

A Warrior Undefeatable 5641-5650

A Warrior Undefeatable

Sylvia's presence shifted, turning sudden and severe. She laced her fingers into a complex seal, lips moving in a quiet, urgent chant. Raw power gathered in her palms, swelling into a sphere so dark it seemed to drink the light around it. "Heavenbane Annihilation!" Her shout cracked the air. She thrust both hands forward, releasing a jet-black wave that hurtled toward Jaehaerys and Brennan. The wave carried ruin itself. Stone vaporized. Shattered blades became dust. The two hall masters stared, terror hollowing their eyes. They tried to move too late. The torrent swallowed them. Flesh, bone, and spirit burst into a red mist, then vanished on the wind. Silence returned to Death Gorge. Only scorched earth and drifting ash whispered of the battle that had raged seconds ago.

Jared let out the breath he had been holding. Pain throbbed where blades and claws had found him, yet beneath the ache simmered fierce satisfaction. He was wounded, yes, but experience like this could not be bought, only bled for.

Sylvia turned, eyes softening when she saw the fresh gashes across his ribs. "Jared, you're in pieces. We need cover and time to heal-now."

"Not yet. One target remains." Jared's gaze locked on Morcant, who was still drawing breath.

"Wait-this is all a misunderstanding," Morcant blurted, cold sweat beading under the dirt on his face. "I was merely passing by. Your quarrel never concerned me." He spun on his heel, desperation propelling him toward the shadows.

"Trying to leave?" Jared flickered forward, the ground cracking under his step, and materialized in front of the fleeing elder, cutting off every escape.

"Easy, boy. Don't overstep," Morcant snarled, masking fear with bluster. "I'm an elder of Malevolent Path Hall. Kill me, and the entire hall will hunt you down."

"An elder? That title means nothing to me." Jared's laugh was icy. "I slaughtered Prince Percival, Grand Elder, Lord Moffat, and even Lord Ashcroft. Why would I fear a minor functionary like you?"

Morcant's face drained of color. "You-you slew Prince Percival, the grand elder, and the lords?"

"Exactly," Jared answered with a curt nod.

"Lies-nothing but empty bragging," Morcant muttered, shaking his head. He had heard the rumors of those deaths, but this wounded youth couldn't be the butcher. If the rumors were true, today's assignment would never have fallen to him. Jared must be bluffing.

"Believe what you like," Jared said, voice dropping to a killer's calm. "Call me a braggart again, and you die where you stand. In fact—" His fingers curled, aura igniting around his fists. "—you die anyway."

Jared finished speaking, then shifted his weight forward, shoulders squaring for the strike he had

already marked out in his mind.

There were evenings when the

young cultivator enjoyed peel

himself up, spinning a little myth around his own name but he

loathed absolutely loathed-anyone brazen enough to call that bluff to his face.

"W-Wait!" Morcant threw both hands up, voice cracking around the single word. He swallowed hard and rushed out the rest. "I can reward

you, richly, any treasure you ask. y life Morcant's g

darted past

Past Jared to

hovered behind the young man like a silent executioner. Jared was

wounded head to toe, but Sylvia had already butchered the first and second hall masters. Morcant knew he was no match for her, let alone the two of them together.

"I don't need your bribes," Jared said, voice low and flat. "Today you die, and that's non-negotiable."

A sudden gale of spiritual aura rolled

in from the far ridge. Figures

streaked through the gray sky of Death Gorge, led by Winston Woodridge-one of Malevolent Path Hall's dreaded Lords. Morcant's relief exploded into a shrill cry. "Lord Woodridge, save me!" Winston landed, long cloak snapping, and took in the carnage. His face darkened. "Boy, who are you? You dare lay a hand on a Malevoler Path Hall elder?"

You must have a death wish." The pressure radiating from him marked a cultivator at Heavenly Immortal Realm Level Two-stronger, Jared realized, even than Sylvia.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Winston's aura bled outward, blanketing every jagged cliff and bone-white boulder in Death Gorge until the air itself seemed nailed in place.

"Name's Jared Chance," Jared announced, meeting the lord's stare without blinking.

Winston's brows shot up. "Jared Chance? The same brat who supposedly butchered Prince Percival, the Grand Elder, Lord Myles, Lord Ashcroft, and half a dozen others?"

"That's right," Jared replied, nodding once. "Seems you're better informed than your trembling friend here."

Morcant's jaw sagged. He had never been high enough in Malevolent Path Hall to hear such secrets, and the revelation struck him like cold water, leaving him gaping at Jared as though seeing a nightmare made flesh.

"Lord Woodridge, can a mere Human Immortal Realm Level Three really slaughter Lord Myles or Lord Ashcroft?" Morcant asked, voice quivering.

"Of course not," Winston snorted. "The brat had help. Prince Percival, the Grand Elder, and Lord Ashcroft were all cut down by Maxwell, the first hall master of Celestial Palace our own investigations proved it. As for Lord Myles, we still don't know who did it, but it sure as hell wasn't this kid. He doesn't have that kind of bite."

Morcant flinched at the name. Even the distant Celestial King-standing stupefied among shattered rocks-suffered an involuntary shiver when Maxwell's legend surfaced.

Jared, listening, could only marvel that Malevolent Path Hall's intelligence network reached that deep, ferreting out truths he had hoped were buried.

Sylvia shot Jared a sidelong glance. The power behind him... could it really be Maxwell? The question flickered unspoken in her eyes.

"Since you're aware I'm not acting alone," Jared said, "why not do yourself a favor and walk away?"

Winston threw his head back and barked a laugh. "Maxwell broke from the void passage and disintegrated-body and soul-ages ago. You think dangling his ghost in front of me will make me run?"

Winston threw his head back and laughed, a gravelly roar that ricocheted off the stone pillars like rolling thunder. Jared stiffened. The name of Maxwell-once enough to freeze lesser men-had slid off Winston's hide like rain off iron, leaving Jared exposed and, for one uneasy heartbeat, painfully unsure of himself.

Drawing a steadier breath than he felt, Jared lifted his eyes to the towering figure. "What is it you're after?"

Winston's smile turned feral. "To kill you, of course." Then he stepped forward. The invisible pressure that rippled out from him struck Jared like a sudden, suffocating gale. Jared staggered backward, boots scraping across the marble floor, and only just managed to keep from collapsing onto one knee.

Sylvia swept in front of Jared, sleeves snapping like banners in the storm of power. "Winston, I lead the Earth Fiend Sect, and we stand on level nine. I would advise you to remember where you are and curb your arrogance."

Winston snorted. "Earth Fiend Sect?"-the words dripped contempt-"That mangy band of misfits? You think you can shield this whelp? Tonight he dies, and no banner on earth will change that."

"Is that so?" Sylvia's voice dropped

to a winter chill. "Then come and test your theory. A surge of power unfurled from her, crackling along the floor like frost racing over glass, colliding head-on with Winston's oppressive force.

Watching the standoff, Jared felt a knot form in his throat. Sylvia knew full well that Winston outclassed her, yet she had stepped forward without a flicker of hesitation. The realization stung him with a sudden

unexpected warmth.

"Thank you, Ms. Vale," Jared murmured. "But this quarrel is between me and Malevolent Path Hall. I intend to settle it myself."

"Jared, Winston's strength is monstrous-" she began, fear creasing her brow.

"I can handle it," Jared cut in gently. "If you stay, you'll only waste your life."

"Then I will waste it beside you," Sylvia said, the words ringing like hammered steel. "I'm aware you're gambling on the idea that I have some hidden patron," Jared replied, a sad half-smile tugging at his mouth. "But I don't. No unseen master stands behind me."

"Patron or not, I would die for you all the same." Her gaze did not waver; it blazed with absolute certainty.

Jared found himself laughing softly, astonished at the breadth of devotion he had somehow inspired.

"Very well. We face him together," he said, nodding once.

"Together," Sylvia echoed, her voice unshakable.

The resolve in her tone drew a flicker of comfort across Jared's battered features.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Though blood streaked his torn tunic, Jared stood tall with the Dragonslayer Sword resting in his grasp. Only the faint trembling in his knees betrayed the toll of his wounds.

"Hold fast, Jared. I will guard your flank," Sylvia said, noticing the tremor.

"No-this time we fight shoulder to shoulder."

"I'm not letting you shoulder this alone," Jared said, giving his head a firm shake, his tone a quiet promise that cut through the roar of the gorge.

The moment the words left him, he dragged a breath so deep it rattled his cracked ribs. Pain flashed like lightning behind his eyes, yet he forced it down, summoned his technique, and let fresh waves of celestial energy spill from his battered frame. Each surge was weaker than Sylvia's, but the iron in his will felt unbreakable, a steady drum that refused to fall silent even in the face of ruin.

Across the shattered ground, Winston watched them both. A flicker of contempt danced in his gaze, as though he were examining two insects that had mistaken themselves for titans.

"The two of you think you can stand against me?" His voice rolled across Death Gorge with lazy amusement. "How delightfully naïve."

"We'll see who's naïve once blades speak," Sylvia answered, her words cold enough to frost stone.

She vanished between blinks-one heartbeat she was beside Jared, the next she burst into existence inches from Winston, hands weaving an intricate seal. A torrent of luminous power erupted forward, a spear of pure celestial force aimed straight for the man's chest.

"Good come at me!" Winston barked, lips curling in savage anticipation.

Golden light flared around his fingers as he mirrored her seal. Twin beams-one silver-white, the other molten gold-clashed midair. Boom! The collision detonated like a

thunderclap inside a cathedral. Death Gorge quaked beneath the impact; cliffs shuddered, boulders burst into chalky powder, and the earth sank under their feet, leaving a crater large enough to swallow cottages.

Sylvia staggered back three full paces before regaining her footing. Winston didn't so much as sway; he stood there, smug and motionless, his superiority carved across his features.

"You're outmatched, Ms. Vale," he said, soft as a dagger sliding home. "Step aside while you still can, or don't blame me for the brutality that follows."

"If you want Jared, you'll have to cross my corpse first," Sylvia replied, steel in every syllable.

Before the echo of her vow had fled, Jared moved. Sword in hand, he blurred-pure lightning in human form-reappearing behind Winston. The blade thrust forward, hungry for the spine it sought.

"Child's play," Winston scoffed.

He angled his torso with effortless grace, letting the sword whistle past empty air.

"Fast, yes," he noted, eyes narrowing with bored appreciation, "but not nearly fast enough."

His arm snapped back—an open-handed strike weighted with crushing force. Had it landed, bones would have shattered like thin glass.

Sylvia thrust her palms forward. A translucent shield blossomed between Jared and doom, woven from threads of her own celestial energy.

Boom! Winston's palm slammed into the barrier, unleashing another concussive blast. Spiderweb fractures raced across the shield, each line a scream of strain, yet the construct held-barely-its glow flickering like a candle in gale-force wind.

"You all right, Mr. Chance?" Sylvia asked, her voice tight but steady.

"Still breathing," Jared replied, forcing a grim smile. "Thank you, Ms. Vale."

Sylvia flicked her wrist, brushing

stray sparks from the edge of her blade. "We're partners here, shoulder to shoulder Spare me the courtesy save your thanks for the moment we win." '

Winston's hawk-sharp gaze flickered between Jared and Sylvia, surprise igniting for a heartbeat behind his golden irises. He had

underestimated them. The realization nipped across his expression like a crack in polished steel.

He had never imagined Sylvia possessed such staggering power-enough to meet his own assault head-on and hold the line without flinching.

And Jared, though clearly the weaker combatant, moved with uncanny synchronicity, slipping in precisely when Sylvia needed a sliver of support.

Winston drew a slow breath, the air vibrating around him. "Seems I'll have to stop playing around and take this seriously."

With that single declaration, his aura convulsed. A fresh tide of force geysered from deep within his core, warping the ground beneath his boots.

Golden light flared around him, layering itself like living armor until he resembled a war deity sculpted from sunlight.

"Heaven's Judgement!" Winston thundered, his voice rolling across the sky like cannon fire.

At his cry, the clouds split. A vast obsidian column speared downward, wrapping him in a cathedral of shadow-shot light.

Within that pillar, Winston's might spiked again, a brutal surge that rattled the mountain valley like an angry drum.

Sylvia called across the wind, "Jared, stay sharp-he's just unleashed his strongest technique."

Jared dipped his chin, eyes steady. "I know. We hit him together, Ms. Vale-right now."

Blade in hand, Jared exploded forward, the earth fracturing under his sprint as he sliced through the golden dust toward Winston.

A Warrior Undefeatable

This time, he unleashed Maxwell's taught sword technique—a hurricane of sword energy radiated from his frame, each beam homing on Winston like meteors hungry for impact.

Simultaneously, Sylvia wove her fingers through a rapid series of seals; ripples of crystalline sorcery burst outward, hammering the air toward Winston in glittering waves.

Winston laughed, welcoming the double assault. "Excellent show me everything you've got!"

His hands blurred, conjuring a massive gilt shield that blossomed before him, absorbing the twin storms with a resonant clang.

Steel-bright echoes-clang, clang, clang-rang out, scattering sparks across the battlefield.

Sword light and mystic force collided with the golden barrier, chiming like crystal bells smashed by hammers.

Impressive as they were, Jared and Sylvia's strikes only rippled the shield's surface; the wall reformed instantly, almost taunting them.

Winston's laughter boomed. "Is that all? You really think such feeble sparks could singe me?"

He clasped his palms; a lance of molten gold erupted, surging toward the pair with the roar of a collapsing star.

Sylvia shouted, "Move!"

She yanked Jared sideways, both bodies rolling clear an instant before the beam punched a crater into the stone.

The detonation thundered through the valley; dust and rubble geysered upward, leaving a smoking hollow large enough to swallow a cottage.

Jared caught his breath amid the haze. "This isn't working, Ms. Vale. Winston's power eclipses ours—we're barely scratching him."

"We don't have the luxury of quitting," Sylvia replied, green eyes blazing. "If we fall back now, everything ends here."

She wiped a thin ribbon of blood from the corner of her lip, steadied her breath, and met Jared's gaze. "We have to find a way to bring him down," Sylvia said, her voice soft yet steeled with resolve.

A heartbeat later, Winston's fingers blurred through a whirlwind of sigils. Gold light burst from his palms in a glittering storm, each beam a needle of divine wrath that rained toward them like a falling constellation.

Jared's eyes narrowed. "Ms. Vale, split up-now!"

They whipped apart in opposite directions, boots skidding over jagged stone as the golden deluge slammed into the ground where they had stood a breath earlier.

Even so, several lances of light ripped through their defenses, carving searing lines across flesh and fabric. A sickening wet crack echoed in the gorge. Jared and Sylvia spat crimson, stumbling as the heat of the blows scalded their bones.

"Ha-ha-ha! You were never worthy opponents!"

Winston's laughter rolled through Death Gorge. "Allow me to demonstrate real power!"

His hands twined again, faster, and a globe of molten gold swelled between his palms-growing, pulsing, collapsing inward before roaring outward. The air itself quivered, rocks vibrating as if afraid of what was coming.

"Lord's Judgement!"

With a vicious shout, he hurled the sphere. It streaked across the battlefield, a miniature sun dragging a tail of burning sigils toward Jared and Sylvia.

Their faces blanched. The pressure alone felt capable of grinding marrow to dust. If that strike landed, bones would shatter and organs would pulp-of that they had no doubt.

"Together!" Jared yelled, hope forging iron in his tone.

"Sylvia nodded once. They unleashed everything.

Light flared along Jared's sword; dozens of razor-thin arcs exploded outward, each one humming with killing intent. At the same instant Sylvia's fingers danced, releasing a torrent of emerald celestial force that crackled like living lightning."

Boom! Gold, silver, and emerald slammed together, the collision thundering through the chasm like the sky itself collapsing.

Death Gorge convulsed. Cliffs fractured, boulders atomized, and a crater yawned where solid ground had been. Jared and Sylvia were

blasted backward, coughing more blood as they skidded across

shattered rock. Even Winston

staggered three paces, shock

flickering across his otherwise smug

features.

"Impressive. The two of you actually blocked it," Winston admitted, lips curling. "But that was only the opening act."

He moved again-faster, fiercer.

Another golden storm erupted, this one denser, merciless, a living net of light. Jared and Sylvia dodged desperately, yet beams still found flesh, fresh blood soaked their torn clothes, each breath shallower than the last.

Jared gritted his teeth. "Sylvia, we can't keep absorbing hits. We need a counter, now."

She winced, scanning Winston's flawless guard. "I know, but his power leaves no seam-I can't see a single weakness."

Winston's silhouette straightened amid the broken columns of light that still drifted through the air like dying fireflies. With a butcher's calm, he raised both hands. All around him, the wind imploded inward, as though the mountain itself were breathing only for him, and a darkness thicker than tar coiled at his fingertips-his most merciless strike, called up once more.

A Warrior Undefeatable

That darkness erupted as a single, towering spear of black light—too wide to be an arrow, too sharp to be a storm-racing for Jared and Sylvia with an animal howl. They saw the beam coming and felt every drop of blood turn cold. A direct hit would not merely wound; it would shatter bones, scatter organs, and leave whatever was left begging for release.

"Ms. Vale—what do we...?" Jared began, voice already cracking beneath the roar of onrushing death.

"I know," she cut in, eyes fixed ahead. "Together. Now."

She gave a quick, decisive nod, the way a commander signals retreat or charge when there is no time left for speeches.

"You realize," Jared said, half-laughing through the terror, "our timing's getting scary good. I might be starting to enjoy you. If we live through this-I swear you'll learn exactly how good that can feel."

Sylvia rolled her eyes so hard the gesture felt like a slap. Even at the cliff edge, he managed to flirt.

She remembered how he'd played the saint earlier, pretending cultivation was all spirit and no flesh. Now—with the grave yawning—he suddenly wished for twin cultivation, for pleasure shared before oblivion.

"Survive first," she snapped. "Die now, and our souls scatter. Even double cultivation in the afterworld won't save you."

Words spent, they struck. Jared's longsword flashed open like a newborn star, vomiting ribbons of sword energy that sliced the air into glassy shards. Beside him, Sylvia's fingers blurred through seals until a column of pure celestial force burst from her palms. Boom!

Light, dark, and heaven's own fire smashed together. Heaven Gate Mountain lurched as if tectonic plates shifted beneath its roots. The collision hurled both warriors backward. They hit rock hard enough to crater it, coughing blood so bright it looked lit from within.

"Ha-ha-ha! Do you finally grasp my power?" Winston's laughter peeled across the ravaged summit. "Now watch yourselves vanish for good."

He formed a fresh seal, each gesture slower, crueler, the promise of execution written in his fingertips.

Blood still dripped from Jared's chin when he forced himself upright. Bones ground against one another, yet his gaze never wavered. If I quit now, she dies with me. Not happening.

"Ms. Vale, go—now! I'll hold him. Whatever happens, I won't die today."

"Jared, forget it! I leave, he obliterates you. We finish this together."

"Listen to me," Jared growled, sword rising like a broken mast in a hurricane. "I've got insurance you don't know about. Someone far bigger than him has my back—so move!"

Jared tasted copper on his tongue yet kept his spine straight. Deep down, he understood he would not die here; somewhere in the unseen distance, Mr. Sanders lingered, and that man would never allow his protégé to be butchered. Sylvia met the unwavering fire in Jared's eyes and realized he was not bluffing in the slightest.

A single heartbeat of hesitation passed, then she gave a faint, solemn nod that made her silver hair tremble at her shoulders.

"Mr. Chance, please—stay alive," she whispered, every syllable trembling with urgency.

With those parting words, Sylvia spun on her heel, cloak snapping.

threw her as she dashed toward
jagged mouth of Death Gorge.

"Leaving? Not a chance," Winston growled, his voice echoing like
grinding stone. "Both of you die

today and no one will weep for the corpses

He flashed a ruthless hand seal, and a column of blinding gold light
erupted from his palms, racing after

Sylvia like divine spear.

Jared lunged forward, long sword raised. Blazing sword energy burst out, meeting the
golden beam in mid-air.

Boom!

Power slammed against power. The canyon walls groaned, and shards of black rock
cascaded like lethal rain.

The shock wave hurled Jared backward. He skidded across stone, coughing a spray of
blood that shone dark against the dust.

"Mr. Chance!" Sylvia cried, skidding to a halt, desperation cracking her voice.

"Go!" Jared roared, forcing himself to one knee. "Don't slow me down-run!"

Her eyes glistened with anguish, but she understood the cruel logic. Staying would only
chain him.

"I'll come back for you. I swear it," she vowed, voice low yet steadier than steel.

Then, she vanished into the labyrinthine shadows of Death Gorge, her silhouette
swallowed by swirling dust.

Winston watched her disappear and merely sneered; the real prize, the boy with the
dragon blood, stood right here.

"No savior left, whelp," he said, lips curling. "Your grave is already dug."

Again, his hands wove that merciless sigil, birthing another torrent of searing gold that
streaked straight for Jared's heart.

Panic and cold calculation flashed across Jared's face.

A Warrior Undefeatable

He knew one touch of that attack would crush every bone in his body, and his limbs were leaden-dodging was no longer possible.

Jared could only watch as the radiant spear of light barreled toward him, unstoppable as sunrise.

At that desperate instant, the draconic essence hanging over his chest flickered, pulsing like a heartbeat of molten amber.

Jared inhaled sharply, channeling the crystal's surge. His battered sword erupted in blinding brilliance, turning night to noon within the gorge.

"You picked the wrong day to bury me!" he bellowed, swinging the blade in a furious arc that cleaved straight into the incoming radiance.

Boom!

Sword light and golden judgment collided once more, their impact tearing a crater into the canyon floor while thunder rolled between the cliffs.

The blow slammed into Jared like a runaway meteor. His body arced backward through the smoky air before crashing onto the rubble-strewn ground.

The impact split fresh wounds wide open. Hot blood gushed over his lips in thick, metallic bursts while pain hammered every bone.

Across the fractured courtyard, Winston skidded several steps back. The golden glow around his palms flickered as shock broke across his handsome, ruthless face.

He had not expected Jared already battered nearly beyond recognition to survive that strike, let alone block it.

"Impressive willpower for a dying man, brat," Winston said, his voice low and ringing with predatory amusement. "But will alone is never enough."

Having said that, he formed another flurry of hand seals. Golden spears of light burst from his fingertips, multiplying into a storm of radiant darts that screamed across the courtyard toward Jared's prone body.

Jared lay flat against the cracked flagstones, lungs burning, limbs refusing to move. He no longer had the strength left to dodge the incoming attack.

He could only watch while the oncoming barrage filled his vision with blinding gold, each bolt promising to snuff the last spark of life still clinging inside him.

A sudden rush of wind cut through the courtyard. Right then, Sylvia landed beside him, silver hair whipping around a face drained of color the moment she saw the carnage.

Terror and resolve flared together in her eyes when she witnessed the sight before her.

"Mr. Chance!" she cried, voice cracking as she thrust both hands forward. "Hold on, I'm here!"

Sylvia performed a series of hand seals. A translucent shield of pure celestial power unfurled before Jared like a blossoming iris, blocking those attacks.

Boom!

The golden spears slammed into the barrier with thunderous booms. Shockwaves rattled shattered columns and sent debris spraying.

Hairline fractures spider-webbed across the shield, yet Sylvia gritted her teeth until the final bolt fizzled against the cracking wall. The barrier—though quivering—held.

"Ms. Vale, why did you come back?" Jared gasped, blood trailing down his chin.

"I refuse to leave you here." Her reply was fierce, immediate. "We face this together, or not at all."

"But there are too many of them," Jared wheezed. "We can't beat an army."

"Maybe not," she said, eyes glinting with stubborn fire, "yet surrender is not an option. We'll find a way—no matter the cost."

Winston's smile curdled into a snarl as he studied Sylvia's defiant stance. "So, Lady Vale, you've chosen death beside him. Fine—no mercy." His arm swept upward. "All of you, now!"

Morcant and the other elders of the Malevolent Path Hall surged forward alongside Winston. Blades, spells, and crackling chains of energy converged into a murderous tidal wave, roaring toward the pair.

Jared and Sylvia darted through the maelstrom, but the curtain of attacks was too dense. Blasts—carved through flesh, tore fabric, and painted their clothes a deeper red with every desperate step taken

Each breath grew shorter, their movements slower, strength draining away like water through shattered stone.

They stumbled back-to-back, wobbling beneath the storm of power, both knowing that the next heartbeat might be their last.

Without warning, a terrible pressure swept across the ruined clearing.

It pressed on lungs, bent tree trunks, and made loose stones skitter as though the ground itself had grown afraid. The force of it dwarfed even Winston's aura. Winston, Morcant, and the other elders stiffened, color draining from their faces.

They all understood at once. Someone far stronger than any of them had stepped onto the field.

Winston drew a sharp breath. "Who dares?"

A single figure strode through the settling dust, his pace calm yet unhurried, as if the storm of power belonged to him alone.

The newcomer was a middle-aged man in an ivory scholar's robe. Gentle folds of fabric swayed around him, but the aura that clung to his frame crackled with silent might.

Winston narrowed his eyes. "Identify yourself."

The newcomer ignored Winston completely and crossed the courtyard in three easy steps, stopping only when he stood before Jared, who lay bruised beside Sylvia.

"Mr. Chance, are you hurt?" the man asked, voice low and steady. Recognition lit Jared's battered face. "Mr. Swanson?" His relief burst out as a ragged laugh. "I can't believe it's you!"

The newcomer was Zevon Swanson, the man Jared had rescued at Ethereal Realm's Celestial Stairway.

Had it not been for Jared's intervention, Zevon would have remained there forever, servant to the golder immortal.

Zevon lifted one hand. A warm river of spiritual power flowed from his palm, coating Jared and Sylvia in shimmering light. Torn flesh knit, broken bones straightened, and breath returned to lungs that had been seconds from failing.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Jared looked at Zevon, who was standing before him, the emotions in his eyes a mixture of gratitude and surprise.

Jared pushed to his feet, still shaky but alive, and clasped Zevon's hand. "If you hadn't appeared when you did," he said, voice thick with gratitude, "Sylvia and I would already be corpses on this ground."

Sylvia forced herself upright and offered a respectful bow. "Your timing saved our lives, Mr. Swanson. Thank you."

Zevon smiled and waved the courtesy aside. "No thanks are necessary. You once freed me from endless servitude. Repaying that debt is the least I can do. Besides, I swore to follow you for three centuries. During that span, I am, if you'll permit the term, your servant."

Jared shook his head hard. "Don't speak of servitude. I could never view you that way."

In truth, Jared knew Zevon's strength easily eclipsed Winston's. On this battlefield, Zevon was their only real hope.

While the two men exchanged quiet words, Winston stood forgotten. Rage bubbled up inside him-volcanic, uncontrollable.

He was among the upper echelons of Malevolent Path Hall. As high and mighty as he was, to be ignored was unthinkable.

He roared, "Do you imagine I'm invisible?"

Black light burst from his body, flickering like lightning trapped in storm clouds. The very air warped around him, whining under the strain of his fury.

Only then did Zevon turn. His eyes were clear, almost kind, yet his words cut like frost. "Behave, and you might survive a little longer."

Winston trembled with rage. He flashed a series of hand seals, chanting razor-sharp syllables. A tidal wave of obsidian energy roared outward, ripping the earth, hurling boulders, and scouring the courtyard in a storm of flying debris.

Zevon's expression never changed. He lifted one palm, and a gentle, luminous current spiraled forth. The two powers slammed together-night against dawn- then froze in place, the collision bending light and sound into a single trembling heartbeat.

Boom!

"The air exploded with a deafening boom.

The blinding, gold-tinted shock wave vanished almost as soon as it appeared, yet Zevon's own spiritual force-fluid and merciless-knifed forward in a single, unstoppable beam toward Winston."

Winston's expression faltered. He felt every muscle seize. He wanted to dodge, but some invisible grip seemed to tighten around his limbs, pinning him in place as though the very space around him had turned to stone.

Bam!

"A second, bone-shaking crack split the silence.

The blast slammed into Winston's chest. He rocketed backward like a severed kite, crashed against the earth, and coughed up a bright sheet of blood that splattered across the crushed gravel."

Reeling, Winston clawed to his feet.

Fear widened his eyes until the whites shone stark against the

blood on his lips. "W who are you?

he rasped, voice trembling. "How can anyone wield power this monstrous?"

Zevon fixed him with a stare as cold as winter iron. "I am nothing more than Mr. Chance's servant," he said, each measured word cutting like a knife you raised your hand against here

my master. You will

alive." .

A shiver slid down Winston's spine. "Then... you're the hidden expert shielding Jared?"

Zevon's head moved in a slow, almost pitying shake. "I already told you. I'm only his servant. The true force behind Mr. Chance stands far higher than I could ever reach."

Memory flashed through Zevon's mind. At that time, at Celestial Stairway, the golder immortal was utterly frightened by the expert backing Jared, and that was why they had gone easy on Jared.

Whoever backed Jared dwarfed even that golder immortal's power. Zevon knew his own limits. He would never presume to claim that throne.

Winston's gaze darted over Zevon's unyielding frame. One truth struck him hard. Fight on, and he would die.

He spun and bolted. A streak of dark light tore across the plain, and in a heartbeat, he was nothing but a shrinking shadow on the horizon.

Seeing their lord flee, the elders of Malevolent Path Hall went pale. Panic overtook reason, and they scattered after Winston like startled birds.

Jared turned to Zevon, urgency tightening his voice. "We can't let them get away. They've harmed too many. If they escape today, they'll only come back worse."

Zevon offered a single, sure nod. "Rest easy, Mr. Chance. They have nowhere to run."

The moment the words left his mouth, his silhouette blurred and then was simply gone.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Light rippled ahead of the fleeing elders. Zevon materialized out of that shimmer, calm as dusk, blocking the narrow gorge they had hoped to escape through.

Terror froze the group. One elder-voice shaking-managed, "S-sir, w-we only followed orders. Please, spare us."

Zevon's eyes hardened to ice. "Did you ever spare a soul when it was your turn to strike? Today, you pay the price for every drop of blood you spilled."

As soon as Zevon finished his sentence, his hands blurred through a storm of hand seals. Spears of condensed spiritual power erupted around him and shot forward at the elders of Malevolent Path Hall like a hail of midnight arrows.

The elders threw up frantic defensive cultivation technique glimmering shields, runic walls—but Zevon's force ripped through their defenses as if through rice paper, leaving nothing but splintered light in its wake.

"Ahh!"

Screams sliced the wind. Bodies ruptured under the impact, dissolving into crimson mist that drifted away on a cold breeze-erased as though they had never existed.

Duty finished, Zevon flickered back to Jared and Sylvia's side, the battlefield's silence collapsing in behind him.

Awe shone in Jared's eyes. "Mr. Swanson, that was astounding. Thank you for wiping out those monsters."

Zevon allowed himself a small smile. "Think nothing of it. A simple chore. Still, Winston slipped away. He may trouble us again."

Jared's expression steadied into quiet resolve. "Once we uncover the Heaven Gate Sect's ruins, my strength will soar. If Winston dares return to trouble us, I'll finish him off with one sword strike."

Jared felt a quiet, almost electric certainty rise in his chest. If he could just locate the entrance to Heaven Gate Sect's ruins hidden somewhere deep within Heaven Gate Mountain, then Winston—no matter how terrifying the rumors that clung to that name—would no longer be a threat. The thought steadied his breathing and sharpened his gaze, as though the mountain itself had become a compass guiding him toward salvation.

"You intend to head for Heaven Gate Sect's ruins?" Zevon asked, his voice low and measured, like a testing blade sliding from its sheath.

"We do." Sylvia dipped her chin once, the pale lantern-light glinting across her dark eyes. "We have already found the gateway that leads inside."

Zevon's brow pinched, the faintest crease between his eyes betraying an unspoken worry. A sentence flickered on his lips, then died unvoiced.

Not missing the hesitation, Jared stepped forward. "Mr. Swanson, is something bothering you?"

Zevon gave a tiny start, then

exhaled. "Nothing at all," he said, forcing a small smile. "But I will be able to accompany you into Heaven Gate Sect's ruins. I'll remain close, however within reach should you require me."

He drew a lustrous emerald badge from inside his robe. The badge shimmered faintly, as if a silver tide swirled beneath its surface. "I forged this myself," he said, placing it in Jared's palm. "Asliver of my@y

within w t

Spiritual energy rests within

Should danger find you, break the

emerald badge. I will sense the

fracture and come as swiftly as Heaven allows."

Warmth flooded Jared's throat. "Thank you, Mr. Swanson. I will remember this favor for as long as I draw breath."

Beside him, Sylvia pressed a fist to her heart. "Your generosity will not be forgotten."

Zevon waved away the praise. "Chance brought us together. Courtesy is needless between us. If hardship hunts you again, you know where to find me."

He turned, robes stirring like morning mist-then paused when Jared's voice chased after him.

"One more favor-could you rouse the Celestial King?" Jared gestured toward the mighty figure slumped nearby, his gaze vacant and childlike.

Zevon flicked his wrist. A whisper of light leapt from his palm, brushed Celestial King's brow, and vanished. Instantly, a spark of clarity ignited in Celestial King's eyes, smothering the veil of stupor.

"My work here is done." Zevon's words drifted in the air—and his body dissolved with them, leaving only a ripple where he had stood.

Following Zevon's disappearance, Celestial King straightened, armor clinking with sudden awareness gaze swept the stone corridor,

His

fixed on Jared and Sylvia. "Who are you and what are you doing in my half?"

"My name is Jared Chance," Jared answered, voice calm yet firm. "I am here to rescue you."

"Sylvia Vale," Sylvia added, every syllable crisp. "Sect leader of the Earth Fiend Sect."

Celestial King blinked, baffled. "Rescue me? When did I become someone in need of rescue?"

Jared did not argue. Instead, he slipped a carved token from his item pouch-an ancient crest of aged gold inlaid with a single star of crimson jade.

It was the command token of Celestial Palace's very first Celestial King.

Color drained from Celestial King's face. "T-That is the founding Celestial King's Celestial King Decree! How could it possibly be in your possession?"

A Warrior Undefeatable

"How I obtained it is irrelevant," Jared said, expression unshakable. "From this moment, the entire Celestial Palace answers to me."

His tone carried the chill of iron drawn across stone-no anger, no boast, only immutable fact.

Doubt shadowed Celestial King's brow. Jared's cultivation, after all, sat only at Human Immortal Realm Level Three-scarcely equal to even a mid-level hall master, let alone someone capable of commanding the whole Celestial Palace.

Sensing that skepticism, Jared continued, his words threading urgency and truth. "Back on level eight," he said, "Enaricus conspired with Malevolent Path Hall to seize your Celestial King Palace. Maxwell intervened, and Onneas witnessed every moment. Onneas was the one who sought me out when you vanished-she could no longer reach you. It was then that I learned Jaehaerys and Brennan had imprisoned your mind, planning to deliver you to Malevolent Path Hall. Had I not arrived when I did, you would already be chained in their dungeon."

At the mention of Maxwell-a name no imposter would dare invoke lightly-Celestial King's resistance wavered. Conviction settled over his features, and for the first time, he regarded Jared not as a trespasser but as the unexpected savior he claimed to be.

"Where is our founding ancestor now?" Celestial King asked, his voice low yet echoing through the broken colonnade like a bell struck at midnight. The question lingered in the air, heavy as storm clouds gathering over a battlefield.

"Shattered to dust long ago," Jared answered, meeting Celestial King's gaze without flinching.

"A single scrap of his soul survives, trapped in a void passage. For all these years, he has been imprisoned there by the clan leader of the celestials, claiming he violated the laws."

Celestial King exhaled a sigh that felt older than stone walls. He nodded slowly, as though paging through a grim record he already knew by heart.

Evidently, he was already aware of that matter.

"If the ancestor entrusted his token to you, then the Celestial Palace shall follow your lead. Whatever you require, Mr. Chance, speak it."

Gone was Celestial King's earlier pride. In its place stood a man bowing to destiny, his tone steeped in reverence.

"First, we head for Heaven Gate Sect's ruins," Jared said, his words clipped, decisive. "You are healed now-return at once to the Celestial King Palace. The palace bleeds. Only Onneas still holds the line. You must rise to level eight again and rebuild the Celestial Palace's strength. When you choose new officers, look deeper. Jaehaerys, Brennan, and Enaricus nearly had your head. Remember how close that knife came."

"You are right. I will be vigilant," Celestial King replied, nodding with a resolve born of fresh scars.

Celestial Palace had once loomed unassailable across level eight, yet great empires seldom fall to foreign blades. Their crumbling begins within.

Had Jaehaerys and the others not betrayed him, the Celestial Palace would still stand proud today.

After offering Jared a solemn bow of gratitude, Celestial King summoned a beam of light and vanished toward level eight, and Sylvia

Leaving?

to limp back to the mountain cave where they had first taken shelter.

Both were wounded—bones aching, veins bruised. To charge into ancient ruins now would be to hand their lives to fate's dice.

Inside the cave, Jared set the Pentacarna Tower on the ground. After laying the arcane array, he brought Sylvia into the Pentacarna Tower.

Time inside the tower flowed a hundred times faster than outside. One year beyond

its walls became a hundred within. Realization widened Sylvia's eyes until they shone like frost under moonlight.

In that instant, she understood how Jared's strength had soared beyond common measure.

"Ms. Vale, this Pentacarna Tower is my deepest secret," he said, voice gentle yet firm. "I bring no one here unless they stand closest to my heart."

"I know," she whispered, a smile curving her lips as delicate fingers began to loosen the clasps of her robe.

Jared did not protest this time. Need and trust collided, and he swept her into his arms, their silhouettes merging beneath the tower's jade-lit vault.

Through dual cultivation, their wounds knit with breathtaking speed, vitality flowing between them like twin rivers meeting in a fertile plain.

When they finally emerged from the

Pentacarna Tower, both stood whole once more. Jared's aura

blazed brighter than before. The threshold of Human Immortal Realm Level Four lay a single breath away.

"Let's move," Jared said, the mountain wind catching in his hair. "The Heaven Gate Sect's ruins await."

"Mmm," Sylvia answered, cheeks blossoming with shy color as she slipped her arm through his.

When the final fortress of a woman's heart falls, closeness becomes instinct- especially after a first shared night that burns like dawn over new lands.

People said a woman never truly

forgot the very first man who

entered her life. The claim hung in

Jared's mind like fog on a cold

dawn an old proverb, echoing even here among mountains and shifting clouds.

Guided by Sylvia, he reached the summit of Heaven Gate Mountain. The peak looked barren, nothing but wind-scraped rock-a disappointing sight for a place rumored to hide an ancient gateway.

Before he could voice doubt, Sylvia flicked her sleeve. Space rippled, bent, and the entire mountaintop re-shaped itself as if a curtain had been torn away to reveal a hidden stage.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Where emptiness had stood, stone pillars now pierced the clouds.

Thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—rose straight as lances, forming a silent forest of gray monoliths that glimmered with age and unseen purpose.

"So this is the entrance to the Heaven Gate Sect's ruins?" Jared asked, his voice low, reverent.

Sylvia shook her head. "We must cross the stone forest and reach its heart. I have led teams before. None of us could advance that far."

Jared released a wave of spiritual sense, trying to map the forest. An invisible wall smothered his perception, blocking any view beyond a few pillars.

He tasted frustration-whatever lay ahead would not yield easily.

"I suppose this stone forest forms a grand arcane array," he murmured. "Break the array, reach the center. Let's try."

With that, he stepped between the towering columns.

The moment they entered, the air thickened, pressing on skin and bone like deep water.

No two pillars were alike. Some were as broad as ancient oaks, others as thin as reeds. Every shaft bore runes-archaic runes that pulsed with an icy glow, casting shifting shadows across Sylvia's determined face.

Jared drew a slow breath. Years of studying formation sharpened his instincts.

Almost at once, he sensed a pattern. The pillars were not random. They obeyed a hidden rhythm.

He closed his eyes. In his mind, diagrams of the eight trigrams unfolded, overlaying perfectly onto the forest's layout.

"Ms. Vale, this is indeed a colossal formation-complex, but solvable. I can break it." He opened his eyes, confidence blazing brighter than the runes.

Hope flickered in Sylvia's gaze. She stayed close, every step measured, as though one careless breath might awaken sleeping traps.

Moving deeper, Jared counted paces, recalculating with every subtle shift of light.

After each segment, the runes changed-tiny strokes twisting, dots sliding-clues in an otherworldly script to decipher the arcane array.

"Following the sequence, we first locate the pillar."

As Jared spoke, he searched among the stone forest for his target.

Finally, he stopped short before a thick stone pillar. The runes carved

Stopping, he laid a palm against the stone. Strange power surged into him-images, voices, memories older than dynasties-an unspoken dialogue between mortal and array.

His eyes snapped open. Delight curved his lips. The formation had revealed its starting key.

"Found it. This pillar is the beginning."

Hands blurred, he formed seals, chanting in a steady cadence. Runes across the pillar flared, answering his call, and the entire stone forest seemed to inhale, waiting for whatever he would do next.

At the faintest sweep of Jared's hands, every rune carved into the neighboring stone pillars flared alive. Beams of white-gold light sprang on the etched symbols, crossed in midair, and stretched outward until they wove themselves into a towering luminous curtain that hummed with restrained power.

Without a moment's hesitation, Jared caught Sylvia by the wrist and stepped straight through the

glowing veil, as casua

as they

ugh

they were walking beneath a

waterfall of sunlight instead of raw

arcane energy.

A lightning flash blinded them for a heartbeat.

"When their vision cleared, the labyrinthine stone forest no longer twisted around them.

It was as if an invisible hand had lifted every monolith, shuffled the entire maze, and then set the pieces down again this time leaving a single, arrow-Straight corridor stretching into the unknown."

"Looks like we guessed right. Keep moving," Jared said.

He pressed onward at an unhurried pace, Sylvia matching him step for step as the newly formed passage beckoned them deeper.

They passed pillar after pillar, each one etched with a unique compass of shifting

runes.

Drawing on his command of arcane arrays, Jared paused, traced the air, and unraveled every trap before it could even tighten, clearing obstacle after obstacle with unsettling ease.

The farther they advanced, the thicker the air became saturated with a hush so ancient and potent it felt almost sacred.

"Mr. Chance, your mastery of formation is unbelievable. Is there anything you can't do?" Sylvia's eyes shone with unabashed admiration.

"That was nothing," he answered with an easy grin.

After all, both Divinus and Hellion had once guided his hands. Compared with their lessons, these puzzles were children's games.