on devotion. She had believed Jared's rapid growth would still leave him a step behind a Hall Lord. Yet the battle told a different story. Not only could he match Enaricus blow for blow; he had begun to push Enaricus back, inch by devastating inch.

"Jared, you're incredible!" Onneas called, voice trembling with unfiltered awe.

She crushed her fists together so tightly her knuckles blanched. A fierce thrill surged in her chest, and with it an affection for Jared that flared hotter, brighter, harder to disguise.

Percival and Esorin watched in sullen silence, faces dark as storm clouds. Their tidy plan—let Enaricus finish Jared, then turn on the Guardians of the Celestial Palace—was crumbling before their eyes.

"What windfall did Jared stumble upon to rise this fast?" Esorin narrowed his eyes, greed licking at his thoughts. The raw sword intent spiraling around Jared was a banquet, and Esorin's mind raced with visions of devouring that power for himself.

Percival bit down until his teeth threatened to crack. He had never tasted humiliation so bitter. As Jared's blade sang through the air, Percival silently vowed that, given half a chance, he would kill the upstart with his own hands.

Panic spread among Enaricus' attendants. They had marched to the Celestial Palace expecting easy spoils; now their commander staggered, blood on his lips, defeat looming. Uneasy whispers darted from one soldier to the next like startled sparrows.

"Jared is a monster. What if we're next?" one guard murmured, voice shaking so badly the words barely held together.

"Had I known it could end like this, I'd never have followed the Hall Lord here. Now there's no road out," another answered, his despair almost a whimper.

Inside the dueling ground, Jared's assault intensified, each strike sharper, faster, as though he were no longer bound by mortal tempo.

With a sudden burst of speed, Jared flashed forward-one heartbeat, he was fifteen paces away, the next, he stood directly before Enaricus.

The ethereal blade in his grip arced high, then hurled downward like judgment itself.

A colossal sword shadow erupted from the swing, roaring toward Enaricus with the fury of a collapsing sky. Startled, the Hall Lord stumbled back, fingers weaving frantic sigils that flared into a shimmering shield.

The sword shadow detonated against the barrier in a thunderclap of light and sound. The shield shattered instantly The remnant edge tore across Enaricus' shoulder, carving a deep crimson trench.

Blood spurted. Enaricus howled, knees buckling as hot pain staggered him and the watching

realized perhaps for the first

World rea

time that the old order was truly breaking.

Jared let out a short, scorn-filled snort. "Is that really all you've got?"

In the same breath, Jared's

silhouette rippled and vanished. A

heartbeat later, he materialized

behind Enaricus, arm already

extended, his will forged blade

flashing toward the man's exposed spine.

A prickle of death crawled up Enaricus' back; he hurled himself forward, rolling beneath the thrust.

Yet the sword intent clung to him like maggots on bone, hissing after his retreat. Jared whipped his wrist. The spectral edge swept low, aiming to sever both of his foe's legs.

Enaricus kicked off the earth, vaulting skyward, barely clearing the murderous arc.

Even so, a ribbon of crimson opened across his calf where the intent had grazed him.

Enaricus barked a guttural curse. "D*mn you!"

Realizing he could no longer stay on the defensive, Enaricus steadied himself and drew a deep breath.

Golden energy erupted from within, circling his frame until a pale aureate shell hovered around him, humming with raw force.

"Jared Chance," he bellowed, voice vibrating through the ruined courtyard, "don't fool yourself into thinking this ends in your victory!"

He lunged, fist sheathed in liquid gold, the punch roaring through the air like a comet headed straight for Jared's chest.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Jared met the charge unflinching. With a subtle flick, the notion-blade in his palm scattered into countless translucent shards that spun together, weaving a whirling vortex of sword intent before him.

Fist met vortex. The collision cracked the silence open, a thunderclap that shook loose stones from the ground and twisted the very air.

Both figures were hurled backward by the shockwave. Jared slid three steps and halted, cloak billowing. Enaricus skidded dozens, knees buckling as fresh blood seeped through reopened wounds, and his face drained ghost-white.

Gasps rippled through the onlookers. "The Third Hall overlord is bleeding!"

Another voice, quivering with awe, added, "Jared Chance is unbelievable! Even Enaricus can't match him!"

The whispers slashed at Enaricus' pride. Seeing Jared stand untouched only stoked the fire of jealousy and rage boiling behind his eyes.

Enaricus roared, voice raw. "Jared Chance, today I will end you!" He charged again, but fatigue dragged at every motion; speed and power leaked away like water from a cracked jar.

Mid-sprint, he plunged both hands into his robes and drew out an unremarkable black bowl.

The moment it tasted open air, a wave of malignant pressure burst forth, thick, oily, and wrong. Jared was slammed backward, shoes carving trenches as he tumbled several hundred meters before regaining balance.

From the sidelines, Onneas felt her brow knot the instant she saw another artifact appear in Enaricus' grip.

Percival's eyes narrowed to slits. "That fool-he's using the Soul-Snaring Bowl we gifted him?"

Esorin exhaled slowly. "If he doesn't, he loses."

Jared halted, gaze locked on the ominous vessel. "You call yourself the Third Hall's lord, yet you wield such a wicked trinket?"

Enaricus snorted. "Spare me your lectures-prepare to die."

With a contemptuous flick of his wrist, Enaricus hurled the tarnished begging bowl into the sky. Metal groaned as the relic swelled to the size of a mountain blotting out what little light remained. A suffocating pressure poured from its widening mouth, pinning Jared to the very air itself and denying him even a fingertip of space in which to

breathe, let alone retreat.

Gasps rippled through the crowd. Every onlooker, veteran and novice alike, felt certain they were witnessing Jared's final heartbeat.

Even Onneas, usually ice-cool, felt her pulse hitch. A bead of cold sweat traced the line of her jaw before she could master her composure.

"That rusty beggar's bowl?" Jared said, a casual smile tugging at the corner of his mouth. "You think that little trinket can kill me?"

The blade of pure intent dissolved between his fingers, replaced by the Dragonslayer Sword—an obsidian weapon humming with unseen storms.

Moments earlier, he had held his own against Enaricus with nothing but sword intent. Now, choosing parity, he answered artifact with artifact and the air itself seemed eager to see what would follow.

A single stroke-too swift for mortal

sight-sparked from the blade with a sound like silk ripping through thunder. The slash carved

downward, splitting clouds, parting. wind, leaving only a lingering hiss that skittered across the battlefield.

The grotesque bowl shattered as though made of brittle glass, exploding into a rain of powdered bronze that glittered for a heartbeat before fading into nothing.

From the pulverized shards surged a choir of shrieks-thousands of tormented spirits, swirling like ash, scrambling toward freedom in frantic, ragged spirals.

"Do not let those spirits escape!" Percival boomed, his voice cracking across the sky like a war drum.

Esorin lifted a homespun cloth sack. With one sweep of his hand, the sack expanded into a vortex, its pull irresistible. Each fleeing wraith was dragged howling into the dark mouth of the bag, vanishing in rapid succession.

Jared watched without interference. He had no way of knowing to whom those spirits once belonged, and saw no sense in risking his neck for strangers-especially when facing an elder whose strength eclipsed even Enaricus'.

Enaricus stared at the empty air where his Soul-Snaring Bowl had been. Fury burned scarlet across his faces That artifact-gifted by the Malevolent Path fall-was his

livelihood, a vessel for trading
captured souls for celestial gems.

Now it lay in sparkling dust.

"Quit gawking and attack! All of you-kill him!" he roared, knowing full well that alone he stood no chance against Jared.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Third Hall disciples swallowed their fear, drew what courage they could, and launched themselves skyward in a ragged but desperate formation.

"Celestial Guards, with me-advance!" Onneas commanded.

A glittering phalanx of armor-clad warriors followed her, taking position at Jared's flanks like living walls of steel.

She would sooner fall from the sky than watch him be beaten by sheer numbers.

Behind them, Percival and Esorin remained still. Esorin's gaze never wavered from the Dragonslayer Sword, the reflection of its dark edge flickering in his ancient eyes.

A weapon that could splinter the Soul-Snaring Bowl with a single blow-such power bordered on legend.

In that instant, a forbidden desire bloomed in the elder's heart: the hungry wish to claim that sword for his own.

The Soul-Snaring Bowl-an artifact whispered about in every corridor of the Evil Path Hall—would have bought Enaricus a lifetime of favors. Yet Jared leveled the Dragonslayer Sword, tapped the bowl once, and it burst like cheap glass under a hammer. In that brittle shatter, everyone on the terrace finally understood what the Dragonslayer Sword truly was: a weapon that could slice through legends.

"You cannot hope to fight the Celestial King's Palace with so few men."

Onneas strode forward, Celestial Guards fanning out at her heels. A single step from her boot turned the air electric, a tidal wave of power rippling across the flagstones.

Enaricus' own troops were competent brawlers, yet they had never faced disciplined warriors raised inside the palace walls. That imbalance was the reason he had begged for the Malevolent Path Hall's help in the first place.

Boom!

The moment Onneas and the Celestial Guards released their auras, Enaricus' soldiers staggered back a full hundred paces. No blades had crossed, yet victory and defeat had already been stamped into the ground.

"Prince Percival, Grand Elder!" Enaricus called, desperation sharpening his voice.

Esorin answered first, springing skyward as lightly as a leaf in wind.

A casual flick of his sleeve sent Jared skidding across the courtyard. Against

Esorin's cultivation, Jared had no footing—at least not yet.

Jared could overwhelm Enaricus, yes, but Esorin was a mountain he had not yet learned to climb.

"Jared, are you hurt?" Onneas asked, worry threading her words.

"I'm fine," Jared gasped, forcing himself upright. "Protect the Palace first."

Onneas nodded once. A rally token appeared in her palm; she crushed it. Golden light erupted overhead, flaring like a newborn sun.

In that blinding radiance, thousands of cultivators poured from the Celestial King's Palace—rank upon rank of Celestial Guards, followed by robed disciples from every corner of the complex. Additional auras surged in from the surrounding peaks, answering the call

These were the reinforcements Onneas had prepared in silence.

Enaricus' face drained of color. He had never imagined she would shatter the rally

token, summoning every palace fighter on level eight.

His own soldiers blinked in disbelief, as though the ground had dropped from beneath their boots.

Moments ago, both factions had shared the same lineage. Now they stood poised to butcher one another.

The palace side outnumbered them several times over.

Esorin's brow creased, then he let out a low, chilly laugh. "Good. If the Palace gathers everyone, we can wipe them out in a single sweep."

"Grand Elder, what now?" Enaricus whispered, all traces of swagger gone.

His mind was empty of strategies; only the Malevolent Path Hall's might could salvage him.

He could not match Jared's sword. He could not match the Palace's numbers.

"They can call reinforcements-why can't we?" Esorin replied, his voice as calm as falling snow.

He tilted his chin toward Percival.

Percival dipped his head in silent assent, then traced a glowing circle in miger, its edges pulsing like a

crimson drum-am invitation for

darkness to answer the Palace's shining rally.

Within the swirling outline of the magic circle, the empty glow slowly hardened, Silvery runes fused until the ring became a solid, blazing gate, and at its core a single spiritual crystal pulsed like a jagged star-each flare announcing that the teleportation array was fully awake.

Jared recognized the design at once. A Teleportation Array. Percival had started calling in reinforcements.

Almost immediately, currents of murderous pressure seeped through the circle. Every fresh pulse felt like a claw raking the air, hinting at the monsters about to arrive.

"Grand Elder, you mean you keep another branch all the way up on level eight?" Enaricus asked, his voice a taut wire of surprise.

He thought Percival was only drawing troops from the Malevolent Path Hall's branch he already commanded.