

A Warrior Undefeatable 5671-5680

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Color drained from the Soul Devourer's cheeks. Almost no one alive still held proof of his betrayal. Across level nine, people remembered only that Heaven Gate vanished overnight; none had discovered how the sect had fallen.

"Master Hawksley spared your life, and you repaid him with blood-slaughtering the entire sect before dawn. I am here today because I swore to Master Hawksley that I would cut you down and carry Heaven Gate's vengeance."

Jared's expression hardened to black ice as his stare locked on Soul Devourer.

"Yes, I erased Heaven Gate-every last disciple. So what? Strength rules here in the celestial realm. Sentiment is for the weak. I butchered them, stole their resources, and rose stronger."

His manic laughter clanged through the audience hall, brazen, metallic, and utterly devoid of mercy.

"Then steel yourself for death." Jared said, rage filling him.

Dragonslayer quivered in his grasp, loosing a chain of dragon cries that rattled the pillars.

The Soul Devourer's mirth rebounded off the stone, swollen with arrogance. Even Jared's swift ruin of the Five Shade Demons looked, in that contemptuous gaze, like children tussling in sand.

"Revenge? For Heaven Gate Sect? Brat, you think you can boast before me just because you have a scrap of their legacy? Killing a few worthless minions does not earn the right to challenge me, the Soul Devourer."

He rose from the throne. Light itself recoiled, and a tide of thick, living darkness rolled from his pores, crushing every chest. The disciples whose spirits Jared had rekindled found their knees trembling once more beneath that hammering malice.

Neville and Sylvia exchanged grim looks; the Soul Devourer's depth defied even their bleakest guesses. Jared was formidable, yet this ancient fiend had ravaged the heavens since forgotten ages-outcome uncertain.

"Try me."

Sensing Jared's resolve, the Dragonslayer Sword sang louder, its corona of sword light shredding the encroaching miasma into glittering dust.

"Fool. How cocky and ignorant."

With lazy disgust, he flicked his wrist as though brushing away a fly. Space screamed, ripping like overstretched parchment.

A raspy tear shivered through reality.

A pitch-black fissure yawned open, its rim crackling with chaotic void currents that breathed annihilation.

From the jagged tear in space oozed a breath older than mountains-raw, primordial, and heavy with the dust of endless centuries.

Under that pressure, a figure stepped through the rift: a man so huge he seemed to carry an entire battlefield on his shoulders nearly** three meters tall and broad as a city gate.

His battered bronze cuirass, chipped and slashed by countless blades and axes, clanked as though it still remembered every clash it had survived.

Bronzed skin stretched over knot-rope muscles that twitched with explosive promise, each sinew hinting at storms of violence held barely in check.

His face resembled a monument carved from granite, yet his eyes remained hollow, indifferent-windows without a soul, the gaze of a machine built only to kill.

Around him, invisible threads of

Heavenly Law curled and writhed

bending light warping air, leaving everything near him looking slightly unreal-as if the world itself doubted he belonged.

Even Bloodshade skittered backward, terror widening what passed for their eyes.

"The boy is yours." The Soul

Devourer lounged on his throne, one

cheek propped against a lazy fist, as though the carnage to come were nothing but afternoon theater.

He sank deeper into the seat, drumming idle fingers on the armrest. "Do not take forever. My patience wears thin." The words floated out, casual yet lethal.

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Theron offered no reply. He merely turned, the emptiness in his eyes locking unblinkingly on Jared.

The instant that vacant stare found him, Jared felt an icy spike slide into his chest.

A threat like none he had faced crashed down on him, every hair on his body standing rigid, as if the air itself had grown fangs.

The danger felt sharper-crueler—than anything the Soul Devourer had shown so far.

He had known the Soul Devourer was stronger than on level six, but he had never imagined the fiend could summon a monster of this magnitude.

"Mr. Chance, be careful! This one... this one is utterly bizarre!" Neville Contreras shouted, voice strained by the same crushing weight.

Cold dread surrounded Neville. The giant's aura was so formidable and suffocating that Neville found his lungs cramped, his heart hammering hard against bone.

Beside Jared, Sylvia tightened her grip on her long sword, Heaven Gate energy racing through her veins, ready to strike the moment fate demanded.

Jared pulled one deep breath, swept every stray thought away, and fixed every shred of will on the giant before him.

He sensed at once that this opponent stood worlds above the Five Shade Demons he had slain.

"Kill." The single syllable clanged from the giant's throat like steel on stone. An instant later, he moved.

No thunder of aura, no howl of demon wrath—only one simple step. Yet that step shredded distance itself; from over a hundred meters away, his ancient-scented fist now hovered before Jared's eyes.

Fast. Indescribably fast. So fast it slipped beyond the limits of Jared's spiritual sense, blurring past thought itself.

Though the blow had not yet landed, the condensed fist-pressure already stung Jared's face. Air detonated around him with rolling thunderclaps, shredded into empty shock waves.

Too fast!

An earthquake of terror thundered through Jared's chest. Instinct short-circuited every rational thought. He poured every shred of his colossal spiritual power into the Dragonslayer Sword and whipped the blade across his body in a desperate guard.

A metallic concussion boomed, so loud it could have cracked the heavens.

It sounded like twin mountains colliding, the air itself shrieking under the impact.

The shock raced down the sword and into his arms. Agony lanced through muscle and bone. The skin between thumb and forefinger split open, blood spraying in crimson arcs.

The blow flung him like a rag doll. He punched through several stone pillars, then slammed into the rear wall of the grand ball. Masonry exploded, a cloud of dust billowing toward the vaulted ceiling

"Jared!" Sylvia cried, her voice fracturing as terror blanched her face.

"Mr. Chance!" Neville shouted, his usual battle-hardened calm shredded by raw panic.

Both Sylvia and Neville stood rooted after their shouts, faces drained of every trace of color.

The tiny flame of hope that had begun to stir in the disciples of the Nethergate. Šect sputtered out as though doused in ice water Across the rubble, the Soul Devourer curled

a merciless smile, as if he had

predicted this outcome from the

very first clash.

The dust thinned. Jared dragged himself from the cratered wall, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth. Inside, his energy churned,

violeththy. Every organ felt bruised,

rattling against his ribs.

Such brutal force... and that punch was...

He frowned, realizing the strike had carried more than speed and strength. A sinister pulse of law had brushed him, slowing his body by a hair's breadth—and that sliver had proved devastating.

Is... Is Time Law interfering?

A flash of understanding knifed through his mind.

The giant, his eyes hollow and lifeless, stepped forward again, unleashing another seemingly simple yet devastating fist when he saw Jared could still stand.

"Time Deceleration!" Jared roared, bracing himself.

Raw time nascence energy erupted from him in rippling waves, seeking to drag the seconds around the giant into a sluggish crawl.

Then, the impossible happened.

The moment the Time Deceleration field touched the giant, the aura around him shimmered.

Jared felt the time nascence power melt away like frost beneath morning sun, devoured and rewritten by an even deeper, more primordial force.

No, it's not just devoured!

Inside the Time Deceleration zone, the giant's fist lurched faster, ripping through the air like lightning unleashed.

Along his knuckles glimmered a faint sheen—an afterimage that looked disturbingly like time itself running backward.

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"What?" Jared gasped.

His pupils shrank to pinpoints, the revelation smashing into his thoughts like a tidal wave.

Time Deceleration had not only failed—it had become ammunition for his opponent.

Somehow, the giant was twisting Jared's own mastery of time into a weapon against him.

Lightning cracked through the gloom, and Jared had no time for conscious thought. The fist racing toward him was a comet of raw force, its wake ripping the air to shreds before it ever reached his skin.

"Five-Element Sword Force, guard me!" Jared shouted, the words tumbling out like a battle drum.

Five intertwining streams of color burst from his body and wove themselves into a glittering net-like sword energy that bloomed in front of him.

At the same instant, his Golem Body sealed him in a shell of radiant metal.

He hammered both heels against the stone, launching into a blur of footwork that dragged every last ounce of speed from his muscles in a desperate bid to sidestep that uncanny punch.

Boom!

The net met the onrushing fist. For less than the span of a single breath, they held- then detonated into shards of dying light.

Jared twisted, but the shockwave still kissed his shoulder.

Crunch!

White-hot pain flared as bone caved; his left shoulder folded inward, the agony so sharp it stole his breath. He spun through the air like a broken doll, scarlet spraying from his lips before his body hammered into the ground and skidded.

"Jared!" Sylvia's cry cut through the storm of debris.

Her ice-blue sword flared, becoming a streak of winter lightning that swept toward the giant, every snow-white petal of frost it summoned aimed at buying Jared a single heartbeat.

"Out of my way, insect." The giant did not even bother to look at her.

With lazy disdain, he flicked a broad palm behind him. The gust that roared forth bent space itself; time inside that wind seemed to clog and curdle.

Sylvia's sword charge hit the distortion and slowed as if it had plunged into quicksand. The radiant edge dulled, its brilliance aging before her eyes, power leaking away like sand from a shattered hourglass.

Thud.

The warped gale slammed into the blade, ripped it from Sylvia's fingers, and pitched her backward. Blood spattered from her mouth; Neville lunged and caught her, yet her face had already blanched to parchment and her pulse fluttered.

"His power... it erodes time itself..." she managed, eyes glossy with shock.

Neville's jaw locked; his fists

clenched so hard his nails carved

crescents in his own palms. He

yearned

to charge, but if Jared and

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effortlessly he knew he would only add another corpse to the field. Content

All he could do was trust in Jared—trust that somewhere behind the battered young

fighter stood a master greater than any of them had yet seen.

Across the ruined ground, the Soul Devourer watched with growing delight, savoring

the scene like a cat toying with mice it had already decided to eat.

Jared struck the earth, bounced, and forced himself upright. He didn't bother to wipe the blood from his lips. Firestormrage boiled in his chest, but a glacial share of reason held it in place.

Time... His command of time nascence runs deeper than mine.

My Time Deceleration won't hurt him. Worse-it might be turned, speeding his

blows instead. Sylvia's strike was decayed by that same power. Could it be...

A terrifying hypothesis coiled through Jared's mind, cold as midnight and twice as heavy.

The giant closed the distance again. No feints, no flourish-only a brutal fist arrowing straight for Jared's face.

The blow carried the promise of annihilation, as though it meant to explode his skull like overripe fruit.

Gritting his teeth, Jared unfurled Time Deceleration and hurled his Holy Light Fist-golden, righteous, blazing to scour all evil.

He needed to feel, at point-blank range, what was going on with the giant's Time Law.

A deafening hum shivered through the hall.

In the heartbeat before their

knuckles met, that higher-order ripple of Time Law surged again. Jared poured every shard of spintual Sense into that splinter of eternity, desperate to seize the mystery.

And then he saw it.

At the brink of impact, the skin of the giant's fist glimmered—and, impossibly, time inside that inch of space flowed backward.

It was not acceleration, nor slowing, but a localized Time Reversal—the ruthless rewinding of reality itself.

The loop lasted less than a hundredth of a breath, yet its horror was boundless.

That microscopic rewind yanked Jared's Holy Light Fist from its apex back to its first spark, stripping away every ounce of momentum.

The giant's punch, unburdened by the lag, crashed into the weakened light with merciless precision.

The outcome was expected.

A wet explosion of air and blood burst between them.

The golden fist shattered; Jared's technique vanished as though it had never

existed. The same time-warped force hammered his chest, caving bone and spirit alike.

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"Gah!" Blood sprayed from Jared's lips as ribs snapped; his body flew like a rag doll, gouging a trench across the marble until the far wall stopped him with a sickening crack.

His aura plummeted, the Dragonslayer Sword skittering away to whine in helpless protest.

"It's over..." Neville whispered, despair thick in his throat.

Hopelessness clouded Neville's face.

If even Jared had fallen-and so utterly-who could still stand against the Soul Devourer?

Is the Nethergate Sect truly fated to die here today?

All around him, disciples paled; many collapsed to their knees, shivering in dread.

The Soul Devourer nodded in dark satisfaction and told the giant, "Enough play. End him swiftly."

The giant obeyed, heavy footsteps echoing through the ruin of the hall as he

marched toward Jared's broken form. He raised one boot, his power and that eerie Time Law ripple condensing around it, ready to crush the fallen warrior's skull. The shadow of death swept over Jared.

Jared lay sprawled across the frost-slick ruins. Shards of stone bit his skin, and every nerve pulsed with agony, yet his fogging mind spun like a broken projector, replaying-frame by merciless frame their brief but brutal exchanges. Most of all, he kept circling back to that impossible instant when the current of time itself had been forced to run backward.

Time reversed... not accelerated, not slowed... rewind. When I decelerate, I merely drag the river's surface, altering its flow. He, though-he dives straight to the source. He overwrites, resets-erases. What is the essence of time? A river? A plucked string? Or a single, pliable membrane that can be folded, spliced, and laid over itself?

Every past whisper he had ever grasped of the time nascence collided with the shock of this higher law now battering his senses. In that dizzy point between life and death, theories clashed, sparked, and fused within him. He seemed to glimpse the river in full flood, to see a thousand diverging tributaries braid together again, binding past,

present, and future into an indivisible thread.

My deceleration merely slackens one stretch of the torrent, but reversal—reversal forces a branch of water back up the gorge. To achieve that demands power and comprehension far beyond mine... yet all laws share a single womb. If he resets a single temporal node, maybe, if I pierce that node precisely as it resets, I can intervene, or render my own law immune to his overlay.

The giant's mountainous foot, heavy enough to shatter cliffs, rose above Jared, humming with death. Neville squeezed his eyes shut, unable to watch the execution

Sylvia tried to push herself upright, but her limbs buckled; glossy tears of despair blurred her vision as she collapsed again.

Then, at the final heartbeat before annihilation, light flared within Jared's previously dim eyes, bright and cold as newborn stars.

That glare belonged to a man who had torn aside a veil and glimpsed truth's scaffolding.

He saw it: the exact instant when power gathered around the giant's foot, the air trembling with the coming Time Reversal. In brilliant clarity he located the temporal node about to be reset.

So that's it!

Insight rushed through him like dawn flooding a cavern. The bottleneck inside his comprehension shattered; his command of time nascence vaulted to a new summit.

Deep within his nascence space, a lone star roared to incandescent life.

He no longer tried to decelerate or oppose the giant's Time Reversal. Instead, he melded with it-matched it beat for beat.

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The instant before that titanic foot could descend-just before the law activated Jared gathered every last sliver of spiritual energy. The reborn time nascence folded inward, cocooning him, sealing especially the fragile space around his skull heartbeat hung, stretched thin as silk.

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Within that cocoon, he mirrored the giant's rhythm, syncing his own microseconds to the impending rewind until both laws vibrated in eerie resonance.

A low, deep hum erupted.

The giant's Time Reversal rippled outward precisely on cue. Yet this time, the moment it met Jared's synchronized field, everything changed.

The eerie current of time nascence-able to roll any assault back to the instant before it erupted-touched the faint halo that clung to Jared's skin. Instead of resetting him, the current faltered. Its sweeping authority to overwrite and rewind simply dissolved.

Jared's own timeline began to reverse in perfect resonance, matching the invader's pulse for pulse until a fragile equilibrium formed.

Time streamed backward, yet it could no longer drag Jared's battered body into the past.

Stripped of that treacherous favor, the giant's sure-kill kick shed its temporal cloak and shrank into raw, unvarnished strength. That strength still roared, but Jared's flesh—hardened by countless baptisms in Heavenly Spirit Liquid—now stood ready.

"Now!"

Jared's eyes flashed like twin comets. The instant the titan's foot descended, he hurled his fist upward. He poured every ounce of power into the punch, hitching it to his fresh command of time. Rather than rewind, he accelerated the flow around his knuckles to its final limit—Time Acceleration, a brand-new facet he had seized only heartbeats ago.

The collision detonated. A thunderclap louder than any prior clash ripped the hall apart. A hurricane of energy spun outward from the two combatants, flinging up earth for over a hundred meters. Even the vaulted ceiling of the Nethergate Sect's grand hall split open, stone raining like broken stars.

The giant groaned a muffled, startled cry, half pain, half disbelief.

A savage, razor-edged force, brimming with the power to shred temporal balance, knifed from the sole of the giant's foot through every inch of his frame. His gigantic body shuddered. Staggering backward, he carved deep footprints into the shattered floor, cracks spider-webbing in his wake.

Using the recoil, Jared flipped once and landed lightly. Blood still traced the curve of his mouth, his face milk-pale, yet he stood as straight as a pine eyes honed to a blade..

Though his aura flickered weakly, a

new depth ancient as

unfathomable—now breathed

around him.

He raised a hand, and the Dragonslayer Sword answered with a joyful draconic cry, streaking back into his grasp.

Silence. The entire grand hall of the Nethergate Sect froze, soundless and still, as though even air dared not stir. One could have heard a needle strike the ruin-strewn tiles.

Every spectator stood rooted, jaws slack, staring at Jared—sword leveled at the giant, posture unbowed.

He had actually repelled that unbeatable monster, and he had done it on the brink of death.

Neville blinked hard, convinced his senses had betrayed him.

Sylvia clapped a trembling hand over her lips. Tears still glittered on her lashes, yet fresh joy blazed beneath them, a beam of dawn slicing through endless night.

The composure on the Soul Devourer's face drowned under a glacial darkness. Mockery fled, replaced by a chill that seemed to leach warmth from the world.

His fingers tightened on the throne's armrest, unaware. The arm of black iron groaned, sinking beneath his grip until hair-thin impressions of his nails appeared.

The giant had assumed he could read this Human Immortal fledgling the way a butcher sizes up a lamb. Yet the quicksilver insight and meteoric growth Jared displayed now leapt far beyond any script the giant had written. For the first time, the hulking warlord felt the future slip from his grasp as though the fight itself had begun to breathe on its own, ignoring the hand that once puppeteered it.

He glanced down at the tingling soles of his massive feet, then up at Jared, whose breath came ragged yet whose eyes shone with a star-strewn depth that seemed to contain whole heavens.

Those once vacant orbs inside the giant sparked for the first time with living flame—astonishment, confusion, and above all a volcanic rage that threatened to set the ruined hall ablaze.

A guttural roar ripped from the

giant's throat, nothing human—more like some primordial beast

awakened from stone. The sound

trashed through the air in rotting waves, rattling the shattered pillars and flinging dust like rain.

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The sonic tide hammered the tattered great hall until its bones quivered; disciples of the Nethergate Sect with weaker cultivation bled from ears and nose before collapsing like felled wheat.

Across the giant's bronze skin, veins bulged like furious serpents while his battered copper armor screeched and cracked against muscles straining for release.

A torrent even wilder than before detonated around him—chaotic, ancient, smelling of forgotten epochs—and the marble beneath his feet spider-webbed outward.

"Vermin!" he rasped, the words grinding out like rusted gears. "I... will kill you."

The threat was coarse and halting, as though he had forgotten the taste of speech, yet the murderous intent inside each syllable almost took physical shape.

To be repelled by a youngster of the Human Immortal Realm—a creature he deemed beneath notice—was a humiliation he could not swallow.

The hall shook as a thunderous blast answered his fury.

The giant kicked off the ground. Flagstones shattered like wet clay, leaving a crater in his wake as his body streaked forward, a bronze comet doubled in speed and momentum.

On his fist, ripples of warped Time Law unfurled—no longer a simple rewind of a moment, but concentric, quivering rings that threatened to drag everything nearby into a churning temporal whirlpool.

He meant to hurl Jared and the very space around him into that maelstrom, to erase them from existence.

Yet the young man faced that wrath with an unclouded gaze, calmer than still water under moonlight.

A heartbeat earlier, on the razor's edge between life and death, Jared had glimpsed the first thread of the time nascence's true tapestry.

Time, he realized, was not a one-way river but a vast mesh, a net that could fold, pleat, and overlay itself. Slowing, hastening, or reversing a moment was nothing more than manipulating different knots of that net.

The giant's Time Reversal, then, was simply forcing one tiny node to wear an earlier layer.

Jared had failed before because his own weave differed in texture, unable to resist that superimposed past.

Now, by matching frequencies—making his strands sing in unison with the giant's for an instant—he avoided the overwrite.

Beyond that, he had grasped how to accelerate the flow across his entire patch of the net.

"Perfect timing—come at me!" Jared called, his shout sharp as steel against flint.

Instead of dodging that world-shredding punch, he drove forward, choosing collision over retreat.

But the stance he adopted in answer froze every onlooker-their hearts missed a beat.

Jared did not unleash a dazzling sword technique. He did not summon a roar of spiritual energy. He simply lifted his left hand, pressing index and middle finger together like a blade.

The instant that blade rose, the flow of time around him warped-compressed, accelerated, obeying a quiet decree.

To Neville, to Sylvia, to every spectator, Jared's outline blurred as if a hidden hand had slammed the fast-forward button. He moved beyond the reach of mortal perception.

All they could see was an after-image made of wind and intention.

It was not Jared who sped up. It was time itself, bent to his pulse.

"Time Acceleration!" The silent command echoed inside his skull like a muted drumbeat.

In the hair-thin instant before the giant's fist-shrouded in ripples of Time Reversal could crash into him, Jared's sword finger struck first, defying sequence.

He did not pit raw strength against that terrifying blow. Instead, his new mastery of time condensed into a single, infinitesimal Time Needle. With surgical precision, the needle speared the node where the laws of Time Reversal churned most violently, ready to engulf the world.

The faintest pop, no louder than a bubble breaking, drifted through the arena. The time ripples coiling around the giant's hammer-like fist-ripples

it could null met

any

attack collapsed like a punctured. balloon the moment they touched Jared's accelerating Time Needle. The profound law fell into chaos, directionless in a single breath.

"What?" The giant's fury evaporated, leaving raw disbelief.

His command of time, his proudest crown, had been severed by one negligible tap. The fact staggered him.

Impossible. His mind screamed the word, yet evidence mocked him.

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With Time Reversal shattered, the giant's fist—still colossal in power—was suddenly riddled with openings. Jared had been waiting for one crack, and now the sky showed nothing but daylight.

Inside the bubble of Time Acceleration, his thoughts and sinews reached their absolute peak. Even as his left hand withdrew, the Dragonslayer Sword in his right hand flashed into a streak that ripped the very skin of the void.

"Sever!" No radiant arc followed, no thunderous boom. Only a single slash—so condensed it devoured the surrounding light—etched a line of midnight across existence.

It slid along the awkward seam where the giant's old power had faded and new strength had yet to rise, appearing and vanishing within a heartbeat.

Fast! Faster than language, faster than sight, faster even than divine perception! It was a killing stroke born inside the womb of accelerated time, a blow that left the realm of measurement behind!

The giant's massive frame lurched to a halt, as though some unseen wall had slammed into his charging bulk. He hung there—fist frozen mid-strike—while his dazed gaze drifted downward in search of an explanation his muscles no longer offered.

Against the torchlit gloom, a razor-thin red fissure surfaced, beginning at his left shoulder and carving a slow, merciless path toward his right flank.

The bronze armor encasing him, once proud and impregnable, seemed to age a thousand years in a heartbeat. It split along that line with a whisper, the edges polished smooth as mirror glass.

The storm of power raging inside him collapsed, deflating like a punctured bellows. The flames behind his eyes guttered out, leaving only bewilderment and an expanding void.

"T-Time... How can—" the giant rasped, each syllable shredded by disbelief.

The very next heartbeat shattered the moment. A wet, rending crack ripped through the hall like lightning, tearing open the night.

His body parted cleanly along the crimson seam, two perfect halves sliding away from each other in almost reluctant grace.

Blood erupted in a feral geyser, entrails slapping stone with obscene finality.

Both halves of his body hit the floor in a dull, bone-deep boom, stirring choking clouds of dust.

Thus fell the enigmatic warrior who had wielded the very essence of time at the Soul Devourer's command.

Jared ended him with a single, almost casual stroke.

The spectacle flashed by quicker than memory could anchor-lightning between clouds, already gone before eyes could truly register.

From the giant's first roar of rage to Jared's languid riposte, everything unfolded so swiftly that conscious thought lagged behind by entire heartbeats.

Silence reclaimed the grand hall.

Yet this hush no longer reeked of doom; it vibrated with stunned wonder, the very air quivering around a truth too vast to voice.

Shock collided with exultation, leaving hearts unsure whether to shriek or sing.

Every eye locked on the young man covered in blood, standing alone amid rubble and gore, sword lowered yet unbowed.

Blood darkened the folds of his robe,

his face blanched with fatigue, and his breathing hitched. Even so,

seemed to tower like annet

shouldering the heavens, blazing, with a light none dared meet head-on.

"Won... We won?" a disciple of the Nethergate Sect whispered, voice quavering, tears edging the words.

"Mr. Chance just slew that monster!" another cried, pitch cracking with raw delight.

"Hail Mr. Chance! Mighty and unmatched!" a third roared.

"The Nethergate Sect is saved!" countless throats chorused.

The fragile quiet detonated into a tidal wave of jubilation, cheers battering the vaulted ceiling like rolling surf.

Survivors, drunk on being alive and awed by Jared's strength, spiraled into wild, worshipful frenzy.

Neville exhaled a long, rattling breath, the taut wire of tension in his spine finally snapping slack. Only then did he notice his back was soaked with cold sweat.

He stared at Jared—gratitude, relief, and something harder to name swirling behind his eyes.

I gambled everything on him—and I won.

Long before the mysterious backer rumored to stand behind Jared ever stepped into the light, the young man's own power had already risen to a level that made seasoned cultivators tremble. Tonight, that truth unfurled like thunder, rattling every heart inside the marble hall.

Across the chamber, Sylvia's blood-drained cheeks warmed with a sudden flush. She could not tear her gaze from Jared's silhouette, its outline gleaming beneath the fractured torchlight. Colors rippled through her wide eyes, and her

heart—usually calm as

snow-pounded against her ribs

without permission.

On the throne, the Soul Devourer sat immobile, his face so dark it seemed to drip

ink.

He rose, inch by deliberate inch, and the demonic aura coiling around him erupted into a gale of black tempest.

A pressure far crueler than anything felt before descended—formless yet as heavy as a mountain—crushing every last cheer into choking silence in a single breath.

His stare skewered Jared, and when he spoke the words drifted through the hall like shards of frozen steel, cold as the Ninefold Hells themselves.

"Good. Great! Time and again, boy, you have managed to 'surprise' me. It appears I must crush you with my own hands."

Only now did the true calamity descend. The Soul Devourer was about to strike.

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The cheers that had been rattling through the main hall of Nethergate Sect were strangled mid-cry, as though an invisible titan had clamped its fist around every throat.

From the platform, Soul Devourer rose—no flourish, no grand gesture, merely standing—but the whole world appeared to pivot on this single point, all gravity rewired to him alone.

Moments ago, the giant had seemed terrifying. Now his menace felt like a firefly before the full moon, a creek set against the boundless sea.

A thunderous rumble rolled overhead, deep enough to shake dust from the broken rafters.

Outside, the sky already bruised by demonic aura—plunged into total night.

Clouds thick as congealed ink whirled together, churning like a cauldron. No clean lightning flickered there, only faces—thousands of distorted, wailing spirits—that flashed and vanished with piercing shrieks.

A wind colder than graves rushed through the shattered doors, whipping robes like tattered flags and probing straight into bone.

Around Soul Devourer, the very air warped, a wavering mirage, as if he stood inside a private hellscape stitched over the mortal realm. The slaughter-born malice he carried, distilled from an age of carnage, crashed in relentless waves against every mind present, each crest heavier than the last.

Somewhere in the hush, heartbeats pounded, loud enough to echo like war drums.

Weaker disciples toppled without a cry. Eyes rolled white, blood trickled from nostrils and ears, souls splintered beneath terror no language could name.

Even an expert like Neville felt a mountain range descend upon his shoulders. Joints groaned, and only the frantic circulation of his Netherlord force kept him standing, his face drained chalk-white.

Sylvia staggered with a muffled gasp; the color Jared's victory had returned to her cheeks drained away again. She held her longsword like a crutch, fine frame trembling, unwilling to collapse.

Her very soul shivered, gripped by instinctive dread born of a gulf in existence itself. The entire hall—no, the entire mountain gate of Nethergate Sect—quivered beneath that aura, as though a breath more would shatter it into dust.

Only Jared remained unbowed.

He stood at the epicenter, bearing the brunt of Soul Devourer's fixation, the pressure of a collapsing sky.

Stone tiles splintered beneath his boots, branching cracks like a spider's web, and the blood he had only just staunched slid anew across his lips.

Yet his spine held straight, the posture of a spear that would sooner break than bend.

In his grip, the Dragonslayer sword rang with a desperate, exalted cry—part agony, part defiance—its light flickering as it wrestled the realm's most profane darkness.

Jared's gaze sharpened further; he

knew with surgical clarity that the true ordeal opened only now. Every clash before this had been an appetizer. Across from him stood a monster who, ten millennia ago, had erased Heaven Gate Sect overnight. Chance had no place here.

The Soul Devourer finally spoke, his tone calm and merciless, the sound of a judge who had never learned pity. "To die beneath my hand is the greatest glory a maggot like you will ever know."

He lifted his right hand, fingers splayed, and pushed downward with deceptive gentleness—an executioner laying a palm on the world.

No blaring trumpets announced the strike. No shower of colors lit the sky. The moment arrived in perfect, terrifying silence.

The instant Jared's palm touched

empty air, every inch of space within thirty meters snapped still. Stones mid tumble drifting dust even the smallest breath everything as though the world itself had been paused.

red

Yet it was more than space alone. Light stopped flowing, sound

curdled in its throat, the surrounding

spiritual energy froze into glass, and—most frightening of all—time

itself bowed beneath an unseen hand and refused to move.

Jared's face drained of color. Panic, disbelief, and raw survival instinct collided behind his eyes.

He felt as if he had been poured into a mountain-sized block of amber. Each attempt

to lift a finger demanded impossible strength, and even thought moved sluggishly, like oil trying to push through ice.

A Warrior Undefeatable

This was not the simple slowing of a clock. It was a wicked fusion—Space Prison interwoven with Time Deceleration—forming an absolute cage that mocked every escape he knew.

Within that flawless prison, Jared stood sealed, a living butterfly pinned beneath glass.

Above his head, a colossal hand coalesced from the purest, deepest demon haze. It appeared from nothing—five talons of night reaching down from a void.

The hand blotted out what little light remained. Creases carved across its palm like canyons, nails gleamed like newly forged blades, and in the hollow of its center, countless wraiths writhed and screamed, exhaling rot and ruin.

It began to descend. Even before contact, the pressure made Jared's bones groan aloud, a high, brittle whine. The spiritual shield hugging his skin flickered like a candle far too close to death's breath.

"Jared!"

"Mr. Chance!"

Sylvia and Neville felt their hearts split. They could taste the power packed inside that demon palm—it was the sort of strength that would grind a peak-level Heavenly Immortal to dust without effort.

If the hand struck, Jared would not leave so much as a memory behind.

"We fight even if it kills us!"

Neville roared, ignoring the impossible gulf between his own cultivation and the Soul Devourer's abyssal might.

He ignited his Netherlord force. Power erupted from him like a volcano tearing free of earth; demonic markings blazed across his skin, and beads of blood oozed from every pore.

Forming a desperate seal with both hands, he bellowed, "Netherlord World-End Seal!"

A vast, obsidian sigil-reeking of death and annihilation-flowered over his crown. Within its rim, a gate to the underworld cracked open, unleashing the chorus of ten thousand howling ghosts.

This was Nethergate Sect's last and most forbidden art. One use demanded a price few dared consider, but Neville had already thrown his life upon the scale.

The black sigil charged, unstoppable, and slammed toward the demon hand pressing down on Jared.

On the opposite flank, Sylvia smothered the tremor that rattled her soul and forced the Heaven Gate legacy to its uppermost limit.

She raised her blade vertically before her brow. Resolve flashed across clear eyes -clean, cold, unbreakable.

A surge of sword intent burst from her, vast and pristine, steeped in righteous energy that clawed up through the suffocating demon miasma like dawn through midnight.

"Heaven Gate Sword Art-Judgement!"

Sylvia's shout rang like shattering crystal. At once, the ice-blue blade in her grasp burst apart, unfurling into a pillar of raw radiance that speared from broken stone all the way into the brooding sky.

Within that blinding shaft

shimmered ghostly balconies and roofs-a phantom palace born of divine intent. The beam, driven. the same righteous hunger that carried Neville's, Netherlord World End Seal, knifed toward the vast black palm smothering the heavens.

The Soul Devourer did not even bother to raise his eyes. He simply pressed down, adding the faintest ounce of pressure to the descending hand.

"An ant trying to topple an elephant. How very foolish."

Boom!

Neville's crimson seal met the shadowed palm first.

There was no earth-splitting clash-only silence, then ruin.

The seal, forged from Neville's lifetime of cultivation and the last embers of his Netherlord force,

sun A

melted like frost under nonic

sickening biss rose as pure demonic aura corroded, unraveled, and

devoured every trace of power.

Even the law of death woven into the seal cracked apart and was ground to dust,

absorbed whole by that terrible hand.

A wet, brutal cough tore from

Neville's chest. Blood fanned across

the air as he was hurled backward a

limp kite cut from its string. He slammed into a distant wall, sank deep into the shattered masonry, and hung there motionless his fate unknown.

Sylvia's sword light—still pulsing with Heaven Gate Sect's righteous energy—struck the palm a heartbeat later.

Szzt!

This time, sound exploded: pure sword light colliding with absolute corruption, spawning jagged sheets of brilliance and raging eddies of energy.

Heaven Gate Sect's technique did sting the demonic aura. The palm's descent hit a momentary snag, and several wailing spirits in its center flickered out beneath the cleansing glare.

A Warrior Undefeatable

But the reprieve ended there.

The Soul Devourer's cultivation towered far above Sylvia's—an ocean against a candle flame. Any temporary restraint was meaningless beside such weight.

In less than a breath, the sword light shattered with a dull roar.

The ice-blue sword shrieked, fractures racing along the blade before it splintered into glittering shards.

A backlash of demonic aura tore into Sylvia's body. She screamed as if threaded with poisoned needles; blood seeped from every pore until she was painted red, then she crashed to the floor, breath thin as spider silk.

The desperate strike of two Heavenly Immortal experts had not slowed that colossal palm even for an instant.

They couldn't even force the Soul Devourer to lift a finger in earnest. That alone spoke volumes-and the message was terrifying.

Inside the frozen prism of warped space and halted time, Jared watched in horror as Neville and Sylvia hurled themselves forward to shield him. Blades of darkness carved their flesh, dropping them in mangled silence, and something savage tore through Jared's chest, hotter than any flame, darker than any pit.

A roar ripped from his throat-more beast than man. His eyes blazed crimson, pupils drowning in blood-red rage.

Spiritual energy howled through his meridians at a suicidal pace, tearing micro- fissures in its path yet surging on.

He lashed the newborn principle of Time Acceleration to its limits, desperate to pry open the spatial coffin.

"Open-now!" Jared roared. The very air answered with a metallic hum, a low, vibrating buzz that rattled bones.

Time's flow convulsed around him. Hairline cracks skittered across the frozen cage, small as dust motes yet unmistakable-a first wound in the cage.

Within that millionth of a heartbeat, Jared clamped both hands around the Dragonslayer Sword, pouring every shred of strength, wrath, and refusal to die into the blade.

"Nascence power-fuse. Time Acceleration-cleave!"

f

Gold, jade, sapphire, scarlet, and amber flared together, no longer a loose sword aura but five condensed chains of primal law spiraling up the weapon. Around the steel time itself sprinted, driving the Stroke past the reach of conscious thought.

A beam burst forth, like the universe's first light piercing primordial darkness. It raced upward, defiant, aiming to slice apart the titanic black palm already blotting out the sky over his head.

This was Jared's absolute limit-his single, unrepeatable, do-or-die strike.

Inside it coiled his grasp of nascence power and his newborn intimacy with the law of time.

"Oh?" the Soul Devourer finally murmured, the first hint of emotion brushing his face.

The ferocity and layered laws braided through Jared's swing had caught even him off guard. For once, the ancient monster acknowledged an attack worth noticing.

The collision did not pass in silence this time. It thundered-rolling, mountain- shaking thunder.

Prismatic sword-light slammed into the pitch-black demon's hand. Stars seemed to crash, detonate, and collapse in the same instant, releasing a storm of power too vast for language.

Crack!

"The sky itself seemed to split as a cataclysmic roar followed.

Nethergate Sect's grand hall-already little more than a wounded monument— finally gave way. The great dome blew apart in a blinding eruption, and every wall collapsed like a child's sandcastle under a merciless tide."

Splintered beams and jagged stones whirled upward, snatched by an unseen vortex before being shredded to dust in midair.

Light so searing it felt white-hot burned away all sight. Thunder that could split bone ripped away all hearing.

Only the true horror remained—an expanding shock wave, rolling out from the epicenter in pitiless rings, the ripples of death itself.

Disciples of Nethergate Sect fled in

panicked knots, yet the wave ran faster than any mortal foot.

Screams strangled in their throats as the trailing ene

Bodies souls

caught them.

hopes-everything-turned to

drifting ash.

When it passed, the entire mountain gate looked as if some titanic boot had stomped straight through. Pavilions toppled like dominoes, spires cracked, whole peaks split open, and the very earth pitched and rotted. It felt like the end of days.