

A Warrior Undefeatable 5681-5690

A Warrior Undefeatable

When the glare and soot finally thinned, those still alive risked a glance toward the ruined heart of the battlefield—and choked on despair.

The colossal hand that blotted out the heavens still hovered above the crater.

Jared's peerless strike had carved a deep fissure through the palm. Dark vapors hissed from the wound, yet the hand-blurred, translucent, wounded-remained intact, radiating slaughter.

At the bottom of the newly-born crater, Jared knelt on one knee, exactly where he had once stood tall.

His robes were nothing but rags. Crosshatched wounds crisscrossed his frame so deeply bone flashed white beneath blood. He looked like shattered porcelain glued together by sheer will.

The Dragonslayer Sword, once ablaze with draconic light, now stood planted beside him like a grave marker. Its glow had dimmed to a dying ember, its dragon-song a rasp one could barely hear.

With every ragged cough, Jared expelled fresh blood-and pieces of his own organs. His breath came thin, flickering, precarious, as though the lamp of his life had run out of oil.

That last swing had gathered every shred of his strength, and more. All it had done was injure one casual strike from the Soul Devourer-it could not smash him.

The gulf between their realms was too vast, so vast it smothered even the thought of hope.

Hovering above, the Soul Devourer studied the figure in the pit-surprised, for a heartbeat, that a mere Human Immortal had survived.

"You are the first human immortal to take a blow from me and live," the fiend murmured, voice colder than permafrost. "Unfortunately, this is as far as you go."

The mammoth spectral hand drifted lower once more—not fast, but with the lazy malice of a cat pinning a broken mouse. It intended to erase Jared and the crater both from creation.

At the pit's rim, Sylvia dragged her battered body upright. Blood and tears blurred together as she watched the crimson-stained silhouette below. No sound escaped her, yet her heart howled.

Wedged deep in a fractured wall, Neville twitched a single finger. Lifting an arm was beyond him. Fury and helplessness warred in his eyes, endless and raw.

The remaining disciples of Nethergate Sect—ashen-faced, hearts hammering—could only stare upward as the demonic palm descended like an executioner's blade.

Gazing at the lone figure in the

crater, they felt a chill coil around et

their hearts—a serpent of dread that tightened until even breathing became an act of courage

It was over. Utterly over.

Even Jared, the man who had walked among them like living legend, lay defeated.

Who else could possibly save them now?

Despair gathered like a star-eating night, blotting out every last spark of hope.

"Jared, call the power behind

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you—now! If you don't, we all die here!" Neville shouted, bleeding and swaying, each syllable torn from a chest already rattling with defeat

At those words, every battered survivor fixed their gaze on Jared. Their futures—life

or oblivion—hinged on whether he could summon aid.

"I'll even give you the chance," the Soul Devourer scoffed, voice dripping contempt. "Fetch your hidden guardian if you dare."

Jared rose slowly in the crater's dust, drew out the jade pendant Zevon had

entrusted to him, and crushed it between trembling fingers.

The once unremarkable trinket fell away as silver dust, each grain whispering of a hope now gambled.

Time seemed to freeze; only the huge hand kept descending, heavy with death. A wider sneer curved across the Soul Devourer's lips he was already savoring the sight of Jared ground to pulp.

The clawed shadow was a breath from Jared's hair when a resonance, neither clap nor thunder, thrummed out of the unseen void.

It was as though the very laws of heaven had been plucked like a harp string, and the world hummed in answer.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Without warning, an indescribable presence flooded the ravaged valley.

At first, it felt languid, almost drowsy, nothing like the tyrannical aura of the Soul Devourer. Yet its arrival felt inevitable, as though it had always filled every inch of sky, finally noticed only now.

Above, the swirling cloud of wailing spirits rippled like water struck by stone. The howling wind fell silent, as if an unseen palm pressed it flat.

An aging figure materialized on the rim of the crater, stepping between Jared and Sylvia in utter silence.

His robe was plain, even threadbare, his hair loose and unkempt-Zevon Swanson, and no other.

He had not torn the sky, nor shattered mountains. He simply arrived, like a passerby who happened upon catastrophe and decided, at last, to intervene.

The moment his boots touched the cracked flagstones, the howling black hand that could have flattened even a Heavenly Immortal froze in mid-descent, fingers splayed, unable to drop another inch.

Invisible force shimmered between that claw and the crater below, forming a silent wall that separated predator from prey.

High overhead, the roiling clouds of demonic vapor dimmed. The lazy sneer on Soul Devourer's face vanished, replaced by a tight, measuring stare.

His pupils narrowed to slits as he studied the newcomer-Zevon-and for the first time felt an aura equal to his own, perhaps deeper, older, far more unfathomable. "So," the Soul Devourer said, voice low and cold, "someone worth my time finally shows up."

Zevon paid him no mind. He knelt beside Jared, whose blood soaked the dust but whose spine remained straight. A quiet flicker of approval crossed Zevon's eyes.

Then he angled toward Sylvia. Two fingers touched the center of her

brow. Warm, gentle

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power-brimming with impossible vitality poured into her body, wrapped her failing heart steadied her shredded breath and began stitching torn meridians back together.

Color returned to Sylvia's paper-white cheeks. Her lashes trembled open, and relief mingled with surprise.

"Sir..." she whispered.

Zevon lifted a hand, wordless, bidding her rest.

He rose slowly, surveying the Nethergate Sect—now a wasteland of shattered halls and smoldering rubble—before lifting his gaze to the Soul Devourer, hovering in mid-air.

"Tch. You made quite a mess," Zevon drawled, idly flicking dust from his ear. "Tell me—does terrorizing children really amuse you?"

The Soul Devourer's eyes chilled. "Who are you to meddle in my affairs?"

"Me?" Zevon pointed at his own nose, flashing a bright grin. "Just a passer-by. But

you touched Mr. Chance, and that I cannot overlook."

His eyes slid back to Jared. "Mr. Chance, you and the others escaped Heaven Gate Sect's ruins. Did you gain anything there?"

Blood dripped from Jared's lip as the weight on his chest finally eased. He forced the words out. "Sir.. we met the last sect leader's lingering soul. Ms. Vale... has inherited the legacy of Heaven Gate..."

Zevon's brow arched; genuine wonder flickered, followed by a soft, nostalgic smile.

"So the Heaven Gate legacy has found its heir at last. Good—very good."

A Warrior Undefeatable

Jared drew a ragged breath. "Sir... Heaven Gate did not vanish without cause. It... it was wiped out overnight by Soul Devourer. He was once a disciple. He repaid the sect with slaughter, murdered his own master, butchered every elder."

"What?" Zevon's voice cracked the air like splintering ice, shock and fury flaring behind his calm eyes.

The idle languor on Zevon's face shattered the moment those words left Jared's mouth.

A horror too ancient for language, like a primordial behemoth rousing from a million-year sleep, erupted from deep inside him.

Gone was his former calm. In its place surged killing intent, raw fury, and a pressure powerful enough to rip open the sky and turn the earth on its head.

Boom!

The heavens convulsed again, colors bleeding and recoiling as if creation itself could not decide which master to obey.

Light like a newborn sun burst from Zevon's body, colliding with the demonic aura that cloaked the Soul Devourer's domain and even beginning to drive it back. The ground shook. Stilled energy storms screamed alive. Wind tore across the plain—no longer cold and malicious, but scorching, righteous, and purifying.

Zevon snapped around. The hint of drunken haze was gone from his eyes; what remained was lightning forged in the highest sky, locked unblinking on the Soul Devourer. "Is... what... he... said... true?"

A shadow of concern flickered across the Soul Devourer's face when Zevon's aura detonated, but it twisted quickly into a jagged grin. "Yes-and what of it? Those hypocrites of Heaven Gate were fossils. They deserved to become the stepping-stones beneath my feet. I swallowed their souls, consumed their cultivation, and stand at this height because of them. So will you seek their revenge?"

Confirmation landed like a hammer. Zevon swayed, shoulders shivering beneath the weight of it.

He closed his eyes. Pain rippled across his features, followed by grief, rage, and a guilt so deep it seemed to hollow his chest.

When his eyes opened again, the whites were gone. Blood-red resolve blazed where mercy had once lived.

He did not answer the demon. Instead, he whirled, facing the distant silhouette of Heaven Gate Mountain.

With a dull thud, his knees struck the fractured earth. The world fell silent-disciples of the Nethergate Sect and even the triumphant Soul Devourer froze, stunned by the sudden reverence.

"Master! Sirs! My fellow disciples of Heaven Gate! I, Zevon, was too late!"

His voice was raw, carried on the wind like broken glass. He bowed three times, his forehead cracking against the shattered stone until flecks of blood bloomed beneath him.

"In days past, was reckless and

broke the rules, expelled in disgrace, unfit to name myself a son of

Heaven Gate. Yet Heaven Gate's net

blood still runs through my veins. The sect fed me, taught me, and I have never forgotten. Today I learn an apostate has butchered every last one of you, this hatred cannot stand. I, Zevon Swanson, swear before heaven and earth to slay that fiend and offer his very soul to our countless dead. If I break this oath, may lightning scourge me, the ground swallow me, and my spirit know no rest."

Each word dripped blood, each sentence a blade. Grief, fury, and the vast might of his cultivation fused into a single tide that made the sky itself weep.

Jared stood frozen where he was, his breath locked tight in his lungs. Zevon, usually so irreverent it bordered on lazy, had dropped to both knees in silent supplication. What on earth is he doing? Jared's mind reeled, a storm of awe and confusion crashing through him.

Only then did understanding slam into Jared like a falling mountain. Zevon-this unpredictable wanderer he had taken for a mere rogue was a disciple of the legendary Heaven Gate Sect Worse, he was their head disciple.

"S-Sir, you—" Jared's voice cracked, the question dying in his throat before it could take shape.

Zevon rose with deliberate calm. When he turned, the tears were gone. What remained was a glacial fury and a disturbing, almost tranquil madness distilling behind his eyes.

A Warrior Undefeatable

"It's all in the past," he rasped, each word scraping out like stone across steel. "I was the head disciple of Heaven Gate. I pledged my life to a junior. For that sin, my master destroyed my core technique and cast me out. I alone shamed the sect."

"But!"

Zevon's head snapped up. His voice exploded across the night like rolling thunder. "The sect is still my home. Its enemies are mine. Soul Devourer-prepare to forfeit your life!"

That last bellow cracked the sky, the sound like the first divine thunder at the dawn of creation.

He moved. In an instant, the man of languid posture became a blade of light, carving a blinding arc toward the sky where the Soul Devourer hovered.

Where Zevon passed, demonic aura shrank away, the very void twisting as though terrified of him.

High above, the Soul Devourer's voice slithered through the darkness. "So it is you, Zevon Swanson-the disgraced disciple. Perfect. I will erase you along with the Heaven Gate name and turn it into a forgotten myth."

Boom!

A geyser of obsidian light roared from the fiend's body. He became a ragged spear of night, hurtling down to meet Zevon's oncoming brilliance.

Light and darkness-absolute right and absolute ruin-collided above the Nethergate Sect.

The concussion tore sound from the air.

The entire level nine seemed to quake, wailing beneath the impact. At the epicenter,

a sphere of seething power-half radiant gold, half bottomless black-ballooned outward and swallowed dozens of miles of sky. Inside that writhing orb, laws shattered, space fractured, and time staggered out of rhythm.

Two blurred figures danced at speeds no divine sense could follow, trading blows fierce enough to remake worlds.

Each clash unleashed a shock wave fierce enough to wipe a whole metropolis from the map.

Above, the sky split apart. Jagged rents a few kilometers long hung there like festering scars that would never knit together.

The earth bucked in rolling swells. Mountain peaks shattered, rivers bent in new directions, and once-lush woods smoldered into lifeless ash.

"Move! Activate every sect defense formation! Everyone get to the array core, now!"

Neville staggered free of the broken wall—someone must have pulled him out during the chaos. Blood soaked his robes, yet he forced himself upright and barked orders until his voice cracked.

He understood all too well that even a stray ripple from combat at this level could obliterate the survivors without a trace.

The few remaining disciples of the Nethergate Sect bolted toward the heart of the formation, that faintly glowing nexus buried deep inside the compound. Terror distorted every face. Heads tilted back they watched the doomsday sky and felt as if gods and devils were at war above their heads.

With Sylvia's weakening spiritual energy supporting him, Jared retreated to a marginally safer ledge. He could not tear his gaze from the blazing orb of destructive power blooming high overhead.

I finally understand what a true battle between titans looks like.

Compared with this, every fight he had ever survived felt like a child's scuffle in the dust.

Inside that seething sphere, Zevon pressed two fingers together like a sword. Each thrust carried a pure sword intent to scour evil from the world an executioner's place swung in the name of Heaven Gate Sect's tribunal.

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Across from him, the Soul Devourer whipped both claws. Demonic aura burst into thousands of snarling phantoms, mouths gaping to consume and corrode everything, as though he intended to drag the realm itself into bottomless hell.

"Heaven Gate Sword Art-Myriad Swords Return!"

Zevon loosed a ringing howl. Law-forged swords—hundreds, then thousands— whirled around him, merging into a roaring river of light that shredded demon mist and shot straight for the demon's brow.

A Warrior Undefeatable

"Ten-Thousand-Soul Devourer!"

The Soul Devourer's roar split the air. Behind him rose a colossal demon effigy

woven from countless wailing souls. Its cavernous maw opened wide, ready to gulp down the river of swords.

Boom!

Light and darkness collided again. The surge chewed at itself until both forces exploded, hurling the combatants apart. Blood streaked from the corners of their mouths as they tumbled backward through the void.

"Seems you never abandoned the Heaven Gate style," the Soul Devourer sneered, wiping the crimson from his chin.

"I kept enough to kill you." Cold-eyed, Zevon flashed forward, hands weaving seals. "Starfall!"

Daylight dimmed as stars sparkled into existence. Spears of starlight punched through demon clouds, descending like a meteor storm toward the Soul Devourer.

"World-Devouring Demon Art!" he bellowed. Demon mist contracted into a bottomless vortex that swallowed the falling star-beams as fast as they landed.

They battled from sky to soil and back again, tearing reality wherever they went. Matter crumbled, and even the laws that held the world together unraveled in their wake.

The gate of Nethergate Sect cracked and crumbled under the titanic clash, entire slabs of earth sliding like broken plates across a trembling world.

The duel raged for a full day and night, until sun and moon were snuffed from the sky, rivers reversed, and it seemed level nine might be punched straight through.

Jared, Sylvia, and the few who still breathed braced themselves like boats in a hurricane, their hope reduced to a thin, quivering thread. Only now did they understand what true apex power meant.

At dawn of the second day, the sphere of annihilation swelled once more and detonated with a scream of ruin.

A twin burst-like lungs expelling the last breath of a dying world-thundered overhead. Two figures plummeted like meteors, slamming into opposite horizons and plowing trenches several kilometers long before coming to a stop.

When the final gleam faded, their identities emerged.

At one end lay Zevon, kneeling in the groove's farthest shadow. His robes hung in ribbons, skin flayed to bone, a single claw mark yawning across his chest.

Black demonic aura coiled inside the wound, refusing every spark of healing.

His face was the color of dried parchment, his breath little more than a shiver. Even the crimson gourd at his hip was cracked like old glass.

Across the wasteland, the Soul Devourer fared no better. His obsidian armor lay in shards, one arm twisted grotesquely, bone jutting beneath torn flesh.

Scars left by sword energy and stellar burns latticed the demon's torso, and a deep groove cleaved his brow, from which wisps of soul-light bled into the air. He hacked eruptions of black blood, his eyes stiff savage yet edged now with something unexpected caution, even retreat.

The Soul Devourer rasped, "Zevon Swanson... to think a cast-off wretch could corner me to this degree. Today's humiliation is etched in my marrow. When recover I will rip quit your soul string by string and grind you through eternity."

With a snarl, he clawed open the already-shredded fabric of space, flaring into a streak of onyx light that vanished beyond mortal sight. His venomous promise lingered above the rubble like smoke that refused to blow away.

The Soul Devourer had fled.

Zevon staggered upright, intent on pursuit, but a fresh gout of blood splashed the dust. His legs buckled, and he collapsed where he stood.

The wounds were simply too grave.

At last, the waves of destruction ebbed, leaving only a mutilated landscape and survivors who could barely believe they still lived.

Sunlight pierced the thinning clouds, bathing the ruins in a cold, after-cataclysm glare that offered no warmth, only the numb chill of survival.

The clash had torn both sides apart. Victory no longer mattered. Only ragged breathing and the reek of blood remained.

A Warrior Undefeatable

The young woman tottered across the churned earth. Blood beaded along her lips, then fell like garnets onto a gown ripped open by countless blows. Pale skin showed through cracked silk, every exposed inch laced with fresh crimson. Her steps wavered, betraying fatigue she could no longer hide.

"Stop struggling, pretty thing. Hand over the Ninefold Pill you stole from that ancient cavern. Do that, and my buddies and I might let you die quickly."

A scar-faced demonic cultivator, his cheek carved by an old wound that twisted whenever he grinned, let out a low, lecherous chuckle. Greed and lust shimmered in his eyes like twin blades thirsty for new cuts.

"Never! I would rather die than let trash like you succeed."

Her sword flickered forward in a desperate flurry, yet every frantic stroke opened another weakness, another invitation to the killers circling her.

Hidden, Jared watched, brow knit in reluctant concern.

He normally didn't like being a busybody, but three demonic thugs bullying one wounded woman was too unfair. Plus, the words Ninefold Pill stirred him. The pill could heal bodies and raise cultivation, and his own hidden wounds still ached.

Oh, well. Fate has brought me here. Their misfortune will be their judgment.

He was no saint, but some lines he would never allow to be crossed.

Scarface lunged, claws out, reaching for the woman's unguarded back.

A razor-thin hiss—sharper than a whipcrack—split the air.

A streak of sword energy, as bright and sudden as lightning, drilled clean through Scarface's brow. The predator's victorious smile froze in astonishment.

He wavered once, then collapsed like a felled statue, eyes wide and unseeing.

"No!"

The two remaining demons lurched to a halt, terror eclipsing their bloodlust.

Across from them, the wounded woman blinked in stunned relief, uncertain whether the miracle was real or merely the last dream before death.

Jared stepped into view like a shadow given form. Though his face had paled, the calm in his eyes outweighed the weakness of his body.

He raised two fingers as though they were a blade, and the faint glow of the Five-Element Origin Power gathered around him—subtle, yet undeniably superior.

"Time Deceleration!"

An unseen field rippled outward. The two demons moved as if trapped in syrup, every motion slowed to a helpless crawl.

"Die!"

The Dragonslayer Sword never even left its sheath. A single arc of condensed sword force swept across the immobilized necks. Two heads spiraled skyward, expressions of shock still etched on their faces while the bodies toppled, spraying silent fountains of dark blood.

A wet, rasping cough ripped from Jared's throat, and a scarlet spray arced through the night air like rain driven from a broken vessel.

He had forced his ebbing strength into one last, ruthless surge—three strokes, three enemies felled. The backlash now tore through muscle and marrow. His knees buckled. He stabbed his sword into the shattered flagstones and used the trembling blade as a crutch, jaw clenched while the courtyard tilted beneath him.

The handsome planes of his face turned a waxen gray. Each breath hitched out of rhythm, ragged and short, clear proof that his earlier wounds had deepened into something far more dangerous.

Dragging a breath deep into bruised

lungs, Jared forced the riot of energy inside him to settle. Only when the worst of the tremors eased did he fix his eyes toward the young woman he had just saved—she was stiff standing in a daze, her chest rising and falling too quickly.

Before he could speak, she examined herself with brisk efficiency. Finding nothing broken she dismissed him with stunning indifference, stooped to strip the fallen demonic cultivators of their storage pouches, then spun away, flared violet in the

Her torchlight as she streaked skyward, a shard of amethyst vanishing into the clouds.

For a heartbeat, Jared simply stared, speechless.

He did not ask for a repayment, yet her retreat felt colder than any blade edge. To walk off without a glance—without even acknowledging the carnage he had endured on her behalf—struck him as merciless.

Besides, he had slain those thugs himself. By any law of the wandering world, their spoils were his.

Blood still dampened his robe where her rescue had ripped fresh seams in his wounds, but she offered not so much as a token of gratitude. It was as though none

of this neither the danger nor his sacrifice-concerned her in the slightest.

A flush of anger burned away the weakness. Drawing what power he could muster, he barked, "Halt right there!"

The command was low, ragged with pain, yet it carried an iron finality that froze the swirling night air.

The female cultivator paused, turned, and drifted back until pale moonlight revealed her face.

She was striking—delicate features framed by dark hair—but frost rimed her expression. In those brilliant eyes, he found no gratitude, only guarded suspicion and the faintest shadow of irritation.

"What do you want, stranger?"

Her voice rang clear and cool, a bell of polished glass held at arm's length.

Swallowing his frustration, Jared steadied himself. "I intervened of my own accord, yes, but the clash reopened wounds I can ill afford. Simply flying off, pockets heavy with loot I earned, feels... improper, don't you think?"

Her lips curved into something almost like a smile yet far closer to a sneer. She let

her gaze drift over the blood on his collar, the tremor in his grip, then shrugged as if weighing the worth of an insect.

A Warrior Undefeatable

"Master, are you all right?"

Jared knelt beside Zevon, fingers glowing faintly as he examined the elder's injuries.

Zevon shook his head, a wan smile tucked beneath the blood at the corner of his mouth. "I will live, Mr. Chance. But the Soul Devourer fled..."

"He fled wounded," Jared replied, voice steady but low. "Given the gash you carved into him, he won't return for a while. What matters now is regaining our strength as quickly as possible."

He rose and turned to Neville. "Mr. Contreras, we need the use of your sect grounds —and disciples to guard us while we recover."

Neville inclined his head, the lined planes of his face hard with resolve. "Mr. Chance, so long as the Soul Devourer stays away, my disciples will stand against anything level nine—or anyone else—dares to send."

Neville let out a long, measured breath. "All right."

Jared answered in kind, then strode to the Nethergate Sect's forbidden grounds. With a sweep of his sleeve, he took the Pentacarna Tower out.

Without hesitation, Jared stepped through the yawning gate. Sylvia's violet robe fluttered after him. Neville followed with soldierly economy, and, finally, Zevon slipped inside, curiosity blazing.

Within these walls, the tower bent the fabric of existence itself. What felt like a single breath beyond its door could stretch into seasons beneath its vaulted ceilings- perfect for warriors desperate to reclaim their strength before the next battle trumpet sounded.

Waves of silver mist rolled across the inner corridors, each ripple a visible pulse of dilated time. Zevon's eyes widened; the reflection of that undulating current made his pupils shimmer like twin mercury pools.

"Mr. Chance," he whispered, awe edging every syllable, "is this the Pentacarna Tower?"

"It is," Jared replied, arching a brow. "You recognize it? Most cultivators wouldn't."

Zevon's mouth curved into a thin, knowing smile. "Recognize it? I can recite its very birth."

Jared leaned closer, the tower's shifting light dancing across his features. "Then, sir, please tell us everything."

"Long before recorded scripture," Zevon began, his voice echoing against the bronze pillars, "in the distant Primordial Era, humans, beasts and demons roamed the same sky. Their endless wars cracked the world, tilting the Three Realms toward ruin. To restore balance, three beings-each born of destiny's purest breath-offered their lives. One was the Human Ancestor. One, the mighty Beast Overlord. The last, the Demon Saint Emperor. Each poured every drop of cultivation, every insight into the Heavenly Law into a sky piercing monument. First came the Pentacarna Tower, forged when the Demon Saint Emperor used his own spine as the central beam and braided it with the Time Law. Inside, one hundred years can pass while outside a single year drifts by."

"Second, the Beast-Subduing Tower-this one anchored by the Beast Overlord's natal core and woven with spatial energy. Its chambers fold into labyrinths, opening portals, taming rampaging titans, even erecting shields that no siege can breach."

"Third rose the Immortal-Sealing Tower, birthed from the Human Ancestor's perfected law and tempered with raw elemental power. It was never meant to shackle the virtuous. Instead, it imprisons fallen immortals—those who chased power until their halos blackened into evil."

"That tower purifies chaotic energy, dissolves stray attacks, and returns refined Origin Power to the land. Separate yet aligned, the three

towers chained the wild torrents time, space, and energy. Demons now languish in the current of hours, beasts wander lost within shifting voids, and corrupted immortals slumber beneath silence itself."

"At last, the tempest of battle quieted. A hush rolled across the ravaged sky, and for one precious heartbeat, the three realms seemed to inhale the same, unbroken breath."

"Long-kept lore spoke of a day when

three living towers—each a miracle

wrought from the might of

humankind, demons, and

beasts would clasp together once more. When that union came so the

story swore, the Tri-Realm Anchor

Tower would rise: a sentient

colossus whose will alone could

steady creation itself."

"If my guess is right, your Pentacarna Tower can bend the very clock—one year outside, an entire century inside, yes?"

"Exactly." Jared's eyes flew open, shock rippling across his face like lightning over still water.

Until this moment, he had never imagined the tower's birth to be so otherworldly. Hearing the name Beast-Subduing Tower sent a stab of urgency through him.

Cyanna and Coall were still imprisoned there, and the dragon crystal Jared had taken from Cyanna now pulsed quietly inside his own chest.

Even more staggering—each of the three towers had once been a supreme cultivator, their souls refined into everlasting stone and steel.

So the races were allies once, and only later tore each other apart.

A Warrior Undefeatable

"Sir, do you know what became of the towers afterward? More importantly, how can they be drawn back together?" Jared's words spilled out faster than his breath.

His mind now circled a single ambition. With the Pentacarna Tower already in his grasp, if he could secure the Demon Seal and Immortal-Sealing Towers as well, he would stand unrivaled beneath the heavens.

"That I cannot tell you," Zevon admitted, shaking his head. "The Demon Seal Tower roams the boundless universe at whim, untethered by space. No sage can predict where it will appear. As for the Immortal-Sealing Tower-or any method to fuse all three-I have heard nothing but silence."

"Oh." The single syllable slipped from Jared, heavy with disappointment.

Still, knowledge was a seed. He vowed to keep watch for any sign of the wandering spires.

"Mr. Chance, I have ordered my disciples to deliver every last resource the Nethergate Sect possesses," Neville announced, bowing with measured respect.

The gesture was sincere-Neville understood that without resources, their wounded cultivators would never reclaim their former strength.

Stacks of spirit stones, jars of pills, and bundles of rare herbs soon lined the courtyard floor, yet Jared's brow knit with faint unease. For all its fame, Nethergate's treasure trove felt thin; alone, he could burn through it in a handful of cultivation sessions. His appetite for power simply outpaced ordinary supply.

"Good. Restore yourselves inside the tower," he told them, tone calm but decisive. "I need to step out for a while."

He had no wish to fight with Sylvia and the others over scraps; better to hunt fresh riches on his own terms.

Sylvia hurried to keep pace, her silver cloak rustling over the flagstones. "Mr. Chance, where are you going?"

Jared answered with an easy shrug, the motion at odds with the fresh bandages hidden beneath his robe. "To level eight. The Celestial King is already back inside the Celestial

Palace, so I want a firsthand look at the halls—and, if their vaults still overflow, I might relieve them of a little excess."

"Should I come with you? You're still injured," Sylvia asked, worry softening her voice.

"I'll be fine," Jared said, half laughing. "Even wounded, I can stroll through level eight heaven like it's my own back garden."

A small, knowing smile tugged at the corner of his mouth.

Truth be told, wounds or not, few in level eight could stand against Jared once he chose to fight.

Zevon, clutching his torn cloak around a chest still slick with drying blood, managed a respectful nod. "Take care out there, Mr. Chance."

"I will. I won't be gone long."

With that, Jared stepped beyond the tower and vanished into the gray daylight.

He trusted Neville completely, leaving the tower in Nethergate Sect without a second thought.

Besides, Sylvia and Zevon remained on site—if Neville ever grew greedy, those two alone could put him in his place.

"Kid, you're not really headed for level eight, are you?" the Vermilion Demon Lord asked.

Jared's grin widened. "The palace is in ruins why beg them for supplies? I'll roam level nine instead. A little shakedown here, a little highway robbery there, and the right resources will come looking for me."

"Saints preserve us. Does saying that aloud not prick your conscience?" Vermilion Demon Lord muttered, exasperation leaking through his smirk.

"Hardly. I only steal from the wicked." He blurred into the wind, his form dissolving as mist caught by sunlight until even his shadow was gone.

Hiding himself, Jared skimmed low over the untamed ridges of level nine. Below, forests, rivers, and crags sprawled like an unmapped tapestry. His spiritual sense unfurled beneath him an invisible net searching every ravine for prey sufficiently well-supplied.

Pain flickered in his gut, residue from the duet with the Soul Devourer. Each time he forced his energy forward his meridians burred as though timed with goals, yet the need for fresh resources drove him on—for himself, and for the dozens sheltering inside the tower.

Half a day later, ripples of chaotic energy—and the distant clash of voices—rose from a canyon ahead, tugging sharply at his attention.

He sank even lower, body lighter than a drifting leaf, sound and aura swallowed by the wind.

Within the gorge, three black-robed demonic cultivators—each perched at the very peak of the Human Immortal Realm—had cornered a young woman in a purple robe

Serrated ropes of demon fight twisted from their palms, forming claws, chains, and spectral jaws that snapped at her without mercy.

Their coordination was flawless and their intent lethal; every pulse of dark light shrieked toward the woman's heart, determined to drag her spirit into the void.

The young woman—already

standing at the very peak of the

Human Immortal Realm—fought like a candle in a hurricane. Her long sword gleamed as thin and blue cold as autumn water. With every whirl of her wrist, the blade shed sheets of light that fluttered outward and stacked into trembling layers of pale protection. Those fragile curtains were all that kept three attackers from carving her open.

A Warrior Undefeatable

"Improper?" Her voice was icy, the syllables fired off so quickly they tangled together. "Look at yourself you're half dead already. You're a clay idol trying to cross a river, and you still dare to play hero? Up here on level nine, the strong devour the weak. They surrounded me because I was unlucky and not strong enough. That's the law, and today happens to be my turn. You chose to kill them. Your choice, not mine. Did you honestly expect me to fall at your feet in gratitude— or worse, throw myself into your arms? You've got some skill, sure. Shame the brain behind it is dull. Those three were only outer disciples of the Dark Wrath Sect. Slaughtering them means real trouble will sniff you out soon."

"If you want to live, stop clinging to me and start figuring out how to run."

She spat the warning in a single breath—sharp, rapid, dismissive—turning Jared's act of rescue into an irritant she could hardly be bothered to swat away.

The flurry of mockery should have fanned his anger. Instead, Jared felt an almost glacial absurdity settle over him. He had risked himself for a woman whose heart was clipped colder than the steel in her hand.

"Still," he said quietly, "I did save you, didn't I?"

"And I never begged you to," she shot back, as if the very idea smelled rotten.

"F*ck," Jared muttered, a short, savage laugh escaping him. "You should've told me you had a physiological defect before I bothered saving you."

Watching the female cultivator act uninterested, Jared deflated. Even arguing felt pointless.

"Physiological defect?" She blinked, momentarily confused, then her cheeks flared crimson. "You're the one—"

The Dragonslayer Sword flashed. A single silver arc split the air, and her words— and her head—left her shoulders in the same breath. Before the body hit soil, Jared's off-hand flicked. The storage pouch at her waist leapt obediently into his palm.

"Kid, that was stone-cold." The Vermilion Demon Lord's curious voice sounded. "But tell me what defect were you rambling about? She looked normal enough to me."

Jared only smiled—a thin, private curve of the mouth. Some jokes explained themselves; the rest weren't worth the breath.

He rifled through four stolen pouches, then strolled off the trail until he found a fissure in the cliff wall. Inside the shallow cave, he sketched a quick-and-dirty cloaking formation, let the runes sink into the stone, and finally sat amid the shadowy hush to count what the day's bitterness had bought him.

Jared began with the practical. One by one, he upended the storage pouches, yet the rewards were meager—crude demonic crystals and a scatter of morbid ingredients that meant almost nothing to his path.

The moment he untied the woman's pouch, however, a muted glow slipped through his fingers and made the cave walls quiver with color.

Alongside several flawless spirit stones and high-grade elixirs lay an emerald vial, delicate as frost. Inside floated a marble-sized pill haloed by nine swirling hues—the very Ninefold Pill those fools had butchered each other to seize.

Nestled beside the vial was a palm-sized token—neither metal nor wood cool as moonlit jade. The

front bore the single word Mystic; the reverse, a mist-wreathed peak and another word—Fiend.

"Mystic Fiend Sect?"

Jared's brow rose. Though he had only recently stepped onto level nine, even he had heard that name—an unsavory second-tier order famed for corpse-harvesting and ghost-binding.

"Rotten roots make rotten branches," he muttered, the woman's earlier cruelty still fresh on his mind.

The memory of her venomous smirk flickered before him; how could a sect steeped in such filth possibly nurture anything else?

From resentment, a plan crystallized—clear, sharp, and merciless.

"This Ninefold Pill will restore most of my strength. Once I'm whole, the Mystic Fiend Sect will be my first stop for fund-raising. His voice dropped to a chill no flame could thaw.

Cold light cut across his eyes.

Jared was never a wanton butcher, yet his creed remained iron. Treat me with respect, and I repay double. Harm me, and I return it tenfold.

The woman had crossed that line; by extension, so would her sect. In his view, the world would breathe easier without it.

Purging such a nest of demons would fill his stores and, incidentally, polish a bit of karmic balance.

He stopped thinking. He uncorked the vial and swallowed the Ninefold Pill in one smooth motion.

A Warrior Undefeatable

Warmth erupted inside him—a tidal river both gentle and immense rushing through limbs, bones, and marrow.

Pure medicinal power stitched torn meridians, mended bruised organs, even brushed his weary soul with a balm of light.

Mist-thick aura pooled through the cavern; Jared's aura swelled, forging itself into something dense and inexorable.

Cuts knitted shut, pallor blossomed into color, and the once-ragged cadence of his breath steadied like a drum at parade.

Power climbed higher still, brushing the threshold of Human Immortal Realm Level Five.

Several days later, he opened his eyes. They shone like tempered steel. He closed a fist-the cave quaked. A thin, wintry smile curved his lips.

"Time to move."

He raised the sect token, slid his spiritual sense inside, and at once sensed a mountain gate leagues away, drowned in sinister miasma.

With a flex of will he became a streak of light, vanishing toward the Mystic Fiend Sect-silent, swift, and utterly unstoppable.

The Mystic Fiend Sect squatted in a sun-starved canyon where every buried vein of yin converged.

Gray-black clouds-thick with malice-clung to the peaks year-round, dripping the scent of rot and an everlasting chill into the air.

Disciples patrolled the grounds with predatory stares, thin coils of ghostly vapor snaking around their shoulders like pet vipers.

Yet Jared drifted through the array as though it were morning mist, rising until he hovered high above the sect's dark, crooked halls.

He stopped mid-sky and looked down, eyes cold, then unshackled his aura. A formless mountain of pressure plummeted.

Boom!

Tiles shattered, weak cultivators collapsed like puppets with cut strings, and the entire Mystic Fiend Sect erupted into frantic screams.

"Who dares violate the Mystic Fiend Sect!"

Several sharp auras burst from the inner compound. Brendan Nightshade and four elders—each at the opening tier of the Heavenly Immortal Realm—rose in a tight wedge.

Brendan's face was bloodless, his gaze poisonous. Seeing only one intruder-and sensing he was merely Human Immortal Realm Level Five-they exhaled in relief, then burned with anger at being looked down.

"Boy, name yourself!" Brendan barked, signaling his elders to fan out and encircle the lone figure.

Jared regarded them the way one might observe ants. Without a word, he produced the token-taken from the woman he had met earlier-and let it tumble toward the courtyard. The token landed with a metallic clang at Brendan's feet.

Brendan glanced down and stiffened. "That is... Lilac's token. What have you done with her?"

Lilac had been a favored inner sect disciple.

"I killed her."

Jared's tone was flat, as though announcing he had swatted a fly.

"You killed my disciple?" An elderly crone behind Brendan shrieked, her voice slicing the air. Lilac had been her apprentice. "Sir, kill him—avenge my Lilac!"

Brendan's eyes blazed. "Why slaughter a disciple of our sect?"

"She had a sharp tongue," Jared said, his voice as calm as falling snow. "I dragged her back from the brink, yet she repaid me with mockery and spite, so I ended her. Ending her was no harder than crushing an ant."

Brendan's eyes flashed with

murderous frost. "Very well. A mere Human Immortal Realm Level Five dares to slaughter my disciple then stroll through my gates? Today I shall rip out your soul, refine your spirit, and condemn you to eternal misery. Form the array!"

At once, the attending elders slid to the four cardinal points. Shadows leaked from their robes like ink in water, swirling together until a towering Ghastly Array its surface a screaming phantom maske funged toward Jared, jaws gaping wide enough to swallow a mountain.

Brendan himself joined the assault. He swung a bone staff wreathed in wailing

green phantoms; the weapon burst into a sickly emerald streak and speared straight for Jared's brow as if to nail his soul in place.